A New Cultural Path for Indonesia's Islamist PKS?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the commencement of Indonesia's transition to democracy, following 32 years of rule by the military dictator Suharto, political space has opened for dozens of political parties to form and regularly contest elections. The *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (the Prosperity and Justice Party, PKS) is an Islamist party that emerged following the first post-1999 democratic elections, with roots that extend to the pre-Suharto era. Although Indonesia has a history of Islamist political parties that goes back to the founding of the nation, since democratization they have never garnered much support, despite Indonesia's nearly 90 percent Muslim population.

Political parties are interested in mobilizing the highest number of supporters in order to create legislation that reflects the parties' ideological underpinnings. Often these same ideological underpinnings are tempered in order to broaden the support base of a given party. We show that PKS has faced a dilemma. Sticking with a rigid interpretation of its Islamist foundation alienates some voters who may be sympathetic to a less rigid platform, therefore broadening the party's base and increasing its electoral success may include tempering its ideological strictness. On the other hand, as a strict Islamist political party, its core supporters are those who agree with its rigid ideological stance. Tempering this stance may alienate the hard core of supporters.

We show that there is increasing tension in the PKS leadership between the two camps over the issue of base broadening. The "justice" faction favors stricter Islamist ideology, and the "prosperity" faction favors tempering the Islamist message in order to draw more electoral support. This tension became manifest during the PKS national convention in February 2011. The convention was held in Yogyakarta, an autonomous region in Central Java that is considered the home of traditional Javanese culture (including mysticism – anathema to the PKS position on religious practice, and a sultan who is traditionally viewed as a caliph). The notion of "culture" in the context of the PKS meeting, therefore, was a fulcrum for party leadership, with the "justice" cadres on one side, and the "prosperity" cadres on the other.

It may be that the apparent embrace of culture is simply a result of the party's gradualist approach to change. This makes it possible for party cadre to advocate and practice "deculturalized" Islam while their leaders state publically that PKS is "open to culture" and not opposed to traditional practices.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we are concerned with the ways in which Indonesia's largest Islamist political party *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS, the Justice and Prosperity Party) has, or at least appears to have, moderated its positions on the acceptability of local culture in pursuit of electoral advantage. The Indonesian term *kebudayaan*, and PKS discourse about it, refers simultaneously to culture in the sense that it is used in anthropology and other social sciences and to culture in the sense of literature and the performing arts. The issue is further complicated by the fact that boundaries between *kebudayaan* and religion (*agama*) are often blurred.[1]

Elman and Warner[2] have argued that given the opportunity to contest elections, religious political parties, including Islamist ones, tend to moderate their positions to gain electoral advantage. They are, however, often divided between pragmatic factions willing to make significant compromises and purist ones for whom ideological clarity and consistency are of paramount importance. Many contemporary Islamist parties face an additional challenge because they are based on what Geertz[3] calls "scripturalist" understandings of Islam. These emphasize the primacy of religious texts, especially the *Qur'an* and Hadith (traditions concerning the Prophet Muhammad and his close companions), and characterize Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and local cultures as less than properly Islamic, if not outright unbelief. This leads to religious and political agendas centered on the establishment of visions that Roy[4] calls "denationalized and deculturalized" *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) based Islam as social reality.

This theological-ideological exclusivism contributes to the establishment and maintenance of clear social and political boundaries characteristic of cadre parties. It poses serious problems for Islamist parties contesting elections because of the perception that, should they come to power, they might use it for sectarian purposes including the substitution of *Shari'ah* norms for cultural practice. It limits the ability of Islamist parties to appeal to voters outside their core constituencies.

The 2011 convention wrestled with a more difficult issue: How to reconcile the party's Islamist ideology and base of support with a newly articulated embrace of local culture?

Elman and Warner also point to a division in the political science literature between scholars who argue that religious political parties and especially Islamic parties genuinely moderate their positions and others who feel that apparent moderation is merely an electoral strategy. The analysis presented here shows that there is a similar division in Indonesian evaluations of the apparent moderation of PKS.

We focus first of the historical background and religious orientation of PKS and then on the party's national convention held in Yogyakarta (Yogya) from February 24 to 27, 2011. Like past party gatherings, it was a study in contradiction. In 2010, PKS held its annual meeting in the Jakarta Ritz-Carlton hotel, one of the country's most extravagant and expensive venues, while claiming devotion to populist

political and economic agendas.[5] Public portions of that convention were performances emphasizing the party's social location in Jakarta's political elite and its commitment to improving social and economic conditions for the Muslim community.

Some PKS supporters interpret the contrast between the opulence of the venue and the populist message located the party in very different ways. To them it demonstrates that despite the fact that it is now a player on the national scene, PKS retains it religious roots and commitment to the common good. The 2011 convention wrestled with what may be an even more difficult issue: How to reconcile the party's Islamist ideology and base of support with a newly articulated embrace of local culture? One Indonesian observer put the question this way: "Is PKS going to become indigenous by accepting local culture (in both senses) or is it going to remain an Arab party?"

This paper starts with a brief background of Islamism in Indonesian politics. After noting historical influences, the paper then shifts to a discussion of modern Islamist political ideology, specifically the embrace of Wahhabism or Salafism. Since the Islamist PKS chose Yogyakarta, perceived as a center of Javanese culture, as the location for its annual convention, the paper then describes the apparent friction between holding such an event in a region rich with a culture that is proscribed by one faction within the party as un-Islamic. The decision to hold the event in Yogyakarta, and the symbolic embrace of local culture, points to a pragmatic attempt on the part of PKS to broaden its base as an electoral strategy, despite alienating some of the party's core constituents.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

The *Partai Keadilan* (Justice Party, PK), the precursor to the PKS, emerged from the campus based Tarbiyah (Islamic Education) movement shortly after the fall of the authoritarian military regime of Indonesia's second president Suharto in 1998.[6] The Tarbiyah movement was the brainchild of Mohammed Natsir (1908-1993), the elder statesman of Indonesian Islamism. Natsir was an ethnic Minangkabau from West Sumatra. He was educated in Dutch and traditional Islamic schools. He joined the fundamentalist *Persatuan Islam* (Islamic Union, PERSIS) in the 1930s and was one its leading intellectual figures (Hefner 2000: 105-106). PERSIS combines the revivalist spirit of the Muslim Brotherhood with understandings of Islamic theology and ritual practice similar to those of Saudis and other Wahhabis.[7] It has been an important force in Indonesian intellectual development but never became a mass organization.

Natsir was also a strident Indonesian nationalist. He was among the most important modernist Muslim voices in the small group of activists and intellectuals who collectively "imagined" Indonesia in the late 1940s. Unlike some other Muslim thinkers, he accepted democracy as a political strategy. Like many other Muslim leaders he mistakenly

believed that because Indonesia is predominantly Muslim, that there was substantial support for an explicitly Islamic government. He was one of the founders of the Muslim Masyumi party that received the second largest share of the vote (20.9 percent) in the 1955 elections. Natsir was prime minister in the early days of the Indonesian Republic (1950-1951). In 1961 he was jailed for participation in the PRRI/Permesta rebellion, and remained there until 1965.[8] He established Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII, The Indonesian Council for the Propagation of Islam) in 1967 after he was released from prison but was not allowed to revive Masyumi.[9] DDII was conceived as a vehicle for the propagation of fundamentalist Islam in a context where politics and armed struggle were not viable options. Natsir stated at the time: "We used to do *dakwah* with politics. Now we do politics with *dakwah*."[10] The DDII agenda includes a combination of Muslim Brotherhood activism and salafi religious teachings.

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Natsir realized that Indonesia's future would be shaped by graduates of the modern university system that began to expand rapidly with oil-fueled economic growth in the early years of the New Order. He focused attention and resources on campus-based *dakwah* organizations. These efforts produced substantial results, especially in the 1980s. There were at least three reasons. The first is that other forms of political activity were banned on university campuses. The second was that the Iranian revolution of 1979 inspired a new generation of campus activists. Most were attracted by the revolutionary spirits of Khomeini's Iran, but not by Shi'ah religious teachings. The third was that the Saudi Arabian government began to pump millions of petro-dollars into its own *dakwah* programs to counter Iranian influence.

Natsir forged close relationships with the Saudi elite that enabled him to raise vast sums to support efforts to promulgate Muslim fundamentalism in Indonesia. The Tarbiyah movement was among the prime beneficiaries of this largess. It is not a single, directed social movement, but an umbrella term for loosely affiliated groups seeking "Islamic" alternatives to the current social and political order and who share a general commitment to promoting and practicing a "purified" version of Islam. In other respects it is very diverse. Socially and politically its constituents range from militant activists to groups who deliberately isolate themselves from the world and regard any form of political activity as sinful.[11]

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In the early 1980s campus based Islamic movements were more diverse than they would later become. Like the Middle Eastern Islamic movements described by Bayat,[12] the Indonesian campus Islamic movement was dynamic. In part because the Indonesian government was perceived as being anti-Islamic, it stressed a shared Muslim identity as a means of establishing a discourse of resistance. In the early 1980s this discourse of resistance and Muslim unity were more important than theological and ritual orientations. Veteran leaders from those days

explain that the movement drifted in the direction of DDII's understanding of Islam because Natsir was able and willing to provide them with assistance, while leaders of more mainstream organizations including Muhammadiyah and NU were not. Some student activists who were uncomfortable with DDII's political and religious agendas left the movement. Many of them embraced Javanese and other Indonesian cultures as vehicles for *dakwah*. Emha Ainun Nadjid, whose role in the 2011 PKS convention is described later in this paper, was one of them.

PKS and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), a nonviolent organization that rejects democracy as "un-Islamic," are the two most important political forces to emerge from the Tarbiyah movement.[13] Both are overwhelmingly urban and middle class. PK activists Woodward spoke with in 1998 were confident that the party would soon come to power. They stated that their plan was to lead by example and that the Indonesian people would soon come to understand that Shari'ah offered the only viable solution to the nation's problems. In 1999 PK contested Indonesia's first democratic election in more than half a century on a platform advocating Shari'ah and the establishment of an Islamic state. It received only 1.4 percent of the vote, failing to meet the threshold for participation in the next election cycle. For this reason, the party dissolved and reformed as the PKS for the next election cycle.

The share of the vote PKS receives is small by absolute standards, but sufficient to make it Indonesia's fourth largest political party.

Hasan[14] and Woodward[15] have argued that this poor showing led to the reformulation of this wing of the movement as PKS, which has, since its inception, taken more moderate positions its publically stated platform. PKS repositioned itself as a populist, reform oriented party. In 2004 it ran on the slogan "Clean and Caring," to which it added "Professional" in 2008. It downplayed its Islamist orientation and received 7.3 percent of the vote in 2004. Party leaders expressed disappointment that they fell short of the 15 percent target set for 2008, garnering only 7.8 per cent. The share of the vote PKS receives is small by absolute standards, but sufficient to make it Indonesia's fourth largest political party, allow it to be a significant player in parliamentary politics and to enter into governing coalitions. In 2009 PKS ran Christian candidates in some regions of Eastern Indonesia where Christianity is the dominant religion, as much to establish a national presence and to appear "inclusive" as in hopes of gaining seats.

The party has been unable to expand its appeal beyond its middle class Islamist base for at least two reasons. First, its image as a "clean" (non-corrupt) party has been severely tarnished by bribery, corruption and sex scandals and a growing perception that it is as corrupt as other political parties.[16] Such scandals are especially damaging to PKS because of the party's claims to occupy the moral high ground. Second, a substantial percentage of the Indonesian public believe that PKS engages in dissimulation on a massive scale and that is has not abandoned its "Wahhabi" agenda. It is very widely believed that PKS cadre, usually operating outside the party's official structure, routinely attempt to

"infiltrate" mosques, schools, and clinics affiliated with other Muslim organizations to spread the PKS "brand" of Islam.[17]

This indicates that PKS should be understood as being the formal political component of a broader social movement. While the party makes a point of being open to other religions and local cultures, other component of the movements, including schools established by party members are not. These "integrated schools" are based on principles established by the Arab-American scholar Faruki, who sought to "Islamicize" all aspects of knowledge. They have high academic standards and teach an intolerant version of Islam with a salafi orientation.

RELIGION, CULTURE AND ISLAMIST AGENDAS

Hostility towards local culture is a common feature of Islamist movements based on Wahhabi and other fundamentalist teachings. Negative evaluations of cultural practice are based on the assumption that *Shari'ah* and *sunnah* (the social practice of the Prophet Muhammad) are the only acceptable models for Muslim conduct.

The condemnation of culture can be traced to the teachings of Taqi ad Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703-1792). These scholars offered very strict interpretations of the basic Islamic doctrine of *tauhid* (the unity of God or monotheism) and attempted to purge Islamic theology and religious practice of what they considered to be polytheism, unbelief and innovation. They stressed legalist understandings of Islam and were critical of other modes of Muslim thought and social practice. They were especially critical of Sufism and elements of popular religion and culture derived from pre-Islamic traditions.[18]

Some of their harshest criticisms were reserved for beliefs and rituals concerning the veneration of tombs and prayers for the dead. Ibn Taymiyyah's views were rejected by most of Muslim scholars of his day and did not figure significantly in Muslim discourse until they were revived by al-Wahab and by nineteenth- and twentieth-century reformers. Today they are among the foundational texts of a wide range of Muslim religious, social and political movements.[19]

Known by various terms including Islamism, Reformism, Fundamentalism, *Salafism* and Wahhabism, there is now a global current in Sunni Islam that shares this exclusivist, *Shari'ah* based world view. Roy[20] has mentioned the rejection of culture as being among the most important components of a global trend towards neo-fundamentalism or neo-Wahhabism. He analyzes the growth of transnational Islamism as a quest for a "New Ummah" that is simultaneously de-nationalized and de-culturized. This movement is revivalist as well as puritanical and seeks to establish what are believed to be the social and religious practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his close companions as models for the contemporary Muslim community.

Ideologically speaking, this is a global movement that prioritizes the concept of the *ummah* or Muslim community and minimizes concern with ethnicity and nationality. The global, transnational and transcultural character of neo-Wahhabism is symbolic and ideological but not social or political reality. In practice, there is a tendency for adherents to look towards Saudi Arabian culture as a model for the construction of distinctive and self-contained local constituents of the ideologically constituted global community. It is ideologically global, but socially and politically a diverse group of national and regional social movements drawing on elements of a complicated amalgam of fundamentalist and revivalist religious teachings, symbols and ideologies from which individuals and communities pick and choose.

The display of "Islamic" or "Muslim" symbols is an important element of neo-Wahhabi social and cultural practice. These symbols include "Muslim" clothing, for men as well as women, "Muslim" material culture ranging from Arabic calligraphy to "Muslim" bumper stickers to electronics, and Muslim cultural practices of which Islamic banking, "integrated" Islamic education and certified *halal* food, cosmetics and medicines are examples. The articulation of these symbols serves to reinforce Muslim personal and collective identities and to establish boundaries between "genuine" and inauthentic or corrupt Muslim persons and communities. Ironically the choices people make about the symbols to use in constructing "transcultural" Muslim identities are driven as much by local as by global considerations. The result is an array of local variants of the New Global Ummah. PKS is an Indonesian example.

Differential emphasis on officially certified *halal* food in Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia provides an example of the importance of locality in the construction of "global" Muslim identities. *Halal* certification is more important in Malaysia and Singapore than it is in Indonesia, because in the latter non-halal food is more common. In Malaysia there is a substantial (more than 40 percent) non-Muslim minority. In Singapore Muslims are a small (approximately 15 percent) minority. In both countries Muslims must make conscious choices to avoid forbidden foods, such as pork. In Indonesia, people assume that food is *halal* unless there are clear signs that it is not. The result is that in Indonesia, certified *halal* has little traction as a symbol of Muslim identity, while in Singapore and Malaysia it is quite important. The fact that Indonesian Muslims living in majority Christian or Hindu areas and those traveling abroad shift their behavior in the direction of Malaysian and Singaporean practice illustrates the contextual nature of these concerns.

Many Indonesians are convinced that PKS is a front for Wahhabism.

PKS is an Indonesian component of the New Global Ummah. Its ideology owes much to the Muslim Brotherhood and to Saudi Wahhabism, and at the same time it is a *legal* political party. Participation in democratic politics has led the party to compromise with the Indonesian political system, and to formally accept religious diversity. It now claims to accept the legitimacy of the Indonesian constitution and participatory

democracy as vehicles through which Islamic morality and ethics can come to play more substantial roles in public and private life. PKS leaders often refer to the fact that the organization is a political party to support their contention that they are not Wahhabis, noting that political parties are outlawed in Saudi Arabia. They also downplay theological differences and state that Muslims with decidedly anti-Wahhabi Sufi orientations are welcome to join the party; very few have. In the 2009 electoral campaign PKS television commercials promoted this message by linking the party and its platform with the founders of other Indonesian Muslim organizations.

Election results indicate that many Indonesians have not found these efforts credible. Many are convinced that PKS is a front for Wahhabism and describe it as "the party that waits for orders from Arabia." Belief that Middle Eastern donors finance PKS is widespread. The failure of political compromise to achieve the anticipated results has motivated a cultural turn in PKS public relations efforts.

The Yogyakarta convention was an ideal location to roll out the new culture-friendly PKS because the city is known as and regards itself as being "the center of Javanese culture." Javanese make up approximately 40 percent of the Indonesian population and are by far the largest ethnic group. Their cultural traditions are especially problematic for Islamists because of the importance of pre-Islamic Indic traditions in literature and the performing arts.

A closely related issue was an attempt to accommodate a faction loyal to the party's core religious values with a more pragmatic faction willing to compromise to increase the party's popular appeal. The Justice Faction stresses the party's core *Salafi* or Wahhabi Islamic values. The Prosperity Faction is more concerned with increasing its electoral appeal. Party spokesmen steadfastly denied that these factions exist. As one put it: "This makes for good media stories, but it is not reality. We are completely united." Tension between them was, however, apparent over the course of the convention and in the contrasting themes of public events and closed working sessions. Public sessions and events stressed openness and embraced local culture, especially that of Yogyakarta. In semi-public and officially closed sessions, participants placed greater emphasis on core Islamist values.

Party cadre were well briefed and spoke nearly unanimously about the need to be open to local culture, especially the Muslim culture of Yogyakarta. They described openness as a strategy for electoral success and a vehicle for *dakwah* (propagation of Islam). Leaders freely admitted that openness is vital for the continued growth of the party. One commented that while efforts to build a core of disciplined middle class cadre rooted in have been very successful, that the party has little support among the *wong cilik* (little people), especially in rural areas. They also stressed that, as a political party, PKS is not tied to any particular understanding of Islam and that even non-Muslims are welcome. This is

technically correct, but the larger social movement in which the party is located actively promotes fundamentalist understandings of Islam and considers many elements of local Indonesian cultures to be unbelief. The Prosperity Faction reasons that public demonstrations of "openness" will help to increase the party's electoral appeal and spread its religious message. They controlled the public face of the convention's agenda. This is an example of the PKS philosophy that politics and *dakwah* (propagation of the faith) are one in the same.

YOGYAKARTA AND THE PKS

If PKS is the Indonesian variant of the culture-free New Global Ummah, Yogya is known in Indonesia as an area where culture is paramount. A faculty member at one of the city's many universities explained that, "In Yogyakarta, culture is as important as religion is in other parts of Indonesia and is a 'wall' preventing the intrusion of Islamist ideologies." Yogya is a "special region with the attributes of a kingdom within the Republic of Indonesia." It is the only one of the more than two hundred traditional states that existed at the close of the colonial era to have survived as a meaningful political identity. Sultan Hamengkubuwana X is the provincial governor by virtue of the fact that he is Sultan. The sultans of Yogyakarta have used the title *kalipatullah* (God's Caliph) since the kingdom was founded in the mid-eighteenth.[21] Islamists, including many PKS supporters, who advocate the establishment of a caliphate as the political form of the New Global Ummah, find this confusing. They understand the caliphate as a Middle Eastern based Pan-Islamic institution and are unaware of the complex ways in which the concept has been utilized in the history of Islamic political thought and praxis.[22]

The sultans of Yogyakarta have used the title kalipullah (God's Caliph) since the kingdom was founded. Islamists, including many PKS supporters, find this confusing.

Yogyakarta is home to a rich Islamic culture heavily influenced by Sufi traditions and an ancient Hindu-Buddhist heritage.[23] The Sultan is believed to be a living saint, to communicate directly with God, and to be the channel though which divine blessing and mercy are conveyed to society. Javanese political thought is based on the mystical-social concept of the "Union of Servant and Lord" according to which the Sultan is linked by spiritual bonds to both God and his subjects. Pilgrimages to the graves of saints, Muslim scholars, sultans and heroes, the quest for intuitive understanding of and even union with the divine, and belief in the power of sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*) are elements of this culture. There are very strong links between the palace and the mosque. Many of the most important mosques in Yogyakarta were founded by members of the royal family who chose piety instead of politics as a vocation and are built on land donated by the Sultanate. They display the royal coat of arms and are staffed by Muslim scholars who are also *abdidalem* (palace officials).

The Yogyakarta variant of Javanese culture employs complex linguistic and behavioral conventions to express respect for elders, teachers and others in positions of authority. There is an array of personal

pronouns, the use of which encodes and expresses respect and hierarchy. These are so deeply engrained that students at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, one of Indonesia's premiere educational institutions, stand in line to kiss their teachers' hand after class. Many Islamists are uncomfortable with the deferential gestures, and some maintain that they are *syirik* (idolatry) because they show deference to humans in ways that should be reserved for God alone.

Yogya is also a center for both traditional and contemporary performing arts. Both are dynamic living traditions that are constantly reinventing themselves. Classical dance and *wayang* (shadow play) traditions are based on Javanese variants of the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabhrata*.[24] The epics originated in India and are among the classics of Hindu myth and literature. Localized variants are important components of Buddhist and Muslim cultural traditions throughout Southeast Asia. In Java and other Indonesian and Malaysian societies the Islamicization of the epics is profound, but subtle. Hindu gods and goddess are made Muslim, by making them human and including them in royal genealogies that begin with the Muslim Adam.

Contemporary music draws on classical Javanese, western pop-rock, jazz, and hip-hop, Indian Bollywood classic and modern Arabic styles in a remarkable variety of forms. Some *avant-garde* performances combine classic and contemporary genre. There are many music groups, some of which are linked to secular and Islamic universities. Islamic groups promote performances as cultural *dakwah*. These groups provide expression for Islamic sentiments similar to those of the *Tarbiyah* movement, but in ways that locate Muslim piety in Javanese and other cultural contexts.

The arts have long been an important means of political expression. This is especially true of *wayang. Wayang* is a very subdued performance tradition. A puppeteer accompanied by a *gamelan* orchestra and female vocalists stage an all-night performance based on a segment of one of the Javanese Muslim variants of the Hindu epics *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. The traditional repertoire includes tales of kings, warriors, sages and struggles for power as well as asceticism and the cultivation of moral virtues. Sultans and presidents have used it to speak of their legitimacy and religious authority. Critics and rebels use *wayang* to rally support for their causes. In both legitimizing and oppositional modes it leaves much to the observer because symbolic relationships between contemporary political actors and *wayang* characters must be inferred.

A recent development is the appropriation of Hadrami Arab devotional and performance traditions by the Yogyakarta Sultanate. There have been Hadrami (Yemini) Arab communities in Southeast Asia for centuries.[25] Most practice a type of Islam similar to that of traditional Indonesian Muslims associated with Nahdlatul Ulama. Hadramis are particularly devoted to the veneration of saints and their graves. Many have nothing short of a visceral hatred from Wahhabis who

destroyed/desecrated the graves of their ancestors in Arabia.[26] These communities are increasingly integrated at national and local levels. Many Indonesians revere Hadramis because of their perceived descent from the Prophet Muhammad. It is now common for traditional Indonesian Muslims to speak of a distinction between "our Arabs," meaning Hadramis, and "their Arabs," meaning Saudi Wahhabis.

The Yogyakarta palace now sponsors Hadrami Sufi *shalawat* (devotion to the Prophet Muhammad and his family) performances that attract as many as a quarter million young people.[27] Palace officials and Hadrami Syechs agree that: "We wear different clothes, but have a common purpose which is to teach Islamic values to the people of Yogyakarta." They also agree these performances are "anti-radical" and help to counter the religious messages of Islamist groups, including PKS. After distributing holy water to a group of mothers and infants after a performance, Habib Syech, the most popular *shalawat* performer in Yogyakarta, turned to the crowd and said: "And *they* call this *bid'ah* (unallowable innovation)!" The Syech did not need to explain who "*they*" are. We all knew. One young man said: "Oh yes, that means PKS." PKS has not attempted to appropriate Hadrami cultural performances.

It is difficult to imagine anything further from the de-culturized Islam of the New Global Ummah that PKS has promoted in the past. Until recently PKS cadre have pointed to these traditions as examples of what is wrong with Javanese culture and called them *khufarat* (unbelief). For the duration of their convention at least, PKS cadre described them as "cultural *dakwah*" and stressed their "openness" to local tradition.

There is no evidence that PKS has abandoned or significantly altered its core principles. It is clear, however, that there was a systematic attempt to appropriate the symbols of Javanese culture at the Yogyakarta convention. Performers and performances were treated as "symbols." They were symbols not of the New Global Ummah, but of Javanese local Islam. Some of the symbols made use of their presence to implicitly or explicitly question the message they were used to present.

The appropriation of Javanese cultural symbolism was apparent in promotional materials that flooded the city prior to the convention and in the three most important events staged in conjunction with it: Expo PKS, a musical performance by Kyai Kanjeng, and a Wayang performance.

PRE-CONVENTION PUBLICITY

Prior to the convention PKS flooded Yogyakarta with banners and billboards. This is common practice, but PKS is the acknowledged master of this type of advertising campaign. It is a common joke that the acronym PKS actually means "*Partai Kebanyakan Spanduk"* (party with the most banners). Almost all included party and convention logos. The convention logo borrows from the iconography of the Yogyakarta *kraton* (palace), and places the PKS party logo at the center of an abstract representation of the

front gate. It suggests that the *kraton* endorses PKS, which is not the case. This was a very creative exercise in symbolic transformation, but far removed from reality. This effort was similar to the party's attempt to appropriate the images and words of the founders of other Muslim movements in the previous election cycle. Like that effort, it met with little success. Many in Yogya found it to be ludicrous, insulting or both.

EXPO PKS

Expo PKS was similar to the Islamic Fairs described by Woodward.[28] The expo featured approximately fifty merchants selling books, clothing and other kinds of "Muslim" material culture. It differed in two ways. Many featured PKS-themed merchandise. Booksellers featured party publications and works by or about Hasan al-Bana, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, who is the spiritual and ideological "grandfather" of PKS. Clothing shops featured a wide range of PKS jackets and baseball caps. Unlike some other Islamist organizations PKS discourages ersatz Arab style clothing for both men and women. Robes and calf-length pants (for men) and face veils (for women) were noticeable only in their absence. Items featuring the coat of arms of the Yogyakarta Sultanate and batik (a traditional Javanese fabric) were also common.[29] There were noticeably fewer *jihadi* publications than there are at typical "Islamic Fairs." One bookseller explained that PKS supporters are usually not interested in publications that promote violence.

EMHA AINUN (CAK NUN) AND KYAI KANJENG

Emha Ainun Nadjid (born 1953), or Cak Nun as he is commonly known, is one of the luminaries of the Yogyakarta culture scene. He is a writer, poet, political commentator and musician from a traditional Muslim background. He is known for promoting democracy, religious pluralism and human rights. He is also known for biting satirical critiques of political opportunism and corruption of Saudi Arabian efforts to export their "brand" of Islam to Indonesia.

Cak Nun is also the founder of the musical variety group Kyai Kanjeng, a fusion ensemble based on the Javanese *gamelan* (percussion orchestra) that also includes musicians who play Western and Middle Eastern instruments. The repertoire is as diverse as the orchestra itself, ranging from *gamelan*, to Arabic *shalawat* to American Broadway show tunes. Some, but not all, of the female performers cover their hair. PKS considers the *hijab* (head scarf) to be obligatory for women. A year ago, the Yogya branch refused to allow a band featuring a female vocalist to perform at a party function and declared that "in Islam," women are forbidden to sing in public.

Many in the Yogya artistic community were surprised that Cak Nun agreed to appear at the PKS convention. He explained that he was reluctant to perform in this venue because he strongly disagrees with

everything the party stands for. After a period of intense negotiation he agreed, but insisted the organizing committee allow him total artistic freedom. One of his aides explained that it was difficult to turn down the request because they had performed at other political events and because Cak Nun and Nur Hidayat Wahid, one of the founders and former president of PKS, had studied at the same *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school).

Kyai Kanjeng opened their performance with a medley of Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious music they call "Global Shalawatan." This official PKS video[30] features only the Muslim numbers. There are Jewish and Christian songs from a previous performance.[31] The PKS video does include a female vocalist singing (in English) portions of "L-O-V-E," originally recorded by African American jazz master Nat King Cole[32] and covered by his daughter Natalie, and many others. It was originally written as a romantic love song. Kyai Kanjeng's Muslim adaptation parallels the use of romantic lyrics in classical Sufi poetry. This blending or hybrization of cultural and religious performance, and the adaptation of imported traditions, is typical of Java, and especially of Yogya. It reflects an epistemology of openness that is nearly the opposite of PKS textual literalism.

Cak Nun also had a lengthy onstage conversation with Hidayat Nur Wahid. Hidyat is no match for Cak Nun as far as stage presence is concerned. He did, however, speak in elegant Javanese and stated that PKS is not anti-*Maulid* (celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad), anti-*Shalawat* or anti-*Tahlil* (prayers for the dead). A Roman Catholic Priest who Cak Nun had invited joined them on stage and mentioned Roman Catholic openness to Javanese culture. It is not clear what PKS had to gain from this exchange. Nur Hidayat repeated what PKS leaders have said in the past about being "open" to culture and linked himself to the pragmatist Prosperity faction. Some PKS cadre we spoke to explained that as a political party, PKS does not oppose these elements of traditional Islam, but as a *gerakan* (movement) it works to spread "pure" Islam. There can be little doubt that hardliners from the Justice faction were not pleased by Hidayat's exchange with Cak Nun. Many others in Yogya, and elsewhere in Indonesia, simply did not believe him.

PKS's attempt to appropriate this symbol of Javanese Muslim culture succeeded in a very limited way. It was a symbolic success because they were able to advertise it and because simply staging it could be interpreted as success. Discursively, appropriation was less successful because the symbol refused to be appropriated and challenged PKS to make good on its commitment to cultural "openness." Some PKS cadre were clearly uncomfortable with the inter-faith music and even more so with the Cak Nun-Nur Hidayat exchange. Cak Nun's fans found both to be hysterical. They view the exchange as a debate, and clearly thought that their contestant had emerged victorious.

WAYANG PKS?

Wayang is a traditional performance, most frequently using shadow puppets but also occasionally using actors and dancers, based on the Indian Hindu epics the Ramayana and the Mahabarata. In Java, the stories have become "Javanized," taking place locally, for example, and incorporating elements of syncretic Islam. Many Islamists think that *wayang* is among the clearest example of the non-Islamic character of Javanese culture and that it is an abomination. Some believe that puppets depicting even stylized human forms are idolatrous. They tend to essentialize *wayang*, dance and other elements of the Javanese performing arts based on the Hindu-Javanese-Islamic epics as "Hinduism" in much the same way that they essentialize *Shari'ah* as "Islam." Many traditional Javanese Muslims say that *wayang* can be understood as "*Dakwah Wali Songo"* (*Dakwah* of the nine saints) and that it was among the means through which early Muslim preachers brought Islam to the Javanese people. That PKS staged a *wayang* speaks to the extent that the Prosperity faction controlled the public agenda. There was, however, debate within the party about the propriety of a *Wayang* PKS. A party spokesman explained that cadre had debated the question and that the party's *Shari'ah* council had approved it.[33]

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PKS leaders wearing traditional Javanese costumes sat on chairs on the stage during the performance. Many looked uncomfortable in this attire and according to observers, looked as if they were not accustomed to wearing it. In a more traditional setting, the audience would have been sitting on the floor. Costumes worn by female singers were clearly not in accord with PKS norms. In welcoming speeches they referred to each other as "*Kyai,"* the Javanese term for religious scholar. Most PKS leaders do not have the fluency in classical Arabic or knowledge of theological and legal texts required to be recognized as *Kyai.*

The *lakon* (play) presented was *Bangkit Bima* (Bima Arising). It is not one of the canonical *lakon* but was rather a composite biography of Bima, one of the five *Pandawa* brothers who are the protagonists of the *Mahabharata*. It began with the tale of his miraculous birth, in which he breaks free from an extraordinarily tough placenta with help from an elephant named Sema. Bima is the largest and strongest of the five Pandawa brothers. He is also known for righteousness and courage. In one episode he struggles on behalf of the common people to defeat the king of the cannibals who has been eating them. For these reasons, political groups presenting themselves as the saviors of the common people have often used Bima as a symbol. During the Suharto regime (1965-1998), Bima's struggle against a cannibal king who dined rapaciously on his subjects was used often as a vehicle for expressing concern about the corrupt character of the regime. Muslim groups often associated themselves with this protest tradition. PKS officials explained that *Bangkit Bima* was an appropriate choice because it reflects "the current place of

Islam in Indonesian society." They associated Bima's heroic character with that of their party.

By staging a *wayang* performance PKS clearly sought to locate itself in the mainstream of "high" Javanese culture. Non-PKS Muslims commenting on the performance raised two sets of questions. The first was about intentionality – "Do they really mean it or is this a political game?" The second was about cultural competence – "Do they actually understand Javanese high culture and etiquette well enough to behave correctly and appreciate the performance?" Most people I have discussed these issues with are skeptical on both points. Many expressed the opinion that a PKS *wayang* could only be a "political game." Those well versed in the fine points of the tradition considered the composite character of *Bima Bangkit* to be a sign that PKS producers were merely "putting on a show" and did not understand the philosophical subtleties of the tradition. There were, however, many whose knowledge of *wayang* is not that deep who were surprised that PKS would do something so "thoroughly Javanese." Others commented that PKS cadre and leaders appeared to be uncomfortable in traditional Javanese clothing and questioned their ability to understand the complex language used in the performance. A common joke was that PKS has entered into a polygamous marriage with Arab and Javanese culture.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS WITH THE JUSTICE FACTION

Working sessions of PKS conventions are not open to the press or the general public. Even their locations are not disclosed. In spite of this, it was not difficult to locate them. We simply went to the hotel next door to the venue where Expo PKS was held and followed the songs and when that did not work, asked hotel staff where the PKS meetings were. Even though we were uninvited guests, we were welcomed warmly. We listened in on sessions concerning agricultural policy and had a lengthy conversation with a PKS public relations/press officer. The *dakwah* spirit of the Justice faction was much more apparent in these contexts and in semi-public religious talks attended almost exclusively by PKS supporters.

Here the theme was the unity of *dakwah* and politics, which is one of PKS's core teachings, and one the party inherited from Mohammad Natsir. Sessions devoted to agricultural policy concerned the development of strategies to use the party's control of the ministry of agriculture to increase its electoral appeal in rural areas, and as vehicles for *dakwah*. The basic question to be considered was how to assist rural people so that they would support PKS politically and accept its interpretation of "genuine" Islam. There was little talk of inclusivism or of openness to cultural and religious perspectives other than those of the core PKS constituency.

Religious talks (*pengajian*) for party cadre also stressed core religious values. They included a different interpretation of "openness" according to which the party was not "exclusivist" because all of the people of Indonesia benefit directly from its efforts. When asked about the

new policy of cultural openness, speakers often stated that it was necessary for the growth of the party and to spread its message to those who were not yet ready to receive it more directly.

CONCLUSIONS

When PKS (then PK) was founded in 1998 most cadre were extremely devout and idealistic young people. Most were from middle class or privileged secular backgrounds. Many came to the *Tarbiyah* movement with a strong sense of Muslim identity but limited knowledge of Islamic thought, ritual practice or history. When they encountered DDII *dakwah* and the *Tarbiyah* movement they were convinced that this simplistic version of Islam, with clearly defined criteria for distinguishing between "genuine" and "corrupt" Muslims and an emphasis on ethics and social justice, offered a solution to Indonesia's problems. At that time there was disagreement and debate about the course that the movement should take. Some saw PK as a potential force in electoral politics and thought that the democratic transition that accompanied the collapse of the New Order offered a new opportunity for Islamicizing Indonesia. Others envisioned the party as the vanguard of a social movement and saw political transformation at the national level as an opportunity for expanding *dakwah* efforts to the "masses." This distinction persists in the split between the Justice and Prosperity factions. It would appear that for the time being that the Prosperity faction is ascendant.

Unlike revolutionary Muslim movements, PKS advocates a gradualist approach to social, religious and political transformation.[34] It has concentrated on building a community of highly committed cadre and to a variety of modes of *dakwah* of which electoral politics is only one. Many of the seeming contradictions in PKS can be explained by reference to this distinction. Because *dakwah* operates in stages, what is said in public settings does not necessarily reflect the party's core values. This makes it possible for party cadre to advocate and practice "deculturalized" Islam while their leaders state publically that PKS is "open to culture" and not opposed to traditional practices.

"Of course we do not tell the public how radical our agenda actually is. If we did, no one would vote for us."

This leads many Indonesians to fear a hidden Wahhabi agenda and others to denounce the party as hypocritical. One Yogyakarta PKS leader, who was blunter than most, put it this way: "Of course we do not tell the public how radical our agenda actually is. If we did, no one would vote for us." It would also seem to be the case that the difference between the Justice and Prosperity factions is tactical, and that they continue to share a common religious orientation. It is likely that the direction that the party takes in the future will be shaped by the success or failure of its "new openness" as a strategy in the 2014 elections.

There are, however, signs of increasing divisions within the party. A new round of scandals that emerged in March and April 2011 further tainted the party's image. Arifinto, a PKS member of parliament, was caught watching a sexually graphic video in the legislative chamber. He had been a vocal supporter of anti-pornography legislation passed with PKS backing in 2008. He initially denied the charges, but subsequently resigned.[35] Perhaps even more damaging are allegations made in a lawsuit filed against the party by PKS founder and former head of its Shari'ah commission Yusup Supendi. Supendi has charged that 94 percent of funds for the 1999 campaign came from illegal donations from Middle Eastern benefactors, that party leaders had embezzled nearly 1.5 million USD of these illegal funds and that three senior PKS leaders entered into polygamous marriages without obtaining permission from the party's Shari'ah Commission.[36] These scandals have made PKS the laughing stock of the Jakarta elite and raise very serious questions about its ability to maintain its image as a clean, caring, professional and religious party. Concerns about the party's future prospects are serious enough that some members of the Justice faction, and others with similar views who have been expelled from the party, are rumored to be considering bolting from PKS and establishing an alternative party. It is to be called Hisuballah, or the Party of God.

NOTES

[1] See Hidayah, S. (2007). *Religion in the Proper Sense of the Word: The Discourse of Agama in Indonesia*, unpublished MA thesis, Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies, Gadjah Mada University. Also see Woodward, M. (2010). 2010 *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, New York: Springer.

[2] Elman, M. and Warner, C. "Democracy, Security, and Religious Political Parties: A Framework for Analysis," *Asian Security*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 2008. pp. 1-22.

[3] Geertz, C., *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

[4] Roy, O. (2004), *Globalized Islam. The Search for the New Ummah*, London: Hurst and Company.

[5] Fealy, G., "Front stage with the PKS," *Inside Indonesia*, No. 101, July-September, 2010. http://www.insideindonesia.org/stories/front-stage-with-the-pks-04091353.

[6] See Machmudi, Y. (2008). *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)*, Canberra: Australian University Press; Woodward, M. (2008a). "Indonesia's Religious Political Parties: Democratic Consolidation and Security in Post-New Order Indonesia," *Asian Security*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008. pp. 41-60.

[7] Federspiel, H**.,** *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State: The Persatuan Islam (Persis), 1923 to 1957***,** Leiden: Brill, 2001.

[8] The PRRI/Permesta rebellion was centered in Sumatra and Sulawesi. Although the rebels' demands were varied, they were primarily interested in more autonomy for the regions and against the influence of the communist party, which was viewed as antithetical to Islam by some Muslims. The rebels partnered with former Darul Islam rebels.

[9] Liddle, W., "Media Dakwah Scripturalism. One Form of Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia," in: M. Woodward (ed.) *Toward A New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought*, Tempe: Program for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series, Arizona State University, 1996.

[10] Van Bruinessen, M., "Genealogies of Islamic radicalism in post-Suharto Indonesia." *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 10, nom. 2, 2002, pp. 117–15.

[11] Woodward, M., Amin, A., Rohmaniyah, I., and Coleman, D. (2010). "Muslim Education, Celebrating Islam and Having Fun as Counter-Radicalization Strategies in Indonesia," Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 28-50.

[12] Bayat, A. (2005). "Islamism and Social Movement Theory," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6, pp. 891-908.

[13] HTI is the Indonesian branch of *Hizbul al Tahrir al-Islami* (The Islamic Salvation Party) and off shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Palestine in 1953. It is active in Australia, Europe and North America and is outlawed in all Muslim majority countries except Indonesia. See Woodward (2010) p. 175 and also Hilmy, M., "Manufacturing the

"Ontological Enemy": Socio-Political Construction of anti-Democracy Discourses among HTI Activists in Post-New Order Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 3, No 2, 2009 http://ejournal.sunan-ampel.ac.id/index.php/JIIS/-article/view/415.

[14] Hasan, N., (a) *Islamist Party, Electoral Politics and Da'wa Mobilization among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia*, RSIS Working Paper nom. 184, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 2009. www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP184.pdf.

[15] Woordward (2008a) *op cit*; Woordward, M. (2008b) "PKS Against the Rest. The Justice and Prosperity Party and the 2007 Jakarta Election," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Commentary no. 55, April 2008. http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/commentaries.asp?selYear=2008.

[16] The most recent of these involve a PKS legislator being caught watching pornographic videos during a parliamentary session and the party's use of its control of the Agriculture Ministry to profit from meat imports. http://www.celebritiesevenue.com/analysts-observe-voter-backlash-for-pks-in-excess-of-scandals.html Indonesian analysts speculate that these scandals will have a negative impact on the party's performance in future elections.

[17] Woodward (2008a) *op cit*.

[18] Memon, M (1976). *Ibn Taymiya's Struggle against Popular Religion*. The Hague: Mouton, 1976.

[19] We have argued elsewhere (2010) that there are Muslim movements and organizations in Indonesia and elsewhere that embrace Ibn Tamiyyah's and al-Wahab's teachings concerning the doctrine of the Unity of God (*tauhid*) that are firmly rooted in local cultural traditions. This distinguishes reformist orientations from the neo-Wahhabism Roy describes. PKS would appear to be located on the boundary between the two.

[20] Roy (2004) *op cit*.

[21] Woodward (2010) *op cit*.

[22] Crone, P. *God's Rule. Government and Islam Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

[23] Woodward, M. (1989). *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. Association for Asian Studies Monograph Series, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

[24] Weiss, S. (2007). *Listening to an Earlier Java: Aesthetics, Gender, and the Music of Wayang in Central Java.* Leiden: KITLV Press.

[25] Ho, E., *The Graves of Tarim, Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

[26] The hatred is mutual. In 1994 when Wahhabi forces attacked Tarim, they turned assault weapon and rocket propelled grenade fire on the cities cemeteries where many Hadrami saints are buried. As one Hadrami in Singapore put it: "For sins like this there can be no forgiveness."

[27] A performance can be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFMbOlPNABo

[28] Woodward, M. (2009, September). "Turning up the Heat on Wahhabi Colonialism," *COMOPS Journal*. http://comops.org/journal/2009/09/02/turning-up-the-heat-on-wahhabi-colonialism/.

[30] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zz2btf1Z60

[31] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-W48k2CI9Q6E

[32] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JErVP6xLZwg

[33] *Today News Indonesia*, February 22, 2011, http://today.co.id/read/2011/02/22/12164/tiru_pkb_pks_akan_kawinkan_islam_dengan_budaya_lokal

[34] Rahmat, I. (2008). *Ideology Politik PKS. Dari Masjid Kampus ke Gedung Parlemen* (The Political Ideology of PKS. From Campus Mosques to the Parliament Building). Yogyakarta: LKiS.

[35] *Jakarta Globe*, April 8, 2011, http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/pks-legislator-denies-downloading-porn-in-dpr/434245 (accessed May 10, 2011)

[36] *PedomanNews.com*, March 22, 2011 http://www.pedomannews.com/tokoh-a-wawancara/berita-tokoh-a-wawancara/kabar-tokoh/2337-selain-mengenai-korupsi-yusuf-supendi-juga-cerita-soal-poligami-petinggi-pks (accessed May 10, 2011) *Jakrta Post*, March 28, 2011, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/03/28/bad-apples-see-islamic-pks-veer-course.html