



TRANSFORMATIONS OF  
YOUTH RESISTANCE:  
UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENE  
AND ISLAMIC POLITICS IN  
POST-AUTHORITARIAN  
INDONESIA

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Australian  
National  
University

Indonesia Project

# INTRODUCTION

- My background as an underground rock musician since the mid-1990s (inc. with Alone At Last)
- About the song “Sekali Untuk Bernyawa”: records a memory of places, people, and events that inspired me to write my PhD thesis)
- The song reminds me that some people behind the AAL’s song/album production has gone *hijrah* and stopped playing music:
  - The growling vocal in the beginning of the song by Aldonny aka ‘Themfuck’ (ex-Jeruji)
  - The synthesizers in AAL’s 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd album by Noor Al Kautsar aka Ucay (ex-Rocket Rockers)
  - The guitarist of AAL Rizki Hasibuan aka Ucay
  - The producer, owner of Absolute Records Andhika (ex-Turtle Jr.)



# INTRODUCTION

- Underground music scene: an alternative space for free expression and solidarity beyond age, gender, religion, education and class differences (Pickles 2000 & 2007; Wallach 2008; Saefullah 2017)
- Underground music scene as bastion for progressive and radical leftist activism during *Reformasi* (Pickles 2001 & 2007; Wallach 2005; Saefullah 2017):
  - Anti-Fascist Front (FAF), Anti-Fascist, Anti-Racist (AFRA), RI Boots, Nusantara Anti-Fascist Network (JAF-Nus), etc.
- Changes in post-authoritarian 'conservative turn' (see Fealy 2006; van Bruinessen 2011 & 2013)



# INTRODUCTION

- Events during the ‘conservative turn’:
  - religious-based tensions, conflicts and terror attacks
  - the emergence of conservative and right-wing Islamic groups (e.g. FPI, Laskar Jihad, MMI, HTI) and the reproduction and popularisation of their religious-political narratives (inc. anti-Ahmadiyyah, anti-Syiah, anti-Liberal Islam, anti-LGBT).
  - MUI’s “SEPILIS” *fatawa* (anti-secularism, anti-pluralism, and anti-liberalism)
  - the emergence of Islamist mobilisations (inc. 2007 International Caliphate Conference, 2012 Anti-Liberal Islam Protest, and 2016-2017 Aksi Bela Islam)
  - the emergence of the ‘Islamic underground movement’ (One Finger Underground Movement, Punk Muslim, Underground Tauhid, Punk Hijrah, and HTI-linked Liberation Youth, Hambos Community)
  - The emergence of the *hijrah* movements (the Strangers Al Ghuroba and Shift: Gerakan Pemuda Hijrah)



One Finger Underground Movement (OFUM) with their followers: together with Islamic Clothing United & Indonesia Tanpa JIL in Jakarta Clothing Festival 2012 – Photo taken from OFUM's facebook fanpage

# QUESTION & ARGUMENT

- Some underground scene participants who did *hijrah* directly and indirectly supported and joined the Islamist mobilisations and taking part in the Islamic underground movement and *hijrah* movement. The existing literature on Indonesian politics/Islam particularly the ‘conservative turn’ failed to include these participants into analysis.
- Research Question:  
“Why did some underground music scene participants shift to conservative Islam and right-wing Islamism in post-authoritarian Indonesia?”
- I argue that the transformations of the Indonesian underground music scene including the most recent towards conservative Islam and Islamism reflect the transformation of youth resistance in response to different socio-political, and economic conditions that have disempowered and marginalised them.
  - The participants sought for alternative channels to express their dissent, including new ideological and organisational platforms to resist hegemonic cultures and authorities and finding solutions to the demoralising effects generated by the above conditions.
  - The decline and absence of coherent leftist activism due to continuous state suppression and repression has caused conservative Islam and right-wing Islamism to become the main ideological and organisational alternative for the youth resistance

# SUBCULTURAL THEORY

- **Chicago School** → Youth participation in gangs, crimes, and delinquent acts is not the result of their personal, moral, and psychological defects but rather a reflection and reproduction of broader socio-economic problems such as rapid social change generated by industrialisation and urbanisation (Haenfler 2014; see Park 1915; Znaniecki 1918; Anderson 1923; Cressey 2008).
- **Strain Theory** → youth participation in crime, deviance, and delinquencies is a result of social pressures and goals placed on people who do not have enough material means to achieve them (see Merton 1938; Cohen 1955; Crutchfield 1992; Agnew & Brezina 2010)
- **CCCS/Birmingham School** uses Marxist's class analysis, Strauss' *bricolage*, and Gramsci's cultural hegemony → subcultures are collective solutions to the problems experienced collectively by working-class youths and an avenue to express and resolve 'magically' the contradictions in their parent culture (Cohen [1972] 1992; Clark 1981; 1985)
- "...Subcultures arise as attempts to resolve collectively experienced problems arising from contradictions in the social structure, and that they generate a form of collective identity from which an individual identity can be achieved outside that ascribed by class, education and occupation" (Brake 1985, vii).
- **Post-subcultural scholars** → dismissed CCCS subcultural theory as 'irrelevant', 'outdated' and do not correspond with the realities of contemporary youth cultural practices (consumerism; leisure and fun but not 'political' or 'resistance') (see Wienzierl & Muggleton 2003)
- **Contemporary subcultural theory** → subcultural theory is still relevant as it re-emphasises the problems of political economy (structures and inequality, marginalisation) and how it is affected young people in their everyday life (Blackman 2005; Shildrick & MacDonald 2006) → subculture as political and emphasis on resistance which is multidimensional (micro-meso-macro; passive and active, overt and covert resistance) (Williams 2009 & 2011; Haenfler 2014; Jensen 2018)
- Subculture function as free spaces, submerged networks, and abeyance structures that ferment dissident ideas and practices that fosters mobilisations (Haenfler 2014)



# METHODS

## PRIMARY

- PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION (2015-2018)
- NONGKRONG: SEMI-FORMAL AND INFORMAL INTERVIEWS & CONVERSATIONS WITH MORE THAN 80 PARTICIPANTS (MALE & FEMALE) IN BANDUNG, JAKARTA, AND SURABAYA

## SECONDARY

- SCHOLARLY & SCENE LITERATURE (FANZINES, WEBZINES)

# APPROACH

- CONTEMPORARY SUBCULTURAL THEORY: YOUTH SUBCULTURAL PRACTICES AS 'POLITICAL' & RESISTANCE/RESPONSE/SOLUTION TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
  - POLITICAL ECONOMY
- SUBCULTURE-SOCIAL MOVEMENT

# THE BEGINNINGS OF THE INDONESIAN UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT

- The New Order context (1966-98): Indonesian youth's use of foreign musical styles, texts, and performances to channel anger and frustration and resist forces that oppress them (Sen & Hill 2007)
- 'Youth culture provides an outlet for normally blocked aspirations, and a channel to convey criticism, provides a space for non-conformity within the context authoritarian rule' (Hadiz, cited in Baulch 2022, 221)
- Indonesian underground movement begins with the consumption of underground music in 2 periods (the 1970s and the 1990s).
  - **In the 1970s:** disorderly spectacular countercultural form that signifies youths' dissent, anger and frustration over the socio-economic crisis and New Order's turn to political authoritarianism – the music genres and class composition of the followers were limited (mostly consumed and performed by middle-upper class) – *passive resistance*
  - **In the 1990s:** wider dissemination of underground music in rural and urban areas that helps young people of all classes to articulate dissent, anger, and frustration through music, fashion, styles, and semiotic gestures (*passive*) and developed their cultural expressions into *active* resistance such as taking part in social movements





# THE RISE OF THE RADICAL UNDERGROUND

- **The late 1990s:** The underground's transformation from *passive* to *active* forms of resistance: creating alternative media and economies by applying DIY ethos to cultural production and extending it to macro levels of resistance by participating in social movements that challenged capitalism and state authoritarianism
- The spectacular styles and musical experiences were followed by political education and class consciousness that leads to an organised resistance (Saefullah 2022, 112)
- Underground scenes were used as sites of resistance where participants exchanged and shared anti-establishment ideas and took part in series of *aksi* or mass mobilisations against the New Order (Saefullah 2022)
- The anti-establishment ideas (democracy, freedom, equality, collectivism, human rights, animal rights, anti-hierarchy, etc.) were disseminated through various sources: song lyrics, leftist zines, poetry, books, and the internet (Saefullah 2022)



# THE DECLINE OF THE RADICAL UNDERGROUND

- After the fall of Suharto in 1998: the country ‘enjoyed a brief period of euphoric optimism,’ but this was followed by ‘disillusionment, disorientation, and despair’ (Heryanto 2014, 1; cited in Saefullah 2020, 320)
- ‘KEKECEWAAN’ and ‘DEMORALISASI’ → caused by the **external** and **internal** factors



# DISILLUSIONMENT & DEMORALISATION

## • External Factors

- The failure of post-Suharto leaders to address people's demands for *Reformasi* (Saefullah 2022) → skepticism & political apathy (Pickles 2007)
- Empty promises of democracy and social, political, and economic reform
- Poverty, unemployment, precarious work conditions
- The continuous repressions of the political Left: arrests of Left activists, including activist punks by the government, shutdowns of Leftist events
- The co-optation of Leftist figures by the post-Suharto government

# ORDE BARU MASIH ADA

tirto.id

"Masih banyak orang yang berangkat dari ketidaktahuan akan marxisme, yang berujung menjadi kebencian atau ketakutan," kata Bilven. "Kami ingin mengalahkan ketakutan dan menghilangkan kebencian tak berdasar itu."



2004  
ULTIMUS BERDIRI DI BANDUNG  
UNTUK MENGAJAI PEMIKIRAN KARL MARX

## PENERBITAN BUKU KIRI



NASKAH LITERATUR  
MARXISME



NASKAH SEJARAH KELAM  
TRAGEDI 1965

14 DESEMBER 2006

DISKUSI 'GERAKAN MARXIS INTERNASIONAL'  
DIANGGAP MAKAR

2016

GELOMBANG PEMBUBARAN DISKUSI  
MASIH TERJADI



# DISILLUSIONMENT & DEMORALISATION

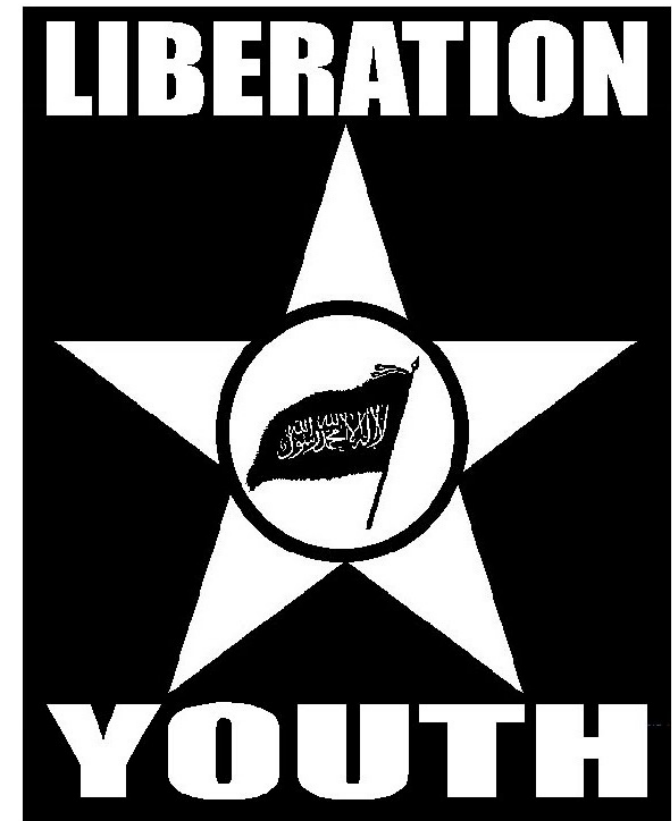
- Internal Factors

- Polarisation, fragmentation, stagnancy within the underground scene (activists fallen out; withdrawn their alliance with PRD)
- Commercialization of the underground subcultures by corporations (especially tobacco companies)
- Age transition (participants become older and faced family and financial pressures)
- The “conservative turn”: The rise of Islamic conservatism and Right-Wing Islamic movements and narratives
- Due to the absence of coherent Leftist activism in the underground scene, some participants seek ideological and organisational alternatives, and found Islam and Islamist political ideology as the new alternatives



# THE RISE OF ISLAMIC CONSERVATISM AND RIGHT-WING ISLAMISM

- The idea of *Ghazwul Fikri* or the 'invasions of the minds' → believed to be a part of West's conspiracy against Islam and Muslims in post 9/11 global order
- Early IUMs: HTI-linked collectives such as Liberation Youth and Hambos Community
- The production of DIY fanzines and webzines with Islamist contents
- Recruitment of students/underground youths in schools, universities, underground hang-outs



EDISI

1



BERANGUS NASIONALISME

REVOLUSI

CHALIPHATE

AKU SAYANG KAMU

Bring Me To Revolution.....

Revolt  
n'rise

effe9p-ey-ey-e-

# NO COMPROMISE #5

ISLAMIC ZINE CONTRA THOGUT

MENELAAH KEMBALI MITOS-MITOS  
YANG DI BANGUN KOLEKTIF ANARKIS DI INDONESIA






**RISE: SENAYAN KERAS KEPALA '07**  
'Bergerak berkali-kali, karena mati hanya



**UNITE  
PEOPLE  
UNDER  
KHILAFAH**



**RISE!**

Islam  
melawan,  
revolusi kami,  
pasti...!



**P.R.I.P.**



**RISE!**



# THE RISE OF ISLAMIC CONSERVATISM AND RIGHT-WING ISLAMISM

- The idea of *Ghazwul Fikri* or the 'invasions of the minds' → believed to be a part of West's conspiracy against Islam and Muslims in post 9/11 global order





SERDADU AS TEMBAKI AL-QUR'AN

سبیلی  
MAJALAH ISLAM  
**Sabili**  
MENITI JALAN MENI... OTILLAH

Bantuan Langsung Tunai  
Proyek Instan  
Merusak Mental

Berjuang  
Menghidupkan  
Al-Qur'an

JAWA RP 9.400 LUAR JAWA RP 10.000



NO. 24 TH. XV 12 JUNI 2008/8 JUMADIL AKHIR 1429

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MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER \* KILLUA

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Richard Stephen Gosal aka Thufail Al Ghifari









# THE BIRTH OF HIJRAH MOVEMENT



**komuji**  
Karena Sahabat itu Memberi Kebaikan

**TASAWUF**  
وَلَسْتَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ  
وَلَسْتَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ  
**UNDERGROUND**



## CONTEXT

- POST-AUTHORITARIAN ERA: DEMORALISATION, DISILLUSION, & DISORIENTATION
- CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCIALISATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE; PRECARIOUS WORK CONDITIONS, MATERIAL INEQUALITY
- THE ABSENCE OF COHERENT LEFTIST MOVEMENT & NARRATIVES
- THE RISE OF ISLAMIC CONSERVATISM & RIGHT-WING ISLAMISM

## HIJRAH PARTICIPANTS

- MALE & FEMALE
  - AGE 20s – 40s
- MOSTLY URBAN MIDDLE CLASS
- GREW UP IN SUBCULTURAL COMMUNITIES SUCH AS UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENE
- AGEING → CHANGES IN LIFE COMMITMENT & ORIENTATION, CAREER, WORK, FINANCIAL & FAMILY PRESSURES
- MOSTLY HAVE HIGH-LEVEL EDUCATION, BUT RELATIVELY LOW INCOME (MARTIN-IVERSON 2012, 388)

## STORY OF ASEP\*

- MALE, 33 years old
- EX-GUITARIST OF HARDCORE/PUNK BANDS
- MARRIED WITH 1 WIFE, 2 KIDS
  - SECULAR EDUCATION
  - PROBLEMS WITH CAREER:  
CHANGING JOBS, FAILED  
BUSINESSES, 'GALAU'
- HIJRAH IN 2017: LEARN RELIGION  
INITIALLY VIA YOUTUBE BEFORE  
JOINING SHIFT, THEN MOVE TO A  
SALAFI STUDY GROUP JEJAK SAHABAT





## STORY OF DONI\*

- MALE, 39
- SKATER, SURFER, ENTREPRENEUR
- GREW UP IN SUBCULTURAL COMMUNITY
  - SECULAR EDUCATION
- FAILED IN SNACK BUSINESS IN BANDUNG → DEBT TO BANKS AND LOAN SHARKS
  - BECAME POOR & BROKEN HOME
- HIJRAH IN 2015-16: LOOKING FOR FREE FOOD IN MOSQUES AND FRIENDS, ASSISTED BY SHIFT: PEMUDA HIJRAH MEMBERS AT MASJID AL-LATHIIF IN BANDUNG



THE END