

## Foreword

This volume, *The Workshop for Morality* by Dindin Solahudin is a remarkable study of a most unusual pesantren. Officially known as Pesantren Daarut Tauhid, this pesantren was located in Bandung and flourished at the beginning of a period of Islamic resurgence in Indonesia. More commonly referred to as the *Bengkel Akhlaq*, this 'Workshop for Morality' exerted a special appeal to groups of young urban Muslims, particularly students. Its founder was H. K. Abdullah Gymnastiar, popularly known as Aa Gym, who later went on to become one of Indonesia's most important Muslim preachers and television celebrities.

Pesantren Daarut Tauhid was notable for the popularity of Aa Gym's preaching and the emotional response that he affected among his followers. Ritual weeping was a prominent feature of gatherings at the pesantren. But Pesantren Daarut Tauhid was also unusual for the way that it organized the teaching of classic Islamic texts (*kitab klassik*) by inviting distinguished religious teachers from other West Javanese pesantren to lecture at different times during the week and to present varying Islamic orientations.

Dindin Solahudin did his fieldwork for this study in the mid-1990s and is able to provide exceptional insights into the operations of Pesantren Daarut Tauhid while at the same time conveying a sense of the religious enthusiasm that characterized this period. He was also able to speak, at some length, with its founder, Aa Gym, and on this basis, he presents a picture of Aa Gym's early life and of the initial setbacks and subsequent spiritual experiences that were to transform his life. He highlights the importance of dreams and the profound experience of the *hajj* that prompted the first stirring of his preaching career and the eventual establishment of his pesantren.

As particularly pertinent to an understanding of Pesantren Daarut Tauhid's mission as a 'Workshop for Morality', Dindin Solahudin examines Aa Gym's formulation of the qualities of mind and heart that he sees as fundamental to an Islamic morality: sincerity, modesty, honesty and patience. The attainment of these qualities was the purpose of all religious activities of the pesantren.

*The Workshop for Morality* is a superb work of both historical and ethnographic relevance that reflects the capacity of its author, Dindin Solahudin, to capture a critical moment in the development of Islam in contemporary Indonesian society. A native of Bandung, Dindin Solahudin has had an association since 1993 with the former State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Sunan Gunung Jati that has now become a State Islamic University in Bandung. On the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication, he has, at different times, headed both the Department of Journalism and the Department of Community Development. Since 1996, he has also been a lecturer at Pesantren Al-Ihsan. Since his graduation from The Australian National University in 1998, he has continued to do research

and to publish on a wide range of topics. He is currently engaged in the study of Islamic moderation for a doctoral degree at the State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta

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