

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I have attempted to portray Pesantren Daarut Tauhid in terms of its emergence, its nature and structure, and the role it plays in the reinforcement of Islamic morality. The emergence of this pesantren in 1990 is part of the general resurgence of Islam in the world. It has been argued that the contemporary resurgence in Muslim societies, particularly in urban areas, can be understood as the continuation of the spirit of reformist renewal in Islam. Christian Kiem (1993:92), observing Muslim youth in Eastern Indonesia, argues that Islamic resurgence among the youth in Muslim countries has to be understood as “an intra-Islamic...purification of religious life from pre-Islamic beliefs and practices.” In a similar tone, Rifqi Rosyad (1995:115) argues that the Islamic resurgence among the Muslim youth in Bandung...“is a continuation of *tajdid* (renewal) tradition in Muslim societies.” Seen in this way, the resurgence is most often linked to the reformist movements that undermine the position of Islamic traditionalists. Kiem evidently links the resurgence in Ternate to Muhammadiyah and Rosyad links the resurgence in Bandung to Muhammadiyah and Persis. Both Muhammadiyah and Persis represent the modernist, reformist line of Islamic thought.

Such an argument is not always an accurate representation of the diversity and complexity which is the very nature of Islamic resurgence throughout the Muslim world (Dessouki 1982:6). While the internal purification from traditional practices of Islam may be the chief aim of some cases of Islamic resurgence, it is not the aim of many others. I see an inclination among Muslim youth to leave behind the exhausting conflict between modernist-traditionalist groups. This results in a decreasing concern with questioning one’s practice of Islam. The question whether or not one’s practice of Islam is “Islamic,”--viewed from modernist point of view, anyway--is now less important than whether or not one practises Islam at all. Hence I argue that associating the resurgence with theological reformism is less relevant than previously.

In support of this, Dhofier (1980a:342-3) has shown the inadequacy of this approach based on a traditionalist-modernist dichotomy. Lessons from Pesantren Daarut Tauhid demonstrate that Muslims are less concerned with the different views and practices of the modernist and traditionalist groups. Their primary concern is that, to cope with pervading social ills, Muslims have to practise their Islam, regardless of whose group of Islamic practices they follow. Thus Muslim youth at Daarut Tauhid put emphasis on *akhlaq* (Islamic morality), an aspect of Islamic teaching that is conceived of in the same way by both modernist and traditionalist groups and so does not cause a split. What has divided Muslim societies into modernist and traditionalist groups has mainly been *fiqh* (Islamic

jurisprudence), for there are many *ikhtilaf* (different views) in Islamic thought in this regard. I therefore argue that Muslims at Daarut Tauhid are neither modernist nor traditionalist but a combination of the two.

This combination is clear from the Islam that is practised at Daarut Tauhid. Modernist traditions in Pesantren Daarut Tauhid can be seen in two respects. First, Pesantren Daarut Tauhid applies some modernist practices for Islamic rites. For example, it practises the modernist style of eight cycles *shalat tarawih* in Ramadhan. Second, it tangibly attempts to adopt modern technology, if Kiem (1993:104) is justifiable in his assumption that the modernists are more open to adopt Western technology than the traditionalists.

Traditionalist practices in Daarut Tauhid are also clear. In fact, being a pesantren, Daarut Tauhid bears more traditionalist features. This is because the pesantren tradition itself is identified with the traditional line of Islamic thought, regardless of the fact that a reformist kind of “pesantren” is now developing. Thus, Daarut Tauhid has many features in common with the pesantren tradition in general.

Pesantren Daarut Tauhid, as we have seen, grew out of a small *pengajian*, just like other pesantren (Dhofier 1980a; 1982). But, unlike the common case that a pesantren is established by a learned pesantren graduate or by a hereditary *kyai* (Dhofier 1980a:72-73; Horikoshi 1976:186-191), Daarut Tauhid was founded by a young leader born to an army-family and a graduate from an academy of technology. Thus, to be a religious specialist, Aa Gym lacked both genealogical legitimacy and intellectual competence. To overcome these deficiencies some rites were extremely crucial to the *kyaiship* of Aa Gym. These were the *i'tikaf* and the *haji*. The *i'tikaf* Aa Gym carried out during Ramadhan in 1987 and the *haji* he performed two months later transformed his personality and the perception of people about him. The *i'tikaf* and the *haji* functioned as a phase of liminality, in that Aa Gym stayed “at a distance” from people and reflected on his personality and spirituality. After the *i'tikaf* and the *haji* were completed, Aa Gym began to qualify as a religious leader. This was supported by several dreams that revealed the future leadership of Aa Gym. Therefore, the *i'tikaf*, the *haji*, and the dreams were sources of legitimacy to Aa Gym's *kyaiship*.

Seen from the perspective of the founder, the case of Daarut Tauhid is like the case of Pesantren Tegal Rejo, which was founded by a *priyayi* (Pranowo 1991). Further, as in the case of Daarut Tauhid, Pranowo has also noted a certain degree of creative expression of Islam pioneered by Pesantren Tegal Rejo. The difference lies more in terms of their ‘target’ of creativity: while Tegal Rejo creatively employed local culture, Daarut Tauhid creatively modifies a more global culture than the local one. The reason for this is certainly the location: Tegal Rejo is rural whereas Daarut Tauhid is urban. Thus, the challenge is different but the response to it is similar, in that both tend to incorporate, rather than to oppose, the challenge, with necessary modification.

Unlike Horikoshi (1976), I argue that the relationship between Aa Gym, the *kyai*, and his followers is both collective and personal. Horikoshi, studying the *kyai* in West Java, argues that the *kyai* “must maintain a certain distance from the masses to preserve the image of a symbolic leader not easily accessible to the public.” (1976:368) As we have seen, Aa Gym develops an intimate sphere of interaction with his followers. The religious advice and consultations at Daarut Tauhid are not impersonal in nature. Yet, Aa Gym, like other *kyai*, remains charismatic in the eyes of his followers. This may follow the leader-follower relationship in Javanese tradition, which is, as Murtono pointed out, “a personal and close tie of mutual respect and responsibility” (cf. Guinness 1986:180). Hence, I argue that the *kyai* leadership, like the leadership among Ledok people in Yogyakarta (Guinness 1986:181), is conceived of less as a privilege than as a religious responsibility. The *kyai* is offered trust on the basis of his community mindedness and less on the basis of his personal following.

In the reinforcement of Islamic morality, Pesantren Daarut Tauhid has made a contribution to the pesantren tradition at large. It is true that the intention of all pesantren is to refine the morality of their students, educate their spirits, propagate virtue, teach propriety, and prepare them for a life of sincerity and purity (Dhofier 1980a:10). However, at other pesantren, this embedment of morality is confined to the *santri* who stay at the pesantren complex. These *santri* are in turn supposed to be the living examples of Islamic morality when they return home. Thus, generally speaking, the role of the pesantren in the application of Islamic morality among Muslim community is indirect, that is, the *kyai* and the *santri* become examples of correct Islamic behaviour (Dhofier 1980a:6; 1982:19).

By contrast, the role Pesantren Daarut Tauhid plays in the reinforcement of Islamic morality is quite direct. This is clearly seen through several factors. First, its popular name, Pesantren *Bengkel Akhlaq*, reflects its deliberate focus on reinforcing morality in the Muslim community. Second, the life of the pesantren is also developed in a moral minded sphere, in terms of oral and bodily behaviour. Third, Islamic morality is always the central theme of the public sermons and the written publications issued by the pesantren. Fourth, the main activity is spiritual workshops which aim at rehabilitating the morality of the Muslim community. In fact, the idea of these workshops originated from the short course tradition common to nearly all pesantren. In West Java, it is known as *pasaran*, that is, a short course in Ramadhan during which one or two *kitab* (Islamic texts), usually thick enough, are marathonly read to the end. More recently, this tradition is called *pesantren kilat*, held commonly in Ramadhan in many pesantren and mosques. Nonetheless, the *pasaran* and the *pesantren kilat* is generally concerned more with the mastering of Islamic knowledge than with the practical application of Islamic morality in daily life. This latter is more the concern of

Pesantren Daarut Tauhid. I argue that it is for this form of moral workshop that Pesantren Daarut Tauhid draws the attention of Muslim youth in urban Bandung.

The reinforcement of Islamic morality at Daarut Tauhid is made more effective by the creation of the tradition of ritual weeping. Daarut Tauhid established an individual and communal tradition of ritual weeping. This constitutes a novel feature of the pesantren tradition in Java. There may have already existed a tradition of spiritual weeping among Muslims, mostly among Sufi. However, it is individual in nature and as a result is not socially recognised. By means of this weeping, Muslims at Daarut Tauhid effectively control their life: becoming religiously conscious, they purify themselves from any sin and immorality and pursue the highest standard of piety and righteousness. Tears mean, to them, fear and obedience, submission and relief.

It is by way of reinforcing this Islamic morality that Islam in Bandung is “gaining energy” among Muslim youth. To gain this energy, Islam does not have to lose its definition, as Geertz suggests it has (1995:165). If Geertz bases his judgment on his observation that the ills of modern life are taking shape among Muslims (1995:142-143), Daarut Tauhid might be used to counter Geertz’s proposition. Daarut Tauhid attempts to reinforce Islamic morality and, as a result, it gains energy. Thus, to gain energy, Muslims have to confirm, and not to abandon, the definition of Islam. Certainly, lessons from the case of Pesantren Daarut Tauhid demonstrate that Islam, in Indonesia and elsewhere, is now gaining energy by maintaining the definition of Islam.