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Salafi Activism and the Promotion of a Modern Muslim Identity: Evolving mediums of Da'wa amongst Yogyakarta University Students

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Indonesia has witnessed the emergence of a market of Islamic goods, services and media platforms that have catalysed a qualitative shift in the ways individuals come to express their religious convictions. Salafi Islam is no exception to this transformation, and this paper provides a case study of contemporary Salafi propagation amongst Yogyakarta's students and graduates. Through description and analysis of campus based religious lectures, websites, magazines and fashion outlets linked to the al-Atsary Islamic Education Foundation, this paper explores the intricacies of campus affiliated da'wa. Linked to a 'literalist' interpretation of Islam reliant on scholars in Saudi Arabia, Salafism is frequently denounced as foreign to Indonesian norms. Yet, while activists do indeed promote a rigid adherence to Islamic tenets, they also align Islamic values to concerns with a modern Muslim identity. By framing Salafism as sensitive to ideas of professional employment, while juxtaposing it against images of a less-well educated rural Islam, they have thus have created a unique strand of urban Salafi propagation.

Key Words: Islamic Activism, Salafism, Religious Consumption, Islamic Modernity, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Introduction

Salafi inspired Islamic activism has expanded rapidly since its introduction into Indonesia during the mid-1980s. Although relatively small in numbers, Salafis have created a vast network of schools, foundations, publishing houses, internet sites and radio channels whose expanse covers all corners of the archipelago. Frequently recognised by their strict adherence to conservative Islamic dress (as men wear long religious robes and women wear the *niqab*), they aim to literally emulate the *al-Salaf al-Salih* (which they regard as the first three generations of Muslims) in order to return to a true and original understanding of Islam. Their hostility to local religious and cultural practices, together with their preference to refer to scholars based in the Arabian Peninsula, distinguishes them from the majority of Indonesian Muslims – and debates as to whether they represent the 'Arabisation' of Indonesian Islam are common (Bruinessen, 2009; Hasan, 2008; Scott, 2016). Yet, despite the global dynamics that underline Salafism, Indonesian strands have thrived within post-authoritarian Indonesia since 1998, and have become adept at promoting their religious ideals through social media, public lectures, political alliances and the sale of commodities.

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Within this paper, Salafi activism is approached as part of multi-stranded and multi-directional social movement, building upon an increasing array of literature that views both Salafism, and religious revivalist movements more broadly, as sustained efforts to challenge pre-established forms of Islamic authority and practice.² Indonesian Salafism is a diverse and fragmented movement, sustained not through any singular organizational structure, but shaped and transformed through the lived experiences, disagreements, and multiple ways in which it is promoted by individuals within a given locality; by which I refer to the spaces that define the everyday world of individuals not merely spatially but through a set of social interactions that can create both coherence and difference (Massey, 1994: 139). This diversity is reflected in the growing amount of insightful literature covering Indonesian strands of Salafism. For instance, scholars have investigated the movement's history (Hassim, 2010), socio-political mobilisation (Hasan, 2006; Jurdi, 2012), formal educational networks (Wahid, 2014), proselytising radio stations (Sunarwoto, 2016), outreach programs amongst women (Nisa, 2012, 2013), and the dynamics of village based propagation (Krismono, 2015). As these works illustrate, not only is the movement involved in a diverse range of propagational and socio-political activities, but it has flourished within Indonesia's democratic environment across the archipelagic nation.

There remains an analytical gap however. While much has been said concerning how the movement mobilises resources and builds upon political opportunities (for example, Hasan, 2006), there is less emphasis on how activists themselves come to adapt and synthesise their faith with local and national understandings of identity, faith and modernity. This paper aims to fill this space by strengthening our understanding as to how Salafi enthusiasts adapt and frame the existential coordinates of their religious identity in relation to the socio-political forces at play within their given locality. By examining how Salafi scholars linked to the universities of Yogyakarta promote a religious ethic, this paper thus argues that they have become proficient at combining calls to the faith with references to economic progress, national development and modernity. In doing so they not only alter the dynamics of religious activism but also initiate a fundamental shift in how Salafism is represented and enacted within everyday circumstance within the university campus.

Based on ethnographic research conducted from 2011 to 2012, this paper investigates campus based *da'wa* (propagation) in order to understand the inner logic within the Salafism appeal to urban and campus based Islamic enthusiasts. The primary focus concerns the religious lectures organised by the student orientated *Yayasan Pendidikan Islam al-Atsary* (al Atsary Islamic Education Foundation, YPIA) as well as the activism of YPIA members who promote

² Concerning Salafism specifically see: Bonnefoy, 2011; Hasan, 2006; Pall, 2013. Concerning religious revivalism more broadly see: Bayat, 2005; Lehmann & Siebzeher, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2007.

their religious ideas through independent ventures. These include the social media company Yufid, the Shari'a inspired business magazine *Pengusaha Muslim* (Muslim Businessman), and those involved in the creation and sale of new religious commodities such as t-shirts. This activism underlines a particular skill amongst Salafi activists to understand their environment and utilise their professional skills to further promote their religion. Furthermore, it denotes a flexibility within the concept of *da'wa* itself, and the sensitivity of Salafi followers to the social, economic and ideological forces that influence the lives of students. Far from being decoupled from the everyday environment of the university campuses, *da'wa* activists utilise references to the supposed intellectualism and progressiveness of their student audience. Although this perhaps renders the idea of Salafism being a global and 'timeless' interpretation of Islam problematic, it emphasises how Salafism has become entangled in broader trends of Islamic revival within Indonesia, coming to promote a modern Muslim identity that is complementary to the professional aspirations of the student body.

Understanding Salafi Activism within Indonesia

Prior to elaborating upon the dynamics of contemporary religious *da'wa* amongst Yogyakarta students, it is important to describe what I mean when evoking the term 'Salafi.' What is referred to here as Salafism has spread across the archipelago since the 1980s, forming a framework of educational establishments (Hasan, 2010b; Wahid, 2014), as well as playing a crucial role in post-Suharto sectarian violence via the *Laskar Jihad* (Hasan, 2006). However, providing a definitive account of the movement is no easy task; at present, there are at least five different networks in Indonesia, who frequently denounce each other by drawing from the same religious resources.³ Moreover, despite growing literature pertaining to the Salafi movement both globally (Koning, 2007; Meijer, 2009) and within Indonesia specifically (Hasan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b; ICG, 2004; Nisa, 2012, 2013; Sunarwoto, 2016; Wahid, 2014), the use of the term remains somewhat obscure. Not only does Salafi denote an important reference to Islamic history, deriving from *al-Salaf* or 'those

³ A preliminary list of these poles within the movement includes: those who follow scholars such as Abu Nida, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, Faiz Asifuddin and Aunur Rafiq Ghufroon, who are the main focus of this article; former followers of Jafar Umar Thalib linked to Luqman Ba'abduh, Muhammad as-Sewed and Ayip Syafruddin; former followers of Jafar Umar Thalib linked to Dzulqarmain, who was in charge of *fatwa* for *Laskar Jihad*; former followers of Jafar Umar Thalib linked to Abu Thurob al-Jawi; those affiliated with the Makassar based religious organisation Wahdah Islamiyah. While not the focus of this article, it is interesting to note that fragmentation has been most common amongst those formerly linked to *Laskar Jihad*, as these groups more commonly engage in activities that discredit the legitimacy of other Salafis (Sunarwoto, 2016).

who came before us',⁴ but traced genealogically references to the 'Salafi' saturate the work of some of the earliest Muslim scholars, most notably al-Bukhari (810-870), Muslim (817-875) and Al-Awza'i (707-774) (Hassim, 2010). Accordingly, the *al-Salaf al-Salih* (pious ancestors) command respect and inspiration amongst Muslims.

Within this paper the term will be limited to a loose but specific reformist movement that aims to closely emulate the first three generations of Muslims, the *Sahaba*, *Tabi'un* and *Tabi' al-Tabi'in*, through scrupulous examination of their acts, deeds and sayings. Following rich works concerning the global development of a Salafi movement compiled in an edited volume by Meijer, I thus refer to a doctrine that developed within the Arabian Peninsula, most predominantly within Saudi Arabia during the 20th century (Meijer, 2009). It combines the reformist trends unleashed by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92) and Muhammad al-Shawkani (d 1834) (Griffel, 2015), emphasising the need to literally adhere to the Qur'an and Sunna (deeds, teachings and sayings of the Prophet) through the emulation and study of Hadith (sayings and doings of the Prophet and his companions). Followers believe Muslim civilisation to have become tainted by *bid'a* (unIslamic innovations) and *shirk* (idol worship) and so stress a need to return to the true teachings of Islam by emphasising the importance of *tawhid* (oneness of God, or the doctrine of absolute monotheism). There is, moreover, a strong emphasis on *da'wa* and *tarbiya* (religious education) as followers aim to bring non-Salafis into the fold through grassroots activism. Indeed, the need to both educate oneself as well as others in correct Islam is considered *Fard al-'ayn* (an individual obligation).

The central position held by Saudi Arabia within the movement has often led opponents to clump it together with Wahhabism, although this undermines the contention that has frequently existed between the *aimat al-Da'wa al-najdiyya* (religious notables of the Najd) and the proponents of Salafism (for example, see Lacroix, 2011). Saudi Arabia - and the Arabian Peninsula including Yemen, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates more broadly - do provide an important financial, educational and religious reference point, but Salafism remains incredibly varied as there is no one global 'centre' or any pre-conceived mobilisational blueprint or hierarchical structure to follow. Nonetheless, Salafism made its first inroads within Indonesia in the 1980s through an influx of funding and educational opportunities from Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula more generally.

⁴ As Ibn Manzur recorded, it is linked to 'the preceding group of people; those who have preceded you, from your forefathers and closest relatives, who are more advanced than you in age and virtue' (as quoted in Hassim, 2010: 9)

It was the *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council, DDII), formed in 1967 by former Prime Minister Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993), that became the main medium for donations from Middle Eastern countries.⁵ While not explicitly Salafi, DDII was fundamental in facilitating the spread of globally inspired Islamic scholarship within Indonesia. When Saudi Arabia wished to open a branch of the Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University of Riyadh in Jakarta, the DDII proved a useful national partner. The *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab* (Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic, LIPIA) was established in 1980 and, in its formative years, worked almost exclusively with DDII to provide language training to Islamic activists who wished to study in Saudi Arabia (Hasan, 2007). As LIPIA's alumni network expanded it became a vital conduit through which Salafi literature was translated and disseminated.⁶

The growth of the Salafi movement in Indonesia has gained increasing scholastic and media coverage, especially from the post-Suharto era onwards (Hasan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010b; Hassim, 2010; ICG, 2004; Jurdi, 2007, 2012; Nisa, 2012, 2013; Wahid, 2014). These studies have provided valuable insight upon which we can further our understanding of Salafism. Eeqbal Hassim has, for example, provided a perceptive study discussing the foundational moments of the movement within the LIPIA and DDII, and how it differs – both theologically and socially – from Indonesia's larger Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah (Hassim, 2010). A more contemporary study of the movement has been undertaken by Din Wahid, whose extensive research provides insight into the evolution of Salafi *pesantren* (religious schools) in Indonesia, how they obtain funds, what materials they teach to their students and how they disseminate the Salafi *manhaj* (method) (Wahid, 2014). Eva Nisa has additionally advanced understanding of Salafism by focusing on recruitment and the ethical dilemma's faced by women Salafi reverts in Yogyakarta (Nisa, 2012). Meanwhile Syarifuddin Jurdi has also provided a thorough account of the Salafi inspired Islamic organisation, Wahdah Islamiyah, an organisation with over 120 branches across the nation (Jurdi, 2012).

The most thorough account concerning the development of Salafism in Indonesia has been provided by Noorhaidi Hasan, who argued that the arrival of Salafism cannot be decoupled from the wider socio-political transformations that affected Indonesians during the latter 20th

⁵ Banned from direct political participation by Suharto's New Order, Natsir saw the DDII as a move away from 'top-down' Islamic politics to 'bottom-up' social activities that would renew Islamic piety amongst the Indonesian citizenry.

⁶ It should be noted, however, that not all LIPIA graduates were advocates of Salafi doctrine. By the 1990s teaching staff supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood inspired *Sahwi* (awakening) movement had taken up positions at LIPIA. Much like religious institutions in the Saudi kingdom itself, LIPIA's staff thus competed against each other for influence and, as Sahwi-inspired ideas gained ground, many Salafi scholars began to advise their students against further study at LIPIA.

century (Hasan, 2006). Tracing its emergence during the mid 1980s to the rise and eventual demise of the militant *Laskar Jihad* in 2002, Hasan argues that the Salafi doctrine made its initial inroads through home-grown scholars such as Abu Nida, Yusuf Baisa, Ahmas Faiz Asifuddin and Aunur Rafiq Ghufron (Hasan, 2006). As Hasan continues, these scholars received DDII sponsored religious training both in Saudi Arabia and in LIPIA, and upon completing their studies, tapped into a network of university campuses and DDII affiliated schools in urban centres such as Yogyakarta, Makassar, Solo, Semarang and Jakarta, in order to find employment (Hasan, 2006). Building upon social movement theories, Hasan thus underlines how the movement mobilised resources and utilised political opportunities so as to gain prominence within Indonesia.

As informative as Hasan and other scholastic works cited above are, little has been said concerning how Salafi agents themselves come to adapt and synthesise their faith with local and national understandings of identity, faith and modernity. It is on this issue that this paper aims to build upon and contribute to our understanding of Salafism. In order to do so this paper will limit its scope to Yogyakarta and its surroundings. Yogyakarta is an important hub for the Salafi movement, where it was first introduced when Abu Nida (full name Chamsaha Sofwan) began teaching in the city. Born in 1954 in Gresik, East Java, Abu Nida had participated in a DDII sponsored *transmigrasi da'i* (transmigration preacher) program, which trained and then sent Islamic enthusiasts to remote parts of the country, prior to receiving a scholarship to study at the Imam Muhammad ibn Saudi University in Riyadh. After completing his studies in 1985, Abu Nida joined the Afghan war against the Soviets under the leadership of Jamil al-Rahman. After three months, he returned to Indonesia and in 1986 he moved to Yogyakarta, where the local head of DDII provided him with a teaching position and access to mosques within the vicinity of the *Universitas Gadjah Madah* (UGM). Abu Nida became a popular feature for many students and so he quickly expanded his lectures to other campuses as well as setting up an informal 'school' within the proximity of UGM for enthusiastic followers.

As those following him grew, Abu Nida expanded his operations, establishing the *Yayasan Majelis at-Turots al-Islamy* (at-Turots al-Islamy Foundation, or at-Turots) in 1994, and opening a number of religious schools, mosques, and an informal Salafi 'village' during that decade. He was joined by numerous other Salafi preachers who began to participate in religious education across the city. These included Umar Budiharjo, who founded the *Pesantren As-Syifa* (later renamed the *Pesantren Taruna al Quran*) in 1993, and Abdul Afifi Wadud, who preached amongst high school and university students and opened the Islamic clothing store *Ihya* in 1994. However, arguably the most notorious of these preachers was

Jafar Umar Thalib, who was initially invited to the city by Abu Nida, but became hostile to the latter's perceived willingness to work with non-Salafi organisations (such as the DDII). Jafar Umar Thalib would go on to form the 7,000 strong *Laskar Jihad* (Jihad Brigade) that would participate in sectarian conflict in Maluku during the early 2000s. During the 1990s he became one of Abu Nida's fiercest critics and followers of these two preachers were vocal opponents of each other, with their condemnation of the other often leading to confrontations outside mosques. The divide between the two remains to this day, but hostility – either verbal or through direct confrontation – is rare.

The history of Jafar Umar Thalib has been well documented by Hasan and security experts (Hasan, 2006; ICG, 2004). In contrast, the networks of Abu Nida, and how they have evolved since the resignation of Suharto in 1998, have received relatively less attention, and it is to these that this paper turns. Indeed, the university campus provided Abu Nida with the necessary space and locality in which to recruit young followers, but in doing so his propagational activism intersected with a broader interest in Islam amongst university students and younger upwardly mobile Muslims. These individuals had benefited from the economic and educational opportunities made available by the New Order, but rejected the political ideology and authoritarian practices of the regime (Effendy, 2003; Hefner, 2000; Latif, 2005). These university educated Muslims had begun to re-engage with Islamic values to navigate the challenges of society, leading to the increased popularity of both nationally orientated Islamic intellectualism commonly referred to as 'Civil Islam' (Hefner, 2000), as well as global Islamic scholarship such as Salafism. It is the intersectionality of the Salafi ethic with the broader emphasis on university education and creation of a modern society, which this study explicitly analyses, and to which it aims to build on the abovementioned literature concerning Salafism in Indonesia. Indeed, there remains a need to examine how Salafi activists come to adapt and synthesise their faith with local and national understandings of identity, faith and modernity.

Campus Lectures and the Yayasan Pendidikan Islam al-Atsary

The resignation of Suharto in 1998 and subsequent political *reformasi* allowed Abu Nida's at-Turots foundation to expand its activism space. In 2000 they opened their flagship educational establishment, the Islamic Centre Bin Baz, which was later complemented by a nearby medical school, as well as a hospital.⁷ By 2012 they had also trained over 1,400 preachers who have been sent across Java and Indonesia to spread the Salafi message. Furthermore, at-Turots affiliated preachers were pivotal in organising several student

⁷ The Islamic Centre Bin Baz was named after the former Saudi grand mufti, Shaykh 'Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz (1910-1999), who proved to be a patron for global Salafi initiatives as well as a prominent scholar whose works are frequently quoted within Salafi circles.

orientated lectures, foundations and religious programs, which would later take on an independence of their own. Of particular concern here is the *Yayasan Pendidikan Islam al-Atsary* (al-Atsary Islamic Education Foundation, YPIA). The YPIA's roots lie in informal religious lectures that were organised on the UGM campus in 2000 by Ustadz (preacher) Afifi Abdul Wadud, Kholid Syamhudi, Abu Sa'ad Muhammad Nur Huda and Fauzan bin Abdillah; the latter three all teach in at-Turots affiliated institutions. This initial activism occurred at a time when political Islam was in the public spotlight given the rise of *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia* (Indonesian Unified Muslim Student Action, KAMMI), waves of religious violence in Maluku, Poso and Kalimantan as well as the global debate catalysed by the events of September 11th 2001. Accordingly, original YPIA members stated these lectures became a popular alternative to Islamic lectures that were overtly political, as they attempted to appeal to a 'pure' and depoliticised Islam outside of the destabilising national climate (Interview, Yogyakarta, 28 March 2012).

The success of these lectures led to the establishment of an informal student association in 2002 which would later register as the YPIA in 2007. Its explicit mission is to disseminate Salafi knowledge within the university campuses of Yogyakarta. In order to achieve this, the YPIA has launched a number of structured courses on Islamic learning and Arabic language classes, which follow a syllabus that includes key Salafi authors such as Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and Muhammad al-Uthaymin (LBIA, 2006). They also manage several student boarding houses for both men and women, all located close to UGM's main campus. Students residing in these houses are required to take religious classes, assist in cleaning nearby mosques as well as distributing the Friday Islamic bulletin *At-Tauhid* after Friday prayers. However, the most prominent activity organised by the YPIA remains the public religious lecture. The foundation currently organises over 28 such lectures a week on four separate university campuses.⁸ These cover a number of topics including Hadith studies, *tawhid*, *aqida* (creed), *adab* (courteousness or culture), *akhlak* (morality) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and are open to both men and women (although these audiences are strictly segregated) who can have either an advanced or simple understanding of the Islamic sciences. Students are encouraged to attend as many open lectures as possible, which – aside from increasing one's knowledge – are meant to inspire one's desire for personal *muhasabah* (introspection).

Muhasabah is an integral part of becoming *mukmin* (pious) and meant to provide an initial path through which one comes to understand the importance of religious living. As one informant, Yudi (pseudonym), who went on to create his own religious social media services, stated:

⁸ Aside from UGM, these take place on Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta State University and Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University.

'I came (to know about Salafism) from friends at UGM (Universitas Gadjah Madah). So my friends often organised routine lectures on campus and afterwards I saw that there was one at my faculty and that's it! I tried and easily joined. Afterwards I was interested' (Interview, Yogyakarta, 4 June 2012).

Further qualifying exactly why such lectures were important and appealed to him Yudi continued:

'The first time I came across the Salafi lectures I was hooked because...I liked finding logic (in things) and it entered logic...no figure was considered the ideologue...when I first arrived in Yogya (Yogyakarta) in the year 98-99 I also joined left-wing discussions (diskusi kiri). We talked about Das Kapital, Karl Marx and others. Now this also has logic. But, afterward I met the organiser (pembesar) of the Salafi kajian and became sure in my heart, and afterward, that's it! Until this moment I have followed it like that' (Interview, Yogyakarta, 4 June 2012).

Yudi was not the only one who mentioned the importance of lectures, as several other informants I spoke to also referred to its importance in their reversion. Indeed, for informants, an important aspect of the appeal of lectures relates to its 'everyday' relevance, which foregrounds a preference to understand religion in relation to one's life through *muhasabah* over more scriptural forms of Islamic learning. Furthermore, these lectures, while often introductory, provided a first step to more intensive learning through structured classes, acting as 'obligatory points of passage' through which one familiarises oneself with the movement, its doctrine and activists.⁹ More experienced students and preachers would act as guides for newcomers, assisting them in personal matters as well as providing information on further learning.¹⁰

I observed one YPIA weekly lecture at a *Musholla* (prayer hall) close to UGM's Medical Studies faculty. The *Musholla* is a moderately sized two-storey building, with the ground floor reserved for men and the upstairs for women. These classes were led by Ustadz Solahudin (pseudonym), a teacher at the at-Turot's ICBB. A polite and amiable individual, Solahudin is a former UGM student himself and had received a BA from UGM's pharmacy

⁹ This phrase 'obligatory points of passage' derives from the work of Michel Callon who uses it in relation to actor network theory to stress a point through which actors are forced to converge on a certain topic and/or purpose. My use of the phrase loosely converges with this idea of passage although I envisage it as a physical space where actors engage with each other rather than a potential group of actors or problems one must pass through in a given network. For further information see, Callon, 1986)

¹⁰ Crucially, such observations are hardly unique to Salafism, as comradeship has become a key characteristic of contemporary Islamic revivalism more broadly. For further examples of the role of *halaqah* or study circles see: Bruinessen, 2002; Mahmood, 2005.

department before studying at the Daar al-Hadits Institute in Yemen (a popular centre for Salafi study) for 4 years. His lectures did not attract a particularly big audience, and so he addressed approximately 12 males and an unknown number of females per week (I could not ascertain this information given strict gender segregation). These participants were students from the medical department, predominantly in their early twenties and who were new to Islamic classes.

Solahudin would sit cross-legged in front of a microphone and knee-high table with the audience sitting around him in a semi-circle with their Qur'an, notebooks and textbooks in hand. They would follow a prepared syllabus titled *Nutrisi Hati* (Nutrition for the Heart), which was, in terms of religious sciences and content, simple. The premise was to inculcate a basic understanding and enthusiasm for Islam that would provide the first initial steps into a wider web of Salafi piety. There was an urge to engage in personal *muhasabah* in order to instil the true values of *aqida*, *tawhid* and thus follow 'true' Islam by becoming *taqwa* (fear and love of God). Yet, such religious tenets were frequently combined with an emotive appeal that greater piety would not only save oneself from judgement day, but also pave the way to overcoming the social ills and moral corruptions he believed plagued Indonesian society.

For instance, in March 2012, when the wider student community was involved in demonstrations against a planned government fuel hike, Solahudin argued that such worldly concerns only help cause friction amongst the *umma* as well as detract from one's concentration on religious obligations (Observation, Yogyakarta, 27 March 2012). Similarly, several weeks later, he joked about the public frenzy surrounding several deaths linked to the *tomcat* (rove beetle), believing that while such deaths were unfortunate, one should prepare for them by turning to religion rather than 'gossiping' and making demands upon the government (Observation, Yogyakarta, 10 April 2012). Importantly, he did not condemn the activities of students outright, but referred to the university as a place of contradictory forces. On the one hand, it was un-Islamic as it encouraged the mixing of the sexes, and so distracted men from both their studies and religious duty. Yet, on the other hand, it was a space and opportunity within which people could engage freely with religion and receive an education; an important requirement if one wanted to better the place of Muslims in society (Observation, Yogyakarta, 30 May 2012).

As the lecture series progressed, it became clear the 'secular' university campus and Islam were reconciled by a need to build a modern and forward looking society based on 'timeless' Islamic values. Solahudin began to refer to the audience as a community of scholars who needed to assist each other in guarding against desire and adhering to religious principles. They were, in his words, a *Majlis* (council) who were evidently on their path of religious

piety – but who should also come together to improve society through their own education as well as more practical ability to provide assistance to less-well off individuals. It was notable that over time the number of male members decreased slightly but that those that remained became more confident in asking questions publically to Solahudin. They also began to pray together in a style specific to Salafi doctrine, adopt religious dress and grow their facial hair.¹¹ Several began expressing an interest in continuing to learn about Islam, and so were advised where else to find lectures or information by a YPIA affiliated third-year medical student, who was there to act as a guide for potential new members (Interview, Yogyakarta, 19 April 2012). They were thus beginning to forge relations to the movement that could shift the ways they approached society and religious practice, and the lecture provided an important space in which this shift occurred and was given substance. The focal point of these lectures was the necessity to inculcate religious principles but this was always linked to inherently modern choices and lifestyles rather than being solely scholastic. The emphasis was on discovering how and why to ‘live’ Islam in line with the potential anxieties of ‘being a modern forward looking Muslim’ in Indonesia.

Da’wa, Social Media and Ideas of Business

Salafi campus lectures are complemented by an ever-expanding range of *da’wa* activities that rely on the skills, manpower and ideas of students and ex-students. If Islamic learning is one pivotal pillar to becoming a pious Salafi, being able to conduct *da’wa* in one’s community is another. Yet, as Eickelman and Piscatori remind us, *da’wa* is not a neutral or solely objective activity, but bound to a particular time and place (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996). YPIA members are required to participate in the foundation’s outreach programs, although they have also used their own initiative to create websites and Islamic commodities through which they aim to promote Salafi principles. Accordingly, *da’wa* amongst those affiliated with the urban Salafi movement has come to comprise religious commodities, including magazines, social media and clothing outlets (to name but a few) that are informed by broader notions of popular culture within university campuses.

It is not only the format of *da’wa* that has changed however, but also the content. There is increasingly a concern for what informants describe as ‘thematic issues’ (*isu tematik*, or *kajian tematik*) relating to particularly topical events or themes popularised in the media or society. This is evident in the outreach work of the YPIA, which distributes the weekly bulletin, *At-Tauhid*, outside mosques throughout the city every Friday. *At-Tauhid* consists of 4-6 pages printed on cheap A5 paper, and provides a space for students to write about issues they believe to be of concern. For example, *At-Tauhid* No.7.8, distributed on 10 February

¹¹ This style of prayer sees one touching feet with one’s peers and follows the method outlined by Al-Albani. For further information see Al-Albani, 2000.

2012, fretted over the evils of celebrating Valentine's Day - an issue that has become an obsession for many conservative Muslims in Indonesia.¹² In this edition, Arif Rohman Habib, an aspiring scholar and member of the YPIA, used the controversy surrounding Valentine's Day to reflect on its un-Islamic nature and the 'Western' influences that were corrupting Indonesian youth (Habib, 2012). Indeed, it underlines how the substance of *da'wa* relates to society and is embedded in public debates occurring at the time.

The space *At-Tauhid* provides students is gradually being eclipsed by social media and internet platforms however. The YPIA manages the websites www.muslim.or.id and www.muslimah.or.id to provide information of religious events and sermons for a young and technology savvy audience, and it is here that many aspiring scholars now come to post their articles. Arguably the largest online Salafi enterprise in Indonesia is the Yufid group. Yufid was formed in 2009 by several IT graduates who had met via YPIA lectures, and who wished to continue to promote their religion in a way that aligned to their professional skills. They received start-up capital from a religious philanthropist familiar with the YPIA and created a search engine to provide followers of Salafism with a platform from which to access 'authenticated' Islamic online sources.¹³ Yufid has since extended its online services to include a further 14 websites¹⁴ and 15 mobile phone or Ipad applications that can be downloaded from iTunes or Google Play.¹⁵

Yufid's portfolio of websites includes the eloquently designed *yufidia.com*, an online Islamic 'encyclopaedia' as well as the *yufidedu.com* educational website, which provides lecture videos by staff concerning topics of Arabic, mathematics and physics. They have also recently launched the online religious TV broadcasting station *Yufid.tv*, which airs videos on topics such as how to pray, lectures for children, Arabic lessons and Islamic documentaries. Its repertoire relates to numerous themes of socio-political concern, such as the plight of Muslims in Indonesia in light of natural disasters, the perceived lack of real piety within Indonesia, as well as global events like the Syrian civil war. Not shying away from slang or the use of professional editing (which includes background music, fading and cutting to

¹² Valentine's Day has frequently been an issue around which religious conservatives hold annual demonstrations, berating it as Christian, Jewish, Secular or even just a 'sex holiday.' For example, see: Gade, 2013; JakartaPost, 2014; Telegraph, 2013.

¹³ To do so it utilised a Google Custom Search Platform to comb across multiple sites that are part of an ever-increasing database of virtual sources whose 'Salafi-ness' can be confirmed by Yufid's network of employees and associated preachers.

¹⁴ These include www.aqidatuna.com; www.carasholat.com; www.konsultasisyariah.com; www.kajian.net; www.khotbahjumat.com; www.kisahmuslim.com; www.nasehat.net; www.pengusahamuslim.com; www.sahabatnabi.com; www.yufid.tv; www.yufid.org; www.yufidedu.com; www.syaria.com; & www.whatisquran.com List sourced from, Yufid.inc, 2014.

¹⁵ A full list of iPhone + Ipad applications is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/id/artist/yufid-inc/id369656348> accessed 26 October 2014. A list of Android applications is available at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=Yufid+Inc>, accessed 26 October 2014.

images to increase a particular effect), the content of these documentaries revolves around a narrative that aims to urge viewers to 'revive' the purity of Islam in order to solve very real social and political problems. For example, in one recent post titled *Bantu Anak Suriah Agar Tetap Sekolah* (Assistance to keep Syrian Children in School), activists of Yufid and the YPIA's '*Peduli Muslim*' (Muslim Care) record themselves giving assistance to children during visits in 2013 and 2014 to Idlib, Syria. As the video implies, if the suffering of Syrian Sunni's is to truly end there is a need for Muslim solidarity between Indonesian and Syrian Sunni Muslims through such assistance.

According to Yufid's founders, when they design an application they do not follow any pre-conceived organisational strategy or plan, but rely on the resources available at a given time and the input of employees who constantly monitor wider debates within society. As one informant put it, '*we are not an organisation but suddenly can move ourselves to a certain flow...this is called a community*' (Interview, Yogyakarta, 4 June 2012). Importantly, except for one of its co-founders, none of Yufid's employees are religious scholars themselves, and so they continue to rely on a network of preachers and tutors from the YPIA and the at-Turots network in order to supply religious content. Nonetheless, the IT expertise of Yufid's employees allows the group to adapt to an increased demand for online applications. This alters the form of *da'wa* in several significant ways - not least because they now aim to target a potentially global audience. Yufid's employees utilise Google Analytics (as 65% of their traffic comes from Google searches) and iTunes Store in order to monitor downloads and customer feedback, so as to adapt to demands and suggestions. As they have noticed numerous downloads from people residing in Saudi Arabia, France, the UK, Germany and the US who request applications in English, they have, for example, created a number of new English language websites.

Yufid does not represent a 'de-territorialised' or fully global form of *da'wa* however. They may form part of what Bunt has more generally labelled the 'Cyber Islamic Environment' driven by individuals that proselytise Islamic norms and seek online resources (Bunt, 2009); yet the significance of Yufid's mission remains entangled in very local understandings of religious activism linked to campus lectures and socio-political forces. The internet provides a collaborative, fluid and transformative field through which one can promote and access Islamic knowledge, but also remains dependent on social, economic and infrastructural factors. One's professional capabilities (an ability to design websites or read content in a specific language), one's social position (ability to own or access a computer, or even consider this as an important part of one's daily life), as well as geographical location (as urban environments are more densely saturated with Internet technology) are all important

structural factors that influence one's access to the Internet. In this sense Yufid's primary target is the tech savvy student audience they are familiar with. Further, while they believe that the Internet provides a platform through which activists can enhance their religious knowledge, it is not meant to replace the importance of physical lectures. Yufid's founders stress that the internet should complement and not replace physical forms of Islamic learning within the mosque (Interview, Yogyakarta, 4 June 2012).

Online ventures are instead characteristic of the broader substantive transformation of religious *da'wa* that seeks to align it with professional economic pursuits. Indeed, the founders of Yufid are also members of the *Yayasan Bina Pengusaha Muslim* (Muslim Businessmen Foundation, YBPM), a foundation formed in 2008 from a Yahoo chat group and whose explicit mission is to promote ideas of Islamic business in Indonesia. The YBPM runs an online Islamic 'shopping mall', organises business orientated religious counselling, and publishes the *Pengusaha Muslim* (Muslim Businessman) magazine, which is available on iTunes Newsstand. The aim of these products is to reach both Salafis within their network and also those who '*have yet to know about the method of the Salaf al-Salih*', so as to increase the economic viability of Islamic business in Indonesia more holistically (Interview, Yogyakarta, 4 June 2012). The emphasis is not explicitly on to the promotion of a Salafi doctrine, but relates to a broader concern that piety, economic aspiration and religious consumption can necessarily come together to bring worldly successes for both an individual and society.

The perceived success of Yufid and the YBPM is linked to the creation of what Bonnefoy has termed 'moral entrepreneurs' (Bonnefoy, 2011), which refers to those who encourage their specific religious ideals through the idea of Muslim business in the modern capitalist market.¹⁶ They tap into processes of religious commodification that have become ever more popular amongst urban Indonesian Muslims (Fealy, 2008; Hasan, 2009, 2011; Jones, 2007; Lukens-Bull, 2008; Muzakki, 2008). Indeed, Salafis are adept at promoting their religious principles through an array of commodities such as t-shirts, bags, stickers and badges, which mix popular imagery and religious quotations (which are often advertised on Yufid websites or within *Pengusaha Muslim*). YPIA affiliated students have thus been at the forefront of creating their own religious products such as *distro* clothing. Briefly stated, *distro*, as a concept, is the sale of cheaply made t-shirts and fashion that frequently rearranges the logos of multinational companies to include catchy phrases or humorous alterations. It originated from the underground punk music scene in Bandung in 1993 and provided a form of self-promotion through collectively owned outlets that doubled as forums through which music and political issues could be discussed (Uttu, 2006). By 2003 *distro* exploded into the

¹⁶ Bonnefoy is not alone in noting the confluence of business ethics and Islamic faith in Indonesia. Indeed, this topic has been covered more extensively by Rudnyckyj (2009a; 2009b).

mainstream as student designers – often from more well-off backgrounds and benefiting from better technology than their punk forerunners – were able to replicate and reconstruct global labels.

By 2006 there were over 200 *distro* brands in Bandung alone and the trend had spread to other urban centres such as Yogyakarta (Uttu, 2006), where Islamic campus activists have tapped into their popularity to produce a range of products that alter popular brand logos (or sports team insignia) to underline their religious affiliations. Amongst Salafī activists, these are sold predominantly online, via www.muslim.or.id or Yufid's online shop, but they aim to capture the youth market by mixing popular iconography and Islamic catchphrases. For instance, students within the YPIA have formed the *Kaos Oblong* label and sell t-shirts with tag lines such as *Jenggot Yes, Isbal No!* (Beard Yes, Long Trousers No!). *Kaos Oblong* also produce t-shirts promoting the Muslim.or.id website via a graphic logo stating '*visit Muslim.or.id*' in a similar design and fashion as the Indonesian government's tourist campaign of '*Visit Indonesia*.' Such *distro* is not solely an attractive way of promoting one's religion though, as it provides a means of income for students to subsidise their studies. Yet, they nevertheless alter the image of Salafism within the university campus. The wearer – as a young pious university student involved in *da'wa* and religious business – represents a modern, educated and innovative Muslim, cutting a specific image that combines Salafī dress and student ideals of fashion. Compared to Salafis living in rural communities or religious schools, they replace the *jalabiyaa* (long robes) or Islamic prayer shirts with t-shirts and stickers with catchy logos – although, like other Salafis, they do grow their beard and wear trousers that avoid *isbal* (trousers below the ankle). This represents more than an aesthetic difference though, underlining a broader reframing as to the meaning of faith and 'living Islam' within society, and it is to this deeper evolution I now wish to turn.

A Modern Muslim Identity

I now wish to further elaborate on the broader implications of what campus lectures, social media and Islamic business mean to our understanding of contemporary Salafī activism. As described above, on a methodological plane it underlines a dexterity amongst activists to align and promote their faith through practical mediums that appeal to young urban Muslims. Yet, substantively, it also denotes a fundamental shift in Salafī doctrine. Those examined in this paper enact what Bayat terms an 'active piety' to promote religious doctrine (Bayat, 2007: 150), and in doing so they have brought topical issues that arise within the Indonesian university campus front and centre to how Salafism is understood. By bridging between one's search for piety and the anxieties of living a modern ethical and successful lifestyle, activists have changed the very orientation of the movement. In social movement literature this transformation is understood through the concept of frame alignment, where agents can

bridge, amplify and transform a movement's message in order to achieve resonance amongst constituents (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). However, framing is not only symbolic but can affect the very orientation of a movement (Zald, 1996). Although Salafis rely on the Islamic works of scholars in Saudi Arabia, the everyday experiences of members themselves shift and alter the movement's dynamics to give it a unique and local flavour.

The above analysis has elaborated on several instances where activists reflect on everyday examples of student protests to provide an emotive appeal for correct religious faith that simultaneously intersects with a deeper ideological understanding of action, progress and identity. Informants have come to frame their piety in ways sensitive to student aspirations through a variety of techniques that transform how activists discuss and enact specific religious values. Most vividly, they do so by frequently juxtaposing their own religion and social standing against the 'regressive' and 'village' mentality of what they called *Kampung Islam* (Village Islam), a phrase used to reflect generally on rural Javanese society. Believing themselves to be educated progressive 'forward' looking Muslims, campus activists referred to the *kampung* as a source of economic and Islamic 'backwardness'. They are rural spaces tainted by unIslamic Javanese traditions such as the *Joyoboyo* (Javanese zodiac) and *ziarah* (grave visits) that were followed out of blind faith (HASMI, 2011).¹⁷ In contrast, Salafi activists cultivate a sense of Muslimhood that explicitly rejects this idea of village mentality while simultaneously understanding themselves as a *majlis* or vanguard in the creation of a progressive Islamic future.

References to the *kampung* represent a convergence between Salafi doctrine and broader national discourses of development, which provide reference points with which the Indonesian university audience can feel familiar. While I have shied away from providing a definitive typology of who joins the Salafi movement, it is notable that the majority of informants came from moderate (but not poor) rural or pseudo-rural (living approximately 10 miles from a major city) areas and were of the first generation of their family to attend university. When discussing their enthusiasm for Salafism, several would compare its apparent clarity to the superstition and unquestioning loyalty to a *Kyai* (Islamic scholar, often linked to traditional Islamic practices such as those affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama) that defined the Islam they knew at home. As one informant remarked, '*One issue that made me interested (in Salafism) was because of its knowledge...no figure was considered the ideologue. This was different than the condition in my family where the Kyai is the ideologue*'

¹⁷ I am not the first to denote the derision of the *kampung* amongst Islamically inspired students; Brenner observed such a dichotomy in her study of Muslim women university students, who rejected the 'Western' elitist culture of the political classes but also the backwardness of one's parent's generation (Brenner, 1996).

(Interview, Yogyakarta, 4 June 2016). In comparison, Salafism stressed a modern egalitarianism, where preachers were respected but approachable, and knowledge could be obtained by all through study and perseverance.

Within the national discourses of development, the *kampung* represents a bastion of timeless Indonesian culture, and a space from which students believed they had to distance themselves in order to become part of modern society. This was especially true during the Suharto New Order, where the *kampung* was used to legitimise political and economic policies as well as class distinctions, becoming what Bourchier has referred to as a form of ‘conservative indigenism’ (Bourchier, 1998). Indonesian culture, through the *kampung*, was promoted as being communalistic, harmonious and so reinforced Javanese aristocratic notions of statecraft. Indeed, as Sullivan noted, the *kampung* evoked an image of the Javanese village and its apparent loyalty to the royal court was an often-utilised image and a source of political legitimacy during the New Order (Sullivan, 1992).

Differentiations between the *kampung* and the campus permeate *da’wa* amongst the YPIA and their Salafi associates. While I have previously focused exclusively on the YPIA’s campus activism in this paper, it is notable that many of their activists are also involved in rural based religious activities and welfare programs. They provide basic religious classes to children living in villages on the outskirts of Yogyakarta, and the YPIA also runs an ‘Islamic Centre Merapi’ – a relief centre that was formed in the aftermath of the 2010 Merapi volcanic eruption and has since gone on to offer basic education to surrounding rural communities. However, such activism varies greatly when compared to campus learning. In rural communities, *da’wa* includes handing out a number of A6 size *buku saku* (pocket books) that provide summaries of major religious works. These pocket books offer simple descriptions of religious practices, such as *salat* (prayer), *wudu* (ritual washing before prayer), and proper dress through bullet points and explanatory diagrams. For example, the *buku saku* version of *Sifat Shalat Nabi* (Ways of Prayer According to the Prophet) by Shaykh Mohammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani is a mere 50 pages while the ‘full’ edition that students at the YPIA are required to read is over 250 pages.¹⁸

Rural lectures also differ when compared to campus lectures. I observed one such lecture at the *Masjid al-Ikhlasan* (al-Ikhlasan mosque), located in Sawangan village, an hour and a half away from Yogyakarta, from March to July 2012. The mosque was constructed in 2009 by local Salafi enthusiasts and built in an architectural style more akin to the Middle East than rural Java. Every Sunday they would hold an open lecture, which attracted approximately 100 male participants who came dressed not in Salafi-esque clothing but a mixture of *sarongs* and

¹⁸ I am specifically referring to the translation published by Media Hidayah (Al-Albani, 2000).

songkok (a black traditional hat). The residing preacher, who was a teacher at the Salafi Pesantren al-Irsyad in nearby Salatiga, was light-hearted, mild and polite. While critical of contemporary society he delved little into world politics, preferring to look at welfare, behaviour and social justice. For example, in a lecture given just before Ramadan he asked the audience to ‘moralise’ their religious practice (*mengikhlaskan ibada*) so as to assist in building an ethical society (Observation, Sawangan, 15 July 2012). Sensitive to the composition of his audience, he also occasionally switched from Indonesian to Javanese, most notably when he wished to find a catchphrase that could summarise a particular issue he was reflecting upon. He forwent any dialogical exchange with the audience to focus on the need to correct *ibada* (Islamic practice) and *muamala* (social relations). The nuances of this message differed from the urban lecture as, rather than pushing the audience to think of themselves as a ‘saved’ group, the stress was on good morality and touched little on national socio-political issues. When he did touch on society, his repertoire was different from that seen on the campus, as he talked about the problem of crime and alcohol abuse amongst the village youth, rather than promoting the need for an Islamic modern society. Furthermore, these sessions – unlike lectures within the campus – did not include any question and answer session, allegedly because of fears this could lead to an audience member hijacking the event to promote a ‘political’ agenda.¹⁹

Urban Salafi activists, in comparison, see themselves as part of a growing progressive and professional *milieu* that combines their piety with a broader desire to be modern members of an educated class. They are, in this regards, part of a more fundamental shift that has occurred amongst Muslim professionals within Indonesia. The influx of consumer goods and greater level of social mobility amongst university educated Muslims has come to inform and facilitate the very concepts upon which an outward religious identity transects with ideas of modern belonging. Salafis tailor their consumption patterns and *da’wa*, selecting preachers and the magazines or websites they access so as to socially demarcate themselves as members of a particular segment of the Salafi movement, which is educated and modern. As both Hasan and Muzakki have argued, Islam in Indonesia has become a symbolic commodity that is selected by followers in order to reify their own identity within a social group (Hasan, 2009, 2011; Muzakki, 2008). The very process of picking and consuming goods becomes

¹⁹ Moreover, the lack of questions, I believe, was linked to a general uncertainty as to how an Ustadz would be received in such an environment. Questions necessarily open the door for representatives of ‘local’ Islamic practice to critique them. At one further event I attended in Yogyakarta, a local Kyai, while respectful and in general agreement with Salafi principles, created a degree of confusion and embarrassment by using several Javanese phrases that the Ustadz could not understand. It caused a level of furore amongst the audience and underlines the challenges experienced by preachers in gaining local credibility and the risk they run in encountering hostility (Observation, Yogyakarta, 15 February 2012).

representational of how one defines both one's 'religious' identity and one's social and economic class (Fealy, 2008).²⁰ Campus based Salafi activists thus demarcate themselves from rural segments of the movement and Muslim population, and the use of religious commodities and explicit reference to the *kampung* sets them apart from other Salafi Muslims in this regards.

Importantly, this is not unique to religion as both Schulte-Nordholt and Dick have pointed out that the consumption of specific goods and products has, historically speaking, acted as a crucial marker through which middle classes in Indonesia have come to identify themselves as such (H. W. Dick, 1985; H.W. Dick, 1990; Schulte-Nordholt, 2011). Yet, it nevertheless represents a fundamental and qualitative shift in Indonesian Islamic expression, and a significant development within the Salafi movement specifically. Salafi campus activists may draw from the same scriptural references as their rural Salafi counterparts, but the ability to utilise social media and create religious commodities has led them in a vastly different direction, envisioning their movement as something that is not just engaged with society, but also part of a broader professional Muslim society. They thus represent a re-articulation of Salafi doctrine, aiming to return to an 'original' Islam that both saves oneself and provides a solution to the social and economic ills of contemporary society.

Conclusion

The development of new forms of Salafi activism amongst students and graduates underlines the diverse ways Salafism has developed since its inception in Indonesia over 30 years ago. While this paper is limited to a number of specific student based foundations and industries such as the YPIA and Yufid - and so is in no way representative of the broader Salafi movement in its totality - it provides a case study as to how urban Salafi activists have become adept at transforming both the substance and form of their religious propagation in contemporary Indonesia. In line with broader trends of Islamic revival across the archipelago, Salafis are busy constructing radio stations, online social media services, and commodities that promote an Islamic identity. However, such activism signifies both personal faith and membership to a social class. The vocabulary of development and modernity is apparent here, denoting the differences between the *kampung* and the educated and urban environments in which such activism is based. This does not imply that rural communities are secondary to Salafi activism; indeed, other studies of Salafism make it clear that rural Java remains one of the most active areas for Salafi foundations. Yet, for urban and campus activists, Salafi

²⁰ Class means more than correlation between a group's income, but refers to a particular consciousness that explains the differences between different social behaviours over matters of 'the common good' (of one's class) (Klinken & Berenschot, 2014).

values, which remain sensitive to concerns within a given locality, have been reframed as a solution to the challenges of modern life.

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