

Endorsements Ahmad Syafii Maarif – Islam, Humanity and the Indonesian Identity

“Ahmad Syafii Maarif is one of the most percipient and profound Muslim thinkers of our age. His book should be read not only by those interested in the future of Indonesian Islam but by every Muslim who cares about Islam, and as importantly, by every person who cares for the future of humanity.” – Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl, Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Professor of Law, UCLA School of Law.

“Are Islam and democracy compatible in a 21st century nation-state? This book’s unequivocal answer is yes. Its author, Ahmad Syafii Maarif, for decades Indonesia’s most distinguished Muslim thinker, develops here his most authoritative argument. His answer is at once theologically sophisticated and deeply rooted in the Indonesian experience. Indeed, as a prominent public intellectual, university professor, and leader of Muhammadiyah, the country’s most influential and successful modernist Muslim organization, he has been instrumental in shaping the modern discourse. Syafii’s vision and practice merit close attention and serious consideration throughout the rest of the Muslim world, from west Africa to southern Asia.” – R. William Liddle, professor emeritus of political science, Ohio State University.

“Syafii Maarif has for many years now been honored by Indonesians as one of their nation’s most respected public figures, in the multi-faceted role of public intellectual, religious leader, teacher, and author. His principal message that authentic Islam is properly seen as peaceful, tolerant of diversity, and accepting of change will be of considerable interest to those, especially in the West, who have become all too accustomed to rather different sorts of views. For Syafii Maarif, being an exemplary Muslim, a patriotic national citizen, and a good citizen of the world are by no means mutually exclusive, and leading a moral and a thoroughly modern life is both necessary and possible. In many corners of society, both in Indonesia and outside of it, such views have not always found favor. It is to Syafii Maarif’s great credit that he has had the courage to calmly and reasonably defend his views – even when it meant criticizing friends and colleagues – and to act on his principles. Here is a man worth paying careful attention to, and it is heartening to see that this English edition of his major work will make that possible for a great many more readers around the world.” – William H. Frederick, Ohio University Emeritus.

“There are times when we need to look back at history in order to pave the way for the future. The need to look back at the ideas of nationalism and democracy, and its relationship with Islam and the reinterpretation of Islamic values in view of a real transformation and reform. Such a view has been advocated by Muslim modernists and one of the loudest voice in the Nusantara is none other than Buya Ahmad Syafii Maarif, an intellectual leader of Muhammadiyah, a powerful Islamic reformist and socio-religious movement in Indonesia. Perhaps there is no other Muslim leaders who could articulate this complicated nexus between Islam, humanism, and nationalism that formed the foundation of Indonesia, together with a vision of the future, better than the thinker and scholar, Ahmad Syafii Maarif, himself.” – Dato’ Ahmad Farouk Musa, Director, Islamic Renaissance Front, Kuala Lumpur.

“Observers of democracy and governance in Indonesia have long observed that one of the most important influences on this country’s successful transition to democracy in 1998-1999 was the role of prominent Muslim leaders and intellectuals in providing Islamic rationales and organizational support for democratic governance. The former leader of the 30-million strong Muhammadiyah organization, Ahmad Syafii Maarif was always among the most influential and brilliant of those Muslim democrats. With its far-ranging and engaging scholarship in fields as diverse as Qur’anic studies, Islamic history, comparative politics, and religious studies, the English-language translation of Dr. Maarif’s new book on Islam, Humanity, and the Indonesian Identity makes his thoughts on democracy, gender equality, morality, and the challenge of modern diversity available to English-language readers for the first time. This is a welcome and inspiring event, not just for readers interested in Islam and democracy in Indonesia, but for anyone interested in the promise of Islam, democracy, and equality in our troubled world.” – Robert W. Hefner, Pardee School for Global Affairs, Boston University.

“Ahmad Syafii Maarif offers a stunning, and yet hopeful, critique of Indonesian political culture and global capitalism. He draws on the combined insights of Muslim modernists including Indonesian Mohammed Hatta and Pakistani Muhammad Iqbal, Western thinkers including Francis Fukuyama and Noam Chomsky and above all humanistic themes in the Qur’an including equality and justice. This is not just a book about religion and politics in Indonesia. It is a major contribution to political philosophy. He points to short-comings of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organizations Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, especially for failing to deliver on promises of quality education combining secular subjects and religious ethics. He sees hope for the future in the younger generation of Muslim intellectuals for whom sectarian differences matter less than Quranic ethics. He is especially critical of injustices wrought by Muslim, Christian and Market fundamentalists who manipulate symbols for political gain. He concludes with an appeal for an end to the use of violence as a political strategy and for an Islam that is a “protective force” for all people. This is an important book deserving a global readership by academics, policy makers, religious leaders and others concerned with the global quest for peace and justice.” – Mark Woodward, Associate Professor Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University.

“Islam, Humanity and the Indonesian Identity can be considered the intellectual testament of one of Indonesia’s most important Muslim leaders and thinkers in recent decades. Ahmad Syafii Maarif not only led one of the country’s -- and indeed the world’s -- largest modern Muslim mass organisations during a critical period in Indonesian history when the republic transitioned from decades of autocratic rule to democracy. He also represents a progressive type of Muslim intellectual, who is not only intimately familiar with the Islamic tradition, but also well-versed in the achievements of Western learning in the human sciences. For that reason, the ideas expounded in this book are not only illuminating of the place of Islam in the cultural, social and political context of Indonesia, it also maps a trajectory for the future role of religion that Muslims elsewhere in the world should become familiar with. This is what makes this publication in English so important.” – Carool Kersten, Author of Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values.

“For those in the West calling for voices of moderation and peace in Islam, here is Ahmad Syafii Maarif, a figure whose moral authority reaches tens of millions of Indonesian Muslims. In this wise and impassioned book, Maarif envisions Islam as a force for reason, justice, democracy, inclusiveness, and communal harmony in Indonesia and the world. These are the genuine values of Islam. Maarif inveighs against the corrupting influence of power politics and also against the culture of violence that drives angry Islamic jihadists and U.S. imperial actors around the globe. Both are wrong. Humanity itself comes first, he says, then our nations, and finally our local communities. Ideas like

these are often obscured in popular perceptions of Islam in the West. Ahmad Syafii Maarif's hopeful message needs to be heard." – **James R. Rush**, Professor of History School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Arizona State University.

*"Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif is the personification of an Islam that is best suited for the world's fastest growing religion in the 21st Century. When many Muslims believe they must choose between Islam and democracy or modernity, Maarif disagrees. Using the example of Indonesia—the biggest unknown giant and the largest community of Muslims in the world—he demonstrates that if anything, Islam, Humanity and the Indonesian Identity should be understood as a plaited unity that is complementary and mutually enriching. Maarif revives the practice of *ijtihad*—a struggle within the mind to comprehend the wider world, critical thinking, but also a reasoned explication of the sacred texts—anathema to those who prefer *taqlid* (mindless imitation) which has led to the distorted interpretation, repressive conservatism, and violent extremism that masquerades as "Islam" today. The timing of the publication of the English version of this fascinating book could not be better, when Islam is going through a worsening crisis, both within itself, as well as with the rest of the world. Kudos also to the Leimena Institute for making Maarif's ideas accessible to a wider audience. It is a breath of fresh air the world sorely needs."* – **Julia Suryakusuma**, columnist and author of *Julia's Jihad*.

"Reflection on history and society, by a religious humanist like Buya Syafii Maarif, is always illuminating as it emancipating. Buya's intellectual voice and conscience, in time of triumphalism and exclusivism, warrants serious attention. This book is his mastery of historical and sociological engagement, with strong underpinning that a diagnostic thinking always bears a sense of hope. His rootedness to Indonesia is the very source of his relatedness to humanity. His discussion points to the fact that history has a future, only in the affirmation of humanity. And on this point, Buya has taken this up excellently with critical analysis and deep insights." – **Dr. Azhar Ibrahim**, National University of Singapore.