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The Spectacle of Gossip: Homosexuality, Infotainment Programs and Religion

The genre of infotainment is the most popular television genre in Indonesia today. In infotainment programs celebrity gossip dominates the news stories. This paper aims to investigate gossip on celebrities who are thought to be homosexual. Homosexuality has become a contested element of the post-Suharto Indonesia. The democratization process of the nation has led to the flourishing of gay and lesbian identity politics that demand the inclusion of homosexuality as part of the new imagined modern and democratic nation. But parallel to this development is the rise of the political Islam that denies the inclusion of homosexuality as part of an imagined Islamic nation. By analyzing celebrity gossip about Indonesian artists who are thought to be gay/lesbian, the paper aims at revealing the tensions between these different forces that strive to define the meaning and place of homosexuality in the newly (re) imagined nation.