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Foreword [Religion and Television in Indonesia: Ethics Surrounding Dakwahtainment]

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This monograph stems from a research project entitled Religion and Gender in Indonesia, which was supported by the Netherlands-based Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid). The grant was derived from carry-over funds from the conference on the Resurgence of Religions in Southeast Asia hosted by the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) in January 2011. The project started in February 2012 and officially ended in December the same year. However, with much support from like-minded institutions, namely the Geneva-based Globethics.net and the Faculty of Dakwah of the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, the research team was able to extend the lifespan of the project.

While this manuscript was being completed, ICRS was planning ahead for an international conference, to be held in Jakarta, with an almost similar theme – Religion and Television in Indonesia: Ethics and Problematics of *Dakwahtainment*. The conference will be Held jointly by ICRS and Globethics.net, in collaboration with the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, and with participation from the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The idea behind the international conference was largely an extension of the action

research upon which the study was predicated. Action research is a method that transforms knowledge into action. Thus, with the participation of the various stakeholders in the conference, previous discussions and commitments can be further strengthened or even formalised, and collective action can be undertaken to bring about some positive and effective changes.

This monograph can also be seen as an expansion of two articles I wrote. The first was a journal article entitled “Gender Construction in *Dakwahtainment*: A Case Study of Heart to Heart with Mamah Dedeh”, published in late 2012 by *Al-Jamiah*, an international journal based in the Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. The other was a paper presented at an international conference in Qum, Iran, entitled “*Dakwahtainment* and its Discontent: Ethical Considerations in Islamic Televangelism”. The conference took place on 27-28 February 2013 and tackled the intricate theme of *Akhlaak-e va Aadian* (Ethics and Religions). With scholars invited from almost ten countries, it was sponsored by the Qum-based Esra Foundation for Divine Sciences, under the auspices of H. E. Grand Ayatullah Javadi Amuli.

Like many projects of their kind, the action research, conference and monograph could not have been accomplished without assistance, support and advice from many individuals and agencies. Unfortunately, not everyone who provided help can be named. Two people need to be singled out for special mention because without them, the project and monograph would not have materialised. They are Siti Syamsiyatun, the incumbent ICRS Director, and Wening Udasmoro, currently the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Humanities in *Universitas Gadjah Mada* (UGM). They are probably the country’s finest gender specialists. With

their tacit knowledge, field research experience and inspiring leadership in the focus group discussions in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, the research team was able to do what they had intended to do, and derive full benefits from their intellectual insights and contributions.

Three people were engaged for in-depth interviews, namely Mamah Dedeh, Aa Abdel and the *ANTV* producer, Desy, who had been in charge of the programme *Hati ke Hati Bersama Mamah Dedeh* (heart to heart with Mamah Dedeh). The author would also like to thank Yusuf Mansyur, founder of *Wisata Hati* (tourism of the heart), a network of Islamic boarding schools for the memorisers of the Quran (*Tahfidz*). These individuals provided many useful leads, insights and views from the inside, contributing to a critical assessment of the *Dakwahtainment* industry.

The author would like to extend his gratitude to the KPI commissioners Mochamad Riyanto (chair), Ezky Suyanto, Nina Mutmainnah Armando and Dadang Rahmat Hidayat, who guided our team into new aspects of *Dakwahtainment*, especially complaints by the public about these programmes and warnings and sanctions imposed by KPI. Abdul Cholik from KPI's West Java chapter deserves my gratitude for his immense support and the long conversations we had. Much material evidence from KPI was gathered, compiled and shared with the research team, enabling us to access information and data that otherwise would not have been so easily available.

From the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the research team is indebted to Professor M. Machasin, who at the time of the interview served as head of the Ministry's Research, Development, Education and Training. Machasin is an influential figure in the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), Indonesia's largest and perhaps most powerful Islamic

organisation, which in it self testifies to his vast knowledge on Islam. Professor Amin Abdullah, who serves as expert staff in the Minister of Religious Affairs, provided the research team with guidance and tactical advice throughout the research. Also deserving of mention is Sinansari Ecip, one of the heads of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), who oversees affairs pertaining to information and communication. All three contributed their precious time, deep insights and creative ideas as to how to the research team can move forward in thinking about the ethical issues that surround *Dakwahtainment*.

Some individuals made them selves available as facilitators, resource persons, and informants and contributed significantly to the focus groups. They included: Edi Safitri of the Indonesian Islamic University (UII), Budy Wahyuni of UGM, Kiyai Haji Hussein Muhammad and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir from *Fahmina* Institute in Cirebon, Riri Kharirah of *Fatayat* NU, and Sutimun of *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum* (legal aid institute) APIK.

From ICRS, Mega Hidayati, Elis Zuliati Anis and Faishol Adib provided tremendous assistance in setting up and conducting interviews, field observations, data entry and report writing. Collectively, they aided the author, who acted as the principal investigator, in organising the data used in this monograph. Erich Kaunang, ICRS Communication and Media Officer, also helped in numerous ways from the beginning of the project. To all of them, I owe much respect and gratitude for their assistance, collegiality and emotional support. I thoroughly enjoyed having late-night conversations with them, discussing theories of religion, the media and critical discourse analysis, or simply staring at the mountain of detailed information and data derived from our field observations.

On the side of Globethics.net, I would like to thank Christoph Stückelberger, Siti Syamsiyatun and Nina Mariani for kindly encouraging and endorsing the publication of this monograph, and for their support for the international conference. Your contribution to Indonesia and the world is evident in your efforts to spread the goodness of ethics and to deepen awareness of the need to uphold ethics amid the moral confusion and decline in the respect for human dignity and intercivilisational dialogue.

Dicky Sofjan, Ph.D.

Yogyakarta, 15 February 2013



