Jamaah Shalahuddin:  
Islamic Student Organisation in Indonesia’s New Order  
Abdul Gaffar Karim  
Curtin University of Technology

The 1998 [Indonesian] student movement cannot be understood without analysing their Islamisation [process], or the rise of ‘New Santri’.¹

Introduction

This article focuses on the dynamics of Jamaah Shalahuddin, a Muslim student organisation, of Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, assumed to be part of the change in Indonesian Muslim society during the New Order era. The change itself was attributed to structural factors that were present in the era, including the New Order’s development and modernisation, and its political restriction and co-optation of societal powers. The change consists mainly of the rise of religious consciousness amongst Indonesian Muslims. Within the wave of religious consciousness, the number of devout Muslims seemed to increase. The devout Muslims are normally referred to as santri, originated from a Sanskrit word, çantrix, which lexically means pupil or student—and I would label the new devout Muslims as ‘new santri’. As far as I know, it is the first time Shalahuddin has been analysed in the context of the rise of new santri in a major study.

Broader Context of Jamaah Shalahuddin

Political restriction and co-optation were the most visible features of the New Order state authoritarianism. Two important legacies from Sukarno’s Guided Democracy were intentionally kept by The New Order, namely, the state ideology Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945). The New Order government claimed that it implemented Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution purely and consistently, but “enshrined it [Pancasila] as the ideological pillar of the regime. It now emerged as the fully-fledged ideological justification of the ruling group ... [not] a common platform where all ideologies could meet.”² With Pancasila and UUD 1945 established as useful tools, the New Order started to eliminate other ideological positions from the political stage. There were two main targets of the New Order ideological engineering, namely communism and political
Islam—while quite different methods were used for each of them. The incident of 30 September 1965 had raised anti-communist feeling amongst the Indonesian people. While it is still debatable who the main actors in this incident were, the involvement of some elements of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was obvious. This was used by the Army to discredit PKI by identifying them as most responsible for the incident, and making the communists targets of brutal elimination.

While communism was eliminated, the other target of the New Order’s ideological engineering; political Islam, was treated in a more subtle way. However, relations between Islam and the state during the New Order were always changing. I divide Islam-state relations in Indonesia during the New Order into two stages. The first stage covers 1966-1984 and the second covers the 1985-1998 period. The turning point from the first stage to the second is the sole principle policy in 1984, in which the government decreed that all social-political organisations were to acknowledge Pancasila as their single principle.

Another significant element of the environment which made it possible for state-society relationship to change during early 1980s was the decline in the state’s ability (after the collapse of oil revenues in 1982) to maintain its domination over society. As a result, better relations with the largest groups, especially the Muslim communities, were now needed. Some Muslim groups enjoyed a better relationship with the state in the second stage than in the first. However, the catalysts for change in Muslim society were to be found in the first stage, in which Muslim groups’ experienced systematic political exclusion.

The Indonesian Student Movement was targeted during the New Order’s political restrictions. For Muslim students, some policies implemented by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs Daoed Joesoef in the 1970s, although regarded as discriminatory, were a blessing in disguise. Many Muslim students felt that Joesoef represented and echoed the general policy of Suharto’s administration at that time and, thus, had negative attitudes toward Islam. For example, he had, for unclear reasons, cancelled the Ramadhan break usually organised for primary and secondary schools during the Muslim fasting month, while around the same time the government gave official status to Javanese mysticism by recognising it in the main lines of state policy and, seemingly, supported Christian education more than Islamic.
Since the implementation of the ‘normalisation of campus life’ policy (NKK or Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus), the students had limited space for their activities. One of these spaces was the campus Mosque. This limitation proved to be a blessing for religious student activities. Because religious activities were the ‘safest place’ from government repression for students, religious activities at university campuses became increasingly important. What was later regarded as the ‘secular campus religiosity’ wave was more-or-less started in 1974 almost unintentionally. In that year, at Salman Mosque, next to the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Imaduddin Abdul Rachim introduced the “training for the defenders of dakwah” (LMD). A very tight selection process, that considered everything from IQ to motivation, selected approximately fifty students to participate. This entailed being isolated for a week, secluded from the outside world; even newspaper reading was forbidden. They concentrated their mind on the basic values of Islam and the obligation of every Muslim to do the dakwah. LMD soon became very popular. Students from other campuses were attracted to it, and it later came to be called the Salman Movement. In 1976-77, the alumni of LMD began to appear at their own campuses, especially in Java. To a significant extent the founding of Shalahuddin in 1976 was also inspired by the wave of LMD spirit.

We will discuss later how Shalahuddin was founded without a formal organisation, but this was to some extent symptomatic of Indonesian Muslim youth circles during the second half of 1970s. In those days, “the new consciousness on Islam was more spread. ... [Many Muslim youths] were willing to live a ‘clear’ life in the society. They avoided having any central figure, and [they had] no commander.” More importantly, Muslim youths preferred to emphasise that they were Muslim in general, rather than identifying with a particular sub-group, such as the traditionalist Muslim movement NU or the modernist Muslim Muhammadiyah. They tried not to reproduce the traditionalist-modernist dichotomy amongst Indonesian Muslims. Describing Jamaah Salman of ITB, Hefner maps out how they “rejected the scholastic argument of traditionalist Islam and the exclucivism of modernism”.

35
The Founding of Jamaah Shalahuddin

Shalahuddin was founded in 1976. However, there is no agreement on the date and month of the founding, mostly because during the first years Shalahuddin was more of an anomic group rather than an organised board. In the years prior to the founding of Shalahuddin, student movement activity at Gadjah Mada (as at most universities in Indonesia) was mostly patterned by the rivalry between the two dominant student organisations: GMNI (the Indonesian Nationalist Student Movement) and HMI (the Islamic Student Association). GMNI is a secular-nationalist student organisation, and was formerly related to PNI. HMI is an Islamic student organisation, and was in the past very close to the Masyumi party. The origin of the rivalry was to be found in the political context of student activities, but its effect had reached more widely than political matters. Some Muslim students were really concerned about the fact that the dakwah of Islam at the campus always failed to reach the Muslim GMNI (or broader: non-HMI) students. This was simply because the dakwah was seen to just belong to HMI. Later, one of the concerned students expressed the problem to me: “in those days, Muslim GMNI students would not join Friday prayer or Tarawih prayer, because they did not want to be identified as HMI!”

It was also a time when the Indonesian Student Movement in the wider context was having a difficult time due to The New Order political restriction. In this context, Shalahuddin was founded in its very early form: loose and unstructured. Surprisingly, this was a sufficient beginning. The founding of Shalahuddin started with a maulud program, commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Unlike the conventional maulud, which mostly consists of religious sermons, this program also consists of art performances such as a painting exhibitions, choir, poetry readings, as well as dialogue and discussion group forums. One of the keynote speakers in the cultural dialogue was the late YB Mangunwijaya, a well-known Catholic priest. This unusual program was named Maulid Pop and later this became a model for Shalahuddin’s methods of dakwah.

Five santri students, Ahmad Fanani, Muslich ZA, A. Luqman, M. Toyibi, and Samhari Baswedan, are recognised as the founding fathers of Jamaah Shalahuddin, i.e., the ones who arranged the Maulid Pop. Fanani, Muslich, and Luqman were students at the Faculty of Engineering, while Toyibi and Samhari were students at Faculty of Medicine. Toyibi
was the chairman of Gadjah Mada Student Council at that time. As narrated very interestingly in Boulevard, a magazine published by Shalahuddin, Fanani knocked on Toyibi’s door one rainy afternoon in 1976. He asked the Chairman for cooperation in arranging the Maulid Pop, a set of programs aimed at presenting Islam based on campus-scientific culture. Toyibi gladly approved the proposal, and they both spent the afternoon discussing their common concerns about the campus situation at that time. They wanted to end the ‘red-green’ (GMNI-HMI) conflict. They agreed to start a neutral and independent method of dakwah, and soon contacted the other colleagues mentioned above to arrange the proposed program. The program was very successful, and is always recalled by Shalahuddin activists with enthusiasm.

Despite the fact that those people who arranged the Maulid Pop are regarded as the founding fathers of Shalahuddin, the program itself is not referred to as the birth of the organisation—mostly because the name of Jamaah Shalahuddin was not used until months later. This name was used for the first time in an RIC (Ramadhan in Campus) program, for a very simple reason: they needed a name for the committee to be announced to the audience. The organisation is named after a well-known Muslim hero during the so-called Crusades, Shalahuddin al Ayyubi. Most Shalahuddin members claimed that there was no particular reason for choosing this name. The person who announced the name of the RIC Committee remembered ‘Shalahuddin’ and felt that it would be a good name for the committee. However, a later source informed me that Shalahuddin al Ayyubi was a person who “could communicate with everyone in every side, and that’s why we use his name”. All Shalahuddin activists whom I spoke with replied ‘no’, when asked if the name was chosen based on any specific consideration such as ‘reproducing’ the spirit of the Crusades—which to some extent implies an anti-Christian feeling. On the one hand, it would difficult to discount this isolated statement, that the name choice reflected a willingness of Shalahuddin to inherit such spirit. On the other hand, there is no evidence that corroborates this speculation. Since Jamaah Shalahuddin was started with a Maulud commemoration, I would speculate that the reason the committee chose the name was because Shalahuddin al Ayyubi was the first person to start the Maulud tradition. He did so for the purpose of maintaining and restoring the Muslim forces’ spirit during the Crusades.
The Consolidation of *Jamaah Shalahuddin*

For the next three years, *Jamaah Shalahuddin* was simply the name of a group conducting a series of popular *dakwah* programs. People might not have realised at that time who or what the organisation was. They simply knew that the Friday prayer in the *Gelanggang* student hall once a week, as well as the annual *Ramadhan in Campus* program, was conducted by ‘*Jamaah Shalahuddin*’. This ‘organisation’ did not even have a chairman or an office. It was Ahmad Fanani, who was very influential amongst the other *Shalahuddin* founders, who always tried to prevent the group’s formalisation; he worried it would involve *Shalahuddin* in student political activities. Fanani was regarded by other founders as the group’s coordinator, rather than chairman.

Three years later, however, it was felt that the organisation could not be continued in such anomic-group manner. In the interests of sustaining the organisation, it was decided it needed a more definitive format. What was needed at that moment was to organise the group and ensure the process of cadre preparation. In 1979, *Shalahuddin* became a formal organisation; it elected a chairman was elected and occupied an office in the *Gelanggang* student hall. Later, the Statutes and the Rules—the *Tata Barisan* and *Tata Gerak*—were formulated. The chairman’s initial task was to establish a formal board, and to continue the existing activities, including the newly started publishing section. Another important aim was to define the board’s position in Gadjah Mada’s organisational structure.

Basically, as a student organisation established on the campus, *Shalahuddin* was automatically one of Gadjah Mada’s Student Activity Units (*Unit Kegiatan Mahasiswa*, UKM) at the university. But unlike the other Units, *Shalahuddin* was not organisationally under the Student Council or *Senat Mahasiswa*. This was because *Shalahuddin* claimed that it was not part of the *Dewan Mahasiswa* (the name of the Indonesian university’s Student Councils, banned when the NKK/BKK policy was implemented). *Dewan Mahasiswa* was very independent and very critical of the government. *Shalahuddin* was trying to ‘play safe’ by keeping a distance from student political activities. *Shalahuddin*’s leaders believed that their *dakwah* activities at the campus would be banned by the state if they entered the political dimension of student activities.
One of the first challenges to *Shalahuddin* was an effort by Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs Daoed Joesoef in 1980, to ban *Shalahuddin* because he believed that some members of the organisation’s board were involved in several student protests against the NKK policy. The Rector of Gadjah Mada University refused this order. Although the Minister did not do anything further regarding the banning of *Shalahuddin*, he later questioned the conduct of Friday and *Tarawih* prayer in the Gadjah Mada student hall. The Minister said that allocating the hall exclusively for *Shalahuddin* every Friday afternoon and every night during the Muslim fasting month was not fair to other student organisations. Besides, argued the Minister, the prayers should be conducted in the mosque, not in the student hall. It was reported that some *Shalahuddin* board members saw the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, AR Fahruddin, and asked him for support regarding the Friday and *Tarawih* prayer. Fahruddin convinced the *Shalahuddin* members that he fully supported the conduct of both prayers in the student hall, and told them to tell whoever disagrees to come and speak with him.\(^{19}\) *Shalahuddin* also learnt a lesson from an unsolved murder case in the late 1970s. A student at Yogyakarta’s State Islamic Educational Institute, who had a very close relationship with *Shalahuddin*, and was very active in practical politics, was found dead with a bullet-hole in his head. Some people believed he was killed by the military because he always made trouble for the government.\(^{20}\) Needless to say, it was a difficult time for the organisation, also because one of its founders was the chairman of Gadjah Mada Student Council.

Formally, *Shalahuddin* was under the coordination of Vice Rector for Student Affairs, with the mediation of the Consultative Board (*Penasehat*), the members of which are *Shalahuddin* alumni who are lecturers at the university. As an organisation under the coordination of the university’s bureaucracy, *Shalahuddin* activities were supposed to be funded by the university budget. However, the university had limited finances and could not cover all *Shalahuddin*’s funding needs. As a result, it could only assist the organisation once a year with the *Ramadhan in Campus* program. The university provided merely a few hundred of thousands of rupiah; a small percentage of the 20 million rupiah needed for a RIC program. In addition, *Shalahuddin* feared that relying on the university for funding could result in the organisation losing its ‘independence’. Therefore, the organisation claimed to use the university funds less than other sources, and does not ask the university for more money, except as a loan. Fortunately, the weekly Friday prayers, and the daily *Tarawih* prayers during the fasting month, are generous sources of funding for
Jamaah Shalahuddin – Abdul Gaffar Karim

Shalahuddin. During those events, donation boxes (*kotak infaq*) are passed around the congregation. In one single Friday prayer Shalahuddin can raise Rp100,000 to Rp200,000—and twice as much in each *Tarawih* prayer. Millions of rupiah can also be raised from many donors prior to, and during, the fasting month of Ramadhan. The organisation also holds some shares in a Shalahuddin alumnus-owned Islamic-style export import bank in Yogyakarta, Al Ikhlas.\(^2\) As they are to some extent financially independent, Shalahuddin is able to maintain its autonomy and neutrality in the broader context, as desired by the founders. This independence is the most visible consistency of the organisation.

**Testing the Political Area**

Up until early 1990s the non-political manner and the consolidation process of Shalahuddin seemed to be sufficient for the needs of the organisation. However, as is the case of any organisation, Shalahuddin is also part of the social and political dynamics around it. In the early 1990s, the Indonesian political atmosphere started to witness what the authorities claimed was an ‘openness’ policy. In this policy, the political restrictions over societal movements were loosened slightly. One can also notice the growing opportunity for political Islam to participate in political processes at a national level at this period of time. This is not to say that the openness policy was a significant political liberation given by the state to the society, but one of the important impacts of the policy toward the Student Movement was that the psychological borderline between political and non-political areas was gradually withering away. The hesitation of Shalahuddin to involve itself in the political aspects of the Student Movement was to some extent, and for some members, practically reconsidered.

This reconsideration was an important tendency in 1990s, which was demonstrated by events when Shalahuddin was used as a ‘political path’ to positions in the Student Council by some of its activists. In the mid 1990s, three elections for the Student Council were won by those who claimed to represent Shalahuddin via the ‘*Partai Bunderan*’ or the ‘Roundabout Party’, one of the factions in the council, named after a big roundabout in front of Gadjah Mada’s main entrance. While most Shalahuddin people did not criticise this, they still debated on whether to see it either as a rise in the political consciousness of Shalahuddin, or as a decrease in its neutrality. It seemed that the mainstream of
Shalahuddin believe that neutrality was one of the organisation’s most important legacies, and that maintaining this neutrality was still a very important agenda item. However, because that the political aspects were also important, and because it was no longer a dangerous zone for the Student Movement, the debate was concluded by an agreement that stopping the growth of political tendency among some of Shalahuddin people was not a top priority. The demarcation line agreed was that the growth of political tendencies should not affect Shalahuddin’s neutrality for the interest of dakwah conduct, which is the bottom line of the organisation.

Those who took part in this ‘political awareness’ did not do so without reason. The justification is found in the stages of dakwah formulated by Shalahuddin itself. The dakwah should be started at individual level, continued at the family level, and reach its peak at the societal level. Since Shalahuddin exists on a university campus, the highest stage of its dakwah is the level of campus society and institutions. Gaining positions in the Student Council is part of the dakwah method for the societal level. It is important to note that the ‘rise of political consciousness’ was more-or-less an unintended event. A source informed me that it began when the Student Council annual general meeting took place only a few weeks after a Ramadhan in Campus program. More than a half of the meeting’s participants were those involved in the committee of the Ramadhan in Campus program, and it gave ‘Shalahuddin’ a strong bargaining position. When it came to electing the Student Council chairman, predictably, ‘the Shalahuddin faction’ won the vote.

The Role of Women

Another important tendency in the 1990s was a growing anxiety among the female members of Shalahuddin regarding their role in the organisation. This anxiety to a very large extent related to the spread of feminist ideas and movements in Indonesia, a resonance of that in global context. As at most organisations in Indonesia (and in broader context: in this ‘masculine world’), Shalahuddin was founded and consolidated mostly according to the male perspective. None of Shalahuddin’s founders was a woman and, to date, Shalahuddin has not had a female chairperson. Although female leadership in Shalahuddin is not explicitly forbidden, the fact that its members are predominantly male is the most common reason why this organisation has never had a female in its top leadership, and why it has never witnessed female candidacy for the chairperson position.
During the consolidation process, in which Shalahuddin was set up to become more sophisticated organisation, the role of women was formally narrowed and relegated to the Women’s Affairs section. This section was to take responsibility for all activities relating to women’s particular interests and needs. This section, the head of which is never a male, is typical of Islamic organisations in Indonesia that have special structures to deal with woman affairs such as Fatayat and Muslimat in NU, or Aisyiyah in Muhammadiyah. It was argued that a section with the specific purpose of dealing with women’s affairs in Shalahuddin was needed to facilitate and encourage the female members of the organisation to develop their potential. Even the code of dakwah conduct is set up separately between that for male and female targets. The dakwah conduct for male targets is covered in the general plan for dakwah movement (RUGD), while that for female targets is covered in the plan for female dakwah movement (RGDK). The differences lie in the technical methods of dakwah, not in the substance.

In the early 1990s, some people began to criticise the streamlining of female members to a specific section and technical method of dakwah. Some felt that these were “dummy structure and methods, and a sign of obvious discrimination.” As a result, actions were taken to encourage the integration of RUGD and RGD Keputrian. In 1995 Program Planning 1995/1996 to decree that the RGD Keputrian was integrated to the RGD, although both were still referred to in separate articles. This was a victory for those who opposed the separation of men and women. Nevertheless, I would argue that the role of women in Shalahuddin is still problematic. Shalahuddin female members still do not have an active role in the organisation as do their male counterparts. Despite continued criticism and steps to reduce sexual discrimination, particularly as it relates to promotion on the Shalahuddin board, no substantial change has occurred.

**Shalahuddin’s Dakwah: Goals and Targets**

One of the goals of Jamaah Shalahuddin was to seek a safe, middle path for dakwah to overcome the classical rivalry between HMI and GMNI mentioned above. It was also dedicated to becoming an independent dakwah organisation on campus; not connected with any extra-university student organisation. Or, as re-formulated later in Boulevard, commemorating the 20th anniversary of Shalahuddin, the organisation aimed to “create a
format of *dakwah* that is free from any influence of practical politics”. The focus of *dakwah* is the Muslim community in and around Gadjah Mada University campus. They never tried to convert any non-Muslims. As one of *Shalahuddin* former chairmen told me, “we do not want anyone to change their belief to Islam. Our aim is to sharpen Muslims’ commitment to Islam”. In fact, I have never heard of any case in which ‘conversion to Islam’ occurs in *Shalahuddin*.

*Shalahuddin* claims that all Muslim students at the university are its members, and all of its programs are provided for them as the media of *dakwah*. The organisation divides its targets of *dakwah* into four categories:

1. The outer group, those who do not understand and are not interested in Islam. This is the largest group and the *dakwah* aims to make them interested in and then understand Islam by conducting book exhibitions or popular-Islamic lectures.

2. Those that are interested in, but according to *Shalahuddin* activists, do not really understand and are as yet not committed to Islam. The *dakwah* to this group aims to build their commitment to Islam. This is done by providing Islamic lessons and discussions, especially during the Islamic holiday commemorations.

3. Those who understand, are interested in and are committed to Islam, but are not yet involved in *dakwah*, by trying to deepen other Muslims’ commitment to Islam through religious activism. This is the middle group. Methods of *dakwah* used for them try to maintain or restore their commitment to Islam by conducting some *khalaqah* (intensive discussion) on Islamic issues. This is aimed at encouraging them to be involved in *dakwah* activities.

4. Those who are involved in *dakwah* activities. This is the core group, and is the driving force of *dakwah* itself. In defining the obligations of those who understand Islam to involve themselves in *dakwah* endeavours, *Shalahuddin*’s Rules quotes a verse from the Qur’an, which translates to: “Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining Al-Ma’ruf and forbidding Al-Munkar. And it is them who are successful” (Ali Imran: 104).

A categorisation of *Shalahuddin*’s *dakwah* targets and aims is presented in the following figure.
Dakwah activities are focused on the outer group. The majority of Shalahuddin’s activists have an abangan (nominal Muslim) background, and studied Islam intensively only after they become university students. According to one of Shalahuddin’s former general-secretaries, 80% of Shalahuddin activists are from an abangan background, and began their commitment to Islam in the organisation. Meanwhile, according to this source, some

Source: Extracted from the *Tata Gerak*, art. 10 and 11; interview with one of JS ex-chairmen, 21/5/1999
santris at Gadjah Mada University were not willing to join Shalahuddin, because for them “the environment of Shalahuddin was ‘less Islamic’ [than their previous environment mostly at the pesantren]”. \(^3^1\) How abangan students began their activities in the organisation in a very ‘abangan manner’ was explained by an early Shalahuddin chairman:

> We used to have a friend, who was very active [in Shalahuddin], but he did not do the salat [the ritual prayers] yet. He was student at the Faculty of Maths and Science and was very good in electronics stuff. So, he took the responsibility of maintaining the sound system for Friday prayer. And he really did that! While others did the Friday prayer, he just sat and made sure that everything was all right with the sound system. But he is a good Muslim now.\(^3^2\)

Internally, Shalahuddin claims to develop an environment—in which its activists are interacting with each other—with a high moral standard on the basis of the Islamic values, but in a loose and inclusive manner. There is a common agreement, for instance, that dating and smoking are to be avoided by Shalahuddin members, because such things result in more disadvantages than advantages. Interestingly, they also claim that judging people is not part of Shalahuddin morality. They believe that people themselves can learn what is wrong and what is right, and Shalahuddin merely provides an atmosphere conducive to the learning process. The fact that all of Shalahuddin female activists now wear the jilbab, for example, resulted from the wave of religious consciousness during the late 1980s, not because the organisation wanted its female activists to do so. This may sound contradictory: Shalahuddin develops some moral standards on the one hand, and maintains such standards quite loosely on the other. But here, in this ‘contradictory method’, lies the real attraction of the organisation to the abangan students who are obviously the main target of dakwah. Shalahuddin deliberately adheres to this path.

For nearly ten years, Shalahuddin relied on the conduct of Friday prayer and the commemoration of Islamic Holidays, such as Idul Adha, Isra’ Mi’raj, and, especially the Ramadhan month, for its dakwah activities. \(^3^3\) Initially, Ramadhan commemorations were held as part of the ‘Ramadhan in Campus’ program—the name was indeed English, not Indonesian. The reason for using an English name for the first program was a bit naive: it
wanted to be seen as modern. But later, the organisation started to realise that modernity did not have to always be equated with ‘Westernisation’, and the Ramadhan program could be ‘modern’ in terms of its managerial aspects, i.e., the content and conduct, not Westernised by name. Therefore, the program’s name was then changed to be ‘Ramadhan di Kampus’ (RDK), the precise translation of the English name. RDK is not only a medium for conducting dakwah to the student and campus community; it is also the medium for santri-isising lecturers from abangan background at Gadjah Mada and other universities in Yogyakarta. During the Holy Month Shalahuddin conducts the Ramadhan’s popular lecture twice a day, i.e., after the Subuh (dawn) prayer in the morning and after Tarawih prayer in the evening, and holds a weekly discussion forum. During these events, Shalahuddin invites not only popular Muslim intellectuals, to attract people, but also the abangan intellectuals to speak before the congregation on any Islamic-related topics—all speakers’ names were announced on a billboard in front of the campus main gate. By inviting those abangan intellectuals to talk about Islamic-related topics in relatively religious events, Shalahuddin is compelling them to study Islam just before giving the speech. Some of Muslim intellectuals in Yogyakarta during the 1990s were the products of Shalahuddin’s fait accompli methods.

It is also important to highlight that the Ramadhan in Campus committee is always the most effective means for of recruiting new Shalahuddin activists. The one-month program is the longest program conducted by the organisation, and has the biggest committee. The committee usually consists of 200 people or more (it has been as high as 600), who are recruited by an open announcement. They work together for one month toward one single objective: to commemorate the Holy Month the best they can. A commitment to Islamic dakwah is always restored amongst them at the same time. By the end of the program, a network has been also established. Usually less than three months later the annual Musyawarah Akbar or the grand meeting of Shalahuddin is held to review the current chairman and board, as well as to elect the chairman for the next year. Most of the members of Ramadhan in Campus committee attend this conference, and later become members of the next Shalahuddin board. The period of a Shalahuddin’s board is officially based on the Hijria year, started on 1 Muharram (first month of the Hijria). Shalahuddin’s formal board always needs lots of people to participate. The board consists of nine sections, each of which is divided into departments.
The Islamic Holiday commemorations discussed above use similar core methods: popular *dakwah* that is able to reach the broadest possible audience. The most prominent method is art performances. Obviously, the spirit started by *Shalahuddin* founders in the *Maulid Pop* 1976 is consistently renewed by the heirs. The last big art performance was held during the 1996 *Ramadhan In Campus* program when the organisation invited one of the most famous *dalangs* (Javanese traditional puppeteers) in Central Java, Ki Anom Suroto, to perform an all-night *Wayang* (Javanese traditional puppet show) at the university. Suroto was chosen because he was appraised to “be more educated and intelligent then other *dalangs*; and to understand Islam better than other *dalangs* ... and he is able to finish the performance before the call for dawn prayer”.

By the mid 1980s, new concerns arose and soon brought about significant developments to the *dakwah* endeavours of *Shalahuddin*. Relying on Islamic holiday commemorations and the weekly Friday prayer for *dakwah* was felt to be inadequate for the needs of *dakwah* itself. At the same time, most Muslim activists at Gadjah Mada University felt that the Islamic Studies Lectures were no longer effective for building the Muslim students’ commitment to, or at least understanding of, Islam. In 1986, *Shalahuddin* cooperated with the Islamic section of the Student Councils of all faculties at Gadjah Mada, and conducted a poll of Muslim students on the effectiveness of the Islamic Studies. They found that most Muslim students thought the lectures were ineffective. They also found that there were many Muslim students at the university who could not do the *salat*, and many more who could not read the Qur’an (which is written in Arabic script).

As a consequence of this poll, *Shalahuddin* developed an Islamic Studies Assistance program, which referred to the model that had been established at the Faculty of Medicine. The university bureaucracy fully supported the idea, and soon after declared that, among others, *Shalahuddin* was to take responsibility for the assistance program. It is
interesting that the university bureaucracy immediately supported the idea. On the one hand, the support might be related to a policy aimed at concentrating students’ attention on non-political activities such as the Islamic dakwah. On the other hand, Shalahuddin itself might have been effective in lobbying the university that Islamic Studies Assistance was urgently needed. If the latter were the case, the contribution of the Shalahuddin’s Consultative Board in lobbying the university on behalf of the organisation, should be noted. However, the Rector of Gadjah Mada University did not agree with the use of the term ‘assistance’. His rationale was that assistance would need assistants, and that the university would be expected to pay their wages. The problem was there would not be any fund allocation for the wages from the university budget. The term pendampingan (mentoring) was chosen instead, which would be conducted by voluntary pendamping (mentors). The complete name is Pendampingan Agama Islam (Islamic Studies Mentoring), and was first implemented in 1987. It was coordinated by Shalahuddin at the university level, and conducted by the Islamic section (Seksi Kerohanian Islam, SKI) in the student council in each faculty, with an ad hoc committee named Tim/Korps PAI, or the Islamic Studies Assistance Team/Corps.³⁹

Usually on the first day of an Islamic Studies Lecture, the lecturer provides ten minutes for the SKI people to introduce the Islamic Studies Mentoring, and recommend the students attend the mentoring sessions. Because it is announced on the first day of the Islamic Studies Lectures, the mentoring is seen to be compulsory by the first year students. In fact, the sessions were not compulsory, and basically have no direct relationship with the lecture. But it has been Shalahuddin’s most popular program since the mid-1980s. Islamic Studies Mentoring can reach virtually all new Muslim students at the university, while its other programs cannot. Islamic Studies Mentoring sessions are conducted once a week, and for students who cannot read the Qur’an some special purpose sessions are offered. In an Islamic Studies Mentoring session, the students are divided into small groups of approximately ten people with one or two mentors. The mentors conduct a needs assessment in the first session to make sure that the subsequent sessions are organised to meet the needs of the participants. In the forum, the students can discuss any aspect of Islam, but there are some major objectives to follow, or to achieve, by both the mentors and participants. Firstly, the mentors should encourage the participants to study and to understand the basic values of Islam, and to implement them consistently. Secondly, the participants should be able to do the salat properly. Third, they should also understand the
concept of science and knowledge in Islam. And fourth, they should be able to read the Qur’an properly.40

In the beginning, those main objectives were simply unwritten agreements amongst the mentors. But they were later formulated in a detailed syllabus that gives mentors some guidelines containing general and specific objectives of the four main areas above. In 1992, a book entitled ‘Meniti jalan Islam (To follow the path of Islam)’ was published by Shalahuddin and was based on themes discussed in Islamic Studies Mentoring sessions. In recognition of the program’s success, the introduction was written by Amien Rais, one of the most prominent Muslim intellectuals in Yogyakarta and later the Chairman of the Indonesian People’s Assembly. Shalahuddin has also used publication as one of its dakwah methods. This began with leaflets during the RIC 1976 (the Ramadhan News) and then continued with simple leaflets distributed at Friday prayer congregation. This kind of weekly leaflet is regularly printed and distributed by Shalahuddin, the current version of which is entitled Wa Islama. These leaflets contain practical messages of Islam, such as call for Muslims to fulfil their salat and zakat obligations.41

In 1982 Shalahuddin published a monthly magazine, Gelanggang, under the management of Shalahuddin Press. This is a body that is basically separate from Shalahuddin, but originally was established to support the organisation’s publication effort. It has published many books, either translations from other languages or the writings of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals. This was one of the doors through which the international Islamic discourse (including the Iranian Revolution and the Islamic social-political thinking from Middle East) came to the Indonesian Muslim public. Shalahuddin’s first magazine Gelanggang lasted no longer than one year, due to financial problems and disagreements amongst Shalahuddin board members concerning the focus of the magazine’s content. The magazine did not seem to be a ‘religious’ one, because it did not contain any Islamic or religious topics. It mainly focused on social and cultural issues, and only in the last edition discussed religion, but in the context of inter-religious relations and dialogue.42 The Shalahuddin inner board wanted Gelanggang to be more ‘religious’, while those who were in charge of the press (included one of Shalahuddin founders, Ahmad Fanani) preferred a secular publication. But the real power was the Shalahuddin formal board (which had been established for nearly four years, still under the same chairman), who banned the magazine.
after its 12th edition. Those formerly responsible for the magazine subsequently resigned from Shalahuddin Press in disappointment.\textsuperscript{43}

\textit{Gelanggang} was Shalahuddin’s greatest achievement in publishing since it accurately represented the organisation’s true \textit{dakwah} spirit and idealism. For years, Shalahuddin’s ‘experimental magazines’—such as the \textit{Islamic Courier}, \textit{Shalahuddin}, and the last one, \textit{Boulevard}—failed to achieve the success of their pioneer. \textit{Boulevard} is managed more professionally than \textit{Gelanggang} was, but it is sometimes more a mouthpiece of Shalahuddin, which expresses the organisation from an ‘I perspective’, rather than a pure media of \textit{dakwah}. Furthermore, \textit{Boulevard} can hardly compete with \textit{Balairung} magazine and \textit{Bulaksumur} tabloid published by the student press at Gadjah Mada. Those competitors are managed very professionally by well-trained students who are focusing their activity in the BPM (\textit{Badan Penerbitan Mahasiswa}, the student publication board) almost full time.

Finally, in doing \textit{dakwah}, Shalahuddin also established a network with other organisations. Some Shalahuddin-like organisations at prominent university campuses (included UGM, ITB, University of Indonesia, Bogor Institute of Agriculture, and Airlangga University) established the FSLDK, \textit{Forum Silaturrahmi Lembaga Dakwah Kampus}, and the Network Forum for Campus Dakwah Institutions, in early 1980s. This forum has developed a very sophisticated network, covering almost all of the Islamic student organisations on university campuses, and which later spread to off-campus areas. Thanks to internet technology, this network now reaches a global audience through the \textit{Isnet}.\textsuperscript{44}

The Limit

Despite all the above successes, Shalahuddin has many limitations. The most problematic limitation is the personnel handicap: Shalahuddin’s activists are students who leave the campus when they complete their study. The Shalahuddin leadership cycle is indeed very fast—or maybe even too fast—so the organisation’s concepts and ideas are never fully realised. No matter how hard Shalahuddin work, and how sophisticated their methods become, there is still a significant untouched area in which \textit{abangan} students remain. As mentioned earlier, Shalahuddin claims that every Muslim student in Gadjah Mada is automatically a member of the organisation; once Muslim youths are enrolled as students of Gadjah Mada University, they become members of Shalahuddin. However, many
Muslim students do not even know about Shalahuddin’s activities. They are only aware that Shalahuddin is an Islamic student organisation at the university. Some of these students view the organisation as an exclusive group with a specific mission of dakwah. Since the current generation is a product of the New Order’s political socialisation process, they tend to regard anything related to such a ‘specific mission’ of Islam as potentially ‘dangerous’. And as implied above, Shalahuddin publications are unable to reach readers outside the university community. ‘Written dakwah’ is yet to be developed more properly by the organisation. Another weakness concerns Islamic Studies Mentoring. Most mentors in the program are beginners; thus many students find the mentoring sessions slightly confusing, while others feel they know more about Islam than the mentors. As a consequence, for many students the sessions have lost their appeal. In response to this problem, Shalahuddin has revised the recruitment of mentors. They select mentors more carefully, and conduct a training session for those who have passed the ‘mentor test’. This mentor selection was conducted for the first time in May 1997 in the Faculty of Philosophy.

Conclusion

What does the Shalahuddin experience tell us? Social change in Indonesian Muslim community during the New Order relates to several factors, including historical and global factors. In this study I have discussed specifically the structural factors in New Order politics that contributed to the change in Indonesian Muslim society, in which the rise of new santri took place. The structural factors include the New Order’s development and modernisation and particularly its political restriction and co-optation of societal powers. These factors resulted in the formation of an environment in Indonesian Muslim communities conducive to change. The Indonesian Muslim community itself possesses the prospect for change. Looking at its history, one can see that Islam in Indonesia has been going through a schism, especially between santri and abangan on the one hand, and by extension, the division between Islam and the state on the other. But these divisions were subject to change and simply needed a more receptive environment which was provided by New Order politics, and by the Islamic response.

The New Order restrictions over society forced the santri Muslim groups to focus on cultural arenas through which they could bring their religion and values to the broader
context of Muslim society. This was primarily because the state discouraged political Islam while simultaneously supporting cultural and pietistic Islam. Therefore, *dakwah* activities are carried out more easily, and can reach a broader audience, for they are no longer labelled a formal political activity. Development and economic modernisation during the New Order raised the prosperity of most Indonesians, including the *santri*. Many more *santris* went to ‘secular’ schools and universities. With a higher level of education, many *santri* took on professional careers, either in the public or private sectors. The *santri* brought with them the *santri* values when they entered a ‘secular’ environment, and encouraged growth of Islamic consciousness. The introduction of *santri* values to *abangan* people began in educational institutions, especially universities. In fact, on a university campus, the *santri*-ification process of *abangan* people is evident.

It is also important to note that the rise of new *santri* is also related to the growth of new Islamic thinking in Indonesia. This was the result of development processes and achievements that ushered most Indonesian people into changing and confusing social conditions. Starting with questions such as how Islam could become more relevant in this social confusion, new Islamic thinking encouraged the involvement of the whole *ummat* (Muslim community), not exclusively the *santri* people, in Islamic discourses. This was achieved because, since the mid 1980s, Islam has no longer been identified as the ‘political enemy’ of the state. Together, these factors accelerated Islamic revivalism in Indonesia and increased the number of devout Muslims. Some of the findings in this study are not new; it has not discussed anything new about social change in Indonesian Muslim communities during the New Order. Assumptions about Indonesian Islamic revivalism, along with the factors contributing to it, have been broadly quoted. However, this study has focused on one aspect of social change which is usually overlooked in the study of Indonesian Islam: the conversion from *abangan* to *santri* which is socially apparent.

This study does not maintain that the *santri*-abangan divide in Indonesian Islam has disappeared. The schism still exists. However, the balance has shifted toward the *santri*, due to the addition of those who have *abangan* background into the *santri* population. These are the new *santri* people. The case of *Jamaah Shalahuddin* shows that the rise and existence of new *santri* is significant. The *dakwah* projects were indeed aimed at *santri*-ising the *abangan*-Muslim people in the Gadjah Mada university campus; both students and lecturers. Founded by *santri* students, *Shalahuddin* is currently managed mostly by
those who come from an *abangan* background. These new *santri* people are the main energy of *Jamaah Shalahuddin* in conducting *dakwah* activities. The dynamics of *Shalahuddin* also seem to parallel the dynamics of Islam-state relations in Indonesia. Since the mid-1980s, *Shalahuddin* seems to be more effective in providing *dakwah* to *abangan* students, as shown by the conduct of Islamic Studies Assistance (PAI) and the founding of the Network Forum for Campus *Dakwah* Institutions (FSLDK). Since the mid-1980s, Islam-state relations in the broader context have improved. When Islam and the state were no longer antagonistic, and the Muslim groups focused their activities on the cultural rather than the political aspects of Islam, *dakwah* activities focused more acutely on the core objective of improving Muslims’ commitment to Islam.

*Looking at the Post New Order Era: Epilogue*¹⁶

In the final years of the Suharto-era, the opposition movement was dominated more by the nationalist-secular groups than the Islamic. Elements of Islamic groups, particularly the political wing represented by HMI and, more importantly, the ICMI (the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals, founded in 1990) under the leadership of Habibie-Vice-President since the 1998 People’s Assembly (MPR) Session- had a closer relationship with Suharto than ever before. The government accused PRD (Democratic People Party, a leftist Student Movement, rival for most Islamic student groups) of being responsible for the 27 July 1996 riot.⁴⁷ Simultaneously, the Suharto government maintained a good relationship with some Muslim groups, which kept them from joining the hardline opposition powers. Aspinall⁴⁸ indicates that HMI maintained a soft tone in the political reform campaign, avoiding hardline issues such as forcing Suharto from power.

HMI’s hesitancy to show a firm position in the reform-movement was also witnessed at Gadjah Mada. HMI had become increasingly antagonistic towards the FSLDK, especially *Jamaah Shalahuddin*, and the HMI’s hesitancy gave the latter the opportunity to accelerate its politicisation, and to take more overt actions which put it at the forefront of the student reform movement. Just one month before the fall of Suharto, *Shalahuddin* joined other members of FSLDK from 63 universities around the country in their 10th forum in Malang to launch their political wing. On 29 April, KAMMI (Indonesian Muslim Students’ Action Front) was formed, and later became an important part of the Muslim student political movement at Gadjah Mada during the reform era. Under pressure from both intra- and extra-parliamentary sources, Suharto resigned the presidency to Vice-President Habibie on
21 May 1998. The Indonesian political stage changed radically as many new political parties emerged. One of these was the PK (the Justice Party), later transformed into the PKS (the Prosperous Justice Party), which has very strong linkages with the university students’ *dakwah* activities. The PKS has been an important party that was able to secure important political positions, including the Speaker of the MPR since 2004. Following the rollercoaster relationship with President Wahid, and its oppositional standing during Megawati presidency, the PKS tends to maintain closer a relationship with President Yudhoyono.

In Yogyakarta, ex-Shalahuddin members play a significant role in the PKS. One of the former chairmen of Shalahuddin was elected as member of the Yogyakarta Local Council from the PKS in the 2004 elections. Since 1999, the Shalahuddin top leadership has been dominated by KAMMI people, and vice versa, the branch of KAMMI at Gadjah Mada is dominated by alumni of Shalahuddin. It is obvious that what was started as a network of *dakwah* movements in the 1980s has become a political network, in which Shalahuddin, KAMMI and PKS are strongly connected. The Shalahuddin’s connection with political Islam, however, raises questions about the reach of *dakwah* activities to abangan students who most likely have different political preferences from those of Shalahuddin and its network. This means that further research into Shalahuddin’s *dakwah* activities under its political connection after 1998 would be very important.

**Notes**

1. Prof. Mitsuo Nakamura, personal email communication, 13/2/1999.
6. Dakwah can be defined as “[e]fforts to improve thought and behaviour to be in accord with ideal Islamic standards” and “[t]he public efforts by Islamic groups to upgrade the general behaviour of the Muslim community”. Federspiel, H. 1995, *A dictionary of Indonesian Islam*, Monograph in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series Number 94. Athens: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, p. 45:
9 In Almond’s classical work, anomic group is defined as a type of interest group, which is not formally organised, usually established by those whose interests are not represented by any formal organisations. See Almond, G. (ed.). 1974, Comparative politics today: a world view, Boston: Little, Crown and Company, p. 74.

10 Interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board, 29/4/1999. Tarawih prayer is daily prayer conducted during Muslim’s fasting month.

11 Other source adds these names to the list: Jafnan TA, Erlius, and Hadi Prihatin (see Boulevard, 2/IV/1997), but the five-name list seems to be more agreed than this one.


13 Since they wanted to end the ‘red-green’ conflict, they did not want to be either red or green. Later, some activists of Jamaah Shalahuddin prefer to call themselves ‘santri biru’ (‘blue santri’) — a joke made up from the fact that “the color of blue is the mixture of red and green” (sic!). Interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin, student at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, 21/5/1999.

14 Interview with one of Shalahuddin’s earlier chairman, 25/5/1999.

15 Interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board, 29/4/1999.

16 Interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board, 29/4/1999.

17 The Statutes and Rules are occasionally updated, considering recent social condition. The last updated Statutes and Rules can be found at the following URLs: http://www.geocities/Shalahuddin/Tata_Gerak.htm http://www.geocities/Shalahuddin/Tata_Barisan.htm.

The use of Tata Gerak and Tata Barisan terms is uncommon in Indonesian language. Usually people use the term anggaran dasar for the statutes, and anggaran rumah tangga for the rules. The terms tata gerak and tata barisan sound more ‘active’ than ordinary terms. Gerak means movement; barisan means row, which refers to the row of salat jamaah (congregational prayer) usually known as shaf. But the spirit of such unusual terms was based on Shalahuddin’s adaptation to strengthened state control after the sole principle policy. Formulating anggaran dasar and anggaran rumah tangga as the statutes and the rules was avoided mainly because Jamaah Shalahuddin did not want to mention anything about ‘azaz’ (principle)—which is usually presented in the anggaran dasar. By doing so, they could avoid mentioning Pancasila as their principle, without entering any political discourse or getting involved in conflicts with the authorities (Interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin, student at the Faculty of Maths and Science, 2 June 1999).

18 Interview with one of Shalahuddin’s earlier chairman.

19 Interviews with two former Shalahuddin’s chairmen; interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board. See also Boulevard 2/IV/1997.

20 Interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board, 29/4/1999.

21 Interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin, 18/5/1999.

22 Interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin, student at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, 18/5/1999. This person was later a board member of United Action of Indonesian Muslim Student (KAMMI) in Yogyakarta.

23 Interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin.

24 Interviews with two of Shalahuddin’s former chairmen.

25 Interviews with two female members of women’s affair section board.


28 Extracted from the Tata Gerak, art. 10 and 11; interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin, 21/5/1999.

29 Quotations of above verses are based on the English translation of Qur’an by Al-Hilali, M.T. and Khan, M.M. 1994. Interpretation on the meaning of the Noble Qur’an. Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam. Al-Ma’ruf is defined as “Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do”; and Al-Munkar is defined as “polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden” (pp. 103f).

30 Email interviews.

31 Email interviews.

32 Interview with Shalahuddin’s earlier chairman, 25/5/1999.
Idul Adha means “the feast of sacrifice”, the day when Muslims sacrifice a particular animal (usually goat or cow) — i.e., those who can afford it — and give the meat to the poor as charity. “It is generally held by ... (the Muslims) to have been instituted in commemoration of Abraham’s willingness to offer up his son as a sacrifice” (Hughes, T.P. 1982, *Dictionary of Islam*, New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, p. 192-4). Isra’ Mi’raj means “the nocturnal journey and the ascent”. It was the Prophet Muhammad’s “supposed journey to haven” and to *Aqsha* mosque in Jerusalem (p. 351f). In this journey, the Prophet received from *Allah* the order of five prayers every day for his followers. Ramadhan is the ninth month of Hijriah year (the lunar system based calendar used by Muslims). In this month, every adult Muslim is obliged to fast from dawn to sunset, with the exemption of those who are ill or have any physical handicap (p. 533-5).

Interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board, 29/4/1999.

Interview with a member of Shalahuddin Consultative Board; interview with one of Shalahuddin’s earlier chairman; interview with a former general secretary of Shalahuddin.

Interview with a former chairman of Shalahuddin, 21/5/1999.

This course is compulsory for all first year Muslim students. Similar courses are also compulsory for other religions (i.e., Catholics, Protestant, Hinduism, and Buddhism — these were the officially-acknowledged religions by the state).

The Islamic section at the student council of the Faculty of Medicine had developed an assistance program for Muslims students who were attending the Islamic Lectures. Senior Muslim students guided their juniors, discussing aspects of Islam once a week, apart from the Islamic Studies Lecture classes. Some Muslim students at the faculty learnt the Arabic letters to read the Qur’an, some others even learnt the technical aspects of their religion (e.g. the Islamic prayer and all requirement to do it), through the assistance sessions.


Salat and zakat are the second and the third items of five foundations of Islamic practical religion, three others of which are, first, to declare that there is no god but *Allah* and Muhammad was His Messenger; fourth, to fast during the Ramadhan month; and fifth, to do the haji pilgrimage for those who can afford it. Zakat literally means purification, but usually it is used to “express a portion of property bestowed in alms, as a sanctification of the remainder to the proprietor” (Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 699).

The complete editions of Gelanggang were held, interestingly, by a Church-owned library in Yogyakarta. I do not know any other library which holds them. Even *Shalahuddin* board does not have every edition of its first magazine.

Boulevard, 2/IV/1997.

See URL: http://www.isnet.org

The euphoria and mushrooming of political parties in Indonesia in the so-called era of reform shows that santri-ism and abangan-ism — i.e.: aliran politics in which santri-abangan schism is also taking place — still exist, as represented by the ideological mapping of the political parties. The descriptions of political parties in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto can be found in Dakhidae, D. *et. al*., 1999. *Partai-partai politik Indonesia: ideologi, strategi dan program*. Jakarta: PT Kompas Media Nusantara.

I would like to thank my friend Titok Hariyanto (IRE Yogya) for his useful comments on this section.

The 27 July 1996 riot, in which the headquarters of the national party PDI was attacked by hundreds of people, was a turning point for the New Order government.


For the profile of members of Local Council of Yogyakarta Province, visit http://www.dprd-diy.go.id/index.cfm?y=profil.

Most of my interviews with ex-*Shalahuddin’s* activists were conducted in the branch secretariat of KAMMI Yogyakarta. Information on the latest activities of KAMMI can be found at its website: http://www.kammi.or.id/