

# MAPPING RADICAL ISLAMISM IN SOLO: A Study of the Proliferation of Radical Islamism in Central Java, Indonesia\*

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## **Abstract**

*Radical Islamism is becoming a challenging new phenomenon in the modern world. In the Indonesian context, Solo is interesting because some radical Islamism groups have emerged in the region—Pondok Ngruki, Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta (FPIS), and others. One basic assumption is that Solo is prolific for radical Islamism groups. This paper will explore and map the nature of Islam, especially radical, in Solo. Obviously, political conduciveness at the national level is not the only factor supporting the peculiarity of the city. Some historical and sociological accounts of the city are also necessary to study to thoroughly understand this phenomenon. The heavily abangan (nominal Muslims) majority of the city has been deprived by ethnic, economic and political factors. On the other hand, the intense dakwah (prosehytizing) conducted by some Islamic groups has given rise to 'instant' Muslims who see Islam as the ultimate solution to their problems. The call of jihād, shari'ah, and contentious politics are among the ways some radical Islamists' endeavour for the victory of Islam.*

**Keywords:** Radical Islamism, Pondok Ngruki, Jama'ah Gumuk, Abangan, Dakwah

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## A. Introduction

Solo<sup>1</sup> is a unique city. Although previously known as the centre of the great Islamic modern Mataram kingdom, Solo is also well known as the heartland of Javanese culture, culture into which Islam has been mixed. In addition, the people of Solo are famous for their distinctive behaviour, graciousness, and refined-manners besides their gorgeous *batiks*.<sup>2</sup> These characteristics can also be seen in their language, Javanese, which is the most highly evolved Javanese in Java.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Solo has become a place where various radical Islamism have flourished. Since the middle of the New Order period, Pondok Pesantren *Al-Mukmin* Ngruki tended to be radical Islamism in the sense that some of its leaders opposed the government and even wanted to establish an Islamic state. The case of *Usrah* in the 1980s forced Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir to flee to Malaysia. The involvement of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in the establishment of *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI, Indonesian *Mujahidin* Council) in 2000 signified the phenomenon of the re-emergence of *Darul Islam's* (DI/NII, Indonesian Islamic State) power in Indonesia in general and in Yogyakarta and Solo in particular. Most recently, Pondok Ngruki resurfaced from its alleged connections to some radical violence such as the Bali bombings. It was the International Crisis Group (ICG) which first introduced the term "the Ngruki Network" as the "group" most responsible to various violence since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In its further development, the network has become well known as *Jama'ah Islamiyah* (JI, Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Solo is the same as Surakarta. The official name of the city is *Kotamadya* (the municipality of) Surakarta. The word Solo, however, is commonly used nowadays. Nevertheless, it should not be confused with the residency of Surakarta (*Karesidenan* of Surakarta) which existed during the Dutch occupation. Nowadays, people commonly called it the ex-residence of Surakarta which comprises seven regions—Surakarta (Solo), Klaten, Sukoharjo, Wonogiri, Karanganyar, Sragen, and Boyolali.

<sup>2</sup> *Batik* refers to a generic wax-resistant dyeing technique used on textiles.

<sup>3</sup> About the traditional language in Solo see James T. Siegel, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Community), one of the factions of the *Darul Islam* of S.M. Kartosuwiryo which allegedly acts as the link to Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup>

Solo gained renown for the “sweeping” of hotels and bars by vigilante groups targeting Americans and other Western aliens. Although the *Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta* (FPIS, Muslim Youth Front of Surakarta) is the most active vigilante group conducting such activities, it is not the only vigilante group in Solo. The decline of the Suharto regime in 1998 was marked by the emergence of vigilante groups who tried to participate in social and political issues either locally or nationally. All of the above leads me to believe that Solo is rife with radical Islamism groups.

Despite the proliferation of radical Islamism groups in the city, there have been no significant efforts to insert *shari'ah*-based regulations into bylaw regulation (*peraturan daerah shari'ah*). Although some Islamism groups are concerned with *shari'ah*, their demand for *shari'ah*-based regulations has not been largely supported by the Solonese. In other words, only small parts of the society support the existence of radical Islamism groups in the city. As far as Solo is concerned, the reason for this is simple: Solo and its surrounding regions are overwhelmingly *abangan* in character. *Santri*, or pious Islam, is a definite minority ideal in the region; radical Islamism is even further removed from public acceptance. Thus, the minimal support radical Islamism receives at the grass-root level makes it impossible to get *shari'ah* legislation accepted in the city. The minority position of devout Muslims may explain why they tend towards radical activities. Their recent ‘conversion’ to *santri* Islam is another reason why they are disposed towards radical Islamism. To understand the full implications of the Solonese and Islam in the city, I have to start at the beginning.

## B. Historical Accounts of Islam in Solo

Since the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, Islam has been a significant phenomenon in the Surakarta kingdom. Historical accounts trace that

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<sup>4</sup> Regardless of this unproved accusation, many still believe that he was involved in this clandestine organization.

Islam in Solo had become well developed by the reign of Susuhunan Pakubuwono II (1726-1749). Although he came to the throne at the age of 16, under the big guidance of his grandmother Ratu Pakubuwono, he was concerned with religious issues. Another obvious phenomenon was the interaction of Pakubuwono II with Kyai Kasan Besari, the leader of the *pesantren* Gebangtinatar at Tegalsari Ponorogo East Java, on his flight due to the rebellion. Since then some royal families of Kasunanan Surakarta sent their sons to *pesantren* Tegalsari, Ponorogo. Several other royal families also studied Islam from Kyai Hanggamaya at a *pesantren* in Kedu Bagelen. Therefore, some prominent Javanese royal poets graduated from these *pesantrens*—Bagus Banjar (Yasadipura I, 1729-1803), Bagus Wasista (Yasadipura II, 1760-1845), and also Bagus Burham (Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, 1802-1873).<sup>5</sup> Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, however, is more famous as a forecaster than a royal poet since his predictions on *Serat Kalatidha* have come to pass in the current era. The Islamic contents some of the above works has proven that the development of Islam in Solo in particular could not be separated from the authority of the Kasunanan kingdom; Islam in Solo was mostly developed by the kingdom and was mostly mixed with Javanese values—syncretism. This is among the reasons why the *abangan* Muslim majority in Surakarta exists in the modern era. For this reason, Ricklefs asserts that the strength of Javanism (*Kejawen*, Jw) is not a hindrance for Javanese to be radical or fundamentalist Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

The development of Islam in Solo was continued by Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV (1788-1820). Initially, he invited '*ulamas* from many different places to stay and develop Islam in the city. One of the most famous and fruitful '*ulamas* was Kyai Jamsari from the Banyumas region.

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<sup>5</sup> Some famous books of the above poets are *Serat Ambiya*, *Serat Centhini*, *Serat Cabolek*, *Serat Kalatidha*, *Serat Sabdajati*, *Serat Sabdatama*, *Pustaka Radja* etc. For further accounts see Sri Suhandjati Sukri, *Ijtihad Progresif Yasadipura II dalam Akulturasi Islam dengan budaya Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2004); Nancy K. Florida, "Pada Tembok Keraton ada pintu: unsur santri dalam dunia kepujangaan "klasik" di Keraton Surakarta" (a paper presented at the symposium on *Tradisi Tulis Indonesia* at Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> For this issue see M.C. Ricklefs, Islam and the Reign of Pakubuwono II, 1726-1749 in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 238-252.

He lived and built a mosque on the southwestern side of Surakarta kingdom which later became known as Jamsaren village and also Pondok Jamsaren. Kyai Jamsari not only taught Islam to the people surrounding the village but also taught Islam to the aristocrats and bureaucrats of the kingdom. The *pesantren*, however, was destroyed by the Dutch colonial troops when the *santris* were involved in the Diponegoro war in 1825-1830. In 1878, Kyai Muhammad Idris from Klaten rebuilt and revived the *pesantren* which finally reached its peak at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This development was marked by hundreds of students coming from many parts of Java and its outer islands. Although the *pesantren* was established by the kingdom, it was not fully under the control of the kingdom. The involvement of its *santris* during the Diponegoro war reflected the resistance of the *pesantren* to the kingdom as well as the Dutch East Indies government.

The success of *Pondok Jamsaren* inspired R. Hadipati Sosrodiningrat and Penghulu Tafsir Anom to establish a formal educational institution in order to get more 'ulamas to be *penghulu*.<sup>7</sup> In 1905, therefore, with the support of Susuhunan Pakubuwana X they established a modern Islamic school called *Madrasah Mamba' al-'Ulūm* (the source of knowledge) and assigned Kyai Muhammad Idris as its leader. Unlike other indigenous educational institutions in the form of *traditional pesantren*, the *madrasah* was the first indigenous educational institution to employ a modern system of education. At that time, the *madrasah* had 11 levels of classes, 1-4 for elementary, 4-8 for secondary, and 9-11 for the high level.<sup>8</sup> In its later development the last level was

<sup>7</sup> Both R. Hadipati Sosrodiningrat and Penghulu Tafsir Anom served as royal employees (*abdi dalem*) of the Kasunanan Kingdom. Since the status was a royal school, all expenses of the *madrasah* were fully covered by the kingdom. In traditional Java, *penghulu* is a religious authority in districts or sub-districts.

<sup>8</sup> At its peak in 1925, students of the *madrasah* could number as many as 700. Moh. Ardani (1983) asserts that *Madrasah Mamba' al-'Ulūm* was the oldest Islamic modern school in Indonesia after the one founded by *Jami'at al-Khair* in Jakarta. However, since the influence of this *madrasah* did not reach as far as West Java and Batavia, the Indonesian government does not regard this *madrasah* as a significant stage of the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. For further remarks on this issue, see Moh. Ardani, *Agama dan Perubahan Sosial di Indonesia: Mamba'ul Ulūm Kasunanan Surakarta 1905-1942, Studi Kasus* (Jakarta: Proyek Penelitian Keagamaan Departemen Agama RI, 1983).

developed to be a higher education of *Mamba' al-Ulūm*. Although the *madrasah* was initially for royal and aristocratic families, after the decline of the Kasunanan kingdom by the declining Dutch East Indies government, the *madrasah* was opened for the common people.

To discuss the development of Islam in Solo, it is worthwhile to describe some Muslim majority villages such as Kauman, Pasar Kliwon and Laweyan. We can categorize these villages as enclaves within the society. In describing these villages, I would also describe some of the mainstreams in these regions such as *Muhammadiyah*, *Al-Irshād*, and *Nahdlat al-'Ulama* (NU). These communities or enclaves were deliberately made by the Dutch government and the Kasunanan kingdom to help them control the communities. The division of the communities into such enclaves was also intentionally designed to accommodate the roles they would have to play—Kauman for the religious employees of the kingdom (*priyayi*), Pasar Kliwon for Arabs, Laweyan for Javanese-Muslim businessmen (*santris*), Jebres for Chinese businesspeople, and the rest of the regions for Javanese abangan. The arrangement of such enclaves was also to mark their social status since all the above enclaves were high on the social ladder compared to the common people.

*Kauman* is an exclusive community for the religious employees of the kingdom. These people lived on the north side of Kasunanan Surakarta adjacent to *Masjid Agung* (the great mosque). According to Geertz's social categories, they could be regarded as *priyayi* (higher level) while still being devout Muslims. This is one of the reasons why *Muhammadiyah* was accepted in this community since the people here were educated and from upper class society. The closeness of the *Kauman* community to the kingdom helped them take part in business. As a middle class community, some were engaged in batik trading as well as printing books on Islam as a way to spread their views on moderate Islam. Their relationship to the community was not based only on business but also on religious matters. The development of *Muhammadiyah*, however, was unable to reach the broader community since the earlier and Solo origin organization, *Sarekat Islam*, had been widely accepted in society. The reform actions of *Muhammadiyah* toward traditional communities collided with strong traditional values which



were maintained by the kingdom and *Sarekat Islam* (SI). In some cases, however, *Muhammadiyah* cooperated with *Sarekat Islam* (SI) to confront the Christianization agendas of some Dutch missionaries. When K.H. Misbach joined SI, he confronted the modern views of *Muhammadiyah* and even accused it of being capitalist since most *Muhammadiyahs* were engaged in prosperous businesses. On the latter development, *Muhammadiyah* cooperated with *Budi Utomo* (BU) to confront the brand of communism eagerly taught by K.H. Misbach. In the modern era, however, Kauman of Solo is no longer viewed as the mass base of *Muhammadiyah*, nor are the other regions in Solo. This is due to the decrease of the kingdom's authority in society

Initially, Laweyan village was—just as other villages in Solo—comprised of *abangan* Javanese Muslim majority. Because of the influence of Tegalsari, a nearby village, Islam was able to revive in the village.<sup>9</sup> History records that in 1928 the mosque of Tegalsari was the first established by the Muslim community in Solo, compared to other mosques which were established and run by the kingdom. It was Kyai Safawi who ran the mosque of Tegalsari and turned it into the centre of Islamic studies. In this account, Kuntowijoyo asserts that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the religiosity of the Laweyan people was not as good as in Kauman. In fact, the village of Tegalsari was not only the centre of Islam but also batik. The success of the Tegalsari people in manufacturing batik had influenced the Laweyan people in batik making as well as Islam. In its later development, Laweyan became more famous for its batik. The triumph of the Laweyan people in batik played a significant role in elevating the social and economic status of the community. This gave rise to middle class *santri*. It was from this class that the most famous radical organization at the time, *Sarekat Islam*, emerged. Although initially the SI was followed only by middle class *santri*, in its latter development it was followed by the *abangan* masses. These days, Laweyan is no longer the basis of Muslim business, although the remains of the old houses clearly signal their former wealth. The village of Tegalsari, however, is still famous as one of the centres of Islam in Solo.

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<sup>9</sup> Sudarmono, *Munculnya Kelompok Pengusaha Batik di Laweyan pada abad ke XX* (MA Thesis at Gadjahmada University, 1987), p. 8.

Like Laweyan, initially Pasar Kliwon was only a village for the enclave of Arabs on the Eastern side of the Kasunanan kingdom. Although there were many Arabs living in other sub-districts of Solo, Pasar Kliwon has been the major Arab community in the region. Business has been the province of Arabs since their coming to the archipelago. In the Solo context, the privilege accorded Arabs from the royal kingdom gave them many chances in business especially batik trading, clothing manufacture, and Islamic book making. The success of Arabs in business was supported by the fact that this community had good networks across the country. It was Achmad Soorkati of the Sudan who came to Solo in the end of 1920s to establish *Al-Irsbād*, after quitting from *Jami'ah al-Khair* due its exclusive organization for *habā'ib*, the descendants of the prophet Muhammad. Similar to *Muhammadiyah* and NU, however, *Al-Irsyād* could not become a dominant organization for Arabs, let alone Javanese Solo. Nevertheless, *Al-Irsyād* played a central role in facilitating an *ulamas* congress in 1927 due to the tension between *Muhammadiyah* and NU in Solo. One significant phenomenon of the Arab descendants in this region is that they did not greatly impact Islam for Javanese *abangan* except to the limited families in which they were married. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the villages in the sub-district of Pasar Kliwon were and are among the heavily *abangan* communities in Solo. In the end, given the above social and historical accounts, *abangan* comprise a majority in Solonese. Not only were there *abangan* in all suburban areas, but also in urban areas of Solo. However, it is necessary to assert here that among the existing sub-districts, Pasar Kliwon, Banjarsari, and Jebres are among the most heavily *abangan* majority in the region.

### C. Islamism in Solo during the New Order

The New Order period was highly conducive to the emergence of radical Islamism. The pressure of the government on Muslims during the first phase of this era provoked the rise of resistance movements among Muslims. Some local social conditions also accelerated the emergence of local radical Islamism groups. The *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation, DDII) was established as a substitution for the abandoned Islamic party, the



*Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* (Masyumi). Some years later, Pondok Ngruki was co-founded by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in Solo. The harsh attitude of the government towards Muslims was answered by Sungkar and Ba'asyir's involvement in the *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII) of S.M. Kartosuwiryo. In the years to follow, several incidents occurred related with Pondok Ngruki such as the detention of Sungkar and Ba'asyir, the case of *Komando Jihad*, the case of *usrab*, and finally their exile to Malaysia in 1985. Regardless of some radical activities in Solo, some other significant *dakwah* activities also deserve mention in the development of Islam in the region.

The efforts of some ex-*Masyumi* leaders in politics sparked the establishment of the DDII in 1967. The organization closed ties with *Rābiṭah 'Alam Islāmī* (the Muslim World League) in order to support the government's program to wipe out all latent enemy power, namely communism. Finally, the DDII became the representative of *Rābiṭah* in Indonesia. On shifting the ex-*Masyumi* *dakwah* paradigm, M. Natsir (1908-1993), the founder and leader of the DDII, asserted that "previously we carried out *dakwah* through politics but now we run politics through *dakwah*".<sup>10</sup> In its earliest stages, M. Natsir eagerly summoned his ex-*Masyumi* colleagues to establish branches of the DDII in many parts of Indonesia, including Solo, Central Java. During his speech in Solo in the late 1960s, he asked his ex-*Masyumi* counterparts to establish more pesantrens and Islamic hospitals to counter Christianization efforts which were quite significant in the region at the time. According to Ahmad Chusnan, ex-leader of the DDII branch of Solo, Pondok Ngruki, *Yayasan Rumah Sakit Islam* (Yarsi) hospital, and Kustati hospital were responses to Natsir's suggestion. Along with its general efforts to help (for example) Islamic institutions have financial assistance from Middle Eastern donors, the DDII of Solo also helped Pondok Ngruki in different ways. As far as the DDII Solo is concerned, about 90 mosques were built across Central Java including 3 within Pondok Ngruki. After the death of Natsir in 1993, the DDII in Solo decreased significantly and is no longer an active organization.

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<sup>10</sup> Lukman Hakiem & Tamsil Linrung, *Menunaikan Panggilan Risalah: Dokumentasi Perjalanan 30 Tahun Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (Jakarta: DDII, 1997), p. 8.

Pondok Ngruki was established as an attempt of *'ulamas* to develop Islam in Solo. Although the Pondok Ngruki was founded by several people, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir were becoming icons of the boarding school. Although in its development Pondok Ngruki was assisted by many teachers from many different educational backgrounds, Sungkar and Ba'asyir occupied key positions in shaping and colouring the boarding school. However, we should not neglect the roles played by the *Persis* (*Persatuan Islam*, Islamic Union) Bangil's and Middle Eastern graduates such as Suwardi Effendi, Ahmad Chusnan, Muhammad Ilyas, M. Ya'kub Basya, and Jazri Mu'alim who had helped Pondok Ngruki in term of links and financial support from the DDII and some Middle Eastern Islamic foundations. In its later development, most of the Pondok Ngruki *ustadz*s (religious teachers) were its own graduates, holding to the spirit of Sungkar and Ba'asyir. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore further these two figures.

Abdullah (Ahmad) Sungkar was born as a Yemeni-descent at Pasar Kliwon sub-district of Solo in 1937. Although he only attended formal religious schools until he was in junior high school (not boarding schools) he learned Islam fast. Further knowledge on Islam he acquired by studying Islam himself. Being active in *Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia* (Indonesian Muslim Youth Movement, GPII), led him to also be active in its senior organization, the *Masyumi*, during the Old Order era.<sup>11</sup> From this, we can see that his involvement in *Masyumi* brought about his closeness to M. Natsir, even more so when Natsir established the DDII during the New Order period. Undeniably, therefore, the spirit of *Masyumi* greatly shaped his Islamic thoughts. His spirit of Islam guided him as a good and tough *da'i* (Islamic preacher) in Solo and his concern with politics directed his opposition to the government of the New Order. The character of Sungkar was more obvious when he co-founded Pondok Ngruki.

Abu Bakar Ba'asyir was born as of Yemeni descent in Jombang East Java in 1938. He passed his youth in Jombang until the second grade of senior high school when he continued his study in Pondok

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<sup>11</sup> Muh. Nursalim, *Faksi Abdullah Sungkar dalam Gerakan NII Orde Baru: Studi terhadap Pemikiran dan Harakah Politik Abdullah Sungkar* (Master Thesis at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, 2001), p. 15.

Gontor. Finishing his study there, he continued in *Al-Iryād* University in Solo and the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN, Institut Agama Islam Negeri) *Sunan Kalijaga* Yogyakarta where he was active in the *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* (Muslim Student Association, HMI) in 1964.<sup>12</sup> Severe socio-political conditions at that time forced Ba'asyir to discontinue his studies and vigorously involve himself in the *Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia* (GPII) and *Al-Iryād* until the late 1960s. For further study in Islam he taught himself by employing the basis of Islamic knowledge he already had. His being active in the GPII and also *Al-Iryād* influenced his school of thought greatly. Through these organizations he met Abdullah Sungkar, which later shaped his attitude in politics. Compared to his counterpart Sungkar, initially Ba'asyir was less concerned in politics. However, due to his involvement in Sungkar activities he was tried in the courts, detained, and jailed together with his colleague.

Since then, both Sungkar and Ba'asyir continuously criticized and opposed government regulations towards Muslims. One of the most crucial issues they criticized was the *Pancasila* and *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila* (P-4).<sup>13</sup> They were detained in the late 1978 for involvement in the NII by vowing an oath to H. Ismail Panoto (Hispran). Finally, on trial in 1982 after they were unlawfully detained for 3 years and 10 months, they were sentenced for the same time of the detention for distributing the book *Jihad and Hijrah* of Abdul Qadir Baraja, refusing *Pancasila*, and refusing to fly the Indonesian flag. Objecting to the light sentence, the prosecutors appealed the case to the Supreme Court. In 1985, they were summoned by the district court to hear the verdict of the Supreme Court on their case.<sup>14</sup> To

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<sup>12</sup> For further account of his life see, *Sabili*, No. 16, IX 8 February 2002, p. 38; *Republika*, 20 October 2002 in [www.republika.co.id](http://www.republika.co.id) (Accessed on 18 December 2006); Edi Sudarjat, "Abu Bakar Ba'asyir: Sebuah Biografi Ringkas" in Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. *Catatan dari Penjara: Untuk Mengamalkan dan Menegakkan Dinul Islam* (Depok: Penerbit Mushaf, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> P-4 is a government regulation to indoctrinate the ideology and implementation of *Pancasila* to all government apparatus and university students.

<sup>14</sup> Further, see Irfan Suryahardi, *Perjalanan Hukum di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Risalah, 1982), pp. 300-305.

avoid any unlawful detention, they fled to Malaysia followed by some of their devout disciples in the following years. In their view, it was not an escape from justice, but a kind of *hijrah* (emigration) to escape from the enemies of Islam, similar to the prophet Muhammad's *hijrah* from Mecca to Medina. Although they fled to exile, they left behind them some big issues related the NII, i.e., the possible involvement in *Komando Jibad*, the case of *Usrah*, and the Islamic activism (*baraki*) within Pondok Ngruki.

In the late 1970s, the case of *Komando Jibad* (*Komji*) intensified in Sumatera and West Java as an effort of the ex-NII activists to survive. The raids to collect funds and weapons—led by Asep Warman—was known as the terror of Warman. Regardless of the involvement of the authorities, especially *Badan Koordinasi Inteligen Negara* (National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, BAKIN), in these actions, *Komando Jibad* also took place in Solo and Yogyakarta. The vice rector of the *Universitas Negeri Sebelas Maret* (UNS, State University of Surakarta), Parmanto, M.A. was assassinated by Warman fighters on January 1979 since he was suspected of giving information to the police on the oath of Sungkar and Ba'asyir to H. Ismail Pranoto. In the same month, a student of *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (IAIN) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Hassan Bauw, was murdered by Warman's fighters because he was suspected of giving information to the police on the escape of the assassins of Purwanto. Another action of *Komando Jibad* was raiding the salaries of lecturers and employees of IAIN Yogyakarta. Since then Warman disappeared for a long time and was finally shot dead in Bandung on July 1981.<sup>15</sup>

Although the case of *usrah* was not as significant as *Komando Jibad*, its existence was significant especially in the regions of Central Java, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta. Initially, *usrah* was a kind of *tarbiyah* (intensive Islamic education) method used by university students adopted from the *Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt to educate its members. Developed well at *Salman* mosque of *Institut Teknologi Bandung* (ITB) by Imaduddin Abdurahim, *usrah* later spread

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<sup>15</sup> On this account, see "Akhir Perburuan di Soreang", in *Tempo*, 1 August 1981, Jakarta, pp. 12-13.

widely in some big universities in Java such as at the *Universitas Indonesia* (UI, Indonesian University) in Jakarta and the *Universitas Gadjahmada* (UGM, Gadjah Mada University) in Yogyakarta.<sup>16</sup> Almost at the same time, Sungkar adopted this cell system to broaden his networks. For the sake of this new *tarbiyah* method, Ba'asyir composed an *usrab* manual.<sup>17</sup> The *usrab* system of Sungkar developed rapidly in Central Java, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta due largely to the networks of the NII branch of Abdullah Sungkar. This mechanism was very effective in creating new members in society, especially the youth. Among the networks of the *usrab* were the activists of *Sudirman* mosque in Yogyakarta which published the tabloid *al-Risālah*.<sup>18</sup> This tabloid was circulated in many regions in the networks of *usrab*. Nevertheless, only about two years after its establishment, in 1985, the *usrab's* activities were recognized by the government which caused the arrest and imprisonment of about 29 of its activists, including Irfan Suryahardi and Shobarin Syakur. Irfan, the editor of *al-Risālah* was sentenced to 13 years in jail, a very heavy sentence even during the Suharto regime. The above confrontation with the government led some *usrab* members to exile and establish a Muslim community in Lampung which finally turned into an incident with authorities known as the case of bloody Lampung in 1989.

After the departure of Sungkar and Ba'asyir for Malaysia, the network of the NII within Pondok Ngruki was running well. Although some of their devout disciples were with them in Malaysia, other top

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<sup>16</sup> In fact there is no clear and definitive information about who initially used *usrab* as a *tarbiyah* method. However, Imaduddin was among the first to employ and adopt *usrab* for university students in Bandung. Imaduddin was a lecturer at the *Institut Teknologi Bandung* (ITB) and was well known as a leading figure of Islamic activism in Indonesia. For further information on *usrab* issues, see Abdul Syukur, *Gerakan Usrab di Indonesia: Peristiwa Lampung 1989* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> June Candra Santosa, *Modernization, Utopia and the Rise of Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia* (Ph.D. thesis in Boston University, 1996), p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> The tabloid was initially published in 1981. After being banned by the government in 1984, the tabloid resurfaced in the name of *Al-Ikhwān* until it was fully banned in 1985. Some *Gajahmada* University (UGM) lecturers were involved as board members of this tabloid. They are Dr. Amien Rais, Dr. Kuntowijoyo, and Dr. Sahirul Alim.



leaders were still at Pondok Ngruki. The changing political attitude of the New Order in the late 1980s encouraged the underground Islamic activists at Pondok Ngruki to expand their networks. Unlike before, during this period they tried to acquire more followers by setting more limited circles of learning Islamic studies in the *pesantren*. The more they held limited circles, the more followers they received especially from the schools of *Kulliyah al-Mu'allimīn* (KMI) and *Kulliyah al-Mu'allimāt* (KMT), the male and female schools for those studying religious matters and non-secular matters. Although the 'virus' of *haraki* (clandestine Islamic movement) could reach to more secular schools, i.e., *Madrasah Aliyah of Al-Mukmin* (MAAM, Al-Mukmin Islamic Senior Secondary School)) and almost all its pre-graduates vowed a loyal oath to the *haraki* leaders, most of them did not really understand or care about it. The underground network within Pondok Ngruki increased rapidly in the early 1990s. Some graduates of these periods admitted that almost all pre-graduates should vow an oath to the leader of the clandestine group. It was obvious, therefore, that although Sungkar and Ba'asyir were not there, they still controlled the underground elements of the *pesantren*.

Meanwhile, Sungkar and Ba'asyir used their being in Malaysia to broaden their network. During their 14 years in Malaysia, besides having been involved in many religious activities, they had the good fortune to build their network internationally. Although they were in exile, their network in Indonesia was working well, including their spiritual roles in Pondok Ngruki. Their relationship with Ajengan Masduki was also ongoing until their relationship was heightened in 1992, and Sungkar established his own NII faction in 1993. In Malaysia, besides preaching in some districts, he also co-founded an Islamic school called *Madrasah Luqman al-Hakīm* in the sub-district of Kuala Pilah, Johor Baru, Malaysia. Through the *Luqman al-Hakīm* Sungkar and his disciples taught Islam as they did in Pondok Ngruki. Therefore, *Luqman al-Hakīm* graduates were very similar to graduates of Pondok Ngruki in terms of their militancy and their opposition to the government. It is not surprising that later the authorities in Malaysia suspected the relationship between the networks of Sungkar and *Kelompok Mujahidin Malaysia* (KMM). The capture of Fathurrahman Al-Ghozi (carrying an



abundance of explosives), a Ngruki graduate, in the Philippines in 2002 was further evidence of the international networks of Sungkar. In late 1999, when the political situation in Indonesia changed dramatically, Sungkar and Ba'asyir went home. Unfortunately, before having the chance to stay and organize Pondok Ngruki, Sungkar passed away in Bogor in November 1999 due to heart attack. His death left many questions concerning the existence of *Jama'ah Islamiyah* (JI), the suspected organizer of some violent and devastating bombings in Indonesia.

#### **D. Other Islamic Organizations in Solo**

Unlike some other regions in Indonesia where either *Muhammadiyah* or NU is in the mainstream, neither of the above organizations is mainstream in Solo. Although the former have exceeded the latter in terms of educational institutions, they have failed to re-Islamize and modernize the Solonese. *Abangan* is still the majority and there are some radical groups in the city. Therefore, it is difficult for some board members of both *Muhammadiyah* and NU in the region to answer clearly when asked where the main base of each of organization is. Kauman people, even as the most 'modern' Muslims, could hardly accept *Muhammadiyah*. As far as *Muhammadiyah* in Solo is concerned, there are only small number Muslim figures of the organization from Kauman. History records that Haji Misbach, a son of a wealthy businessman in Kauman, condemned *Muhammadiyah* and actively called for a socialist breed of Islam. In many respects, Laweyan in the modern era is more at the centre of Islam than Kauman. Amin Rais, the previous leader of *Muhammadiyah* and the People's Consultative Council (MPR, *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*), is from the sub-district of Laweyan, although it is also hard to say that Laweyan is the major base of *Muhammadiyah*. It is not surprising, however, that *Muhammadiyah* and NU was not accepted well in Solo since the beginning of their emergence because *Sarekat Islam* (SI) had become the breath of the Solonese. In the following eras, therefore, there are only some local Islamic organizations which obtain a lot of support from society. In other words, the peculiarities of the Solonese are not fully understood by some 'foreign' Islamic organizations.

*Majelis Tafsir Alqur'an* (the Council of Qur'anic Exegesis, MTA) is the most successful Islamic organization in Solo in terms of its members. Abdullah Thufail Saputra's (d. 1992) concern to purify the Islamic belief of Muslims in Surakarta drove him to be involved in some Islamic activities. Initially, together with other *ulamas* in Solo, he established a radio broadcast in the late 1960s. Several years later, in 1972, by the time Sungkar and Ba'asyir had established a boarding school in Ngruki, he established a forum for Islamic teachings later called *Majelis Tafsir Alqur'an* (MTA) in Pasar Kliwon sub-district. At the same time he worked with Abdullah Marzuki to develop a boarding school—*Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam* (PPMI) *Assalaam*. Finally he was inspired to develop his own activities.

At a glance, there are no significant differences between MTA and *Muhammadiyah*. Initially, Thufail actively participated in *Muhammadiyah*. However, due to his disappointment with *Muhammadiyah*, he established the MTA. Similar to *Muhammadiyah*, MTA's purpose is to purify the Islamic belief of Muslims. Therefore, Thufail always invited Muslims to study, comprehend, and apply Al-Quran purely and consistently as done by the first generation of Muslims or companions. The ultimate aim is to dissuade Muslims from any mistaken practices of *shari'ah*, either *bid'ah*, *khurafāt* or *takbayul*. At this point, MTA and *Muhammadiyah* had the same purpose. However, Ahmad Sukino, the successor of Abdullah Thufail, asserted that *Muhammadiyah* is too weak to enforce Islamic teachings in its members, especially to avoid *takbayul*, *bid'ah* and *khurafāt*. Furthermore, he added that there are no significant differences between MTA and *Muhammadiyah* except that MTA compels its members to practice Islam that has been learnt. The most interesting point of the difference between *Muhammadiyah* and MTA is that *Muhammadiyah* is a formal organization with a full-fledged bureaucracy while MTA is just a foundation with an immature concept. Therefore, there is no such regulation within the MTA to change its leader every certain period. Obviously, Ahmad Sukino would run the organization for the entirety of his life as did Abdullah Thufail.

Currently, MTA has emerged as a big Islamic organization not only locally in Surakarta, but wide spread and nationally. In 2007 MTA

claimed that it has about 25 provincial branches, more than 128 district branches, and not less than 100,000 members all over Indonesia.<sup>19</sup> One interesting phenomenon of this organization is that most of its members are Javanese from the periphery and rural areas, which consist of mostly less educated *abangan*. Therefore, although the MTA is situated in the centre of the Arab community in Pasar Kliwon sub-district, none of the Arabs has joined the organization. Obviously, the simple concept of Islam of the MTA does not attract much attention of educated people, let alone university students, although there are a few lecturers of several universities who have joined this organization.

Another influential Islamic organization in Solo is a Muslim community well known as *jama'ah Gumuk*. Founded by H. Mudzakir in 1976, this community is located at a mosque at the village of Gumuk, Mangkubumen, in the city of Solo. Initially, it offered only informal religious teachings for its surroundings. But over time Mudzakir's activities have attracted more and more people to study Islam with him. Although the Islamic teachings of this group are not much different from those of modern Islamic organizations, it tends to be quite an exclusive organization. However, Chalid Hasan, one of the leaders of the community, asserts that his solid community has a broad network covering the Surakarta regions. The cell system of this community enables it to be widely spread not only in Solo but also in some other regions in the ex-residency of Surakarta.

The Gumuk mosque community is an exclusive group. The distinctiveness of the community is based on the fact that the Gumuk mosque is quite different from any other common mosques. The mosque building is more like a four-storey house than a mosque. In addition, the *jama'ah* refuses to name its community by any religious names as other Islamic organizations. It was not surprising, therefore, that once in the 1980s the Gumuk mosque community was suspected by other groups as being Shi'ite. In fact, there are many reasons for other groups to come to this assumption. First, the leader of the community, Mudzakir, once studied Islam at *Yayasan Pendidikan Islam* (YAPI) Bangil, considered as one of the Shi'ite branches in Indonesia.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Ahmad Sukino, the leader of MTA, in Solo on 2 March 2007.

Second, Mudzakir once went to Iran to study Islam. However, based on their Islamic teachings and their daily activities, they should not be considered as Shi'ite. As far as I am concerned, the way this community prays is just like other Muslim groups. Unlike other radical groups, this community rejects the Qur'anic exegesis of Hasan Al-Banna which tends more toward a political interpretation rather than Islamic teachings. Instead, this community uses the Qur'anic exegesis of Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi and Imām Ibn Katsīr. In general, people could say that they are not moderates but *salafy*. Some of the characteristics of their *salafy* are that they grow their beards and believe that *isbāl*, wearing garments that hang below the ankles, is prohibited (*haram*), although the women of this group do not wear head-to-toe coverage, but only regular *hijāb*.

In fact, there are some other interesting things about this community. Similar to the MTA, *jama'ah* Gumuk is originally a local (Solo) Islamic organization. For this reason, it is easier for the Solonese to accept it. In terms of its followers, most of the members of the community are lower class Javanese from the periphery or suburbs Solo, i.e., less educated *abangan* people. Another interesting thing is that during the New Order era, this community tended to concentrate on holding Islamic teachings (*taklim*) and was not interested in any social and political issues. Nevertheless, in the Reformation Era, this community engaged in social and political issues and even had a vigilante force called *Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta* (FPIS) and the *Hawariyyūn* (the disciples), although it does not attach to any Islamic political party.

Another interesting aspect of Islam in Solo during the New Order era is the phenomenon of *Mega-Bintang*. Prior to the general election in 1997 many people strongly demanded that Suharto resign from his presidency even before the monetary crisis at the end of 1997. As was common during New Order elections the party of *Golongan Karya* (Functional Group, *Golkar*) was a single majority party. Since the Old Order period, on the other hand, Solo was a mass base of *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* (PDI, Indonesian Democratic Party) even after it became *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDI-P, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle). The demand for Suharto's resignation

gave rise to alienated people, especially *abangan* in Solo, to mobilize. Mudrick M. Sangidoe, a leading Moslem figure and leader of the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) branch of Solo, saw this opportunity to defeat the unbeatable party, *Golkar*, and formed a kind of mass alliance between the Islamic opposition party, PPP, and PDI-P famously known as *Mega-Bintang*.<sup>20</sup> It was an unprecedented phenomenon at the time, an alliance between an Islamic party and a secular nationalist party. The idea was embraced by both party bases as a mobilization against Suharto and Golkar not only in Solo but in other major cities in Indonesia. The elite leaders of both parties, however, did not see this great opportunity as their chance to defeat Golkar, and therefore, they refused formal coalition of both parties. Although both parties were defeated in the 1997 election, the phenomenon of *Mega-Bintang* can be regarded as a genuine grass-roots voice. Nevertheless, the struggle of *Mega-Bintang* to grasp *abangan* people continued in the form of *Mega-Bintang* Foundation in Solo. The foundation is not only concerned with low-level labour in Solo, but also building public facilities for some *abangan* communities at the periphery of Solo city.

The *Mega-Bintang*'s successful movement represented the social situation of the Solonese in general. In other words, I would say that the case of *Mega-Bintang* was not a balanced coalition between the mass of PPP and the PDI-P, since the PPP's mass was not quite significant in Solo. The lower-class *abangan* people are a moveable group that could be manipulated by any other groups. During the movement era in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the lower-class *abangan* people had been attracted by the *Sarekat Islam* with the brilliant framing ideas of K.H. Misbach. In general, I would say that it was not Islamic ideas which attracted people to *Sarekat Islam* and *Mega-Bintang*, but the idea to encounter the hegemonic power which had been deprived them. In the future, these lower-class *abangan* people could be drawn in other directions which would elevate them from their current social status. Although the process of re-Islamisation (*santrinisasi*) is running well conducted by such Islamic organizations as the MTA, Gumuk, and

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<sup>20</sup> *Mega-Bintang* literally means "big star". *Mega* was a short name for Megawati which represent PDI-P, while *Bintang* is part of the symbol of Islamic party, PPP.



*Muhammadiyah*, the vast *abangan* is still the majority in Solo. On the other hand, the Islamization process would not automatically lead the people to be moderate Muslims. Eventually, it always depends on which organization successfully attracts and leads them in certain directions.

### **E. Radical Islamism in Solo in the Post-Suharto Era**

The dramatic political changes in Indonesia were partially signalled by the emergence and re-emergence of radical Islamism groups. These groups emerged in many various forms, either formally as the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), clandestinely as the *Jama'ah Islamiyah* (JI), or in the form of vigilante forces (*laskar*) such as the *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defender Front, FPI). This new era is also marked by the increasing demand for *shari'ah* in many parts of Indonesia. Along with the demand for *shari'ah*, many vigilante forces have emerged throughout Indonesia. In the context of Solo, although the demand for *shari'ah* is not quite significant, some vigilante forces have emerged significantly during the early years of post-Soeharto era. The Pondok Ngruki phenomenon re-emerged after it was revealed that some bombers of the Bali blast in 2002 were from Ngruki networks. This sub-chapter will explore several vigilante forces in Solo, while Pondok Ngruki networks will appear in a separate sub-chapter.

Unlike other cities in Indonesia, vigilante forces in Solo are significant in terms of their numbers and activities. There are at least seven vigilante forces originally in Solo, hatched from other branch-level vigilante forces. There are *Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta* (the Islamic Youth Front of Surakarta, FPIS), *Laskar Jundullah* (the Soldier of Allah), *Laskar Hizbullah Sunan Bonang*, *Hawariyyun* (the Disciples), *Brigade Hizbullah* (the Party of Allah Brigade), *Barisan Bismillah* (the Path of Bismillah), and *Al-Isblāh* (the Reform). Some branch-level vigilante forces are the *Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah* (the Ka'bah Youth Movement, GPK) and *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defender's Front, FPI). One obvious phenomenon of these movements is that each of these forces represents the diverse Muslim community in Solo. In



many cases, these organizations act together to respond to issues they are concerned with. However, since most of them emerged from political circumstances, only few are still active as vigilante forces. For this reason, I will only explore the FPIS as representative of the other vigilante forces in Solo.

The *Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta* (FPIS)<sup>21</sup> was established out of inter-religious conflict in Ambon in the early 1999, along with other vigilante forces in Indonesia such as *Laskar Jihād*. Although the organization was not as involved in the Ambon battlefield as *Laskar Jihād*, its existence in Solo and Indonesia in general is quite significant. As a local Islamic group, however, the FPIS is not only concerned with local issues in Solo but also national and even international issues related to Muslims. Flocks of people taking to the streets to protest government policies or US policies in the Muslim world were among the activities of this organization. Warsito Adnan, the most prominent leader of the FPIS, acknowledges that the emergence of some radical Islamism groups in Indonesia, including Solo, is due mostly to the hegemony of US in some Muslim countries, especially the invasion of Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Although the FPIS initially was an inclusive organization intended as an umbrella of Islamic organizations, in its later development the organization is becoming an exclusive organization for a certain Muslim group, the *jama'ah Gumuk*. The 'acquisition' of the FPIS by the *jama'ah Gumuk* is among the more interesting points of the FPIS.

Similar to other vigilante forces in Indonesia, the FPIS is concerned mostly with anti-*ma'siyah* (anti-immorality) actions. Although the FPIS knows that Indonesia is not an Islamic state, it nevertheless demands to reinforce the existing regulations concerning moral issues. Therefore, the FPIS periodically sweeps such immoral places as brothels, gambling centres, cafes, and hotels which it regards as violating God's law. During *Ramadan* (fasting month), the FPIS intensified its

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<sup>21</sup> Not to be misunderstood with the *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defender Front, FPI) of Habieb Rizieq. The FPIS has nothing to do with the FPI, although the FPI has its branch in Solo too. Many times, journalists have wrongly noted the FPIS as *Front Pembela Islam Surakarta*.

activities not only at the above places, but also at regular restaurants. To respect Muslims during fast time, the FPIS demands that restaurants be closed during the daylight or at least not expose their activities. As a formal organization, the FPIS also presses the authorities in Solo to impose existing regulations. The most interesting tactic is its “sweeping” of foreigners especially Americans living in hotels in Solo. This action was conducted as a concern and sympathy with some Middle Eastern Muslim counties, especially Iraq which was invaded by the US.

Although the *jama'ah* Gumuk has many members, it is not considered mainstream in Solo. As a seemingly *salafy* movement, however, it is different from other such movements in Indonesia. While *salafis* don't generally regard the Indonesian government as part of their problems in Islamic *dakwah* as long as the president is Muslim, the *jama'ah* Gumuk tends to regard the Indonesian government not only as an illegitimate government, but as a wrong system of state. For them, to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Indonesian government is *haram*, even to be involved in the system to endeavour for Islam. Although the organization does not clearly order or command its members not to be involved in any political parties, it is obvious that its members would consider Islamic political parties as useless. In the same way, the *jama'ah* does not eagerly respond to the issue of implementing Islamic *shari'ah* launched by other Islamic organizations although, in many cases, the FPIS does not refuse to cooperate with any Islamic organizations. For the *jama'ah* Gumuk, the regional regulation of *shari'ah* which has been passed in some regions is not good for Islam ideologically, although politically it has some significance. Therefore, the *jama'ah* does not enthusiastically propose *Peraturan Daerah* (regional regulation, *Perda*) *shari'ah* for the local government of Solo. In many respects, this *jama'ah* does not agree with the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) as this organization is too vulgar to disseminate its ideas on *shari'ah*, although Mudzakir acknowledges the success of the MMI in bringing the notion of *shari'ah* into common discourse in society. As far as I am concerned, the Gumuk community has its own agenda in dealing with this central issue.

Another significant radical Islamism group in Solo was Kompak, *Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis* (Action Committee for Crisis

Response). Although it is still vague about when and where the first *Kompak* was established, the *Kompak* branch of Solo was established in the August 1998 by figures of the *Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia* (DDII) of Solo. Since historically the DDII of Solo has had a relationship with the former leader of Pondok Ngruki, Abdullah Sungkar, the *Kompak* was supported by some associates of Pondok Ngruki, especially Aris Munandar, a Ngruki graduate. Reportedly, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir served as advisor of the *Kompak* of DDII, besides some other prominent figures in Solo. The outbreak of religious conflict in Ambon, on the other hand, inspired some JI members to use the *Kompak* as their means to act in Ambon and also in Poso. Finally, the *Kompak* also has branches in Ambon and Makassar. In many cases, therefore, the *Kompak* and JI have intertwined, making it difficult to distinguish them. The *Kompak*, however, has also been involved in many social actions such as helping Muslims victims of flood or earthquake. Thus, the *Kompak* is now well known as a prominent agent in providing emergency help to victims. The cooperation of *Kompak* with MER-C (Medical Emergency Rescue-Centre), an Indonesian Muslim humanitarian organization, in helping Muslims in Afghanistan after the US bombing campaign in late 2001, was one of the reasons why some Muslim world organizations sent financial help to *Kompak*.

#### **F. The Ngruki Network in the Post-Suharto Period**

After engaging itself with normal educational matters since the mid 1980s, Pondok Ngruki resurfaced at both the national and international level during the post-Suharto era. The return of Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir from Malaysia in late 1999, the establishment of the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) in 2000, the involvement of some Ngruki graduates in the Bali bombings, and the revealed *Jama'ah Islamiyah* (JI) point out that Ngruki has a broad network rather than just a simple boarding school. The establishment of similar boarding schools by its graduates—*Al-Islam* in Lamongan, *Al-Nūr* in Sukoharjo, and *Dār al-Shabadah* in Boyolali—is among the radical phenomenon of the Pondok Ngruki network. On the other hand, the return of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir to Pondok Ngruki has returned to light the uneasy relationship between him and the *Yayasan Pendidikan Islam*

*Al-Mukmin* (YPIA) on the type of *pesantren* Ngruki would be. Although the case of JI has given such a stigma to Pondok Ngruki, the desire of many in society to send their children to Pondok Ngruki is still quite high, especially from the existing Ngruki networks. The inconclusive trial of Ba'asyir concerning his involvement in JI has made Pondok Ngruki more popular than ever.

Returning from Malaysia in 1999, Ba'asyir went back to his previous activities as teacher at Pondok Ngruki. Although it was easy for him to go back to the *pesantren*, as he is one of the co-founders, a 'conflict' with the foundation of YPIA was unavoidable. The absence of Ba'asyir for about 14 years made the *pesantren* 'independent' without benefit of the icon of Islamism or fundamentalism it used to have during the first phase of the New Order period. Some board members of the foundation acknowledged that it was not easy for the foundation to struggle against the hardliners within the *pesantren* and to survive without the icon of Sungkar and Ba'asyir. Therefore, the re-presence of Ba'asyir at the *pesantren*, to some extent, was a dilemma for the foundation. To limit the role of Ba'asyir within the *pesantren*, the foundation did not give him any strategic position within the boarding school. Rather, it gave him a non-structural position as spiritual leader (*sesepuh*), which lacked any real power within the *pesantren*. Therefore, when Ba'asyir was accused of having to do with the JI and the Bali blast, it was easier for the foundation to argue that there was no relationship between the Pondok Ngruki and JI networks.

The presence of Ba'asyir in Indonesia was a blessing for his previous networks of the *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII), let alone the *Usrah* network. The establishment of the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) can absolutely be attributed as the re-emergence of power of *Komando Jihad* and *Usrah*. In August 2000 Ba'asyir supported the effort of Irfan S. Awwas and Sobarin Syakur, his previous disciples on *Usrah*, to establish the MMI in which he was chosen as the *amīr*, the top leader, of the *ahlu al-halli wa al-'aqd* (AHWA). Some prominent Indonesian Muslims such as Deliar Noer, A.M. Saefuddin, Abdurrahman Basalamah, Sahirul Alim, Fuad Amsyari, Mawardi Noer, Abdul Qadir Baraja, Bardan Kindarto also attended the congress in which they were

chosen as members of the AHWA.<sup>22</sup> Some previous members of *Komando Jihad* such as Abdul Qadir Baraja and Timsar Zubil also attended the congress. Unlike other NII split movements, the MMI tend to be a more formal and opened organization which could accommodate other Islamic organizations' aspirations as long as they were in line with the MMI's main mission to reinforce Islamic *shari'ah* at the governmental level.

Some radical violence during the post-Suharto era was attributed to Ba'asyir. The existence of *Kelompok Mujahidin Malaysia* (KMM) in Malaysia, the detention of some members of Al-Qaeda branch in Southeast Asia in Singapore, the publication of ICG on the Ngruki networks, the involvement of some Ngruki graduates in the Bali bombings, and the revealed JI's responsibility for some devastating bombings convinced the authorities that Ba'asyir was the spiritual leader of the JI, the Al-Qaeda branch in Southeast Asia. After an exhaustive search, the authorities arrested him in October 2002 and began to bring him to trial. The accusation worsened when it was found that there were two Ngruki graduates involved in the Bali bombing in 2002, six in the J.W. Marriot bombing in 2003, five in the Kuningan bombing in 2004, and finally, two Ngruki graduates involved in the Bali bombing II in 2005. Undeniably, based on all the above, many people assumed that Pondok Ngruki was the centre for radical violence in Indonesia. Although some people have objected to this accusation, the facts have proved the other way around. However, not all of the above facts were enough to prove that Ba'asyir was the spiritual leader of the JI. The authorities released him in June 2006 after being incarcerated for about four years.

Eventually, the stigma of terrorism situated Pondok Ngruki in a difficult position. Although only some Ngruki graduates have been involved in violent actions in the name of Islam in Indonesia, the belief that it is a nest of terrorism could not be expunged. In other words, even though radical Islamism is not mainstream at Pondok Ngruki, the fact that it was the centre of a clandestine Islamic activism is

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<sup>22</sup> In fact there are about 36 people in the AHWA. Further see Irfan S. Awwas, *Mengenal Majelis Mujahidin: Untuk Penegakan Syariah Islam* (Yogyakarta: Markaz Pusat Majelis Mujahidin, 2001), p. 46.



undisputable. Indeed, there are many Ngruki graduates who know nothing about the clandestine Islamic activism and could not answer clearly why their counterparts were involved in such violent actions. Whatever the reasons, the facts can not deny the involvement of its graduates or its inner circle in some radical Islamism in Indonesia. At least, Pondok Ngruki has planted a seed of radical ideology in its pupils which has finally grown and developed. On the other hand, the fact that Solo was a very significant branch within the administrative structure of JI attest to the role of the *pesantren*.

Nowadays, the legacy of Abdullah Sungkar, radical Islamism, is not quite a significant phenomenon in Pondok Ngruki. Not only was Sungkar much more charismatic than Ba'asyir in many respects, but he was also a great ideologue. The death of Sungkar several months after returning to Indonesia brought about Ba'asyir's seniority both in Pondok Ngruki and among its devout followers. Even though Ba'asyir's presence in the *pesantren* is meaningful for some '*ustadz*s, the power of the foundation makes him powerless in the boarding school. Nowadays, however, Pondok Ngruki is at the crossroads as there are many interests and different groups within the *pesantren*. Although Ba'asyir serves as the leader of the MMI, the organization's ideology is not mainstream in the *pesantren*. While some senior teachers want to drive Ngruki more to *salafy*, the foundation in which Pondok Ngruki is attached wants to lead it as moderate educational institution. I believe that the "divergent" direction and orientation of the *pesantren* would marginalize radical Islamism groups in Pondok Ngruki.

In line with the above phenomena, I argue that the spirit of radical Islamism is no longer a significant phenomenon in the Pondok Ngruki, but it may be so in some of its networks. Some *pesantrens* such as *Dār al-Shahadah* in Boyolali, *Ma'had Aly*<sup>23</sup> *Al-Nūr* in Sukoharjo, *Al-Islam* in Lamongan and *Muttaqien* in Rembang have inherited the spirit of radical Islamism of Pondok Ngruki. Several of these *pesantrens* were established after the resignation of some senior '*ustadz*s and *santris* in 1995. Some graduates of these *pesantrens* were involved in violent

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<sup>23</sup> *Ma'had 'Aly* is a generic term for a tertiary religious school open to graduates of Islamic high schools or *Madrasah Aliyah*.



activities in Indonesia. Although some of these *pesantrens* are relatively small educational institutions, they have gravitated to the *salafy* movement in the Middle East.

However, it should be noted here that not all *pesantrens* established by Ngruki graduates are radical in ways similar to the above two. Many could be categorized as moderate. Among them are *Pondok Abidin* and *Mujahidin* in Solo, *Pondok Syuhodo* and *Ulil Albāb* in Sukoharjo, *Pondok Ibnu al-Qayyim* in Yogyakarta, and *Pondok Tarbiyah al-Mukmin* in Magelang. And there are other such *pesantrens* outside Java in Sumatera and Nusa Tenggara Timur. These *pesantrens* may radical in terms of their ideology, but not in terms of their attitude. The most radical ones tend to be devout followers of Sungkar and Ba'asyir, and they even graduated prior the emergence of the JI in 1993. Since that time, the ideological orientation of some Ngrukis, especially those previously involved in the JI, including the *Dār al-Shabadah* and *Ma'had an-Nūr*, have shifted not to the NII of Adjengan Masduki (now led by Dadang Hafidz) but to *salafy*. However, since the *salafy* of the JI uses the network of the NII, sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the *salafy* of JI and other factions within the NII. However, it remains unclear to which *salafy* the networks of Sungkar belong.

### G. Radical Islamism as a Resistance Movement

The phenomenon of radical Islamism in Solo could best be described as a resistance movement. In other words, the emergence of some radical Islamism groups could be seen as social movements against social changes that do not accommodate their needs. In some cases, social movements make the process of social change gradual. In the case of Solo, however, radical Islamism groups want to fit the changes to support their necessities. The majority of low-level *abangan* in Solo have been economically, socially, and politically deprived. For this reason, they see Islam as an alternative to solve their problems. Islamic teachings that are religious *and* social offer the ultimate solution to their problems. Therefore, we could claim that it is an instant process of Islamization since they just 'jump' from *abangan* to Islamist without undergoing the necessary processes. Similar to what happened during

the age of motion (*zaman bergerak*), they may not really undergo a process of Islamization; they may simply take certain aspects of Islam (i.e., *Sarekat Islam*) to elevate them from their hopeless situation. Therefore, the involvement of such prominent Islamic organizations as *Muhammadiyah* and NU is very important to the Islamization process of the *abangan* society. Otherwise, such radical Islamism groups would consistently emerge from this society.

Since the early days of Solonese history, the *abangan* Javanese majority has been deprived socially and economically. The social stratification during the Dutch occupation put *abangan* Javanese at the lowest level, Arabs and Chinese second, and the Dutch and Javanese *priyayi* at the top.<sup>24</sup> The privilege of the Dutch also gave opportunities for the Chinese to live in urban areas and engage in business conveniences. In addition, as we have seen, the triumph of the Chinese in business positioned them as a different social class. Arabs, although privileged to live in urban areas, didn't receive quite the same economic facilities. The Arabs who had the same religion and culture could easily merge with the Javan Solonese. In most cases, their Arab Muslim-ness was regarded by the Javanese as having a higher degree of religiosity and society. The Arab acculturation was also supported by the fact that most Arabs married with Javanese women.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, the lower level *abangan* Javanese were socially and economically marginalized. This situation has not changed significantly until now. Although many of the lower level Javanese nowadays are living at the periphery of urban areas, they are constantly and economically marginalized. The success of the Chinese in business adds another level to social gaps and social jealousies. Therefore, anti-Chinese riots have been an ongoing social issue in Solo.

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<sup>24</sup> On the account of Arabs in Java see Sumit K. Mandal, *Finding Their Place: A History of Arabs in Java under Dutch rule, 1800-1924* (PhD thesis at Columbia University, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> According to van den Berg, only a few Arab-born women stayed long-term in Indonesia. That is why most Arab men married Indonesian women. Most Arabs in Indonesia the 20<sup>th</sup> century were born in Indonesia. The existence of *sayyid* as the descendants of Prophet Muhammad is an exception. See L.W.C. van den Berg, *Hadramaut dan Koloni Arab di Nusantara* (Jakarta: INIS, 1989) (the original book was published in Dutch in 1887).

The hegemonic power of the Solo kingdoms during the Dutch occupation is another reason why lower level Javanese (*abangan*) were deprived. Since the very beginning of Solonese (Surakartan) history in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, politics was a dominant issue among the aristocrats which finally resulted in the splitting of the Mataram kingdom into several kingdoms. The inability of the aristocrats to handle so many social problems drew the involvement of the Dutch Business Company (VOC) into both internal and external social problems. The rise of *Sarekat Islam* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the peak of social protest against the hegemony of the authoritarian Dutch government, was not responded to positively by the aristocrats. Their ignorance was supported by the disharmony of the Kasunanan and Mangkunegaran kingdoms, a condition which has lasted until today. The social gap or distance between the aristocrats and the *kawula*<sup>26</sup> (lower class people) was not well mediated by the *priyayi* (upper class people). On the emergence of *Sarekat Islam*, Kuntowijoyo asserts that it came from a collective sub-conscious place due to the failure of the *priyayis*. In fact, it was the *priyayis* who were fully aware of both sides—*raja* and *kawulo*—since both did not interact with each other. Until the independence of Indonesia in 1945, the kingdoms reluctantly acknowledged the new state and still accepted the return of Dutch government in 1948. The detachment of Kasunanan from lower class people made them resistant to the Indonesian government's plan to accord Kasunanan a special autonomous status in 1946. Social action in the name of anti-*Swapraja* (anti-autonomous government) was supported by the majority of the Solonese.<sup>27</sup> Obviously, the failure of the kingdoms to provide social cohesion for society split society even further.

Globalization and modernization has drastically changed the world. Not only has globalization shrunk the world, but it has also

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<sup>26</sup> For the case of social class during that time, I tend to employ Kuntowijoyo's category: *raja-priyayi-kawulo* (king-upper class-lower class). For more on this account, see his work *Raja, Priyayi & Kawulo: Surakarta 1900-1915* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2004), p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Soedarmono and Muh. Amin, *Solusi Konflik Pribumi dan non-Pribumi di Kota Solo* (Laporan Penelitian Dosen Muda at UNS, 2002), p. 1.

brought cultural fragmentation at the regional level.<sup>28</sup> Related to this, Tibi, who shares views with Geertz on culture, looks at culture as a framework for social production of meaning and then determines it at the local level. Accordingly, it is due to globalization that political Islam arises in most Muslim countries in the world. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, religious fanaticism and revivalism have arisen around the world, including Indonesia. The rapid mainstreaming of information and technology has marginalized the role of religion in society. Conventional Islamic preaching, therefore, can no longer restrain the tide of modernization from the West. Inevitably, some communities feel that their culture and identity have suffered, that they may lose their social exchange in, economics, for example. The unavailability of a communication space for the community with the government has led them to such a kind of social tension. In such a plural society as Solo, a policy that does not accommodate all parts of society will always be a seed of dispute. From some Islamic fundamentalist perspectives, modernization is viewed as a threat, since it is a social process which produces social products. Moaddel, however, tends to see the phenomenon of radical Islamism groups as related to ideological tensions within the Islamic world.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, some *'ulamas* frame globalization and modernization as part of *ghazwul fikri* (the war of thought). In addition, the hegemonic power of the West allows Westerners to benefit from the invasion of Palestine and Iraq in the name of war on terrorism. All of the above could give rise to social discontent which could in turn incite the emergence of a social movement. The overwhelming emergence of Islamic political parties, Islamic radical groups, and vigilante forces in many parts of Indonesia could be considered products of globalization and modernization.

Finally, the dramatic political shift to the Reformation Era triggered the emergence Islamic radical groups. Social discontent,

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<sup>28</sup> Basam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (England: University of California Press, 2002), p. xvii.

<sup>29</sup> Mansour Muaddel and Kamran Talattof, "Contemporary debates in Islam: modernism vs fundamentalism: an anthology of Islamic thought", in Mansour Muaddel and Kamran Talattof (eds.), *Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam: a Reader* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 3.

formerly (and forcefully) suppressed by the New Order regime, emerged following its decline. Social conflicts have become the most common phenomena of horizontal precariousness. Horizontal tensions in the form of religious conflicts, such as those in Ambon and Poso, have escalated during this period. The inability of the authorities to address religious strife is a 'political opportunity structure' giving chance to social actors to establish social movements. In the Solo context, this political opportunity has also given rise to Islamic radical groups, or the resurgence of old radical Islamism groups. On the other hand, the failure of the local government to grasp social figures and give them meaningful access to political institutions<sup>30</sup> has led to the emergence of some Islamic radical groups. The re-emergence of *Pondok Ngruki* and *jama'ah* Gumuk in the form of the FPIS and the establishment of some vigilante forces such as *Laskar Jundullah* and *Laskar Hisbullah* are among the results of this political condition.

The Solonese perceived the emergence of Islamic revivalism as an opportunity to resolve their social problems. Therefore we can see that most members of the abovementioned Islamic radical groups, including vigilante forces, are from the *abangan* deprived-community at the periphery of Solo. Some terms related to Islamic other values have been used by these groups to attract more people into their communities. Along with the conviction that Islam is the ultimate solution to the world's disorder, the cries for *shari'ah* and anti-West are among the most prolific issues to incite people into radical Islamism groups. Nevertheless, unlike other Islamic radical groups such as in Banten, Garut, Tasikmalaya, and Bulukumba which fervently demand the implementation of *shari'ah* as a regional regulation (*perda*), the Islamic groups in Solo are not strong enough to make such a demand. Although there are many socially deprived *abangan* "converts," those involved in religious radical groups, their numbers are not significant compared to those who are not "provoked" and who remain firmly as *abangan*.

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<sup>30</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), p. xv.



## H. Conclusion

Solo is rife with radical Islamism groups. The existence of the Pondok Ngruki, *jama'ah* Gumuk, *Kompak* of DDII, and some Islamic vigilante forces in the city verify this assumption. The above phenomena also confirm that Pondok Ngruki and its related Islamic radical movements are not the only phenomenon of radical Islamism in Solo. However, it should be noted here that Islamic vigilante groups can hardly be categorized as radical since they are more concerned with moral issues than such fundamental issues as *shari'ah* or the Islamic state. Moreover, these organizations do not have obvious views on Islamic values. For these reasons, I deliberately do not offer rigid categories here since these vigilante forces could possibly turn into social movements depending on favourable socio-political or cultural conditions. Since, in many cases, these vigilante forces were involved in violent actions, these groups could be categorized as radical in broader terms. Although some radical Islamism groups have emerged, their demand for *shari'ah* is not as pronounced as in other regions such as Garut, Banten and Bulumkumba. In fact, the Islamic radical movement in Solo has not become mainstream yet.

The phenomenon of radical Islamism in Solo stems from many socio-cultural and political factors. Social, political, and economic deprivation since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has contributed greatly to the rise of social discontent. The lack of religious and traditional leaders in Solonese society has also led them to form a kind of loose *abangan* society. Certain global and political conditions, in the end, incited this moveable society into social movements. The involvement of some people in radical Islamism groups has been a way to resolve socio-cultural problems. In other words, radical Islamic activism is a part of other social and radical movements in this society. In my view, socio-cultural problems still lie beneath the surface of Solonese society and may explode if just the right trigger is pushed. Compared to the mass support of SI during the age of motion (to borrow Shiraishi's term), some radical Islamism groups these days have not quite touched the hearts of their loosely bound *abangan* society. In other words, although some radical Islamism groups exist in the region,

they are hardly mainstream in Solo. This situation is mostly due to the success of *dakwah* activities in these communities.

Finally, the role of moderate Islamic organizations has mitigated against such radical Islam in Solo. In other words, they should continue to intensify their *dakwah* activities to touch the vast *abangan* majority in the region. Although large Islamic organizations such as *Muhammadiyah* and NU are not widespread in Solo, we cannot conclude that they have been rejected by the Solonese. Their previous failures in *dakwah* could lead them to change their methods of *dakwah*. In addition, coordinative agendas should be made between all moderate organizations to involve all levels of society accordingly. As in other parts of Indonesia where NU is accepted in the suburbs, this organization could play well at the *abangan* majority level. Meanwhile, *Muhammadiyah* and the MTA, which already have networks among the urban *abangan*, could further broaden their networks. In addition, the role of some student Islamic organizations such as the KAMMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, United Action of Indonesian Muslim Students), IMM (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah, Muhammadiyah Student Association), and HMI (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, Islamic Student Association) are absolutely necessary to broaden their *dakwah* activities not only among university students but also among the society, especially the low-level *abangan*. The ability of authorities to diverge all agendas of this huge process of *santrinisasi* (re-Islamization) is also necessary, beside their main task to give religious leaders in Solo political access. Such a comprehensive approach should be employed to reduce the *abangan* majority and include them in the current mainstream of moderate Islam in Indonesia.

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