

Deradicalizing Salafis in Amanah: A Story of a Traditionalist Muslim Leader in Poso

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Abstract

Deradicalization is often the story of state success or the story of an influential national figure. This article is focused on a local leader and two decades of deradicalization work. Following the outbreak of communal conflict, many local Muslims in Poso were radicalized and viewed jihad against Christians as part of their holy religious duty. When law enforcement operations were undertaken in 2007, there was controversy over the government's call for the mujahidin groups in Tanah Runtuh to disengage from violence. Some refused these demands and left Tanah Runtuh to establish the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), a new terrorist group, which was active in the region until 2021. Many others stayed behind. Those who stayed behind have been gradually deradicalized and successfully reintegrated into the community. Without dismissing the impact of security efforts and various deradicalization programs in Poso undertaken by the state, I argue that the deradicalization of this group would not have been possible without the compassionate leadership of Haji Adnan Aرسال. This article examines how Aرسال mobilized various factions of jihadists during the conflict and gradually contained radicalism within the Amanah organization after communal violence ceased.

Keywords: Amanatul Ummah, Deradicalization, Haji Adnan Aرسال, Poso

Introduction

Deradicalization in Poso is often seen as the story of state success or the story of an influential national figure. Most studies showcase the achievements of the government or state apparatus (IPAC, 2021; Karnavian, 2008; Schulze, 2008) or non-governmental and public educational organizations (Hwang et al., 2013; Kristimanta, 2021; Mashuri et al., 2022; Thahir, 2022) in dealing with radicalized Muslims, or emphasize the political economy of radicalization and deradicalization in Poso (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021).

This study focuses on the role of a local leader in deradicalization. Salafi jihadists who came to help Muslims in Poso fight against Christians in 2001 managed to recruit local followers and build a coalition with local leaders. The sense of communal threat and crisis encouraged Muslims in Poso to stand together against those who they perceived to be aggressors. During this period, Salafi jihadists served as a vanguard. Local Muslims relied on them for protection. This trust went beyond physical jihad in a war, and included spiritual and educational needs. As a result, many local people were radicalized to see violence against the Christians as a holy war. For them, terrorizing Christians became a sacred duty of Muslims. Individual and communal grievances among Muslims hardened this doctrine. This grievance matched perfectly with Salafism, in order to nourish radical ideology during and after the conflict (Karnavian, 2014).

In 2007, the government launched law enforcement operations to implement the 2001 Malino II Peace Declaration. These measures created divisions among the Poso jihadists in Tanah Runtu. Although a local leader of the mujahidin, Haji Adnan Arsal, called for jihadists to disengage from violence, many quietly refused his demand. Some of these dissenting members left Tanah Runtu under the command of Santoso in 2012 and established the East Indonesia Mujahidin (Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT)). State security forces eliminated all of those who joined this group, with the last member shot dead in September 2022 (Darmawan, 2022). Many others who remained in Tanah Runtu held radical Salafi views.

They were trying to disseminate their radical Salafism through religious education and activities under *Yayasan Wakaf Amanatul Ummah* (YWAU), known as Amanah, a social and educational foundation founded on moderate Islam. Their radicalism continued up until 2022, when all ex-jihadists affiliated with Amanah agreed to sign a commitment to the Indonesian state and leave behind all forms of radical ideology and organizations. This article presents the story of Aarsal dan Amanah as a case

study to show how Salafi radicalism was contained through a social institution under the mentorship of a charismatic leader.

To re-establish order after the Muslim-Christian conflict in Poso, the government deployed police and military forces to the region. To strengthen this massive security effort, other actors, such as civil society activists and local leaders, were invited to be involved in promoting disengagement among Poso jihadists. However, according to Hwang et al. (2013), government programs played a minor role in their disengagement. Many jihadists were disengaging primarily due to social and cultural reasons, such as forging relationships with individuals outside jihadist circles, family pressure, rational choice, disappointment with the movement's leaders, and evolving personal life goals. Nevertheless, after a person disengages from a violent group, this does not necessarily mean that they have disavowed the radical tenets underpinning terrorist acts (Rabasa et al., 2010). Therefore, to ensure that radicalized individuals have left their extreme ideology behind after disengagement, deradicalization work is needed to rebuild peace in a post-conflict society.

Among those initiatives was the Mosintuwu Women's School movement, which engaged women in local neighborhoods to develop peace narratives to counter hateful narratives resulting from previous conflicts (Kristimanta, 2021). Similarly, international NGOs promoted interfaith encounters among youth. Such movements, however, did not have enough capacity to access and deradicalize disengaged jihadists because they avoided or otherwise did not engage in dogmatic religious debates, such as over the different interpretations between Salafis and traditionalist Muslims.

Arsal, as a moderate traditionalist Muslim, managed to navigate differences among groups of Muslims that had engaged in jihad during the conflict and largely had been radicalized by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) jihadists operating within Amanah. Arsal's passion for overcoming the internal divisions that those radicalized groups had injected into Amanah resulted in around eighty-two men being willing to sign a commitment to adhering to peaceful understandings of Islam and the unity of Indonesia as a nation in August 2022. Without Arsal's advocacy and the presence of Amanah as a social and educational sanctuary for ex-jihadists, they would have likely been subjected to state sanctions and the world would never have heard of the time-consuming but peaceful deradicalization process which took place in Amanah.

This article is a result of my fieldwork in March-April 2021 and April-May 2022 in Poso. In 2021, I met Aرسال twice at his home and once in Pondok Pesantren Putra Amanah in Landangan, Poso Pesisir. I visited Pondok Pesantren Putri Amanah in Tanah Runtuh in Poso City the same year. During the visit, I interviewed him about contemporary trends in radicalism in Poso. During the interview, he referred me to Khoirul Anam, whom he had met several times. I learned that Anam, at that time, was working on Haji Aرسال's memoir about conflict in Poso. This article uses Anam's work in *Muhammad Adnan Aرسال: Panglima Damai Poso* as a secondary resource. Between 2021 and 2022, I contacted his son several times for additional information about Haji Aرسال's role in deradicalizing Poso ex-jihadists from within Amanah. The conversations that I held with the interviewees were recorded.

Based on observations, reading, and conversations, despite the occasional differences among people I talked to about Haji Aرسال's political and ideological views, everybody agreed that he was a local leader who successfully bridged many interest groups during and after the conflict. Such bridging capacity enabled him to speak on behalf of Islam, nationalism, and humanity within his community and among interfaith communities.

Defining Deradicalization

While religious and political radicalization represents a process leading to the formation of extremist beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in support of conflict and violence among different groups (Mccauley & Moskalenko, 2008), deradicalization refers to the process of disengaging individuals or groups from extremist ideologies or beliefs (Rabasa et al., 2010). This process may involve a range of interventions aimed at reducing or eliminating radicalization, including ideological, psychological, and social factors.

Individuals become radicalized due to a desire for meaning, purpose, and belonging, a sense of injustice, and a need for identity. These motivations can lead individuals to seek out extremist groups or ideologies, which provide a sense of community and belonging and promote violent and harmful actions against others. Deradicalization addresses these underlying motivations by providing individuals with alternative forms of support, challenging their beliefs, and helping them develop more constructive ways of engaging with their communities.

One key component of successful deradicalization is the involvement of trusted and credible intermediaries, such as former extremists or community leaders, who can help individuals navigate the process of disengagement and provide support and guidance along the way. As deradicalization is a complex process, different approaches should be considered, including psychological counseling, religious re-education, vocational training, and community outreach programs. Security and intelligence measures are insufficient (Karnavian, 2008; Rabasa et al., 2010).

However, deradicalization is often explained and imagined as a systematic and well-planned process that runs on a well-defined time frame, place, and specific logistical and financial needs. This is true for notorious cases, such as Umar Patek or Ali Imron, whose terrorist activities were clearly identified, enabling efforts to focus on disengaging them immediately, followed by deradicalization. For cases where radical religious views are identified but terrorist activities remain unidentified because of the passage of time, or because they never materialize, radicalization should be understood in looser terms, bearing in mind that each radicalized view can turn into radical action if not treated in a timely manner. I situate Arsal's story of deradicalization work within this understanding.

Features of Radical Salafism

During the Muslim-Christian conflict in Poso, jihadists popularized radical Salafism among local Muslims through paramilitary training, teaching, and *dakwah* (propagation) activities (International Crisis Group, 2007; Nasrum, 2016). Salafism advocates for a return to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, as practiced by the first three generations of Muslims. Salafis are eager to emulate these pious predecessors in all aspects of life. Salafism started as a movement to eradicate *taqlid* (blind adherence to religious leaders) and revive *ijtihad* (interpretation of texts). It was initially a method of understanding Islam rather than a political movement (Cavanaugh, 2009; Hamdeh, 2021; Wagemakers, 2012). However, it is often studied as a political movement because it has inspired many to participate in political activism, even jihad. It has become “a worldview encompassing the whole of existence, from knowledge to practice, from morality to etiquette, and even from religion to politics” (Lauzière, 2016, p. 201), leaning toward conservatism and literalism in understanding divine sources. This inclination differentiates Salafism from Islamic modernism, which makes creating a rational society the goal (R. Ismail, 2021).

Salafism has a common religious creed that followers use to claim authenticity and authority. This creed is rooted in accepting the concept of *tawhid* (lit. monotheism) and fervently rejecting the use of reason by strictly abiding by the rules of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. There is only one truth, which is distinct from human subjectivity. Each group claims to be the most authentic and purest in translating this creed. However, Salafis cannot agree on a unified interpretation when they apply this creed to the real world. As a result, three main types of Salafism emerged: purists or quietists, activists, and jihadists. The purists emphasize non-violent methods of *dakwah* and education. The activists see the importance of bringing the Salafi creed into politics so that Islam can substantially influence social affairs and allow God to become the sole legislator of human affairs. Finally, jihadists endorse the use of violence to topple infidel rulers and reject other religions based on the concept of *hakimiyatullah* (God's sovereignty on the earth) and *al-wala' wa-al-bara'* (acceptance and rejection) (R. Ismail, 2021; Wiktorowicz, 2006).

This typology is not mutually exclusive in practice. The conversion from one type to another or the convergence of two types in one figure is not impossible. Salafism can adapt to different contexts, depending on the goal and interest of a leader. One Salafi may start as a quietist. Due to political imperatives, they can shift to becoming activists, even jihadists, such as Ja'far Umar Thalib (Hasan, 2018). Also, a Salafi can simultaneously emphasize the focus on *dakwah* and jihad, as Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi has exemplified (Wagemakers, 2012).

Salafism, a movement that constantly comes into direct conflict with with traditionalism, has developed a distinct identity in terms of religious practices. It is not surprising if someone says that it is easy to recognize a Salafi from their appearance. "A Salafi is immediately recognizable to others through distinctive dress, social and religious habits, prayer postures, and the content and form of his speech" (R. Ismail, 2021, p. 13). Within their circles, Salafis continuously debate issues related to doctrine, theology, or civics in ways that help them to prove that they are the closest to true Salafism (Sunarwoto, 2021).

Although not all Salafis are involved in radical jihadism, Salafism has inspired some Muslims to become radical. Radical Islamists believe Islam must be implemented literally, as is outlined in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, without compromise. They are opposed to any acts they perceive to be secular in nature. As a result, they demand the implementation of *sharī'ah* (Islamic law), the establishment of a caliphate, and the elimination of democracy (Fealy, 2004).

Communal Conflict in Poso

Poso has been a concrete example of where differences in ethnicity and religion have been mobilized to generate hatred and violence towards other religious groups. The conflict started with racial rhetoric to provoke clashes between transmigrant Muslims and local Christians. When the provocateurs found racial issues less effective in generating confrontations, they shifted to religious rhetoric. The absence of the state, unfair distribution of wealth between transmigrant and local citizens, and a new structure of political competition among local elites mutually reinforced the power of religious sentiment and symbolism to invoke confrontation between Muslims and Christians. Each party tried to mobilize its religious rhetoric to justify their violent acts (Aditjondro, 2003; V. Aragon, 2005; L. V. Aragon, 2001).

Klinken (2007) said that the expansion of the religious war in Poso was not because farmers were more concerned about their religious identity than their agricultural land but because armed conflict needed organization and brokers to deliver victory. Religion is the most effective way to channel organized activities and attract brokers. For him, conflict in Poso is better presented as a dynamic of contestation through diffusion and brokerage. By diffusion, information inciting conflict is passed among the parties who have experienced initial interactions—for example, those involved in competition over contested resources, such as land. By brokerage, information is passed through networks of unconnected groups. For instance, people in Palu who had never connected with those in Poso came to support a specific group on certain contested resources.

McRae (2013) showed the uneven pattern of violence during the Poso conflict. From the first to the last phase of the conflict, there was escalation. For him, this escalation represents the dynamic of violence that requires sophisticated explanation. Employing the concept of division of labor, he showed the reciprocal connection between the clarity of division of labor and the intensity of violence. Each leader in the field had a goal defined by their experiences of conflict. When locals, outsiders, and state players are clear in their plan and jobs to realize leaders' goals, the confrontation results in more severe violence.

Schulze (2017) suggested that compared to the communal conflict in Sambas, the Ambon and Poso conflicts were unique because religious narratives in the latter two cases were more dominant than ethnic narratives. In her view, these religious

narratives were interdependent from the national religious tensions that had been around since the 1990s in Jakarta. Also, she found that Poso jihadists were more disciplined and comprehensive in their movements than those in Sambas and Ambon.

Haji Adnan Aرسال and Yayasan Wakaf Amanatul Ummah (Amanah)

Haji Adnan Aرسال was a civil servant working for the Poso office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. For years, he visited remote villages to provide social and spiritual advice to the Muslim community. Once, he told me that his job had enabled him to meet and develop good relationships with many Christian leaders across Poso (Interview, 25 April 2021). He also was an active member of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Poso and was an advisory council (*mustasyar*) of the organization when the communal conflict began to break out. Before that, he was the head of *Majelis Dakwah Islamiyah* (MDI) Poso and *Darul Dakwah wal-Irsyad* (DDI) Poso. MDI was an Islamic organization affiliated with Golkar, the ruling party in the New Order regime, and DDI is an Islamic organization based in Barru, South Sulawesi. His leadership in this organization enabled him to meet many Christian political leaders. Aرسال later became the head of Yayasan Wakaf Ulil Albab/Yayasan Wakaf Amanatul Ummah (Amanah), which runs an orphanage, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and integrated Islamic schools. He was also the head of *Forum Silaturahmi Perjuangan Umat Islam Poso*, an important organization that became an umbrella for all Muslim organizations during the conflict (Anam, 2021).

Through Amanah, Aرسال played a role as a peacemaker, encouraging ex-jihadists to re-educate themselves according to more peaceful understandings of Islam. Around 1,243 students study at *pesantrens*, madrasas, and schools under Amanah. Most of these students come from the ex-jihadists and families associated with Amanah through *dakwah* and social activities since the conflict began. Among these families are about three hundred and fifty men who joined the jihad against Christians in 2001 following the massacre in Kilo Sembilan. This grouping was established in 2008 in Pulau Irian Jaya Street, Gebangrejo, Poso City, Poso, Central Sulawesi. Before, it had been known as Yayasan Wakaf Ulil Albab, established in 2001. The area where it is located is renowned as Tanah Runtuh. Amanah outlines that it is an educational and *dakwah* organization based on the creed of *Ahlussunnah Wal-Jama'ah* built upon the way of Salaf. It aims to prepare excellent cadres spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually as Divine Scholars (*Ulama*

Rabbani) to actively participate in promoting religion (Yayasan Wakaf Amanatul Ummah Poso, n.d.).

Amanah has two Islamic boarding schools: one in Tanah Runtu, Poso City, for girls and another in Landangan, Poso Pesisir, for boys, which was built using deradicalization funds from the government. In Tamanjeka, near Gunung Biru, where MIT was operating, Amanah organized a boarding school for Qur'ānic memorization (*tahfiz*). It also runs a system of integrated Islamic schools from playground to secondary level, and they are planning to establish a post-secondary school. Amanah has a division for *dakwah* that regularly sends preachers to engage the public by delivering a sermons for Friday prayers, preaching in religious ceremonies, and supervising around seventy *majelis taklim* (local religious study groups), including thirty women's groups throughout Poso. Amanah has a charity wing which collects donations from the public – the organization established *Dompot Peduli Amanah* (Amanah Cares Wallet) and has established donation boxes in many business outlets to facilitate its charity collections.

With all these social, educational, and religious activities, Amanah appears to be a typical organization that does not house any radical religious threat. However, due to its formation during the Poso conflict, it has been closely connected to radical Salafism from the outset. This connection has shaped how Islam is understood, taught, and practiced within the Amanah community, including its relationship with the state and the government.

Salafi Jihadists in Tanah Runtu

The previous interactions and mutual support between local Muslims and transmigrant Salafi Jihadists in Tanah Runtu led most Muslims who identified themselves as Poso ex-jihadists to be affiliated with Amanah. Although few had been involved in acts of violence, most had quietly or openly sympathized with people with radical views toward what they referred to as 'anti-Islamic forces', the government, and Christians.

The Poso conflict reached a crucial moment during the massacre of more than 200 Muslims, including students at the Pesantren Walisongo in Kilo Sembilan, on 8 May 2000 (Schulze, 2019). After this, Tanah Runtu, west of Poso City, where Amanah is located, suddenly became a temporary shelter for the survivors, especially women and children. Amanah, known as Yayasan Ulil Albab at that time, was an

orphanage established in 2001 by Arsal. Since then, Arsal has played a vital role in sustaining and rebuilding the Muslim community in Poso.

The massacre was seen as the third phase of the conflict, taking place after the first (December 1998) and the second (April 2000) phases, in which Muslims and Christians were involved in urban riots in Poso City. In the first and second phases, the head of the regency, Arief Patanga, and religious leaders agreed to stop the rioting. Muslim and Christian residents, however, did not stop seeking revenge. This led to a massive attack on Muslims by Christian combatants from Tentena on 8 May 2000. The event shocked Muslims and drove many to leave Poso City to escape the communal conflict. Religious leaders, public officials, and police left their posts. The situation continued to escalate for two weeks – there was a complete absence of law and order in Poso City. The violence that spread quickly did not stop until reinforcements were sent from the provincial government, following which Christian combatants were dispersed and order was restored (McRae, 2013).

The Kilo Sembilan massacre in and around Pesantren Walisongo provoked anger among Muslims. They could not believe this could happen at the hands of their Christian neighbors. As a result, they established a paramilitary force to defend themselves. Right after the massacre, finding space for negotiations was almost impossible because leaders from both sides were absent. At the same time, calls for jihad were rising among Muslims seeking to protect themselves and demand justice (Interview, Haji Adnan Arsal, April 25, 2021).

Arsal, one of the Muslim leaders, who did not leave the city, was trying to find ways to re-establish order by calling on people to remain calm and refrain from any acts of violence. The massacre, however, had a profound impact on many people. Many young Muslims called on leaders to pursue jihad to defend themselves from attacks by Christian combatants. They were ready to die in defense of Islam. As most leaders had left their people, residents came to Arsal to ask for his willingness to serve as their leader. For Arsal, at that moment, no one could help Muslims defend themselves from the threats and attacks by Christian combatants, except Poso Muslims themselves. The government, police, and military failed in their duties. Sometimes, Muslims were attacked in front of the security forces. This led to Arsal being declared as the leader of the mujahidin by around 300 young local jihadists in the Poso office of the Department of Religious Affairs (Anam, 2021). Most of these jihadist combatants had lost relatives and friends in the last riots and attacks by Christian combatants, especially in the Walisongo massacre. After the local

jihadist movement formed, checkpoints were erected at three front entrances to Poso city's south, southeast, and west. Muslims established night guard posts to secure the city from Christian villagers' attacks (McRae, 2013).

In June 2000, Mujahidin KOMPAK and JI contacted Arsal, the leader of Poso Muslims, to assist him in confronting Christian combatants. He accepted the offer, and Tanah Runtuh became the jihadist movement's headquarters under Arsal's leadership. By then, he not only led local jihadists but also jihadists from outside Poso, including alumni of conflicts in Afghanistan and Mindanao. From that moment until 2007, the entry of mujahidin groups from other parts of the country and their alliance with local jihadists became the defining feature of the Poso conflict (McRae, 2013, p. 6; Schulze, 2019).

Although Mujahidin KOMPAK and JI came to Poso with the same mission to help local Muslims fight, they adopted different strategies to recruit local youth. While Mujahidin KOMPAK only offered a three-week paramilitary training course, JI required would-be fighters to have an individual commitment to a particular type of religious indoctrination before they could proceed to join paramilitary training. These religiously doctrinal processes might take a month to complete. A select few trainees were chosen to participate on the front lines. Not all recruits carried weapons. Those viewed as having good religious knowledge and who were not suited to becoming combatants were ordered to take on an active role in religious teaching under JI. Due to this difference in approach, the two jihadist groups chose different bases until 2004. The locals knew Mujahidin KOMPAK as Mujahidin Kayamanya because they were based in the Kayamanya area, and Mujahidin JI as Mujahidin Tanah Runtuh as their center was at Tanah Runtuh where Amanah (then Ulil Albab) was located. Later, after their leader perished, many Mujahidin KOMPAK joined the Tanah Runtuh group. In 2001, an Islamic Boarding School for girls was established in Tanah Runtuh (Chernov Hwang, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2007). So, Tanah Runtuh simultaneously became a center for jihad, teaching, and preaching.

JI and Mujahidin KOMPAK came to Poso with dual intentions, marking them as different from Laskar Jihad (LJ). For LJ, jihad was required only when the government failed to provide protection and peace. When the government is able to do so, they are willing to disperse. JI, meanwhile, held a Salafi-jihadist doctrine, where the goal is to revive the early Islamic (Salaf) age and to establish an Islamic state (*khilafah*). Poso was a safe base (*qoidah aminah*) to kick-start the formation

for the global *khilafah* because they had strong local support. Apart from that, Poso was located in a remote area, away from the central government, and featured mountainous and hilly terrain (Anam, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2007; Karnavian, 2008).

Since joining the local jihadists in Poso, JI regularly sent religious preachers to promote Salafi jihadist teachings. Six preachers reached Poso in late 2000 and were immediately posted to Tanah Runtu, where Aرسال was building his *pesantren*, now *Pesantren Putri Amanah*. This *pesantren* started as an Islamic boarding school for boys in 2001. In 2003, a *pesantren* for girls was opened in Tanah Runtu, so the boys were moved to Landangan in Poso Pesisir, about 9 kilometers from Tanah Runtu to the north of Poso City. Tanah Runtu, however, remained a headquarters for the JI movement in Poso, even after they declared Poso as a new military command (*Wakalah*) in the organization's third geographic division (*Mantiqi III*).

Pesantren Amanah began as a temporary school for the children of conflict victims. So, JI teachers from Java contacted the community and collaborated with local Muslims to educate them. Gradually, local Muslims relied on them for their children's education. Having noticed this development, Aرسال and the JI group known as Tanah Runtu founded *Pesantren Amanah* (then *Pesantren Ulil Albab*).

In late 2002, Nasir Abbas, then the head of JI's *Mantiqi III*, sent Hasanuddin, also known as Slamet Raharjo, to Poso to lead the new *wakalah*. His task was to strengthen local and financial support for JI without further military operations against Christians. Hasanuddin was a JI member from Wonogiri who had taken part in paramilitary training in Mindanao. To strengthen his authority among local Muslims, he married Aرسال's daughter. After this, he gained wide acceptance and became influential among Poso Muslims. He was appointed as the secretary of the Ulil Albab orphanage run by Aرسال. Nasir Abbas was later arrested in 2003 over his alleged involvement in the October 2002 Bali Bombing.

Consequently, Hasanuddin's leadership continued without senior oversight. Although Nasir Abbas had ordered him to refocus JI activities away from targeting Christians to attracting local support and obtaining financial resources, Hasanuddin went in a different direction. Local jihadists became involved in several acts of violence under his command, mainly revenge attacks on Christians, including the mutilation of three Christian students at Bukit Bambu (Chernov Hwang, 2018).

Under Hasanuddin's command, Tanah Runtuh, where the Yayasan Wakaf Ulil Albab (since 2001) or *Amanatul Ummah* (since 2008) was located, became the center of the JI movement in Poso. He cooperated with other Islamist groups to plan and undertake several acts of violence. They used hard and soft approaches to realize the JI agenda. JI developed two main wings to strengthen its capacity: paramilitary and religious outreach. While the first trained local mujahidin, the second recruited local Muslims to join JI study groups. The first was divided into two groups according to their military competence: the best trainees were used to directly execute violent paramilitary operations, while the less competent were used for supporting tasks, such as surveillance, information gathering, and as couriers. The religious outreach actors were divided into two divisions: teachers (*mu'allim*) for the public and teachers for specifically selected groups. These teachers formed religious study groups in all mosques in Poso. They introduced Islamic practices and traditions according to Salafi teachings. They criticized the existing practices primarily based on NU or Alkhairaat traditions, such as reciting *barazanji*, observing tahlil (religious gatherings involving the recitation of traditionalist prayers), commemorating the Prophet Muhammad's birth (*maulid*), and commemorations for the *isra'* and *mi'raj* (the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven). Some of them married local women. Around 30 of them who displayed good capacity were appointed to participate in more intensive religious training for four to seven days. They learnt about the nature of community (*jama'ah*), loyalty (*al-wala' wal-bara'*), and jihad. Few alumni were selected for this intensive religious training. They learned war strategies and combat skills (Anam, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2007; Karnavian, 2008).

Although the Malino Declaration in December 2001 brought an end to the open conflict, from 2001 to 2007 mujahidin and local actors continued to engage in sporadic acts of violence in many locations throughout Poso. At the same time, Tanah Runtuh remained the center of training and teaching for local Muslims, including students at the Pesantren Ulil Albab. Counterterrorism raids as part of the implementation of the Malino Declaration in October 2006 and January 2007, interrupted this process. Many JI preachers were arrested or were forced to flee to avoid law enforcement efforts. However, religious outreach by the JI preachers and teachers had been going on for years. It profoundly influenced and changed the religious traditions of the Poso Muslims to become more Salafi in their doctrine and outlook. Many Poso residents, who had been accustomed to the traditions of NU or Alkhairaat, known for their flexibility approach towards local practices, converted to Salafism, which was often opposed to local customs. In observing daily worship,

they changed from being Shafi'i adherents to Hanbali-Wahhabists. In the public sphere, Poso Muslims became more formalistic, such as by wearing full body coverings (*cadar and niqab*) for women and wearing Arab- or Afghan-style attire for men. They grew beards and hair and when they performed prayers, they did not permit trousers or sarongs to go lower than the ankle. They became very disciplined in observing their five daily prayers in the mosque. One told me that before the conflict, only older adults used to pray in the mosque. He said that *majelis taklim* during and after the conflict in every corner of the city and village had changed the situation. Many youths now the mosque (Interview, 26 April 2021).

Apart from introducing methods of *dakwah* to encourage people to adopt Salafism, JI preachers taught them to raise funds from the public. They provided channels for donations in every social or religious gathering. You could frequently find signs calling on followers to “prepare your best wealth” at many gatherings. They encouraged people to spare their wealth to support religious and social activities, such as helping the needy. Having been exposed to such calls for years, many people became very willing to spare their wealth and labor to contribute to social and humanitarian programs. The donations that they collected were distributed to their constituents. Local residents also noticed that the Tanah Runtuh group always responded quickly to help others during times of disaster or difficulty. Accordingly, many local residents were supportive of the group. Many sent their children to study at their integrated Islamic schools and boarding schools.

Religious Practices Inside the Amanah Community

I visited the Pesantren Amanah for girls in Tanah Runtuh and boys in Landangan in 2021. Also, I attended one of Amanah's *majelis taklim* sessions. I can conclude that their ritual practices and appearances are closely aligned with Salafi traditions. I joined the dawn (*Fajr*) prayer in Tanah Runtuh, where I made an appointment to meet Ustaz Muhammad Amin, Aرسال's son. The Imam did not pronounce the *basmalah* (opening line of chapters of the Qur'ān used for prayers), perform *qunut* (a special intercession during dawn prayers, typical of traditionalist Muslims), or take part in additional prayers (*dua*) after the obligatory prayers (*salat*) in the congregation. After everyone finished their *zikr* (recitations) and *dua'* (prayers), I engaged in a long discussion with Muhammad Amin regarding the Pesantren Amanah. He began by explaining the Poso conflict and its relationship with Pesantren Amanah. Muhammad Amin is an alumni of DDI Mangkoso, a traditionalist *pesantren* in Barru, South Sulawesi. Following this, he escorted me to meet Aرسال,

the founder of the Amanah, at his home in Gebangrejo, about one kilometer from Tanah Runtu.

A day later, I was invited to a gathering to break the fast at Pesantren Amanah Putra in Landangan, north of Poso City. Amanah Putra is located right next to the Trans-Sulawesi Road. I noticed that the management of the *Pesantren* is modern, different from the Pesantren Amanah Putri in Tanah Runtu. It has standard classrooms in addition to its classical classrooms for studying classical Arabic. It has administrative rooms, a mosque, and dorms for students. Inside the *Pesantren* are also several houses for teachers, including the head of the *Pesantren*.

In the Amanah *majelis taklim* that I attended in the Central Mosque of the Poso City, Baiturrahman, I saw many men meeting the description of Salafi, such as wearing trousers hanging to the ankle and observing a strict separation between male and female members of the congregation. All of the women were wearing *cadar* during the *majelis*.

Haji Adnan Aرسال dan Radicalism in Amanah

From the outset, Amanah (before Ulil Al-Bab) had been the locus of competition and collaboration between various actors with different doctrines and interests. As described previously, JI leaders and preachers played a significant role in establishing Amanah in Tanah Runtu. Aرسال, as the leader and the founder of Amanah, frequently described Amanah as an asset of the Poso Muslim community, regardless of their religious affiliation. He often emphasized the importance of unity of the community, no matter their differences in doctrines and practices, as long as they worked for the benefit of the community (Anam, 2021).

Ustaz M. Anshori, who was a JI member (Karnavian, 2008) and now serves as the head of the educational division at Amanah, explained in an FGD (02/2016) in Poso,

“Amanah did not affiliate with any civil society organizations because many seniors and founders of the foundation, including Amanah boarding school, had NU or Muhammadiyah backgrounds. Therefore, they agreed that Amanah belonged to the Muslim community and taught Islam based on the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Regardless of their doctrinal background, everyone could attend Amanah” (Rais, 2021, p. 369).

Rais (2021) explained in a report,

“This *pesantren* had not claimed to be a Salafi institution, let alone Wahhabi. However, the *pesantren* was committed to practicing the religious traditions of *al-salaf al-shalih* with a doctrine of returning to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. This *pesantren* rejected the mainstream tradition of local Muslims, such as *barazanji*, *tahlilan*, *mauludan*, and *isra’ mi’raj*. Nevertheless, they were often invited to attend such events and celebrations. They usually delivered a religious sermon in order to educate society (p.369)”.

However, the inclusive principle that Amanah adopted had its limits. Santoso, a leader of the MIT terrorist group, and many others who joined him to fight against the state, was originally part of the Tanah Runtuh group. MIT in Poso represented the Salafi jihadist ideology that called for revolution against infidel rulers. For them, anyone who does not strictly implement the Qur’ān and Sunnah is an infidel or apostate and can be targeted in jihad.

For Arsal, “this understanding of Islam should be rejected because jihad, meaning fighting against the enemy of Islam, is an act of protecting Islam and Muslims from illegitimate aggression. Therefore, when the conflict has ended voluntarily or by force, jihad must stop, and peacebuilding must become everyone's priority. Accordingly, the Tanah Runtuh members who were against this principle, like Santoso and others, had to leave us. We wanted peace, and that is what Islam taught us. We learned and knew well what jihad was and how to exercise jihad, and we were not ignorant” (Interview, 14 May 2021).

Once, I asked Arsal about debates on religious interpretations and practices. He immediately responded, “we did not seriously take differences in non-substantive issues in understanding Islam. Initially, our community members used to be involved in such trivial polemics. However, now, they can accept differences” (Interview, 14 May 2021). However, in another account, he told me about his plan to send Amanah alumni to attend Islamic state universities, especially in Java. To his surprise, although he promised to obtain scholarships for those willing to pursue further education at state-sponsored universities, several parents opposed the plan. According to them, he explained, these state-sponsored universities taught a government-sanctioned version of Islam. Several teachers also rejected pursuing modern higher education degrees because they believed that a *pesantren* education was more than enough.

Arsal used a metaphor to describe this unexpected situation, “I am like a hen giving birth to a duck” (Interview, 25 March 2021). As a result of the initial radical Salafi doctrine that many Muslims affiliated with Amanah had received, on many occasions, they interfered with efforts being undertaken by Arsal to modernize educational thinking and practices. However, he always acted in a way that showed his passion for waiting positive change.

This indicates that although Arsal had eliminated the Salafi jihadism from Tanah Runtuh, the Salafi doctrine remained influential within the Amanah community.

M. Amin Adnan once explained,

“Haji Adnan Arsal is a traditionalist. His understanding and practices of Islam lean toward NU traditions. He reads *barazanji*, practices *tahlilan*, and recites *talqin* in the funeral procession. However, many of his followers in Tanah Runtuh have Salafi backgrounds. Amanah does not teach classical texts normally offered in traditionalist *pesantren*, such as *Ihya' Ulumiddin*, the work of Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali. They also reject the teaching of Tasawuf and Kalam. They read books used in many Saudi-affiliated schools, such as the work of Ibnu Taimiyyah, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd Allah bin Baz, and Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaimin (Interview, March 25, 2021, and April 12, 2022)”.

Arsal often says that whoever is against the direction he is taking to develop Amanah should consider changing their views or leaving the organization. Indeed, jihadists who targeted the state as an enemy left Amanah. Nevertheless, the JI Salafis, who supported jihad during the conflict, and have since become quietist or activist Salafis, have remained in Amanah. One of them is Hasanuddin, Arsal's son-in-law, who was arrested for a second time in late 2021 for allegedly being involved in JI-related activities, and M. Anshori, the current head of the educational division at Amanah. They have significant control over teaching materials, especially after-school classes. Outside the school and *pesantren*, they control *majelis taklim* programs. Interestingly, Amanah's education division, from its inception until today, has been in the hands of individuals who are allegedly affiliated with JI.

Arsal avoided debating different issues that used to be controversial among Salafis. However, the Salafi group that had a clear affiliation with JI in the past remains in control of curriculum within Amanah's educational system. Once Arsal was asked

why he allowed those teachers and preachers with Salafi backgrounds to continue to teach at Amanah boarding schools and madrasahs. He asserted that they were loyal and sincere and willing to teach as well as possible, given their low salary (Anam, 2021).

Muhammad Amin told me that although he had an important position as a principal of one of the Amanah schools and the head of human resources at Amanah, he had never been appointed to teach at the Pesantren Amanah for girls. He had only been teaching at the Pesantren Amanah for boys. Further, he told me that one of his brothers was an Arabic teacher at Amanah. He had to leave teaching and preferred to return to the farm to plant cacao as he disagreed with the way the Salafis indoctrinated the Amanah community members. He told me about his obsession with making Amanah pluralist by including other traditions in learning materials, especially NU traditions. He wanted to incorporate traditionalist references into Amanah's curriculum (Interview, 15 April 2022).

Recently, Aarsal has attempted to introduce NU traditions into Amanah. For instance, this year, 2022, he offered a congratulations on the commemoration of the *isra'* and *mi'raj* (commemorating the Prophet Muhammad's night-time ascension to heaven) via a pamphlet. At the same time, students at the Pesantren Amanah for boys arranged an outreach program to mark the *isra'* and *mi'raj* day. He also circulated a pamphlet commemorating Indonesia's Independence Day in 2022. Amanah has actively engaged the government and civil society in their programs and activities. They often invite government representatives, including the current vice-regent, Muhammad Yasin Mangun, and the regent, dr. Verna Gladies Merry Inkiriwang, to attend their ceremonial programs and activities. More importantly, the Amanah group is keen on fusing their local and national curricula through integrated schools and modern madrasahs.

However, there is little expression of nationalist symbols within the Amanah community. Religious symbolism is dominant. For example, students must recite an alumni oath on commencement day. The emphasis of this oath is on religious morality and loyalty to Islam, and there is no mention of allegiance to the nation.

Following the arrest of three individuals suspected of funding JI activities, the public began to understand that terrorist organizations have been transforming themselves into legal organizations conducting legal activities (N. H. Ismail, 2021). One of these suspects was Farid Ahmad Okbah, a member of the Indonesian Ulama

Council (MUI) Bekasi and the founder and head of Partai Dakwah Rakyat Indonesia (PDRI), which is believed to have ties with JI. Okbah met Aرسال in Palu in June 2021 and appointed him as the head of the advisory council of PDRI of Central Sulawesi. This appointment could generate public speculation linking Amanah with JI activities. This implies that Aرسال, without his explicit knowledge, had been in touch with persons who had connections with a radical organization like JI. In addition, many madrasahs or schools connected to the JI network have adopted national curricula to build trust between themselves and the state and the public (Hasan, 2010) as a strategic move to avoid confrontation with the state.

Following the arrest of Hasanuddin, the second most important and influential figure in Amanah, in late 2021, Aرسال decided to gradually step back from directly managing Amanah. He moved from Poso City to Palu City. In mid-2022, Amanah's new head and board were elected. However, when he left the leadership, he worked hard to ensure that Amanah was clean of Salafi radicalism and extremism. In collaboration with state agencies and religious leaders, he convinced all ex-mujahidin who allegedly sympathized with radical and extremist ideology to officially abandon these beliefs. As a result, on 5 August 2022, 82 members of the Amanah Foundation formally expressed their commitment to Indonesia and to eliminating all forms of radical thought and acts of terrorism. This declaration was overseen by the head of police counterterrorism unit Detachment 88, Marthinus Hokum, and witnessed by Wawa Suryatna representing the Office of Poso Religious Affairs, Arifin Tuamaka, the head of MUI Poso, Aرسال, as the supervisor of Amanah, and Yusrin Ichtiawan, head of Amanah. This declaration officially marked the end of radical Islam's ties to the Tanah Runtuh community. It is important to note that they agreed to sign this declaration under the condition that mass media would not be present.

The declaration reads, "I swear in the name of Allah, by Allah: (1) I state that I abandon my allegiance (*baiat*) to the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), JI, and other leaders that opposed the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia; (2) I leave and turn away from any form of ideology or understanding that leads to actions that may destroy the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia; (3) I promise to be loyal to the Republic of Indonesia and abide by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution; (4) I realize that the actions that I have undertaken in the past contradict the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and I promise that I will not join any groups that potentially lead to acts of terrorism; and (5) that I convey this declaration so that I will be responsible to Allah, God Almighty and the State of the

Republic of Indonesia. At this time, I make this Declaration without any duress or threat from any parties.” Dated Poso, 5 August 2022.

The official acceptance of this declaration by eighty-two individuals associated with the Amanah community has erased suspicions of radical ideology within the community. This declaration came as a significant relief for Arsal as, for years, he had to defend himself against accusations of radicalism and at the same time had to re-educate his followers to be genuinely peaceful in their approach towards other groups, especially Christians and the government.

Conclusion

The case of the Amanah community represents a long process of deradicalization from within a *dakwah* and educational institution led by a charismatic local leader, Haji Adnan Arsal. The media or state apparatus rarely recognizes such dedication to peacebuilding work. Although ex-jihadists, mainly local Muslims who were affiliated with Amanah in Tanah Runtu, had been suspected by many as being radical Salafis, Arsal always tried to convince others, including Christian groups and state apparatus, both civil and military, that these accusations were untrue. He believes that deradicalizing Amanah members through re-education and social reintegration will achieve better results than using security and surveillance measures. At the same time, he has consistently reminded his followers on many occasions that, as the state has intervened to tackle the conflict and security challenges, no one has the right to take any revenge on Christians or the security forces. Arsal was always ready to hand over anyone opposing this approach to security forces, so that they could face terrorism charges and trial – including his own son-in-law.

Although Salafi doctrine and practices are still dominant in the Amanah community, and outsiders continue to criticize this trend, Arsal, as a traditionalist Muslim, has not taken sweeping measures to stop it. I think he believes that as time passes, the Salafi doctrine will naturally encounter the traditionalist doctrine existing among Muslims in Poso, such as that practiced by NU, Alkhairaat, and Muhammadiyah. Such social encounters will gradually reshape the Salafi practices among the Amanah community. Therefore, he seems eager to open Amanah up to other traditions and organizations. Muhammadiyah activists seem to be the closest partners of the Amanah community in their social activities, due to the cultural proximity of these two communities.

Restoring peace and fraternity to Poso was his goal. To achieve it, Arenal never walked alone. He was always in contact and coordinated with other parties who sought the same goal, including Christian leaders and organizations, Muslim leaders and organizations, state agencies, civilian and military forces, and political and business leaders.

The limitation of the study is that the author does not know precisely how many individuals affiliated with the Amanah had been nominally radicalized and how far they were radicalized. Due to political and psychological sensitivity, it is almost impossible to obtain such information. Nevertheless, I learned that many of those who identify themselves as Amanah community members had been fighting against the Christians during the conflict and had been exposed to the teachings of radical Salafism. Based on a personal account, they are around three hundred in number. Some, such as Santoso, became terrorists – they are not part of this particular story.

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