

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF KNOWLEDGE:
SALAFISM IN THE POST-SOEHARTO URBAN INDONESIA**

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JAJANG JAHRONI

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Science, 2015

Major Professor: Robert W. Hefner, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the
Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the production and reproduction of knowledge among Salafi groups in post-Soeharto Indonesia. It specifically discusses the issues of how Salafi groups produce the knowledge they claim to be based on the authentic form of Islam in the context of social, political, and economic change. Salafis advocate the need for a return to the authoritative religious sources: the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, and the Salafi *manhaj* (methods and paths of Salafi teachings). Without the last element, Salafis claim, the proper understanding and practice of Islamic teachings are impossible.

The research was carried out in three major sites: Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Makassar, where significant numbers of Salafis are found. Ethnographic fieldwork, conducted from January to June 2011, and from July 2012 to February 2013, focused on

the individual roles, organizational networks, and historical and sociological processes which shaped the reproduction of Salafi knowledge.

To create an ideal community based on the Salafist understanding of Islamic ethics, many Salafis create separate enclaves where they erect *madrasa* and mosques, two strategic institutions fundamental for their development. Claiming to be based on the authority of the Prophet, Salafis develop a medicine and market it to other Muslim groups. Most Salafis engage in endogamous marriage to maintain the groups' solidity. The roles of women within Salafi groups are highly circumscribed. While having careers is possible, women are expected to stay at home and take care of their families.

Salafis represent only a tiny minority of Indonesian Muslims, and they compete with a diverse admixture of Muslim groups, which challenge Salafi interpretations of Islamic knowledge. The political aspects of Salafism are visible in a number of matters of religious knowledge and practice. Salafis use the issues of religious purification as a political tool to maintain their identities and to attack other Muslim groups. Heated debates between Salafis and traditionalist, and to a lesser degree, reformist Muslims, which sometimes lead to violent conflicts, are inevitable. While creating sharp social and religious divisions, debates also result in an exchange of ideas among Muslim groups, heightening the diversity of Salafist forms of knowledge and practice.