
ISLAM AND THE HABITS OF DEMOCRACY: ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS IN POST-NEW ORDER SOUTH SUMATRA

Elizabeth Fuller Collins

“Democratization will not proceed in Indonesia until it is actively supported by the Islamic community and until the values of democracy are explicitly articulated as compatible with Islamic doctrine.”¹

This paper looks to the grassroots to see how Islamic organizations in the post-Suharto period are responding to the challenge of democratic reform.² Islam has played a crucial role in shaping the politics of Indonesia, and since 1998 Indonesia has been viewed as a test case for the compatibility of Islam and democracy.³ However,

¹ “Islam in Modern Indonesia,” a conference sponsored by the United States-Indonesia Society and Asia Foundation, February 7, 2002. This statement is one of the “key conclusions” in the Executive Summary of the Conference Proceedings. Speakers at the conference included Mark Woodward, Robert Hefner, Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Lies Marcoes Natsir, Greg Fealy, Douglas Ramage, Moeslim Abdurrahman, Rizal Sukma, and Donald Emmerson.

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³ See Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Anders Uhlin, *Indonesia and the “Third Wave of Democratization”: The Indonesian Pro-Democracy Movement in a Changing World* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), and Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

there has been little research on how democratic the internal practices of Islamic organizations are at the local level and how the debate about what democracy means plays out in these organizations. As Anders Uhlin has pointed out, “Islam, like any major religion, is complex enough to lend itself to support all forms of political systems, from the most authoritarian to the most democratic. The question is which interpretations are the most influential and powerful in a certain context.”⁴

My focus on the institutionalization of democratic practices in Islamic organizations at the local level and their discourses on Islam and democracy addresses two questions. The first is whether Islamic organizations could play a central role in supporting a transition to a more democratic and accountable government in Indonesia. The second concerns the effects of the Indonesian government’s policy of supporting democratization through decentralization. In 1999, the Indonesian Parliament passed Laws 22/99 and 25/99, transferring authority over local administration from the central government to the districts and bypassing the provincial government. The policy of decentralization means that Islamic organizations at the local level could contribute to developing a more complex and shared conception of what *demokrasi* (democracy) means and to shaping the ways in which decentralization supports or fails to support democratization. To assess the likelihood that Islamic organizations in Indonesia will support democratization—in the form of regular elections, acceptance of majority rule in decision making, toleration of conflict, open debate of issues, protection of the rights of minorities, and procedures that hold leaders accountable—I observe the activities of local Islamic organizations in the post-Suharto period to see whether more democratic practices are being adopted and if a more complex understanding of democratic concepts and values is emerging.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in Stanley Tambiah’s concept of “participatory rationality.” Drawing on the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tambiah contrasts action based on the means-end calculation of instrumental rationality with participatory rationality in which people appeal to values and commitments shared with others to achieve collective goals.⁵ People apply both instrumental and participatory rationality in organizing collective action. For democratic concepts and values to become legitimate, people must practice applying them successfully in pursuit of their interests and collective projects.⁶ Thus, this essay follows the logic of Anders Uhlin’s assessment that “democratic ideas are considered applicable to the Indonesian context to the extent that people have some kind of material interest in democracy.”⁷

Islamic organizations in South Sumatra vary dramatically in their expressed commitment to or rejection of democratic values and in the way they are politically

⁴ Uhlin, *Indonesia and the “Third Wave of Democratization,”* p. 83.

⁵ See Stanley Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁶ This approach has many similarities to analyses that use the concept of “social capital,” which “refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions,” but it places greater emphasis on the concepts that people appeal to in organizing effective collective action. See Robert Putnam, R. Leonardi, and R. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 167.

⁷ Uhlin, *Indonesia and the “Third Wave of Democratization,”* p. 246.

structured, ranging from Muhammadiyah, which supports democratic values and applies those values in its practices, to the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam) and the Islamist Council of Indonesian Mujahidin (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia), which explicitly reject democracy and have an authoritarian structure. This study suggests that in the more open political environment of the post-Suharto period, the authoritarian Islamic organizations are losing their appeal, and organizations that appeal to Islamic values—such as the unity of the Islamic community and the authority of religious leaders—have begun to change in ways that make their practices more democratic. This study supports the conclusion that the flowering of Islamic organizations and open competition among them builds an awareness of the important advantages of democratic participation in decision making and provides experience in collective action. These comprise important steps toward building a stronger civil society and a more democratic and accountable government at the local level.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part briefly describes the history of Islam in South Sumatra, a province noted for religious piety, and reviews the impact of New Order policies on Islamic organizations in South Sumatra. The second part describes concepts that were central to a debate that emerged in the last decade of the New Order about the relationship of Islam to democracy. The third part consists of case studies of Islamic organizations in South Sumatra, focusing on the conceptions of democracy that are articulated by the local leaders of these organizations and the ways in which their decision making is structured. Included are studies of three long-established organizations known for their moderation and support of democracy—the modernist Muhammadiyah, the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the National Organization of Muslim students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI); three *dakwah* (Islamic mission) organizations founded during the New Order—Mosque Youth (Remaja Masjid), the School Dakwah Forum (Forum Dakwah Sekolah, FORDS), and the Action Committee of Indonesian Muslim Students (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, KAMMI); and two militant Islamic organizations that established branches in South Sumatra in the post-Suharto era, Front Pembela Islam (FPI) and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI).

I. Islam in South Sumatra

The people of Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra, have a reputation for combining entrepreneurial concerns with Islamic piety. Muslim merchants from the Middle East traded in Palembang as early as the tenth century. With the founding of the Palembang Sultanate in the seventeenth century, Palembang became a center for trade with the Arab world and a center of Islamic learning. The most famous Islamic scholar from Palembang was Abd al-Shamad, known as al-Palimbani, the son of a *Sayyid* (a title denoting a direct descendant of the Prophet) from the Hadramaut in Yemen who married a woman from Palembang. Al-Palimbani, who was born around 1700, is said to have been educated in Kedah and Pattani on the Malay Peninsula. Then he was sent to Arabia to continue his education. There he joined the community of Malay Muslims, known as Jawi. Through his writings, al-Palimbani spread neo-Sufi

teachings to Southeast Asia and encouraged Muslims to engage in *jihād* (struggle) against the European colonizers.⁸

During the rule of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin (1775-1804), many traders from the Hadramaut settled in Palembang. In 1885, the Arab community of Palembang, consisting of two thousand people, was the second-largest Hadrami community in Indonesia after Aceh.⁹ The *Alawiyin* (Hadrami elite that claimed descent from the Prophet through his son-in-law Ali) spread a rigorous and devout form of Islam. They sponsored the construction of mosques and neighborhood prayer houses (*langgar*), which also served as Islamic schools. In 1848, Kemas Haji Abd Allah established an Islamic press in Palembang, and the first journal of the Hadrami awakening, *al-Bashir* (The Harbinger) was published in Palembang.¹⁰ According to Dutch records, in 1890 there were 230 institutions of religious education in Palembang, with a total of 4,500 pupils.¹¹ In 1898, Palembang sent 715 pilgrims to Mecca, a number exceeded only by Banten (1,289) and Priangan (837).¹²

In 1913, a local branch of Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association) was established in South Sumatra with 7,246 members (out of eighteen thousand members in all the Netherlands East Indies). At the end of the 1920s and 30s, branches of Muhammadiyah were established in market towns like Pagar Alam and Kota Batu Ranau when youths sent to study in Java or outside Indonesia returned home with the idea of “modernist Islam.” Many people in South Sumatra received their first education in schools established by Muhammadiyah volunteer teachers.¹³ The traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) opened branches in Lahat and Bukit Tinggi in 1936-38.¹⁴ In the first elections of the Indonesian Republic in 1955, the modernist Islamic political party Masyumi won seventeen out of forty seats in the South Sumatra legislature, making it the strongest party in the province.

When regional rebellions claiming Islamic credentials broke out in 1957, the central government acted quickly to prevent South Sumatra from joining these rebellions and to protect the security of its oil installations. General Nasution gave Colonel Ibnu

⁸ See Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII: Melacak Akar-akar Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), pp. 146-47, 251.

⁹ By contrast, there were no more than three hundred Dutch in Palembang in the nineteenth century. See Jeroen Peeters, “Space, Religion, and Conflict: The Urban Ecology of Islamic Institutions in Palembang,” *Issues in Urban Development: Case Studies from Indonesia*, ed. Peter J. M. Nas (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1995), p. 145.

¹⁰ Jeroen Peeters, “Palembang Revisited: Further Notes on the Printing Establishment of Kemas Haji Muhammad Azhari, 1848,” in *International Institute for Asian Studies Yearbook 1995*, ed. Paul van der Velde (Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies, 1995), pp. 181-90, quoted in Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma below the Winds* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 145.

¹¹ Peeters, “Space, Religion, and Conflict,” p. 147.

¹² E.T. van Delden, “De bedevaart naar Mekka van 1898,” *De Indische Gids* 21,1: 553, quoted in Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*, p. 64.

¹³ Author’s interview with Amran Halim, former rector of Sriwijaya University in Palembang, November 1, 2002.

¹⁴ Interview with H. A. Ibrahim Yusun, head of the Provincial Board of PKB-South Sumatra (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, National Awakening Party), conducted by Adang Yuliansyah in 1999.

Sutowo, a Javanese officer known to be loyal to the Republic, command over forces in the province. When the commander of the Palembang garrison joined the rebels and fled with his unit into the forests above Bengkulu, he was hunted down by Ibnu Sutowo's forces.¹⁵ In South Sumatra, support for the rebellion appears to have been due mainly to dissatisfaction with the central government's exploitation of the region's economic resources rather than with Islamic mobilization.

After the coup attempt of September 30, 1965, in which the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) was implicated, the army again moved quickly to control events in South Sumatra. Military units in Palembang began arresting PKI members and people in affiliated groups within days of the coup. Islamic organizations in South Sumatra supported the actions of the military, but local Islamic and Christian youth groups did not actively participate in rounding up people or the killing that followed.¹⁶

During the first twenty-five years of the New Order, South Sumatra enjoyed a visible increase in prosperity due to its oil resources. The middle class in Palembang grew, expanding into suburbs that now ring the city, and a new, rural middle class developed in the hinterlands, especially in the highland coffee-growing areas. Educational opportunities expanded. Sriwijaya University (UNSRI, Universitas Sriwijaya) had been established in 1960 when the national government took over the only private university. There was also a Muhammadiyah Law School, which became a university, and three private Islamic institutions of higher learning. In the early 1960s, the latter were incorporated into the system of State Institutes for the Study of Islam (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, IAIN), becoming IAIN Raden Fatah. During the New Order, eight more institutions of higher education were established.

In 1978, student protests in Java against the reelection of Suharto led to the promulgation of the Campus Normalization Act, banning all political activity on university campuses. In reaction to government repression, students at the Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB) turned to the Salman Mosque, where they were inspired by the fiery sermons of Imaduddin Abdurrahim, who introduced them to the ideas of the Muslim Brothers.¹⁷ Salman mosque became the model for *dakwah*, exemplifying Islam as a total way of life (*nizam kamil*), a concept central to the ideology of Sayyid Qutb and

¹⁵ *Sejarah Perkembangan Pemerintahan di Daerah Sumatera Selatan* (Palembang: Publication of the Provincial Government, 1996), pp. 280-291.

¹⁶ Author's interview with Djohan Hanafiah, who in 1965 was a leader in South Sumatra of the Indonesian Nationalist Student Movement (Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasionalis Indonesia), a group affiliated with the PKI, October 13, 2002.

¹⁷ Dr. Ir. Imaduddin Abdurrahim (known as Bang Imad) taught in Malaysia in the early 1970s and was influenced by Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia, ABIM), an Islamic student movement led by Anwar Ibrahim. When he returned to Salman Mosque at the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), he became the head of the *dakwah* wing of the Indonesian Student Organization (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI). In 1974, he broke with HMI and founded Latihan Mujahid Dakwah (Training for Islamic Propagation Warriors, LMD). The militant name for this *dakwah* movement appears to have been taken from an important text of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sa'id Hawwa's *Fi afaq al-ta'lim*. Abu Ridho translated this work into Indonesian with the title *Membina Angkatan Mujahid* (Building a Force/Generation of Defenders of the Faith) (Jakarta: Al-Islah, 1993). See Ali Said Damanik, *Fenomena Partai Keadilan: Transformasi 20 Tahun Gerakan Tarbiyah di Indonesia* (The Justice Party Phenomenon: Transformation over 20 Years of the Tarbiyah Movement in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002), pp. 72-73.

Maulana Maududi. The movement taught that Islam provides a solution for all problems, political, social, and personal. Students in South Sumatra encountered this new current of “political” *dakwah* in the early 1990s at Al Ghazali mosque at UNSRI. The most striking sign of this conception of a more authentic form of Islam was the adoption of the *jilbab* (Islamic head covering) by women students. By 1994, almost half the women students at UNSRI wore the *jilbab*, while women students at IAIN Raden Fatah and the Muhammadiyah University were required to do so.

The New Order response to the Islamic revival of the 1980s combined repression with manipulation. In 1984, the massacre of Muslim protestors from a mosque in Tanjung Priok, a poor area in the port of Jakarta, served warning on all Islamist groups. The following year, a Law on Mass Organizations required all organizations to accept the official government ideology, Pancasila, as their sole basis. This law forced Muslim organizations to give up Islam as their fundamental principle. The National Organization of Muslim University Students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI) split over this issue, and those with Islamist sympathies formed the Council to Safeguard HMI (HMI Majelis Penyelamat Organisasi, HMI MPO) and went underground. Pelajar Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Students Association, PII), the organization of secondary school students formerly associated with Masyumi, also went underground. Branches of these underground organizations in South Sumatra attracted little notice, but they remained active.

Muslim activists sought ways to accommodate to the New Order while working for change. In the 1970s, the Social and Economic Research, Education, and Information Institute (Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, LP3ES) started training programs and pilot development projects in rural *pesantren* (religious boarding schools) in Java. Under the leadership of Adi Sasono, the Institute for Development Studies (Lembaga Studi Pembangunan, LSP) promoted the idea of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with development agendas as the center of a civil society movement.¹⁸ These Islamic development-oriented NGOs conducted leadership-training programs for student activists in South Sumatra in the 1990s.

The New Order established the Union of Mosque Youth (Ikatan Remaja Masjid, IRM) in an attempt to control political activism in Islamic youth organizations. As one IRM leader in Palembang explained, “Youth has [*sic*] a tendency to political involvement, but this tendency can be minimized through the involvement of Remaja Masjid.”¹⁹ In addition, funding from charities founded by Suharto, such as Yayasan Dharmais, went to Islamic education programs established by local Islamic organizations. For example, a three-year academy for rural youth combining Islamic leadership training with entrepreneurial skills was established in 1989 by Yayasan

¹⁸ See Philip Eldridge, *Non-Government Organisations and Democratic Participation in Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 74-98; and Martin van Bruinessen, Universiteit Utrecht Faculty Homepages, “Post-Suharto Muslim engagements with civil society and democratisation,” http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/Post_Suharto_Islam_and_civil_society.htm (accessed August 2003).

¹⁹ Quotations in this section are from interviews with leaders of Remaja Masjid conducted by Widyawati in 1999.

Amal Bhakti Jaya Sempurna (YABJS), a foundation in Palembang funded by Yayasan Dharmais.²⁰

In the early 1990s, Al Arqam, a quietist messianic Islamic community, was established in Palembang. The leader of the community, Musta'in Zamhari, was a charismatic preacher from Ogan Komering Ilir in South Sumatra. The community consisted of approximately one hundred members, most of whom were university students or small-scale entrepreneurs. Members adopted a version of traditional Arab dress: for men, long white robes and turbans; for women, a black *cadar*, which completely covered the body, and, in a few cases, a veil that covered the face. Because of this unusual dress, people in South Sumatra often said Al Arqam members were "*fanatik*" (fanatical), but the community was tolerated until Al Arqam was banned by the New Order in 1994. The ban was announced by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI), which was used to control Islamic activism during the New Order.

The New Order also quietly gave its approval to an Islamic Renewal movement (Pembaruan) led by Nurcholish Madjid, who as president of the HMI in 1970 provoked heated controversy when he called for Islam to be separated from politics with the slogan "Islam Yes, Islamic Party No."²¹ The Renewal movement emphasized the interpretation of scripture in its application to the modern world, and the realization of Islamic values in personal life rather than through political parties. While some lecturers and students at IAIN Raden Fatah were attracted by these ideas, university students in South Sumatra appeared to be influenced more by the conservative Islamist *dakwah* movement. Nurcholish Madjid was criticized because he had been educated in the West rather than the Middle East. People said that he did not speak Arabic (which is incorrect) and that his teachings did not represent "true" Islam.

Despite New Order efforts to control Islamic activism, Islam was used to criticize the New Order. When the popular preacher KH (Kiai Haji) Zainuddin M. Z. spoke in Palembang in the late 1980s, he drew record crowds, delighting his audience with parables and jokes drawing on Islamic values to criticize the New Order in an elliptical fashion. He used the popular image of Islam as a compass (*pedoman*) that helps to direct a person in the right direction, and he emphasized the importance of the Islamic community (*ummat*) working together, implying that New Order elites were egotistical and individualist. People called him "bold" (*berani*) for his subtle criticism of the New Order.

In South Sumatra, the first student-led demonstrations of the kind that would later multiply to become the pro-democracy *reformasi* (reform) movement took place in 1994 at UNSRI. Students protested an increase in tuition that was due to cost overruns in construction of a new campus, which was being built with a World Bank loan.

²⁰ In 1997, YABJS founded an accountancy college at the outskirts of Palembang. The project was not successful due to the low salaries paid to teachers who were only moonlighting. In mid-1999, there were thirty-eight students.

²¹ Nurcholish Madjid's speech was entitled, "Keharusan Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam dan Masalah Integrasi Umat" (The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought and the Problem of the Integration of the Islamic Community). An English translation of the speech can be found in Charles Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 284-89.

Students accused the university administration of corruption and mismanagement, and they protested that poor students could not afford higher tuition. In 1994, a small group of students also demonstrated when the government revoked the publication licenses of three popular national news magazines, *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Monitor*. Although some lecturers at UNSRI quietly supported the student protests, most people outside the university seemed critical. They said that the students' actions were "rather strong" (*agak keras*) and they "smelled of politics" (*berbau politik*). This reaction contrasted with the general appreciation of the subtleties of Zainuddin M. Z.'s sermons.

As the student-led *reformasi* movement grew in strength following the onset of the Asian Economic Crisis in the summer of 1997, the network of *dakwah* organizations on university campuses (Lembaga Dakwah Kampus, LDK) throughout Indonesia joined the demonstrations demanding Suharto step down. In March 1998, LDK leaders formed the Action Committee of Indonesian Muslim Students (KAMMI). LDK activists in South Sumatra established a branch of KAMMI in April. They won control of the Student Senate (Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa, BEM) at UNSRI in the next election cycle.

In the post-Suharto period, Islamic schools have become popular with middle-class parents in Palembang. An Islamic elementary school with a Wahabi orientation established by the Mahadizzuddin Foundation, which appears to receive funding from Saudi sources, is now the most prestigious (and expensive) school in Palembang. At this school, there are also Qur'an study groups (*halaqah*) for adults. Another Islamic elementary school, Azahara, serves the middle-class suburb of Polygon. In South Sumatra, there are also 169 Muhammadiyah schools and 207 *pesantren* with over 90,000 students. Since 2000, branches of the militant Islamic organizations, Laskar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) have also been established in South Sumatra.

In 2003, President Megawati Sukarnoputri came to Palembang to reopen Masjid Agung, the largest mosque in Palembang, which had been beautifully renovated over the last five years. The Central Bureau of Statistics for South Sumatra (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS Sumsel) reports that, in addition to Masjid Agung, the province has 5,525 mosques, 1,015 *musholla* (a small building or room set aside in a public place for daily prayer, but not used for Friday prayers), and 4,209 *langgar* (a neighborhood prayer house that is not used for Friday prayers). While the number of Islamic places of worship in South Sumatra increased every year between 1998 and 2001, in 2002 a decrease in this number was reported.²²

II. Democratic Concepts and Values from an Islamic Perspective

In the last decade of the New Order, a debate over the relationship of Islam to democracy emerged among the leaders of Islamic organizations in Indonesia. Central to this debate were concepts derived from English and Arabic, including *demokrasi* (democracy), *politik* (politics), *masyarakat sipil* (a concept of civil society derived from Western usage), *masyarakat madani* (an Islamic conception of civil society), *musyawarah* (collective deliberation), *mufakat* or *konsensus* (consensus), and *kader* (cadre). However,

²² See BPS 2002 *Sumsel Dalam Angka* (Palembang: Publication of the Badan Pusat Statistik Sumsel, 2002).

these concepts do not have exactly the same meaning as their English and Arabic equivalents, nor do they mean the same thing in all Islamic organizations.

The Indonesian *politik* does not translate as “politics” in the sense of legitimate conflict between parties with different interests and perspectives. In the New Order, *politik* implied opposition to the government and was seen as a threat to the unity of the nation. As Adam Schwarz observed,

Frequent and ominous warnings about the ever-present threats to national unity—from, among others, communists, radical Muslims, and Westernized liberals—are meant to ward off moves for political change. In a society that is culturally comfortable with strong rule and deeply concerned with national unity, these warnings act as powerful disincentives to political reformation. The political choice available to Indonesia, Soeharto argues, is not between authoritarianism and democracy; it is between “Pancasila democracy”—that is, the status quo—and chaos.²³

Even non-governmental organizations came to share this negative view of *politik*. According to Philip Eldridge, “Most NGOs feel less comfortable with any kind of action which can be labeled ‘political’ in any direct sense and . . . are at pains to define their role in non-political terms. Such a stance is not merely prudential but in many respects reflects their core values and practices.”²⁴ In post-New Order Indonesia, *politik* is most often used to refer to self-interested conflicts among elites that paralyze government. To say that something “smells of politics” (*berbau politik*) is to imply that a politically powerful person is manipulating a situation in their own interest.²⁵

In Islamic organizations, the suspicion of *politik* as divisive and based on self-interest is enhanced by the value Islam traditionally places on social harmony, rule by consensus, and the unity of the community of Muslims (*ummat*). The Sunni tradition warns, “Keep away from actions or words that can provoke anger among other people. According to Islamic law, any action that can disturb the society’s order is a major sin that will be judged by God.”²⁶ *Politik* and conflict are generally considered to be the result of egotism and placing individual interests above those of the community. The *dakwah* organizations are particularly uncomfortable with *politik* because of the emphasis they place on unity of the *ummat*. They tend to describe themselves as a moral movement (*gerakan moral*), despite the fact that they have political aims. Political activism is described as a struggle (*perjuangan*) to realize Islamic values rather than as *politik*, and protest demonstrations are called “actions” (*aksi*) to alert people to an issue. One of the chief activities of the youth groups of Islamic organizations is cadre training (*kaderisasi*), which is socialization to Islamic values so that conflict is avoided and leadership through consensus is possible.

²³ Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia’s Search for Stability* (St. Leonards NSW, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1999), p. 42.

²⁴ Eldridge, *Non-Government Organisations*, p. 1.

²⁵ See Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*, p. 37.

²⁶ Kiai Machrus Ali of NU, quoted by Andree Feillard, “Traditionalist Islam and the Army in Indonesia’s New Order: The Awkward Relationship,” in *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Greg Barton (Clayton, Australia: Monash Asia Institute, 1996), p. 58.

In Indonesia in the 1980s, the term *masyarakat sipil* (civil society) was used to refer to the growing role of NGOs. However, when NGOs began to criticize the New Order regime, government officials mounted a campaign against the concept of (an autonomous) civil society, emphasizing the need for harmony and cooperation between government and social organizations. The term “NGO” was taken to imply opposition to the government and therefore conflict and *politik*. To remove the implication that NGOs were opposed to the government, “NGO” was translated into Indonesian as Self-reliant Community Organization (*Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat*, LSM). “Good” LSMs that worked with the government were called Self-reliant Community Organizations for Development (*Lembaga Pengembangan Swadaya Masyarakat*, LPSM). Only one of the organizations discussed in this paper, FORDS, a *dakwah* association that has a small membership and sees itself as focused on “issues” such as drugs, describes itself as a “kind” of LSM.

In the 1990s, Islamic organizations began to refer to an Islamic, as opposed to a Western, conception of civil society as *masyarakat madani*. This term was introduced in Indonesia by Nurcholish Madjid.²⁷ For Muslims in Indonesia, *masyarakat madani* is generally understood to refer to the ideal of a harmonious society without *politik*, an Islamic community led by *musyawarah* (collective deliberation) in which consensus (*mufakat*) prevails.

III. Islamic Organizations and Democratic Practices

*Muhammadiyah Sumatera Selatan*²⁸

Muhammadiyah is the largest Islamic organization in South Sumatra, with fifteen thousand to twenty thousand card-carrying members.²⁹ There are sixty branches and 160 subbranches, a branch of Aisyiyah, the Muhammadiyah women’s organization, and branches of Angkatan Muda Muhammadiyah, the Muhammadiyah youth organization. The structure of Muhammadiyah is democratic. At the provincial level, Muhammadiyah is organized as a council (Pimpinan Wilayah Muhammadiyah SumSel, Muhammadiyah South Sumatra Regional Leadership [Council]). Local branches work together to organize a regional Muhammadiyah convocation (Musyawarah Wilayah Muhammadiyah) every five years. Officers of local branches are elected. They volunteer their time. Financial support for Muhammadiyah projects is solicited from individual members.

²⁷ The term *masyarakat madani*, which is generally understood to mean “civilized society” and to refer to the society of Medina in the time of the prophet, was first used to refer to “civil society” by Najib Al’Atas and Anwar Ibrahim in Malaysia. Nurcholish Madjid introduced this usage to Indonesia in 1995. See Nurcholish Madjid, “Menuju Masyarakat Madani,” *Ulumul Qur’an* 2,7 (1996): 51-55, and “Kedaulatan Rakyat: Prinsip Kemanusiaan dan Musyawarah dalam Masyarakat Madani,” in Widodo Usman, *Membongkar Mitos Masyarakat Madani* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000). Michael Laffan (personal communication) notes that, in the Middle East, Islamist opponents of an autonomous civil society as distinct from government also use Medina as their defining model, but they refer to it as *al-mujtama’ al-islami* (Islamic society).

²⁸ Umar Abdullah assisted in collecting data on Muhammadiyah in South Sumatra.

²⁹ See Muhammad Fuad, “Civil Society in Indonesia: The Potential and Limits of Muhammadiyah,” *Sojourn* 17,2 (October 2002): 133-163.

In accord with the Quranic injunction “to do good and refrain from evil” (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*), the goal of Muhammadiyah is to contribute to society. They focus on seven areas: preaching, religious law, education, health and social welfare, training of cadre, religious foundations and charities, and economic development. The accomplishments of Muhammadiyah in South Sumatra are impressive. They include the establishment and management of seven orphanages, a maternity hospital, five clinics, five health posts for mothers and children, four professional academies, 169 schools with religious instruction, a Muhammadiyah hospital, and the Muhammadiyah University in Palembang. In 2002, Muhammadiyah opened a new Teacher Training Institute in Pagar Alam, which had over four hundred students in 2004. The newest project is an auditorium at the Muhammadiyah University in Palembang that would seat one thousand people.

Muhammadiyah leaders in Palembang are proposing reforms that would make their organization more “professional.” They would like to reduce dependence on voluntarism because officers with full-time jobs cannot implement projects as effectively as they would like. They point out that the Muhammadiyah Public Hospital in Palembang, which opened in 1995, took nearly thirty years to complete. They plan to establish a member insurance program that would provide the funding for a paid staff.

The chairman of the Palembang Branch of Muhammadiyah, Drs. Romli, AS, was formerly Dean of the Religion Faculty at the Muhammadiyah University in Palembang and is now an Assistant Rector at IAIN Raden Fatah. Romli emphasizes that Muhammadiyah is not a “political” organization.³⁰ He points out that Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party, PAN), the political party established by former Muhammadiyah chairman Amien Rais for the 1999 election, is not structurally tied to Muhammadiyah. Members are free to join any political party, and, Romli says, they should not bring their political differences into Muhammadiyah. Romli defines politics as a vehicle for individuals to pursue their particular interests and views, whereas the mission of Muhammadiyah is to create a more just Islamic society. If people understand this mission as political, he maintains, they are wrong. An Islamic society is grounded in an Islamic family, and an Islamic family will be realized by Islamic individuals. In his view, the term “Islamic state” (*negara Islam*), which some people understand as referring to a country governed by Islamic law, simply refers to a nation where the majority of people are Muslims. In that sense, Indonesia is already an Islamic state. Romli points out that there is a great variety of cultural forms of Islamic civilization, and, in his view, Islam supports democracy because Islam is an open teaching that anyone can understand.

Despite the success of Muhammadiyah in South Sumatra, Romli is concerned that Muhammadiyah schools have neglected moral education, so that people no longer consider Muhammadiyah educational institutions superior to other schools. He is promoting a plan to add Arabic and moral education to the curriculum. He is also concerned about inculcating the tradition of social activism in a younger generation of Muhammadiyah activists. He points out that the Muhammadiyah youth organizations

³⁰ “Politik Jangan Dibawa ke Muhammadiyah” (Don’t Bring Politics Into Muhammadiyah), *Sriwijaya Post*, December 12, 2001.

do not conduct as many activities now as they did during the New Order.³¹ Younger Muhammadiyah leaders have become involved in political parties and been nominated to the local election boards, KPU (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, General Elections Commission) and PANWASLU (Panitia Pengawas Pemilu, Election Supervisory Committee), set up for the 2004 elections. However, Romli's concern that members are not as involved in Muhammadiyah's projects now as during the New Order can be viewed from another perspective. One could say that Muhammadiyah has prepared its members for political engagement in a democratizing country. Its members have adopted civic values that motivate engagement in the public sphere, and they have experience engaging in collective social action in the form of civic projects.

*Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)*³²

In South Sumatra, people in villages are likely to identify with NU, although they probably would not be official members of the organization. Therefore, one could argue that NU and Muhammadiyah are equally strong in the province, with Muhammadiyah strongest in urban areas and NU in rural areas. This difference is expressed in the more progressive organization of Muhammadiyah as compared with the more traditional orientation of NU, which emphasizes respect for authority. Under the New Order, NU tended to cooperate with the government and in return received modest government funding for its programs. One member explained, "NU's program does not clash with that of the government but helps to improve the welfare of Indonesian people." Throughout the 1990s, there was little turnover in the local leadership of NU. Bureaucratic organization was minimal. There were no formal reports on activities, and operational expenses, like electricity and fax, were funded by NU officers out of their own pockets. The activities sponsored by NU included religious education, charity, a women's organization, a youth organization, a martial arts group, and mosque building.

The selection of national NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid (affectionately known as Gus Dur) as president of Indonesia in 1999 reinvigorated NU leaders at the local level with the prospect of increased financial support. In January 2000, religious teachers (*ulama*) attending a provincial NU congress in South Sumatra set forth three goals for the succeeding five years: 1) clarify the duties of officers; 2) strengthen existing programs, many of which were inactive; and 3) establish an NU university in Palembang. A committee of eleven people was established to oversee these projects; five were new to the NU Board of Directors.

The NU Board set up a foundation, Yayasan Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama, to take on the task of raising funds for the new university. But before the project was well under way, a dispute emerged between the NU Board and the foundation directors over who would appoint the rector of the new university. NU leaders were not able to resolve this disagreement and make further progress. After the fall of President

³¹ Author's interview with Drs. Romli, AS, Chairman of the Palembang Branch of Muhammadiyah, August 1, 2004.

³² Adang Yuliansyah assisted in collecting data on NU. Quotations in this section are taken from interviews he conducted with NU leaders in 1999.

Abdurrahman Wahid, the Department of Education required that the proposed university be redesigned, and local NU leaders abandoned the project. However, NU leaders succeeded in building a new headquarters in Palembang with funds collected from local sources.

There are two factions within NU in South Sumatra. A group of younger members wants change, stressing the challenge of globalization and the need to establish a more rational, bureaucratic organizational structure for NU. This group wants NU to become a vehicle for spreading pluralist values. On the other side are senior NU leaders who view tradition and the authority of religious teachers (*kiai*) as the source of a stable and moral society. They do not think that a change in leadership style or the promotion of more democratic interaction within NU is necessary. They acknowledge that often they do not have time to perform optimally in their roles in NU because of the pressure of regular jobs, and that management of NU is not “modern.” But they approach change cautiously, frequently referring to the need to “preserve traditions that are good and take on new ideas that are better.”³³ The ferment in NU can also be seen in NU *pesantren* like Ittifaquiah where there is a diversity of viewpoints, ranging from militants supporting the radical Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia to liberal intellectuals who support democratic values and promote dialogue among groups with different viewpoints.³⁴

There were two candidates in the 1999 election of a new NU chairman for South Sumatra. The first, the head of a *pesantren*, could be said to represent a traditional (*pesantren*-based) leadership style, while the second from the IAIN represented a new generation of Islamic intellectuals trained in Western-style academic institutions. The more progressive candidate was elected. Emphasizing the importance of avoiding conflict, an NU leader pointed out that the two candidates have worked together harmoniously since the election.

In 2000, the relationship between NU and Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party, PKB), the political party formed by NU Chairman Abdurrahman Wahid in 1999, was another source of conflict within NU. As criticism of Abdurrahman Wahid mounted in the initial months of his presidency, some NU leaders called for loyalty to the president, emphasizing the problems faced by the new government and the power of entrenched interests associated with Suharto. Others sought to distance NU from the PKB. By 2004, however, NU leaders in South Sumatra had accepted that NU membership was divided politically, supporting not only parties with Islam as a basis—PKB, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party, PPP), and Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Moon Star Party, PBB), but also “secular” parties—Golkar (whose vice-presidential candidate was from NU), the new Demokrasi Partai (DP) of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (which also had a vice-presidential candidate from NU), and Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDI-P), with former NU chairman Hasyim Muzadi as its vice-presidential candidate. The NU chairman in South Sumatra, Drs. Malan Abdullahi, saw the depolitization of NU as an advantage because members were now

³³ The reference to preserving good traditions and taking on better new ideas is often cited in NU circles.

³⁴ Observation of Rick Kraince, November 2003.

more likely to focus on NU projects.³⁵ He pointed to new agricultural development projects and youth activities being developed in villages where people are “culturally NU.”

*Islamic Students Association (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI)*³⁶

The Palembang branch of HMI was established in 1955. It has seventeen subbranches (*komisariat*), which are located in the faculties of Sriwijaya University, IAIN Raden Fatah, the Muhammadiyah University, and other private universities in Palembang. *Komisariat* with full memberships (fifty members) have voting rights; smaller *komisariat* have the right to speak at branch meetings. In Palembang, ten *komisariat* have voting rights and seven have the right to speak. New members are recruited by each *komisariat*.

HMI members describe the manner of decision making in HMI as consensual (*budaya musyawarah mufakat*). Before the election of an HMI-Palembang chairman, leaders try to win support for a sole candidate (*kandidat tunggal*). Frequently, however, *komisariat* compete fiercely to elect their own candidate. If consensus among the *komisariat* is not achieved, voting and majority rule are used.

According to HMI leaders in Palembang, the primary role of HMI is to provide leadership training (*latihan kepemimpinan* or *kaderisasi*) to Muslim university students. During the Suharto era, HMI became a training ground for students with political ambitions. A network of HMI alumni developed, linking elites in all the major political parties. This led to the development of a distinctive political culture in HMI. As one HMI-Palembang member explained, “HMI is an important organization for establishing networks. Your university no longer matters—you are all HMI.” However, outsiders have described HMI as elitist and as having a “patron-client” culture through the strong HMI alumni association (Korps Alumni HMI, KAHMI).

In 1996, when pro-democracy students occupied the headquarters of the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (The Indonesian Democratic Party, PDI) in Jakarta in support of Megawati Sukarnoputri, two factions emerged in HMI-Palembang. The HMI-*progresif* faction, located in the Faculty of Economics *komisariat* at UNSRI, wanted to move HMI away from support of the New Order to a more critical position. They objected to the *kaderisasi* prescribed by the national HMI, arguing that it was a rigid (*kaku*) indoctrination. They decided to provide their own training to fourteen new members. On the final day of this training, the officer in charge of *kaderisasi* for HMI-Palembang declared the training invalid because it did not accord with national guidelines. This announcement almost led to a violent confrontation between officers of HMI-Palembang and the *progresif* faction, but a negotiation was arranged. The new recruits in the *progresif* *komisariat* were allowed to complete their training, but were not given official certificates by HMI-Palembang.

³⁵ Author’s interview with Drs. Malan Abdullahi, the chairman of the South Sumatra Branch of NU, August 2, 2004.

³⁶ Dian Novita, Azimi Asnawi, and Robby Puruhitu assisted in collecting data on HMI.

The incipient split between HMI-Palembang and the *progresif* faction deepened the following year when the *progresif komisariat* carried out another training of ten new members. The HMI-Palembang executive committee put three officers of the *komisariat* on probation. It also reported the conflict to the regional military command (Komando Daerah Militer, KODAM), objecting that the members of HMI-*progresif* should not be allowed to use the name HMI. The HMI-*progresif* faction was put under military surveillance.

In 1997, HMI-Palembang and the *progresif komisariat* elected new chairmen who negotiated a compromise between the two factions. HMI-Palembang would accept the training conducted by the *progresif komisariat* at UNSRI, and the *progresif* faction would be allowed to set up a new division to discuss political and economic issues. *Progresif* leaders felt that this opened up a new space in HMI-Palembang for discussion of the issues they wished to raise.

As the student-led *reformasi* movement emerged, HMI-Palembang began to move away from support for the government. In 1997, HMI-Palembang withdrew from the National Committee of Indonesian Youth (Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia, KNPI), a government-sponsored umbrella organization for youth groups. In 1998, HMI-Palembang joined with other Islamic student organizations—KAMMI, Pelajar Islam Indonesia (PII), a Muhammadiyah Youth Group (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah, IMM), the Student Forum for Masyarakat Madani (Forum Mahasiswa untuk Masyarakat Madani, FORMAD), and the Plaju Islamic Youth Union (Ikatan Pemuda Islam Plaju, IPIP)—to form the Islamic Young Generation (Generasi Mudah Islam, Gemuis). Gemuis was to coordinate the strategy of Islamic student organizations in support of *reformasi*.³⁷

After the fall of Suharto, in the lead-up to the twenty-second National Congress of HMI (November-December 1999), HMI alumni, who were prominent national political leaders, provided support to particular candidates running for the office of national chairman of HMI.³⁸ This led to accusations by the *progresif* faction that HMI was being co-opted by Jakarta elites who “polluted” (*mencemari*) the moral basis of the student movement and turned it into a “political” movement aimed at supporting their interests (*yang sangat pragmatis*).³⁹ In Palembang the leader of the *progresif* faction ousted his opponent, who was criticized for his failure to deal with the split in HMI-Palembang, his rigid style of leadership, and his failure to present a satisfactory account of HMI finances.

At the National Congress, where the role of HMI in the *reformasi* era was debated, HMI-Palembang argued that the statement of HMI values, Nilai Identitas Kader (Fundamental Values of Cadre, NIK), formulated in 1985 under pressure from New Order legislation on mass organizations, did not provide guidance on how to

³⁷ Gemuis did not survive the *reformasi* campaign. In early 2000, when a demonstration against the national electricity company was organized to protest frequent blackouts in Palembang, KAMMI and IPIP dropped out, accusing Gemuis leaders of being manipulated by political figures.

³⁸ The election campaign of M. Fakhruddin (from Aceh) as national HMI Chairman is said to have received financial support from Akbar Tandjung. Fuad Bawazier, chairman of the HMI Alumni Association, is also said to have funded candidates in HMI elections.

³⁹ Author’s interview with Robby Puruhita, leader of the *progresif* faction, June 2001.

implement Islamic values. They proposed that HMI return to Islam as a fundamental principle (*nilai dasar perjuangan*) and the NIK be replaced with a new statement, to be known as the Principles of Islamic Struggle (Nilai Jihad Kader). This proposal was passed. The newly elected national chairman of HMI supported HMI-Palembang in its *reformasi* actions, such as withdrawing from the KNPI.

Under *progresif* leadership, HMI-Palembang began to take stands on political issues. In January 2000, it passed a resolution denouncing the “oppression” and “slaughter” of Muslims in Ambon and demanded that the Indonesian army stop attacks on Muslims in Aceh. The government of Abdurrahman Wahid was urged to take action to prevent chaos on a national level. According to *progresif* leaders, they were attempting to “clarify” national issues, not engaging in *politik*.

HMI-Palembang also joined with other student organizations—the Student Senates of UNSRI, Universitas Muhammadiyah, and IAIN Raden Fatah—to form the Alliance of Environmental Concern (Aliansi Peduli Lingkungan, APEL). APEL pushed for the creation of a green belt on the coast of South Sumatra and the preservation of mangrove swamps that were being destroyed by smallholders building shrimp ponds. However, their involvement in an APEL demonstration precipitated the ouster of the *progresif* faction from the leadership of Palembang-HMI. Opponents of the *progresif* faction on the HMI-Palembang Board argued that HMI was being manipulated by political interests. They pointed out that the idea for the demonstration at the governor’s office had come from an HMI alumnus who worked for PT. Wachyuni Mandira (PT WM), a conglomerate that had built extensive industrial shrimp farms in Lampung and South Sumatra and was owned by the Suharto crony Nursalim. They said that PT WM was using HMI to mount a campaign against traditional shrimp farmers because mud from ponds built by independent smallholders washed inland, damaging PT WM ponds. The opponents of the *progresif* faction threatened to withdraw from HMI-Palembang if the environmental campaign was not abandoned.

With support from the local HMI alumni association, KAHMI, conservative opponents of the *progresif* faction established the Council to Rescue the Palembang Branch (Majelis Penyelamat Cabang, MPC). They issued a statement demanding that the *progresif* chairman of HMI stand down, pointing out that he had not received the training mandated by the national HMI constitution (because he was trained by the *progresif komisariat*). They accused him of being “not Islamic” (*tidak Islami*) and turning HMI-Palembang into a non-governmental organization (LSM), which could become the tool of individual interests. They also objected because he had joined the *reformasi* organization, South Sumatra Corruption Watch.

Supporters of HMI-*progresif* maintained that HMI had become an empty symbol (*simbol saja*) of Islam with no content, while they had created a new atmosphere in HMI-Palembang aimed at concrete Islamic action (*kerja kongkrit agama Islam*). If the HMI constitution hindered action, they argued, the constitution should be changed. The *komisariat* in Palembang were not able to resolve the deadlock over whether the *progresif* chairman should step down. When one *komisariat* opposing the *progresif* faction walked out of the meeting, the *progresif* chairman agreed to step down. He explained that if he continued in office, efforts to unseat him would go on and threaten the unity of the organization. Many other members of the *progresif* faction also withdrew from HMI and joined student *reformasi* organizations.

Two candidates emerged to replace the *progresif* chairman. The more conservative candidate was elected. Several *komisariat* abstained from voting because they did not fully support the candidate who won, but they felt the other candidate was not qualified. Before accepting office, the new chairman asked each *komisariat* to guarantee that he would be supported so long as his actions followed the HMI constitution.

*Two Dakwah Organizations: Remaja Masjid and Forum Dakwah Sekolah (FORDS)*⁴⁰

The Islamic Mission for Youth Education (Pendidikan Remaja Masjid Taqwa, PERMATA), a *dakwah* organization based in a mosque in a middle-class neighborhood in Palembang, was established in 1982.⁴¹ PERMATA was modeled on the Mosque Youth Communication Forum (Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Masjid Indonesia, BKPMI), founded in 1977 in Bandung, West Java by a group of young Islamic activists to combat the activity of Christian missionaries and resist the secularization that accompanied modernization. The founding members of BKPMI had close ties to the Suharto regime,⁴² but their organization was closely monitored by the Indonesian military, especially after a Muslim riot in Tanjung Priok was violently suppressed by the military in 1984. The founders of PERMATA in Palembang initially debated whether to establish formal ties to BKPMI. When they did join BKPMI in 1983, they found that their activities were circumscribed. For example, when they invited Imaduddin Abdurrahim, the charismatic *dakwah* preacher from Salman Mosque in Bandung, to come to Palembang, the military denied permission for his visit.

In the 1990s, when the New Order began to cultivate support from Islamic organizations, the Ministry of Religion turned to BKPMI to establish a national organization of Islamic youth groups. This was called Ikatan Remaja Masjid (Union of Mosque Youth). Six areas of activity were authorized for Remaja Masjid: 1) religious education for young people; 2) Islamic preschools; 3) human resource development programs; 4) entrepreneurial development programs; 5) Islamic Scouts; and 6) family welfare programs.

Remaja Masjid has a top-down orientation, and local branches have limited autonomy. At the provincial level, there is a Remaja Masjid Council with formal autonomy, but in practice the National Council in Jakarta must approve all new activities. District Remaja Masjid groups must get approval from the Provincial Remaja Masjid Council for their activities. However, the formal structure of Remaja Masjid is democratic, with a leadership council in each branch consisting of three officers elected for a term of three years and serving for no longer than two terms. According to members in Palembang, leaders are selected for their Islamic learning.

⁴⁰ Widyawati and Ahmad Fali Okhlilas assisted in collecting data on Remaja Masjid and FORDS.

⁴¹ *Taqwa* is usually translated as “piety” or “obedience.” Farid Esack defines it as “self-restraint in the awareness that one is always in the presence of God and ultimately accountable to him.” Farid Esack, *The Qur’an: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2002), p. 187.

⁴² Founders of BKPMI include Jimly Asshiddiqie (from South Sumatra) and Toto Tasmara, who was close to Tommy Suharto and served as Director of HUMPUS, a corporation owned by Bambang Suharto. In 1990, they were founding members of ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia, the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), an organization formed in 1990 with permission from President Suharto, who was courting Muslim support. In 1998, they helped to form the Islamic party, Partai Bulan Bintang.

In 1992, Remaja Masjid organized the first mosque-based *dakwah* programs in Islamic spiritual training (*kerohanian Islam*, or *Rohis*) for high school students in Palembang. With the endorsement of Remaja Masjid by the Suharto regime, *dakwah* groups could organize more freely and received funding from local and provincial governments. Remaja Masjid claims that 17,087 children in South Sumatra have graduated from their Qur'an reading classes.

According to a former chairman of Remaja Masjid in Palembang, when the New Order provided funding (*gula*, literally sugar) during the 1990s, Remaja Masjid lost the solidarity and dedication that characterized it in the 1980s. When funding dried up with the fall of Suharto, Remaja Masjid found it had difficulty recruiting new leaders and members. Forced to find new sources of funding, Remaja Masjid has developed a successful commercial enterprise selling Islamic clothes, cosmetics, devotional tapes, and books. This initiative led to a conflict with the authorities of the mosque in Palembang, where the Remaja Masjid office was housed. The mosque leaders protested that Remaja Masjid did not pay rent for the use of the mosque facilities, although it received a profit from the Islamic clothing and tapes it sold. The Remaja Masjid chairman then proposed to move the Remaja Masjid office to his home. Some members resisted because they suspected that the chairman was diverting Remaja Masjid funds to his own pocket, but they were not able to voice their objection without proof. The Remaja Masjid office was initially moved to the chairman's house, but the successful establishment of a Remaja Masjid shop in a building on the main street in Palembang allowed for a second move.

The commercial success of Remaja Masjid and the greater freedom of the post-New Order era led leaders to propose a program of new activities in 2000. The South Sumatra Remaja Masjid Provincial Council decided to initiate programs in six areas: 1) human rights, law, and environment; 2) research and education; 3) communication and membership; 4) publication, documentation, and public relations; 5) culture and sports; and 6) international and organizational linkages.

Remaja Masjid officers say that one of the main goals of their organization is to bring diverse Islamic groups together. Most officers in Palembang are from an NU background, but they stress that they maintain political neutrality between NU and Muhammadiyah. They strive to stand above "politics." When conflict emerged between supporters of different political parties in the lead-up to the 1999 election, the Remaja Masjid council tried to deal with the tension by reaffirming the organization's commitment to Islamic mission (*dakwah*) and the training of Islamic cadre.

In response to accusations that the organization has political (Islamist) goals, they point out that the national council of Remaja Masjid (Badan Komunikasi Pemuda Remaja Masjid Indonesia, BKPRMI) did not join the pro-democracy demonstrations that brought down Suharto. Nor did BKPRMI support the actions of the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI) against nightclubs in Jakarta (although these were considered to be "moral" protests). However, this argument is disingenuous. In 1998, BKPRMI, which is based at the Istiqlal Mosque in central Jakarta, was involved in organizing the paramilitary volunteers (*pam swakarsa*) who were brought to the National Parliament to confront pro-democracy students opposing a Habibie presidency. In 2000, BKPRMI also supported demonstrations against President Abdurrahman Wahid, accusing him of corruption and demanding that he act

to defend Muslims under attack in Maluku. However, officially, Remaja Masjid in South Sumatra did not take any position on these issues, and they claim that members joined these demonstrations as individuals.

Remaja Masjid officers claim that their organization is democratic. However, this seems to mean that there is consensus over the goals of the organization, not that procedures for governing the organization are democratic. Members say that the Provincial Council for South Sumatra no longer has regular meetings (despite a constitutional requirement), and they complain that policy decisions are made without consultation.

Another Palembang *dakwah* group, Forum Dakwah Sekolah (FORDS), was established in 1998 in the Al-Ghazali Mosque of UNSRI. FORDS received financial support in small amounts from the Al-Ghazali Foundation, the mayor of Palembang, government-owned corporations (Badan Usaha Milik Negara), local businesses, individual donors (primarily staff of UNSRI), and members. In 1999, FORDS had twenty-five male and fourteen female officers (all from UNSRI and most from the Faculty of Technology) and 118 members.

According to FORDS leaders, their organization is democratic. They say that *demokrasi* means discussion and consensus (*musyawarah*). The chairman of FORDS is not chosen by election, but by acclaim, and members say that religious learning is the most important qualification for a leader. When a new leader is to be selected, everyone writes the name of his or her choice on a piece of paper. In February 2000, three people received votes; however the person with the most votes excused himself, saying that he did not have enough time to take on the responsibility. The other two candidates also withdrew. This led the leadership council to pass a new rule requiring that the chairman be from a class that had graduated from university in the previous three years. On this basis, a candidate was selected (not elected).

The emphasis on religious authority and unity in FORDS is striking. Like members of most *dakwah* groups, FORDS members wear "proper Islamic dress," long-sleeved loose shirts of cotton and long pants (never jeans) for men, and loose blouses with long sleeves, long skirts or pants, and the *jilbab* for women. They use Islamic greetings and Arabic terms in discussions of religion. They stress the importance of the five daily prayers and other ritual observances. In their conformity, FORDS exemplifies the solidarity that in their view is expected of an Islamic community.

Members of FORDS maintain that "politics and religion are one and the same." They describe FORDS as an LSM that is not political, implying that FORDS seeks to improve society without opposing the government. They explain that as individuals, members often join protests that could be considered political, such as demonstrations organized by KAMMI and the Anti-Communist and Anti-Israel Islamic Forum (Forum Ummat Islam Anti-Komunis dan Israel), but FORDS's name is not used in these protests.

One of FORDS's major goals is to deal with issues that divide the Muslim community and to bring NU and Muhammadiyah together. As one spokesman put it, "Don't magnify the differences; why not join together, there must be solidarity."⁴³

⁴³ Quotations are from interviews conducted by Ahmad Fali Okhlilas, 1999.

FORDS leaders in Palembang were particularly proud of a demonstration against Israel that they had organized at the South Sumatra Provincial Legislature. The protest brought together students from different Islamic organizations. Key members of parliament who had previously been informed of the demonstration came out to receive the protestors. FORDS leaders contrasted this peaceful protest with the demonstrations of *reformasi* protestors who were met by police or security forces.

However, in the view of students from *reformasi* organizations, FORDS is political. They say that FORDS is a tool to recruit youth to the new Islamic political party, Partai Keadilan (Justice Party, now known as the Justice and Prosperity Party, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS). The head of PKS in South Sumatra is very close to the leaders of FORDS, who agree that PKS and FORDS share the same vision and mission. But FORDS, they say, has only a "moral tie" with PKS.

FORDS leaders are concerned with a decline of interest in *dakwah* training. *Dakwah* programs sponsored by FORDS in September and November 1999 were well attended. However, since then, *dakwah* activities have declined. FORDS leaders believe that members are now too busy with other concerns, and they complain that school administrators no longer support *dakwah* programs, preferring to promote activities like scouting.

*Action Committee of Indonesian Muslim Students (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, KAMMI)*⁴⁴

KAMMI was established in March 1998 as a national organization of Muslim students from the network of campus-based *dakwah* groups (LDK) to support the pro-democracy *reformasi* movement. KAMMI-South Sumatra was established in April by activists at Sriwijaya University and IAIN Raden Fatah. KAMMI recruits members from campus prayer-houses (*musholla*). Funding comes from donations collected from members and prominent individuals in Palembang known for their support of Islamic causes. In 2000, KAMMI claimed to have given training (*pelatihan kaderisasi*) to eight hundred students in South Sumatra. In the brief period since its founding, KAMMI has become the largest Islamic student organization in the province, surpassing HMI in membership.

According to its mission statement, KAMMI is to train leaders for the struggle to establish an Islamic society through social service and political education. The reform of society is to be accomplished through individual commitment to Islamic values. Coordination of the *dakwah* campaign is provided by nationally elected leaders and implemented by regional executive boards composed of representatives from campus-based *dakwah* groups. Regional councils may organize their own *aksi*, but they must receive approval from the center. KAMMI sees its centralized power structure and disciplined solidarity as a source of strength. Andi Rahmat, a Jakarta-based KAMMI activist, believes this solidarity exemplifies the Islamic concept of *wala'*, "rendering one's loyalty and willingness to be led."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Robby Puruhitu, Aswendi, and Djayadi Hanan contributed information about KAMMI-Palembang.

⁴⁵ "Analysis of Muslim Student Groups," *The Jakarta Post*, February 20, 2001.

Like members of other *dakwah* organizations, KAMMI members are concerned with the outward signs of Islamic commitment, such as reciting daily prayers and wearing Islamic dress, including the *jilbab*. This is a sign of the solidarity they value. KAMMI-organized demonstrations are noted for their discipline. During the *reformasi* demonstrations, the orderly columns of students dressed in white with green scarves were a favorite subject of photographers, countering the view that student protests were a disruptive force which would only bring conflict and chaos. KAMMI's first chairman, Fahri Hamzah, explained,

We have a moral stance. If there is a group that desires to cause a disturbance, please, they are welcome to leave our ranks . . . We are able to guard the coordination of mass action of thousands of people. Not just action together in big cities like Jakarta, Bogor, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, but also actions in smaller cities like Purwokerto and Pasuruan have been implemented by KAMMI in an orderly manner—even in areas that are sensitive to conflict.⁴⁶

For KAMMI, the struggle for democracy is a struggle for Islam, for democracy means majority rule, which should lead to an Islamic-oriented government in Indonesia. KAMMI is committed to nonviolent protest in support of democracy, but where Muslims are threatened, KAMMI takes the position that violence may be required in the defense of Islam. In the spring of 1999, after Christian-Muslim riots broke out in Ambon, KAMMI responded enthusiastically to the call for *jihād*. KAMMI supporters, wearing their distinctive uniforms and marching in disciplined formations under the flag of Partai Keadilan (now PKS), were major participants in the mass *jihād* rally that took place in Yogyakarta in March 1999.

Members maintain that KAMMI is a moral rather than a political movement. Yet KAMMI was at the forefront of groups demanding that President Abdurrahman Wahid step down from the presidency or be impeached for his alleged involvement in corruption and mismanagement of crises confronting Indonesia. KAMMI leaders explain that the purpose of such *aksi* is to "call attention to" national issues, like Brunei-gate, a scandal involving accountability for funds given to President Abdurrahman Wahid by the Sultan of Brunei. However, critics of KAMMI from HMI report rumors that Fuad Bawazier, former minister of finance in Suharto's last cabinet, disbursed Rp.300,000,000 (\$30,000) to bring students to Jakarta for a demonstration against Abdurrahman Wahid on January 29, 2001.⁴⁷ They argue that KAMMI is being manipulated by political elites.

In Palembang, KAMMI demonstrations in January and February 2001, demanding that President Abdurrahman Wahid step down or be impeached, attracted from two hundred to five hundred students. KAMMI in Palembang has also organized demonstrations against gambling, drugs, prostitution, and pornography. Local

⁴⁶ "Kami tak menyulut kerusuhan" (We don't ignite riots), *Gatra*, May 16, 1998, pp. 32-33, quoted in Richard Kraince, "The Role of Islamic Student Activists in Divergent Movements for Reform during Indonesia's Transition from Authoritarian Rule, 1998-2001" (PhD dissertation, Ohio University, 2002), p. 176.

⁴⁷ "Aksi Itu Dibiayai Fuad Bawazier" (Demonstration Funded by Fuad Bawazier), *Tempo Interaktif*, February 25, 2001. Fuad Bawazier, who is a member of the Presidium of KAHMI, the alumni organization of HMI, is said also to have funded HMI to support demonstrations against President Abdurrahman Wahid.

government officials have tended to look with favor upon these orderly KAMMI demonstrations over “social issues” in contrast to demonstrations in support of workers and peasants organized by secular pro-democracy organizations, such as the Legal Aid Society (LBH, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum) and the Environmental Forum (WALHI, Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia).

There is overlap in the membership of HMI and KAMMI in Palembang, but there is also competition between the two organizations. KAMMI members criticize HMI as elitist because it is exclusive in its recruitment of members and has strong ties to established political elites in Jakarta. HMI members say that KAMMI, like FORDS, is a channel for recruiting and training cadres for the Islamist political party, PKS. They say that KAMMI is exclusive and does not engage in dialogue with other student groups with different views. KAMMI members say that Islam provides an answer to all problems, so debate and discussion are not necessary. If there are differences of opinion within the Islamic community, people should focus on their (*vertikal*) relationship to Allah and the differences will no longer be important. In contrast, HMI prides itself on open and free debate of issues, even of questions having to do with Islam.

The Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam, FPI)⁴⁸

The Islamic Defenders Front was founded by Al-Habib Muhammad Rizieq Syihab (Habib Rizieq) in Petamburan, a neighborhood of Jakarta where Christian-Muslim riots broke out in December 1998. The name of the founder, “Habib,” denotes someone who is a descendent of the Prophet, and FPI is based in the Hadrami “Arab” community of Jakarta. In September 1999, FPI was mobilized to support the new President B. J. Habibie when pro-democracy student demonstrators protested that his presidency was an extension of the New Order. FPI was also mobilized against students protesting the passage of new security laws that would give emergency powers to the armed forces.⁴⁹ FPI supports the application of Islamic law (*shari’at*), and it is best known for its attacks on Jakarta nightclubs and bars that “promote vice.”

The Palembang branch of FPI was established in 2000 by Dr. Usman Said, a *dakwah* preacher at the Al Ghazali Mosque. KAMMI and the Muhammadiyah Youth Group (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah, IMM) also supported the establishment of a local branch of FPI. As in Jakarta, FPI draws its members primarily from the community of people of Arab descent long established in South Sumatra. FPI is also closely associated with two NU religious boarding schools, Pesantren Ittifaqiah and Pesantren Darul Ulum, in Ogan Komering Ilir, a rural district south of Palembang.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Robby Puruhita, Umar Abdullah, and Arief Nurhayat collected data on Front Pembela Islam and Majelis Mujahahidin Islam in South Sumatra.

⁴⁹ “Warga Betawi Long March Semanggi-Bundaran HI Dijaga Barisan Pendukung Habibie” (The Long March of the Betawi from Semanggi to Hotel Indonesia in Support of Habibie), *Suara Merdeka*, October 4, 1999; “Pemuda Front Pembela Islam Bakar Gereja di Depok” (FPI Youth Burn Church in Depok), *SIAR*, November 5, 1999.

⁵⁰ Misbahul Anam, one of FPI’s founders in Jakarta, is an NU leader. He has since resigned from FPI.

In October of 2001, FPI in South Sumatra claimed to have over eight hundred members. FPI is organized as a paramilitary group with a command structure. However, according to student activists who joined FPI, there is rivalry between different *habib* who have their own followers, so in actuality there is no unitary command.

FPI cooperated with KAMMI in organizing demonstrations over the “slaughter” of Muslims in Ambon. These two organizations also mounted a demonstration against the United States protesting the anticipated attack on Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, which attracted about four hundred people. FPI claimed to have recruited one hundred *jihad* volunteers in Palembang who were ready to fight in Afghanistan.

FPI, KAMMI, HMI, and South Sumatra Corruption Watch (SSCW) joined forces to campaign against gambling in South Sumatra. This campaign was aimed at the governor of South Sumatra, who was raising money to finance the building of a sports stadium and other facilities for the National Sports Competition (Pekan Olahraga Nasional, PON) to be held in Palembang in 2004. The protestors said that the money was being donated by people involved in gambling and that the governor was taking a cut from funds collected to finance his reelection in 2003. This campaign was an extension of protests launched by SSCW accusing the governor of nepotism and corruption in the awarding of tenders for the support of athletes from South Sumatra who participated in the 2000 PON.⁵¹ However, after meeting with the governor, FPI withdrew from the campaign.

This provoked student activists involved in the campaign to protest to the national FPI leadership in Jakarta, but they were told that it was not ethical (*tidak etis*) for national leaders to become involved in an internal conflict in a local branch. The students were advised to collect signatures on a petition to oust the head of FPI in Palembang. Shortly thereafter, in June 2001, *preman* (gangs associated with protection rackets and generally attached to the military or political elites who provide “backing” [*beking*] for them) attacked the offices of both the *Sriwijaya Post*, which had printed articles detailing accusations against the governor, and HMI, where further demonstrations were being planned. The police failed to show up until after the marauders had left. This brought the protests and accusations against the governor to an end.

In the aftermath of these events, activists from KAMMI and HMI began to distance themselves from FPI. In private, they suggested that the head of FPI was cultivating a relationship with the governor as protection for underground activities and voiced suspicions that FPI was a front for a secret organization with ties to Islamic groups in Malaysia and Thailand.

South Sumatra Council of Indonesian Mujahidin (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, MMI)

The South Sumatra branch of MMI was established on April 15, 2001 at an assembly (*tabligh akbar*) in the Sports Stadium in Palembang. The organizing

⁵¹ “Proyek PON XVI dan KKN Baru” (PON XVI and New Corruption), *Sriwijaya Post*, November 30, 2001; “Keluarga Gubernur Sumsel Borong Proyek Fasilitas PON XVI 2004” (Family of South Sumatra Governor Takes Over Contracts for Facilities for PON XVI 2004), *Media Indonesia*, November 13, 2001.

committee, consisting of ninety men, was chaired by Arfan M. Alwy, an alumnus of HMI and IAIN Raden Fatah. MMI works for the establishment of *shari'ah* through *dakwah* and *jihad* and of a caliphate unifying Muslim peoples to be based in Indonesia, which they describe as "an Islamic version of the United Nations." MMI leaders in Palembang say that they do not condone the use of violence or force in *jihad*. Democracy is rejected as a Western institution.

MMI in Palembang, which is based at the Mujahidin Mosque, has an active program of recruitment. There is a weekly MMI talk show on Radio Hang Tuah Palembang on Saturday afternoons. There are meetings for Qur'an study at the MMI secretariat on Saturday evenings that generally attract about fifteen people. Qur'an study groups also meet on Sunday morning at the MMI mosque and at the South Sumatra Foundation for the Wellbeing of the Muslim Community (Yayasan Amanat Kesejahteraan Umat Islam Sumsel, AKUIS), which manages one of the most modern *pesantren* in South Sumatra. MMI cadre are trained at AKUIS, where the subjects include science as well as religion. The head of the *pesantren*, KH Muhammad Bardan Kindarto, who is also a member of the governing body of MMI, was one of the Islamic activists arrested by the New Order for involvement in Komando Jihad.

In January 2002, MMI in South Sumatra organized a three-day Congress at the Asrama for Haj pilgrims in Palembang. They initially predicted that a thousand people would attend the Congress, which was to be opened by Indonesia's vice-president, Hamzah Haz. However, only a few hundred people came, although the Congress was given official recognition when the governor of South Sumatra agreed to make the closing address.

Islamic Organizations and the Habits of Democracy

In *Making Democracy Work*, a study analyzing the impact of institutional reforms on the emergence of democratic and accountable government in Italy, Robert Putnam and his coauthors argue in the tradition of de Tocqueville that the voluntary associations of civil society play a crucial role in building the habits of civic engagement and public spiritedness. These habits of democracy—public debate, recognition of distinct interests and diverse points of view, the ability to compromise, and bonds of social trust—are the foundations of a successful democratic polity. The study distinguishes between societies in which horizontal organizations with programmatic commitments on public issues predominate and those in which personal, patron-client networks predominate. In the first kind of society, institutional change intended to democratize government is likely to succeed, whereas in societies in which vertical patron-client networks predominate, elites will be able to draw on these networks to retain control over political, social, and economic resources.⁵² In Indonesia, organizations of both kinds exist side-by-side. Muhammadiyah is an example of an egalitarian organization with programmatic commitments. Its success demonstrates the capacity of Indonesians to build bonds of trust and to generate the social capital that is the basis for engaging in successful collective action in pursuit of public goods. On the other hand, NU is

⁵² Putnam et al., *Making Democracy Work*.

characterized by a tradition of hereditary leadership (*keturunan*) and more personal, patron-client ties.

However, there is a generational split in NU between the older generation, which views tradition and the authority of religious teachers as the source of a stable and moral society, and the younger generation, which is more supportive of democratic values and is working to establish more rational, bureaucratic organizational structures. Drs. Malan Abdullahi, chairman of NU in South Sumatra, says that he does not regard this split as a threat to NU. Rather, he thinks it makes NU more dynamic. Drs. Malan also does not see the new Islamic organizations that have grown up on campuses—KAMMI and Hizbut Tahrir (Party of Liberation)—as a threat. He predicts that NU youth attracted to these organizations will return to NU and become more moderate as they mature.

Change within NU will be a slow process. The transition from patterns of traditional and charismatic leadership and vertical patron-client ties to an egalitarian organization with more democratic procedures will not be easy to manage. The presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) could be said to embody the dilemma of relying on a charismatic and traditional leader to establish more democratic forms of governance. There was a wide gap between Gus Dur's rhetorical commitment to democracy and his arbitrary exercise of power against critics. He continued the practice of patron-client politics, appointing a person from NU as minister of religious affairs. This allowed NU to push for the appointment of NU members to influential positions throughout the ministry, the provincial offices for religious affairs, and the state-funded IAIN system. In Palembang, the appointment of an NU member as rector of IAIN Raden Fatah in 2003 strengthened traditionalists who see *politik* in terms of patron-client ties rather than an egalitarian competition based on merit. The *kiayi* (title for a respected Islamic teacher or leader) who head NU *pesantren* in South Sumatra have found that they are courted by local political officials who face direct election in the coming years. The *kiayi* tend to view these officials as patrons to whom they provide a platform in exchange for funding for their school and other projects.

However, when asked about the biggest change in NU since the fall of Suharto, Drs. Malan said that NU members are showing greater initiative in suggesting and carrying out projects.⁵³ Since NU is no longer tied to a political party, members now put their energy into NU projects.

At the national level, leaders of Muhammadiyah and NU formed an alliance in January 2004 to fight against corruption in government. In this campaign, national leaders showed how Islamic elements of civil society can play a political role in curbing abuses of power. National leaders are also cultivating a new understanding of *politik* as involving strategic alliances for shared goals. In South Sumatra, NU and Muhammadiyah leaders recognize that a coalition between the two organizations is possible and perhaps advantageous. However, members of NU and Muhammadiyah compete keenly for key positions in the IAIN Raden Fatah and for influence with local political leaders, so they have yet to make an effort to work together.

⁵³ Author's interview with Drs. Malan Abdullahi, the chairman of the South Sumatra Branch of NU, August 2, 2004.

HMI has a democratic structure and a long history of pragmatic politics and open discussion of issues, but one can argue that in South Sumatra HMI has failed to respond successfully to the challenge of a more open political environment. Supporters of the pro-democracy movement who challenged HMI's support of the New Order and promoted a new conception of HMI's role in a more open political environment were driven out of the organization by conservative HMI members, backed by leaders of KAHMI, the organization's alumni association. This appears to have eroded support for HMI among university students, who viewed HMI as part of a patron-client network of HMI alumni with their own political agenda.

HMI leaders in Palembang admit that their organization is smaller and less important than it was during the New Order.⁵⁴ KAMMI is now the strongest organization on university campuses, except at the Muhammadiyah University, where only the youth organization of Muhammadiyah, Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM), is permitted. However, at IAIN Raden Fatah, HMI made a coalition with KAMMI to win offices in student government (Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa, BEM, Student Executive Body) elections. HMI appears to be learning how to manage to win elections without the support of patrons in the HMI alumni organization. At IAIN Raden Fatah, parties formed by Islamic youth organizations—IMM, HMI, KAMMI, and the NU youth organization Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Students Movement, PMII)—now compete fiercely in elections.

While HMI is no longer the most important training ground for students with political ambitions, HMI leaders point out that young HMI alumni have been very successful in seeking positions in local government. They are active in political parties and *reformasi* organizations, such as South Sumatra Corruption Watch. They have significant organizational skills, and they know how to promote discussion of political issues. One example of the way in which these young leaders support democratization is a Seminar on Regional Development organized by a former HMI chairman who is now a member of the district legislature. I was invited to be one of the speakers and to talk about ways to combat corruption. Such events help to broaden the popular conception of *politik* to include participation in collective decision making through institutional channels.

The *dakwah* organizations that grew so rapidly during the last two decades of the New Order—Remaja Masjid and FORDS—and the militant Islamic organizations that emerged in the post-Suharto period—FPI and MMI—have a predominantly authoritarian structure. In the *dakwah* organizations, leaders do not necessarily involve members in decision making, and the procedures for accountability are not effective. The militant organizations reject democracy and have a military structure. These organizations, which claim to represent a “moral movement” (*gerakan moral*) that stands above *politik*, are not so successful in recruiting new members in the more open political environment of the post-Suharto era. They are most successful in attracting support and new members when they direct the frustration of young people toward external “enemies,” particularly Israel and America, the latter castigated as the front of a Western (secular, Jewish-Christian) conspiracy to destroy Islam. But in South

⁵⁴ Author's interview with Reza, the chairman of HMI at IAIN Raden Fatah, August 1, 2004.

Sumatra, periodic demonstrations against the West have not provided the basis for sustained expansion of these groups.⁵⁵

While the appeal of *dakwah* and radical Islamic organizations does not appear to be growing, the anti-democratic view they promote—that moral reform and Islamic consciousness rather than democracy offers the best hope for a better future—still has strong appeal. The ongoing (and perhaps growing) corruption in government and the difficulty of legislating reforms that threaten political elites causes great frustration. At present, this frustration is being channeled into growing support for the PKS, the Islamist party established in 1999 by KAMMI leaders and *dakwah* activists in preparation for Indonesia's first free democratic elections in forty-five years.⁵⁶ PKS leaders argue that democracy provides a way to establish an Islamic government, and there is no necessary contradiction between Islam and democracy. Of the Islamic organizations discussed in this article, KAMMI has had the most success in meeting the challenge of the more open politics of the post-Suharto era, as evidenced by the success of PKS in the 2004 elections, when it won 7.34 percent of the vote (compared with 1.4 percent in 1999 when it was called Partai Keadilan).

Although KAMMI was established on the basis of closed cells, networked in a relatively authoritarian pattern of organization, it learned how to compete in democratic elections, winning control of student senates in universities in Palembang. KAMMI and PKS have organized emergency help in crisis situations, such as floods and landslides, where the government has failed to respond effectively, providing an example of effective collective action and public service. These organizations appear to have resolved the "contradiction" between a moral movement based on Islamic principles and democratic politics by focusing on the need to end corruption. In 2003, when the South Sumatra Provincial Legislature voted to disburse Rp.7.5 billion (\$900,000) from the provincial Operating Fund to members of the provincial legislature, only the PKS representative refused to take his "cut."⁵⁷ This kind of principled action promotes a new sense of *politik* as honorable public service. PKS has also impressed people in Palembang by choosing a non-Muslim Indonesian Chinese candidate to run for the provincial legislature in Bangka, a province settled by Chinese tin miners during the colonial period. This decision contributes to a new understanding of *politik* as referring to the legitimate representation of different groups with particular interests.

Islamic organizations at the local level are participating in the development of a more sophisticated understanding of politics in post-Suharto Indonesia. The model of government promoted by the New Order, which represented "Pak Harto" as the father of the nation who looked after the interests of all, is being displaced by a model of competing elites who seek support from different segments of society. While the notion that *politik* refers to the manipulation of groups and institutions by self-

⁵⁵ At Bina Dharma University, a private institution that does not have a student government, the Islamist organization Lembaga Dakwah Kampus is very strong.

⁵⁶ In the 2004 election to the provincial legislature, PKS won four seats, three more than in 1999. PKS also won seats in several district legislatures.

⁵⁷ "Anggota DPRD Sumsel Jadi Tersangka" (Legislators Accused), *Sriwijaya Post*, April 23, 2003; "Legislators Implicated," *Tempo*, May 5, 2003.

interested elites still has salience, there is growing acceptance of the idea that groups with different interests have a legitimate role in the political process of decision making. This change grows out of the experience of Muslims in Islamic organizations who are realizing the effectiveness of more democratic practices and appeals in organizing collective action in pursuit of shared goals.

There also appears to be growing acceptance of the idea that civil society (*masyarakat sipil*) organizations have a legitimate role in social reform. For instance, the women's branches of Muhammadiyah and NU have arranged for "training" by a "secular" NGO, the Women's Crisis Center. The PKS representative to the South Sumatra Legislature (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD) has begun to work with NGO activists who help to organize people formerly excluded from the political process. Yuswar Hidayatullah, PKS representative in the South Sumatra legislature, gave an example of how PKS "supports the people." In 2004, residents of three settlements on the outskirts of Palembang sought assistance from the Legal Aid Society (LBH Palembang) when the governor directed their eviction from state-owned land so that a green belt could be established around the city. LBH activists contacted PKS because the party has a position against forced eviction. PKS representative Yuswar was able to facilitate a meeting between the villagers and the governor to delay the forced removal. Yuswar pointed out that even if PKS wins only a single seat, it can facilitate communication between the people and government. Demonstrations are no longer the only channel for people to voice their aspirations and protests. The contrast between *masyarakat sipil* and *masyarakat madani* no longer appears so relevant.

To argue that Islamic organizations in South Sumatra appear to be providing lessons in democracy is not to maintain that democratic reforms will succeed in Indonesia. The struggle to establish an accountable structure of democratic leadership will be long and difficult. But in South Sumatra, the problem is not Islamic or Muslim attitudes toward democracy, but rather continuing widespread corruption, the failure of legal reform, and the rise of new networks of local political and economic elites.