

Interview by Ahmad Suaedy with Bambang Pranowo, Jakarta, February 2015

PhD, Anthropology, Monash University, 1980s cohort



[00:00:08] English	Born in a village near Mount Merapi in Magelang, Central Java. His father was a low level government official in the Department of Social Affairs, and active in politics, his last position was head of the local branch of PNI [Indonesian Nationalist Party].	Childhood; Family background
[00:01:19] Indonesian	While he was a student in Jogja he was influenced by the Indonesian Students Action Forum (KAMI) but when he went home he was influenced by marhaenist ideas.	Undergraduate education
[00:01:46] English	He went to state primary school but, in 1958, his father realised there was a lack of religious leaders in his village so sent him to a religious school, PGAP (Pendidikan Guru Agama Pertama), in Magelang. He had been good at maths so his headmaster suggested he go to the state high school but his father wanted him to go to PGAP. Fortunately there was a teacher there who inspired his interest in Islamic studies and Arabic language.	Early education
[00:03:56] Indonesian	Started school a bit young, when he was five, because he went with his older brother, so he finished when he was eleven.	Childhood
[00:04:24] English	His religion teacher was very good, he taught Arabic language and script as well.	Early education
[00:04:58]	He learnt to write Arabic and still remembers the	Early education

Indonesian	letters.	
[00:05:26] English	After four years he went to PGAA (Pendidikan Guru Agama Atas) in Jogjakarta, on a scholarship. He was expected to become a religious teacher but he wanted to study at the Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) rather than train to be a religious teacher so he applied to IAIN and was accepted into the Department of Comparative Religion with Professor Mutiari.	Secondary education; Early career
[00:07:33] English	Pak Pranowo is the second of nine children. Nearly all did bachelor degrees at university but he is the only one who did religious studies. He chose that field partly because of his father and partly for himself, he was only 17 and didn't want to become a religious teacher and possibly be sent out of Java. He started at IAIN at the end of 1964, then in 1965, a time of political turmoil in Indonesia. He demonstrated against the PKI. His father belonged to PNI Osa-Usep not PNI Asu with Surakhman.	Family background; Career
[00:10:35] English	Started at IAIN in 1965 and finished in 1972 because he was active in many student activities. He didn't belong to organisations because he was upset by the conflict between Association of Muslim Students (HMI) and PNI. He joined HMI but was mostly active in off-campus activities of the dewan dakwah (DDII – Islamic Propagation Council of Indonesia). Although his father was a member of PNI he had many friends who were Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Pak Prawono became a mixture and was invited to speak at HMI and NU, mostly NU, offices around East and Central Java. One day Ansor (Islamic Youth Organisation) came to the Jogja HMI office and his colleagues said he wasn't really HMI. So he had a broad range of influences. [Discussion about the version of Muhammadiyah where he came from and that his father espoused.]	Undergraduate education; Community activities and organisations
[00:15:39] English	He graduated at the end of 1972 and in May 1973 he worked on Buru Island to minister to the Muslim PKI political prisoners being held there. He was part of a special task force, employed by the Department of Public Prosecution in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs to, in theory, meet the spiritual needs of the Muslim political prisoners and create a religious atmosphere. There were 10,000 prisoners and they	Early career; Buru Island

	lived in a separate village, free, because it was a remote island and impossible to escape. He was sent originally for nine months but when Pak Sumitro visited there were [in Indonesian] women protesting and his term was extended to two years.	
[00:19:19] Indonesian	He helped set up a madrasa for the prisoners and their families, gave lectures and encouraged piety. He considered it a mission, those people didn't have anything.	Early career
[00:20:06] English	Did the government provide funds for this? Yes, he could make proposals to the commander for funds. 75% of the prisoners were Muslim. After the coup in 1965 many Muslims converted to other religions. Pak Prawono got a lot of information about the fear of Islam because the people who caught them were from Islamic organisations in East Java and members of their families were victims of Muslim youth.	Early career
[00:21:40] English	Living on Buru Island made him realise his knowledge was limited, he was exposed to Marxist ideology there.	Early career
[00:22:23] Indonesian	He made up his mind to study more. He couldn't present counter arguments.	Further education opportunities
[00:22:55] English	From Buru he went to Jakarta and worked for PTDI (Pendidikan Tinggi [Darul?] Islam) [in Indonesian] that broadcast lectures about Islam. [In English] After two years he transferred to the Sumatran project. [In Indonesian mentions awkwardness and chaos related to religion.] [In English mentions that he was asked to speak at a KAHMI forum about his experience at Buru.] [In Indonesian] There were ex-political prisoners at the forum who were impressed by his speech and how he had helped many political prisoners some who were on Buru with their families and some who were die-hard leftists, Aidit's cadres and Pramoedya. He met them all, got them talking because he treated them humanely, different to how the military treated them. The military were suspicious of him but he said if he couldn't talk to them like that, and about those subjects, he wouldn't gain their trust. He would pray with the prisoners at the mosque.	Career; networks; community activities
[00:28:14]	After leaving PTDI he became a coordinator at LP3ES. [Mentions small industries, trying to help	Further career

Indonesian	them, with involvement from Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), visual arts, exhibit of Italian shoes.] He had an expo of small industries, to help them develop, and the orders flowed in. He joined the Ministry of Religious Affairs and became a speechwriter for the Director General and later Minister Effendi. He wrote an important speech about Pancasila and Islam. He was there from 1976 to 1978.	
[00:33:26] Indonesian	Then he went to the PLPS (Pusat Latihan Penelitian Social) in Banda Aceh. Before that he had been with PLPA (Pusat Latihan Penelitian Agama) at IAIN. He wanted to learn more but he was called to Aceh to the YIS (Yayasan Ilmu Social). He was assessed at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and still remembers the questions. [Gives examples of the questions, about the role of religion in society, and his answers.]	Professional networks; Career
[00:37:24] Indonesian	He was in Aceh for one year, until 1979. He met Dr Lance Castles there, became good friends. Then went to Medan. He had been a public servant since 1976, as a part-timer, and someone advised him to work full time for RP3S, but it was easier to get a scholarship as a public servant so he didn't want to. He followed a colleague, Johan, and applied and was accepted. He studied English. In 1983 he applied for a Colombo Plan scholarship, passed the English test. Now there is a process set up for employees of IAIN but he had to get the information from the embassy himself. He was due to leave in 1984 but he had a dream that he was in a small boat on a rough sea and he jumped out of the boat, the boat fell apart and he swam to a very beautiful island. Then a letter came to his office saying he couldn't go this year because the priority was agriculture and education and he'd been accepted to do a MA in social sciences.	Australian connection; Scholarship opportunities
[00:42:19] Indonesian	He had to sit another test and then Joan Wiley, at the embassy, asked him to provide an academic reference. Lance Castles was teaching Australian Studies at UI and he wrote a good reference recommending Pak Prawono do a MA leading to a PhD, so the scholarship was for five years. The MA was by research at [Monash University] Centre for South East Asian Studies. Students had to be self-motivated and plan their studies if they	Scholarship application process; Australian connection

	wanted to finish within the time allocated by the scholarship.	
[00:45:58] Indonesian	He left Indonesia in January 1985 and went home in August for six months to collect data. While there he went to seminars and discussions. His supervisor, Professor Joel Kahn, encouraged him to continue with his research, especially when he read Pak Prawono's report about festivities in Sidoarjo and that pre-Islamic traditions continue.	Studying in Australia; Fieldwork; Student-supervisor relationship
[00:50:00] Indonesian	His thesis was 'Creating Islamic tradition in rural Java'. [Comments about the cultural influences in the village before Islam became more dominant.] He finished his thesis in 1991 and it was published as a book, 'Memahami Islam Jawa', in 2009. [Discussion about revitalisation or invention of tradition and changes in Indonesia in the intervening years.]	Studying in Australia
[00:52:49] English	Why Monash? Pak Prawono doesn't know, maybe the influence of Lance Castles. Lance was proud of him because a number of his contemporaries didn't finish. [In Indonesian] He was from IAIN and his scholarship was for MA leading to PhD but others, from UI, only had a scholarship for a MA. It wasn't easy, the thesis had to be externally assessed, Pak Prawono's went to the ANU and MacGill, and both examiners accepted it. He finished it on time, it was hard work, little sleep. He wrote it in Indonesian and had to translate it into English himself.	Choosing university in Australia; Australian connection; Studying in Australia; Challenges
[00:55:38] English	His wife and two daughters went to Australia with him. After a year his wife got an Australian government scholarship to do a MA in chemistry, also at Monash. She had done her bachelor degree at the Gaja Mada University (UGM). She finished at the same time as Pak Prawono finished his PhD. His older daughter now lives in Holland with her Australian-born Indonesian husband who works for Esso. She finished primary school and went to secondary school in Australia and did an economics degree in Perth as a private student. The second daughter went to primary school in Australia.	Living in Australia; Family in Australia; Ongoing connections with Australia
[00:59:41] English	The Indonesian community knew he was from the Ministry of Religious Affairs so he was invited to speak at many religious events. [Elaborates in Indonesian with anecdotes about former prime minister, Natsir and comments about Gus Dur (he	Activities in Australia; Indonesian community in Australia

	knew him well before going to Australia).]	
[01:08:32] Indonesian	In 2000 he changed from Religious Affairs to Defence, he thinks Gus Dur may have nominated him. [Comments about his role there, the purpose of the Sumatra Rebellion and the rehabilitation of Natsir afterwards.]	Returning to Indonesia; Post-scholarship career; Professional networks
[01:12:36] Indonesian	[Comments about the debate in the early 2000s about the Pancasila and the historical significance of S30 in Indonesian history.]	
[01:15:05] Indonesian	Return trips to Australia? After finishing his PhD he was Director of Religious Education and went with a group of madrasa teachers to Deakin University. [Anecdotes about leaving academia to become a bureaucrat.] In 1992 he was lecturing in Malang, in 1998 he was given a professorship, he didn't use the title when he became a bureaucrat but he was considered civilian general when he worked for Defence.	Returning to Australia; Post-scholarship career; Professional networks; Ongoing connections with Australia
[01:19:42] Indonesian	[Comments about teaching at the State Islamic University (UIN) and his connections with the Ministries of Education and Defence and the Pesantren MONAS.]	Career
[01:24:28]	END	