

# Foreword

This beautiful study by Arif Zamhari offers a rare glimpse into the practices of Islamic spirituality in contemporary Java. Dr Zamhari focuses on three distinct groups in East Java who gather under the inspired religious leadership of a notable *kyai* to invoke the Divine Names in the remembrance of God (*Dhikr Allah*). Each of the groups is remarkably different yet they adhere to a common tradition that has deep historical roots. At present, these groups are the popular manifestation of a resurgent devotional Islam – an open, active, and engaging form of Sufi worship.

Dr Zamhari's study also provides remarkable insights into the working of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) at a grass-roots level. Each of the groups, which Dr Zamhari designates as *Majlis Dhikr*, has established itself under the broad umbrella of NU orthodoxy. Yet none of *Majlis Dhikr* has been given the formal recognition of *mu'tabarah* that NU has accorded *tarekat* such as Naqshabandiyah, Qadiriyyah, Shattiriyyah or Tijaniyyah. Indeed the issue of recognition has arisen primarily in relation to just one of these groups, the *Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat*; the other two groups, the *Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat* and the *Dhikr al-Ghāfilīn*, are even less formally constituted.

Thus in studying Sufi devotional practice that occurs outside the bounds of organized *tarekat*, Dr Zamhari has had to develop an appropriate terminology to locate such diverse groups within a pertinent frame of reference. His efforts are as innovative as they are revealing. Although these groups and others like them can not be considered as *tarekat*, they share much in common with *tarekat* and are part of a spiritual continuum that is closely linked to the *tarekat* tradition on Java. As Dr Zamhari makes clear, to understand Islam on Java, it is essential to perceive the full spectrum of its religiosity.

This book leads into the world of *tasawuf* – the mystic teachings of Islam. Dr Zamhari devotes considerable attention to an exegesis of critical concepts underlying the spiritual practices of the *Majlis Dhikr* and the interpretative basis for these practices within orthodox teaching. At the same time, he is able to tie his exegesis to a living tradition. He is also able to show how *kyai* act as charismatic religious leaders and to provide a portrait of some of these remarkable *ulama*.

Dr Zamhari's portrayal of the *kyai* who founded the three *Majlis Dhikr* that he examines – *Kyai* Abdul Madjid Ma'ruf, the founder of *Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat*, *Kyai* Abdul Latif Muhammad, known as *Gus Latif*, founder of *Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat*

and *Kyai* Hamin Jazuli known as *Gus Mik*, founder of the *Dhikr al-Ghāfilīn* – is a study in contrasts. The deep spirituality and learning of each of these *kyai* is evident; their genealogical ties within the NU community are made clear, and yet their individuality and their differences in religious approaches are particularly notable. The *kyai* of NU are a diverse group.

The person of the *kyai* is central to the development of these Sufi groups and each has its base in a particular *pesantren*. Dr Zamhari is able to weave all of these elements together – personal, sociological and theological – in a clear, coherent and sympathetic exposition.

Dr Zamhari's ability to create this work is based on his intimate knowledge of East Java and of its *pesantren* community. Dr Zamhari was born in Lamongan and educated there at Madrasah Bustanul Ulum before taking up further study in Malang at Pesantren Miftahul Huda, then at Pesantren Sabilurrasyad and, thereafter, at IAIN Sunan Ampel Malang. He did his PhD in the Department of Anthropology in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the ANU from 2003 to 2007 and has since returned to Indonesia where he lectures at different institutions: at UIN Malang, Ma'had Aly Al-Hikam, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah and Paramadina University in Jakarta, and at IAIN Sunan Ampel in Surabaya