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**A Study of 'Aisyiyah: An Indonesian Women's Organization (1917-1998)**

**By Ro'fah**

**A thesis submitted to  
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts**

**Institute of Islamic Studies  
McGill University  
June 2000**

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***In memory of my father-in-law whom shall I never meet***

## Abstract

Author : Ro'fah

Title : A Study of 'Aisyiyah: An Indonesian Women's Organization (1917-1998)

Department : Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University

Degree : Master of Arts

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This thesis examines the social role of the Indonesian women's organization known as 'Aisyiyah, the female wing of the the reformist group the Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912. This is achieved by analyzing the development of the organization *vis à vis* other Muslim women's organizations. It looks at the activities of 'Aisyiyah during the period extending from its birth in 1917 until the late New Order era of the 1990s, with close reference to other women's organizations.

A comparison of the activities of 'Aisyiyah with those of other women's organizations, and an analysis of the response of this organization towards such issues as polygamy, is also an important feature of this work. While there was much common purpose, still, inevitable differences in perspective, even disharmony developed between 'Aisyiyah and other women's groups. This was due in many respects to its determination to maintain its identity as a Muslim women's organization, while it at the same time faced certain limitations by virtue of its being a part of the Muhammadiyah. In general, however, 'Aisyiyah is no different from other women's organizations in Indonesia, all of which have tried to represent women's interests and have struggled for their enhancement, while at the same time being faced with the challenges posed by a constantly changing political situation.

## RÉSUMÉ

Auteur : Ro'fah

Titre : Une analyse de 'Aisyiyah: une organisation féminine indonésienne (1917-1998).

Département : Institut des Études Islamiques, Université McGill.

Diplôme : Maîtrise ès Arts

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Ce mémoire porte sur le rôle de 'Aisyiyah, la section féminine de l'organisation réformiste Muhammadiyah, fondée en 1912. L'objectif est d'analyser le développement de l'organisation vis à vis les autres organisations de femmes musulmanes. La recherche examine les activités de 'Aisyiyah depuis ses débuts en 1917, jusqu'à la fin de l'ère de l'Ordre Nouveau des années 1990, tout en se référant aux autres organisations féminines indonésiennes.

Une comparaison des activités de 'Aisyiyah avec celles des autres organisations féminines, ainsi qu'une analyse des réactions de cette organisation sur certaines questions telles la polygamie, sont aussi une importante caractéristique de cet ouvrage. Alors que l'on peut retrouver des objectifs communs, certaines différences inévitables et même quelques discordes avec d'autres groupes de femmes ont pu être remarquées. Ce qui, par contre, fut le résultat inévitable de la détermination de 'Aisyiyah de maintenir son identité à titre d'organisation féminine musulmane, alors qu'elle devait faire face à certaines contraintes dû au fait d'être affiliée au mouvement Muhammadiyah. En général, toutefois, 'Aisyiyah n'est pas différente des autres organisations féminines indonésiennes, puisque toutes ont tenté de représenter les intérêts des femmes et ont lutté pour leur valorisation alors que, simultanément, ces organisations étaient confrontées par les défis imposés par une situation politique en constant changement.

## Acknowledgment

This study could never have been completed without the help of a great many people, to all of whom I would like to express my gratitude. Above all, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Prof. Sajida. S. Alvi, my advisor and thesis supervisor whose patience, criticism and valuable advice were invaluable to me in the course of researching and writing this thesis, and in pursuing my other academic duties.

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Most importantly, I am indebted to all members of my extensive family, especially to my late father, Mudzakir, who passed away when I was fourteen and never had the chance to see my achievement, and to my mother, Roikhah, whose love and prayers have provided me with a great source of support and inspiration. I am sure that this work is little enough recompense for everything that she gave me, but I hope that she will take pleasure in my achievement in the years to come. My lasting gratitude is also due to my four sisters and three brothers who supported me morally and financially, and enabled me to pursue a better

education. Thanks also to my seventeen nieces and nephews who have always made me smile and forget the problems I faced with the lovely calls, photos and cards that they sent to remind me of home.

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Ro'fah

Montreal, May 2000

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## Transliteration

For the Arabic words and names the system of transliteration in this thesis follows that of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. Meanwhile, the Indonesian names and terms are written according to the following system: those which are derived from Arabic are transliterated according to the Arabic transliteration, for example: Aḥmad Daḥlān, rather than Ahmad Dahlan; the rest are written according to the new Indonesian spelling (*Ejaan yang disempurnakan*) of 1972. Some examples of the differences between the old and the new Indonesian spelling are oe, j, ch, tj, dj which become respectively as: u, y, kh, c, j (for instance, Sukarno not Soekarno). However, some names and terms are written according to Indonesian convention, (for example, Muhammadiyah not Muḥammadiyah; 'Aisiyah not 'Āishiyah).

The table of Arabic transliteration is as follows:

|       |       |       |      |
|-------|-------|-------|------|
| ب =b  | ذ =dh | ط =ṭ  | ل =l |
| ت =t  | ر =r  | ظ =ẓ  | م =m |
| ث =th | ز =z  | ع ='  | ن =n |
| ج =j  | س =s  | غ =gh | و =w |
| ح =ḥ  | ش =sh | ف =f  | ه =h |
| خ =kh | ص =ṣ  | ق =q  | ي =y |
| د =d  | ض =ḍ  | ك =k  | ء =' |

Short َ =a; ِ =i; ُ =u

Long اَ =ā يَ =ī وَ =ū

Diphthongs: أَی =ay أَو =aw

In the case of tā' marbūṭah (ة) h is written, and if it occurs within an iḍāfah, it is transliterated with *at*.

## Introduction

Throughout the history of the Indonesian women's movement, one of the more common features of its development has been the affiliation of most women's organizations to larger "male" institutions, be they political parties, professional organizations, student groups, or even government institutions. When we observe specifically Muslim women's organizations, the above tendency is even more apparent. With few exceptions, we see that some of the most well-known Muslim women's groups—among them Muslimat NU,<sup>1</sup> Wanita Perti,<sup>2</sup> and Wanita Syarikat Islam<sup>3</sup>—are in fact the female wings of larger Muslim organizations. One such group, namely 'Aisyiyah, the focus of our study, is the female section of the Muhammadiyah, one of the biggest Muslim organizations in the country.

The affiliation of those women's organizations to their larger counterparts has largely invited the assumption that the former—particularly those having a Muslim character—are merely complements to their parent bodies.<sup>4</sup> This assumption in turn has led scholars to overlook the phenomenon of women's organizations altogether, when in fact their social involvement has contributed greatly to the development of the country. Most observers,

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<sup>1</sup> Muslimat NU is the women's section of NU (Nahdathul Ulama). Founded on March 29, 1946, it received autonomous status in 1956. Its parent body, the NU, is widely considered one of the biggest Muslim organizations in Indonesia besides the Muhammadiyah. Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1978), 341.

<sup>2</sup> This organization was affiliated to PERTI (Persatuan Tarbiyah Islam, The Union of Islamic Education). Wanita Perti was established in the same year as its parent organization, PERTI, in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra, on May 5, 1928. Ibid, 311.

<sup>3</sup> This group was formally established in 1953 as an autonomous body within the Syarikat Islam party. Before this year, however, Wanita Syarikat Islam was a unit in the party which responsible to manage all the female members of the party. Ibid, 327.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Johan H. Meuleman and Lies Marcoes Natsir, eds., *Wanita Islam Indonesia dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual* (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), xiii.

even women themselves, are likewise unaware that it is these organizations that should be given credit for the improved conditions of the female population of Indonesia.

During the last twenty years, however, there has been a growing scholarly interest in Indonesian women's organizations. As early as 1960, Cora Vreede-De Stuers looked at the position of women in Indonesian traditional society and the growth of the Indonesian women's movement both in the colonial and post-colonial periods.<sup>5</sup> Another study was done in the 1980s by Sukanti Suryochondro in which she analyzed Indonesian women's organizations both as social movements and a set of "formal groupings," which grow from one period to another in connection with social development.<sup>6</sup> Some more recent studies can also be cited, such as Saskia Wieringa's dissertation, which examines Gerwani, a women's organizations which was closely affiliated to the Communist party. Instead of limiting her discussion to Gerwani, however, this study provides a historical examination of the Indonesian women's movement, particularly during the pre-independence period.<sup>7</sup> Another recent study, conducted by Rifai, deals with the political participation of Indonesian Muslim women since the colonial period and into the New Order era.<sup>8</sup> Other approaches can be seen in the works of Suryakusuma<sup>9</sup> and McCormack.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cora Vreede-De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements* (The Hague: Mouton and 's-Gravenhage, 1960).

<sup>6</sup> Sukanti Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: C.V Rajawali, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Saskia Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender Relations in Indonesia: The Indonesian Women's Movement and Gerwani Until the New Order State" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Nurlena Rifai, "Muslim Women in Indonesia's Politics: An Historical Examination of The Political Career of Aisyah Aminu" (M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Julia I. Suryakusuma, "State Ibuism: The Social Construction of Womanhood in the Indonesian New Order" (M. A. thesis, Institute of Social Studies of The Hague, 1987) in which she observed the New Order policy in constructing the image of women in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, the Muslim women's groups still suffer from a lack of attention. 'Aisiyiah, the oldest and possibly the broadest-based Muslim women's organization, is no exception to this rule. The organization is usually regarded as a mere adjunct to the Muhammadiyah, and not as an organization in its own right. For this very reason, our study is expected to fill a gap by presenting the history and contributions of this organization, which has had a significant and positive impact on Indonesian Muslim women for more than seven decades.

A number of scholars have, of course, studied the Muhammadiyah itself, focusing either on its historical, political, ideological or religious dimensions. Among those who have done so are Mukti Ali,<sup>11</sup> Alfian,<sup>12</sup> Jainuri,<sup>13</sup> Syamsuddin,<sup>14</sup> Peacock,<sup>15</sup> and many others.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Justine Doom-McCormack, "Organizing Women in Indonesia: The Language of Women's Organizations 1909-1930 and 1990-1996" (M.A thesis, Arizona University State, 1998). This is a study of criticism in the media of women's organizations in Indonesia, covering two periods; 1909-1930 and 1990-1996.

<sup>11</sup> Mukti Ali wrote an annotated bibliography of materials on the Muhammadiyah for the period 1912 to 1956, which appeared as a thesis under the title "The Muhammadiyah Movement: A Bibliographical Introduction" (M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1957).

<sup>12</sup> Alfian, "Islamic Modernism in Indonesian Politics: The Muhammadiyah Movement during The Dutch colonial Period, 1912-1942" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969). In this work Alfian emphasizes the contribution of the Muhammadiyah to the process of social-political change in Indonesia.

<sup>13</sup> Jainuri, "The Muhammadiyah Movement in Twentieth Century Indonesia: A Socio Religious Study" (M.A thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1992). In this work the author focuses on the socio-religious role of the Muhammadiyah from 1912-1990 and examines the basic ideology of the movement and its implementation in the Indonesian's religious and social life. He then examines the ideology of the Muhammadiyah in his "The Formation of the Muhammadiyah's Ideology, 1912-1942" (Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> M. Sirajuddin Syamsuddin, "Religion and Politics in Islam: The Case of the Muhammadiyah in Indonesia's New Order" (Ph.D dissertation, UCLA, 1991). This work, like Alfian's deals with the political aspects of the Muhammadiyah, with special reference to the New Order period.

<sup>15</sup> James L. Peacock, *Gerakan Muhammadiyah Memurnikan Ajaran Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Cipta Bina Kreatif, 1986). This book is an Indonesian translation of the author's book entitled *Purifying the Faith*:

None of these works, however, deals with the role of women within the movement in general, or with 'Aisyiyah in particular. Therefore, the present study is the first to examine the development of 'Aisyiyah as an institution. It also analyzes 'Aisyiyah as a part of the Muhammadiyah, but one which has evolved into a dynamic women's organization in its own right.

This study approaches the institutional development of 'Aisyiyah by using a socio-historical methodology. Hence the focus is on reviewing the activities of this organization, and analyzing the social involvement of 'Aisyiyah from its establishment in 1917 until the New Order period of 1966-1998. An account of the political context has been included in order to show how it affected the development of the organization. A comparative approach is also used in exploring the similarities and differences between 'Aisyiyah and other women's organizations in Indonesia throughout the period covered. In this way, we have tried to show how 'Aisyiyah has grown as an organization and how it was involved within the Indonesian women's movement as a whole. Such an approach also shows the affinity of this organization to other women's groups, even while maintaining its distinctive identity as a Muslim women's organization.

The primary sources of this study are the official documents of the organization, i.e., the reports of its annual meeting (*muktamar*), the journal of the organization, its pamphlets, and program manuals. This thesis also consults the available secondary sources in Indonesian and English on 'Aisyiyah and the Muhammadiyah. These latter, however, are

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*The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam*, which tried to observe Muhammadiyah as an Islamic reform movement.

<sup>16</sup> For instance see Alwi Shihab, "The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission" (Ph.D dissertation, Temple University, 1995), which discussed the engagement of Muhammadiyah with the Christian missionaries, and Fathurrahman Djamil's study on the *ijtihad* method of the organization in his *Metode Ijtihad Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Jakarta: Logos, 1995).

very limited since only a few studies on 'Aisyiyah have been conducted in Indonesian, and almost none in English. In discussing the other women's organizations or the women's movement in general, the information presented is based primarily on existing studies.

The thesis itself is divided into three chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one gives an account of the political-historical background of the birth of 'Aisyiyah. It examines the Ethical Policy introduced by the Dutch at the beginning of the twentieth century, and analyzes how the policy -- which was actually designed to persuade the natives to support colonial rule -- led to the rise of Indonesian nationalism. It also discusses the emergence of Islamic modernism and the women's movement: the two trends most closely connected to the idea of nationalism and the two trends in which the roots of the birth of 'Aisyiyah can best be traced. The chapter also describes the formation process of the organization, and analyzes the significance of its effort in the first ten years after its establishment.

Chapter two focuses on the organizational development and activities of 'Aisyiyah during the pre- and post-independence periods. The first part deals with the development of the organization from the 1920s to 1940. Besides analyzing the activities of 'Aisyiyah, particular attention in this part is paid to the position of the organizations among other women's groups, achieved by discussing the position of the organization on the issue of polygamy in the first Indonesian women's congress. The second part of this chapter concentrates on the period of the Japanese occupation during 1940-1945. It shows how the Japanese mobilization and politicization of all social organizations forced the women's movement, including 'Aisyiyah to terminate its activities. The last part of the chapter deals with the development of 'Aisyiyah during the Old Order period of 1945-1965. It investigates the influence of the political context of the Old Order on 'Aisyiyah's activities and policies. This investigation is presented in the context of our discussion of social development, which

underscored the activities of 'Aisyiyah during this period, as well as in the conflict between 'Aisyiyah and other women's groups which arose as a result of the communist ideas prevalent under the Old Order. This part also explores the continuing debate over the issue of polygamy and how 'Aisyiyah has maintained its position on the issue.

Chapter three outlines the organizational development of 'Aisyiyah and its activities under Suharto's New Order of 1966-1998, and it too consists of three parts. This chapter starts by analyzing some internal problems faced by the organization. Special reference is made to the issue of cadre formation, and the dilemma of its autonomous status which seems to underline the un-dynamic and un-progressive character of 'Aisyiyah. The next discussion of this chapter is on the effect of the New Order's policy regarding the women's movement. It looks at how the tight control of New Order regime not only forced 'Aisyiyah to design its activities in accordance with government programs, but also to provide the justification for those same programs. The last part of the chapter deals with the effect that Indonesian feminism has had on the organization. It examines how an issue such as gender equality, which was raised by this new movement, has brought a new perspective on the women's movement as a whole and in turn, a challenge for the continuation of 'Aisyiyah. Finally, this thesis ends with some concluding remarks.

## Chapter One

### The Socio-Political Context of The Birth of 'Aisyyah

#### I. The Ethical Policy and the Development of Nationalism

By the end of the First World War, the Dutch had ruled Indonesia as a colony for about three centuries. All throughout this period, they had exploited the country's natural resources,<sup>1</sup> while at the same time neglecting the welfare of its people. The philosophical legacy of the French Revolution had not yet touched the imperial mindset. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, more enlightened notions of liberty, equality and fraternity began to dominate debate within the Dutch parliament. There were calls for the government to alter its colonial policy toward Indonesia. These voices suggested investing the oppressed people of Indonesia with rights and protecting them against economic exploitation.

The first official expression of this "new trend" in colonial policy was articulated by Baron van Dedem, a member of the Liberal cabinet (1891-1894), and was announced in 1891. He explained that the Dutch colonial government sought to establish "the Indian finances on the sure foundation of the increasing welfare of the people (Indonesians)."<sup>2</sup> This speech marked a new era for colonialism. Henceforward, the dominant trends were to be

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most clear illustrations of economic exploitation in Indonesia can be seen in the Dutch colonial policy of *Cultuurstelsel* (Cultivation System) of 1830-60, whereby the natives were forced to use one-fifth of the rice fields to grow crops favored by European markets such as tea, spices and tobacco. Under Governor General Van den Bosch, the financial result of this cultivation system satisfied the Dutch government as it was reported to made 823,000,000 guilders between 1831 and 1877. For more information on the *Cultuurstelsel*, see Bernard H.M. Vlekke. *The Story of The Dutch East Indies* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1945), 156; idem, *Nusantara: A History of The East Indian Archipelago* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), 269-276.

<sup>2</sup> J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 230-231.

decentralization, economic efficiency, and social welfare. However, it was actually Van Kol, the third Colonial Minister after Van Dedem, who successfully overcame the hesitation of the Dutch government.<sup>3</sup> Motivated by socialist convictions, Van Kol established a "welfare policy." Another Liberal party figure, C. Th. Van Deventer,<sup>4</sup> continued Van Kol's work by insisting on greater colonial humanitarian concern and economic fairness.<sup>5</sup>

These "reform" ideas led to the adoption of the so-called "Ethical Policy," which was officially announced by Queen Wilhelmina (1890-1948) in a 1901 speech declaring the government's intention to "enquire into the diminishing welfare of the people of Java."<sup>6</sup> According to this new policy, the Dutch government formally committed itself to abandoning its old imperial ways. The twentieth century would be a "new era of guided initiation of the Javanese people into modern culture and European technical knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

#### *A. Education: A Tool of Societal Change*

The most important of these three goals was education. Its impact would be broadly and deeply felt. The supporters of the Ethical Policy insisted on major improvements in the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. He was known to have said "We must bring up the child in such a way that it can learn to dispense with our help." See also Bernhard Dahm, *History of Indonesia in The Twentieth Century* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Van Deventer was a Dutch lawyer who worked with one of the large oil companies. He stayed in the country from 1880-1887. After his retirement in 1879 he joined the Liberal party. He introduced a new program, which provided moral and material welfare to the natives. Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> In 1899, in an article entitled "*Een Eereschuld*" (A Debt of Honor), published in the Dutch journal *De Gids*, he argued that the Dutch owed Indonesians a debt for all the wealth taken from their country. This debt should be repaid by promulgating a new colonial policy, which emphasized Indonesian interests. Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, 231; M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia: c. 1300 to the Present* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), 143.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 233.

<sup>7</sup> Cora Vreede-De Stuers, *The Indonesian Women Struggles and Achievement* (The Hague: Mouton and Co-'s-Gravenhage, 1960), 48.

education of Indonesians. Fock's historic budget of 1907, for instance doubled the number of government schools. However, there were differing ideas concerning the type of education that should be provided. Idenburg and Governor-general van Heutsz favored basic and practical education of the general masses, with vernacular languages serving as the medium of instruction. By contrast, the first "ethical" director of education, J.H. Abendanon, and the government's adviser on Islamic affairs, Snouck Hurgronje,<sup>8</sup> preferred—to use Ricklefs's words—"the elitist approach of education," where the content would be based upon the European style of education. Consequently they thought that Dutch would be the ideal language of instruction.<sup>9</sup> The idea behind this elitist approach was to produce a skillful and cooperative Indonesian elite that could perform the work of Dutch civil servants, thereby reducing administrative expenses. Another goal of elitist education was to counter the political impact of Pan-Islamism.<sup>10</sup> Many observers have pointed out that the

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<sup>8</sup> Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) had graduated from a program in Islamic studies at the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden with a doctoral dissertation entitled *Het Mekkaansche Feest* (The Meccan Festival). He then became a teacher in the same university. In 1881 made a research trip to Mecca, assuming the Muslim name of 'Abd al-Ghaffar. Soon after returning from this trip he wrote his first major work, *Mecca in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century*. It was this book which led the Dutch government in Indonesia to appoint him as their adviser, even after he had gone back to Leiden in 1906. As Alfian argues, the fundamental purpose of Snouck Hurgronje's recommendation concerning Islam in Indonesia was to "domesticate" it so that Indonesian Muslim would no longer be a threat to the Dutch. In his opinion, this aim could be achieved through better understanding between Indonesian Muslims and the Dutch. Therefore, in his survey he went deeply into the everyday life of Indonesians. His conclusion was that Islamic values were useless, and therefore would never work as a means to modernize Indonesians. Based on this line of reasoning, he then insisted on the transmission of western values through education to erase the influence of Islam in order to improve the prospects for Indonesians. For more information on Snouck Hurgronje see Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior of a Muslim Modernist Organization under Dutch Colonialism* (Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press, 1989), 17-29; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 137-138; Vlekke, *The Story of The Dutch East Indies*, 170-174.

<sup>9</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 148.

<sup>10</sup> The idea of "Islamic modernism," particularly as stated by Muhammad 'Abduh, found a strong response in Indonesia. The Indonesians who studied in Mecca brought the idea to Indonesia, where it developed a sense of nationalism with strong anti-imperialist overtones. This can be seen, for instance, in a movement founded by some Muslim leaders in Minangkabau in the mid 1910s.

Ethical Policy succeeded in erasing the authority of the traditional *priyayi* by producing a "new" lesser *priyayi* group.<sup>11</sup>

### *B. Failure of the Ethical Policy*

Despite the original philanthropic motivation that inspired the Ethical Policy, in practice it did not significantly increase Indonesian welfare. The failure may have been due to the fact that rapid population increases created insurmountable barriers for the socio-economic agenda of the Policy. In other words, efforts at improving welfare, especially of poor peasants, had insufficient resources. At the same time, the Dutch government also failed to provide sufficient job opportunities for the growing western-educated group. Furthermore, as Alfian has argued, even for those who were lucky enough to get the chance to work in government (especially at the local and regional levels), they still felt their jobs to be beneath their educational training. Imperial prejudices perpetuated discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

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This was one of the first Islamic movements to base its activities on the Islamic modernism and Pan-Islamism. Aware of the danger of its political impact, the Dutch government tried to stop its spread. The advice of Snouck Hurgronje to provide a western education to Indonesians was one of the aspects of their policy to turn natives against Islamic modernism. George McTuman Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 46-48.

<sup>11</sup> The term *priyayi* traditionally refers to the descendants of a royal family, but the new connotation is used to mean "middle class" in terms of economic, social or educational status. The new, "lesser *priyayi*" group emerged from the western education system introduced under the Ethical Policy, and enjoyed privileged access to governmental posts. However, they were still regarded as "lesser *priyayi*" because most of them were not born to the noble families. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 76-78; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 155. For more information on *priyayi* see Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 227-339.

<sup>12</sup> Among the reforms brought about by the Ethical Policy there were a number that affected the political domain. These included the foundation of municipal councils, provincial councils and most importantly the regency councils. The latter were set-up in rural areas and employed many native officials. They were basically designed as a "quasi-democratic check" on the traditional authoritarianism of the ruling *priyayi* class. Dutch administrative interference with this institution, coupled with the native population's parliamentary inexperience, however, ultimately led to a sense of

Ricklefs explains that "Education produced some able and loyal officials, but it also produced a tiny dissatisfied elite who led the anti-colonial movements."<sup>13</sup> The wider educational opportunities for the natives created a new politically aware social class that hastened the emergence of the idea of nationalism. It is ironic that a policy designed to end oppressive colonial policies and thereby co-opt the natives, ultimately destroyed colonialism by turning the natives against its authors.

### *C. Emergence of Nationalism*

It is widely accepted that 1908 was the starting point of the rise of nationalism. A key development was the formal establishment of Budi Utomo (Glorious Endeavor), the first cultural-nationalist organization. The inspiration for the movement came when in 1907 Sudiro Husodo, a retired Javanese doctor visited STOVLA (*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen*: School for Training Native Doctors) in order to drum up support for his efforts to set up a scholarship program to western school for Javanese *priyayi*.<sup>14</sup> Due to the enthusiastic response expressed by the student of STOVIA, Husodo's idea evolved into a student organization. On May 20<sup>th</sup> of the following year, Husodo along with two STOVIA students, Sutomo and Gunawan Mangukusomo, officially launched Budi Utomo's nationalist mission. The fact that STOVIA became the center of a nationalist movement is not surprising. The members of Budi Utomo were either students or graduates of the western educational

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inferiority and incompetence. Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and The Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam Under The Japanese Occupation* (Bandung: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), 34-35; Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior*, 38.

<sup>13</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 152.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 156.

system and therefore imbued with its philosophical traditions. In other words, Budi Utomo clearly represented the elite middle class of the modern Javanese *priyayi*.

## II. The Trend of Islamic Modernism

As mentioned earlier, at the turn of the twentieth century, the dominant trends in nationalism were accompanied by the emergence of Islamic modernism. Yet, the seeds of Islamic modernism in Indonesia can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Three *hajjīs*<sup>15</sup> from Minangkabau, Ḥājī Miskīn, Ḥājī Muḥammad ‘Ārif and Ḥājī ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, apparently brought the ideas of the Wahhabī movement<sup>16</sup> back with them from Arabia. In 1802 they launched what was known as the Padri movement. With the goal of assigning Islamic law (*sharī‘ah*) predominance over all other laws, this movement rejected the balance between ‘*adat*’ (customary practices) and Islam, and condemned ‘*adat*’ as being against *sharī‘ah*. Consequently, Islam had to be cleansed of its customary elements.

The influence of the Padri movement, with its strong Wahhabī overtones, led the people of Minangkabau at the turn of the twentieth century to be more predisposed to the Islamic modernism ideas of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905). It was through a

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<sup>15</sup> The word *hajjī* usually added to a Muslim name refers to one who performs pilgrimage to Mecca.

<sup>16</sup> This movement was founded by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1787) in Dir‘iyya, a region in the Arabian Peninsula, in 1744. The name of Wahhabī however, was given it by opponents of the movement and then used also by European observers. Meanwhile its members called themselves *Muwahhidūn* (“unitarians”). Principally derived from the teaching of Ibn Taimiyyah, (1263-1328) the general aim of this movement was to cleanse Islam of all *bida’* (innovations), in order to make the community aware of the authority of the four *sunni* law schools, and the six book of tradition. It was stated that this movement was fully supported by the ruler of Dir‘iyya, Ibn Sa‘ūd and his successor ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, who not only accepted the doctrine, but also undertook its defence and propagation. They also looked to Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as their religious adviser. D.S. Margoliouth, “Wahhabīya,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 1086-87.

Minangkabau figure, Syekh Aḥmad Khātib,<sup>17</sup> that Islamic reform was first articulated in Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> According to Alfian, there were two important notions he taught his students. The first was a "liberal" attitude, which he personally exemplified by his own behavior, encouraging his students to perform *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) and arguing that its door had never been closed; while the second notion was the concept of religious purity, in the sense that there was a need to purify Islam of irreligious practices.<sup>19</sup>

Because of its role in bringing the Islamic modernism to the Javanese context, the Sarekat Islam (SI) is widely considered to have been its foremost representative, especially in

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<sup>17</sup> Aḥmad Khātib, born at Bukitinggi in 1855, was from Minangkabau. He went to Mecca in 1879 where he achieved the highest ranking position in religious teaching as imam of the Shāfiʿi *madhhab* at the Masjid al-Ḥarām. Although he never returned to his home country, his influence grew through the Indonesians who performed the pilgrimage or studied at Mecca and especially through his writings. He was noted for his liberal attitude. He encouraged his students to read works outside the Shāfiʿi *madhhab*, including those of ʿAbduh, particularly his Qurʾanic exegesis and his *al-Urwah al-Wuthqā*, a periodical he published in cooperation with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897). Aḥmad Khātib was also known for attacking prevalent social customs and religious doctrines, more especially the inheritance law based on the Minangkabau matrilineal system which contradicts Islamic law. Deliar Noer, "The Rise and Development of The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia," (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1963), 47-50; Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior*, 101-3; Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement In West Sumatra (1927-1933)* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesian Project Southeast Asian Program Cornell University, 1971), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Four of his Minangkabau students namely Syekh Muḥammad Ṭāhir Jalāl al-Dīn al-Azharī (1869-1956), Syekh Muḥammad Jamil Jambek (1860-1974), Ḥājī ʿAbd al-Karīm Amrullāh (1875-1945) and Ḥājī ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad (1878-1933), spread the word. The spread of the modernist message to other parts of Indonesia, Java in particular, owes much to the effort of these four and the publications, institutions of education, and political organizations that they founded. Muḥammad Ṭāhir Jalāl al-Dīn al-Azharī, for instance, in 1906 published *al-Imām*, the first Islamic periodical in the Malay language. Inspired by the example of the journal *al-Manār* of ʿAbduh's disciple, Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Imām* vigorously advocated not only the purification of Islamic practices but also reform in the education system in which the "secular subjects" should be added in the curriculum. Although the readership of *al-Imām* was concentrated in Minangkabau, it found many readers in Java, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, and in each of these provinces branches were founded.

<sup>19</sup> Irreligious practices here means *ʿādāt* activities which have come to be regarded as religiously valid. The conflict between *ʿādāt* and Islamic practices had already begun in Minangkabau during the Padri movement with its ideas on purification. There were two conflicting groups active there, known as *Kaum Tua* (literally meaning the old group) who supported the continuation of *ʿādāt*

view of its emphasis on political matters. Founded on November 11, 1911, the SI grew out of the Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Business Association), a cooperative trade organization based in Solo, Central Java. The basic aim was originally to protect its members (mostly *batik* traders) from the encroachments of Chinese entrepreneurs, following the success of the Chinese revolution in 1911.<sup>20</sup> From its origin as a purely economic organization, the SI evolved into the first Muslim political movement with mass support.<sup>21</sup> It was driven by two ideological trends: Indonesian nationalism and Islamic modernism. Indeed, those responsible for the establishment of the SI were the people whose background combined a western-style education, noble birth and a strong Islamic background.<sup>22</sup>

The next prominent Islamic organization to appear was the Muhammadiyah, the parent organization of 'Aisyiyah. The Muhammadiyah was, in a sense, created by the collapse

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practices, and *Kaum Muda* (lit. young group) who insisted on cleansing Islam of customary elements. Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, 5-6.

<sup>20</sup> In its further development its aims broadened into the nationalist sense of achieving "the welfare, prosperity and greatness of the country." With this in mind, SI proclaimed its existence as nationalist movement struggle for Indonesia as a whole. Noer, "The Rise And Development," 162; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 66-7.

<sup>21</sup> In 1919 SI claimed to have two million supporters. Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Among the most important figures who joined SI in its early years, was Umar Said Cokroaminoto. He would become its leader. Born in 1882 to a noble and religious family, Cokroaminoto graduated from the Dutch Administrators' school. This enabled him to obtain a position as chief assistant to a regent (*patih*). During 1907-1910 he continued his education in mechanical courses, and then worked as a Dutch employee for two years. He left this position due to an invitation from Haji Samanhudi (SI's founder) to join the organization. It was Cokroaminoto's leadership—whose personal charisma led people to call him *Ratu Adil* (Imam Mahdi, Messianic figure)—that SI succeeded in attracting members and in gaining legal recognition from the Dutch government. Another important figure in SI was Abdul Muis, a STOVIA graduate from Minangkabau, who joined the Department of Education under Abendanon as a clerk. He left this work to become editor of a progressive Indonesian magazine, *Bintang Hindia*. After returning from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he joined a daily Muslim journal, *Kaum Muda*, which dealt with the Muslim community and Muslim issues (including the ideas of Ahmad Khātib). Another young Minangkabau's young man, Haji Agus Salim, strengthened the role of Islam in SI. He contacted with SI in 1915 as a Dutch police officer. His task was to investigate this organization. His interest in and deep knowledge of Islam—which he acquired during his work at the Dutch consulate in Jeddah in

of the SI.<sup>23</sup> The ideological conflict within the latter, coupled with the government's strong reaction to Communist political activities, led some modernist Muslims within the SI to reconsider their decision to engage in political activities. Soon, this group of like-minded individuals left to form a non-political Muslim organization. To their way of thinking, this would be a more effective medium for the propagation of Islamic modernism. Thus the Muhammadiyah was born in Yogyakarta on November 18, 1912, founded as a socio-religious organization by Haji Aḥmad Dahlan.<sup>24</sup>

The early activities of the Muhammadiyah were primarily directed towards building an infrastructure in the form of educational institutions, journal publications, health centers, orphanages, and other socio-religious activities. Through all of these institutions, the

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1906-1909—led him to join the organization and leave his police work. It was due to Muis and Salim that SI was influenced by ideas of Islamic modernism.

<sup>23</sup> The collapse of SI was primarily caused by an internal ideological conflict. In 1917 a communist group began to take form within the ranks of SI. Three years later, without abandoning their affiliation to SI, this group formally declared the foundation of communist party. This step sharpened the continuing tension between communist and non-communist groups of the party, particularly when the latter insisted on 1921 that SI members could not hold memberships in any other parties. Since then, non-communist SI members became less and less politically active, while the communists became even more militant.

<sup>24</sup> Aḥmad Dahlan was born to a respectable family in 1869 in Kauman Yogyakarta, and was given the name Muhammad Darwis. His father, Kyai Hāji Abū Bakr, was the Khātib (Friday sermon giver) in the mosque of the sultanate of Yogyakarta. His mother, Siti Aminah, was the daughter of a religious official (*penghulu*) in the sultanate. After his father died in 1896, Dahlan replaced him as the religious official of the Sultanate Mosque and became known by the name of "*Tibamin*" (Khātib Amīn). In 1890, he went to Mecca to pursue his studies and stayed there for one year, finishing his lessons on *tafsīr*, *fiqh* and other Islamic subjects under the guidance of a number of 'ulamā', including Aḥmad Khātib and Jamil Jambek, from Minangkabau. In 1903, he returned to Mecca and continued to study the same subjects. It was his period of study in Mecca which introduced him to the Islamic modernist thought of Muḥammad 'Abduh, although—as a few authors have suggested—his interest to this new trend was largely derived from his own learning. He developed connections with various Indonesian Muslim modernists during his involvement in several organizations. Aḥmad Dahlan died on February 23, 1923 after having headed Muhammadiyah for eleven years. Achmad Jainuri, "The Muhammadiyah Movement in the Twentieth Century Indonesia: A Socio-Religious Study" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1992), 1-13; Achmad Jainuri, "The Formation of the Muhammadiyah's Ideology 1912-1914" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University,

Muhammadiyah attracted thousands of new members and established its own mass following. In other words, benefiting from the political failure of the SI, the Muhammadiyah emerged as the first widely accepted Islamic modernist movement.

The social activities of the Muhammadiyah, however, were in many ways a response to the activities of Christian missionaries who, through the building of schools, hospitals and other social activities, won a considerable following. In fact many writers have suggested that besides propagating Islamic modernism, the main reason behind the establishment of the Muhammadiyah was to counter the successes of Christian missionaries.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, despite rejecting all that came from the Christian West, Aḥmad Dahḥān expressed a high tolerance for Christianity.

Although in essence a reformist movement, the Muhammadiyah differed from the SI due to its emphasis on a socio-religious agenda. Furthermore, with respect to nationalism, and particularly when compared to Budi Utomo which was based on combination between western and Javanese culture, the Muhammadiyah appealed to Islam as a weapon to oppose both traditional *priyayi* privilege and Dutch authority.

### **III. The Indonesian Women's Movement and the Nationalist Trend.**

Just as the Ethical Policy of the Dutch colonial administration spawned the nationalist movement, the women's movement had its origins in the changes set in motion by this initiative. As mentioned earlier, the Ethical Policy brought wider opportunity for

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1997); Usman Yatim and Almisar Hamid, ed., *Muhammadiyah dalam Sorotan* (Jakarta: Bina Rena Pariwara, 1993), 21-28, 53; Alfian, *Muhammadiyah the Political Behavior*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Achmad Jainuri, *Muhammadiyah: Gerakan Reformasi Islam di Jawa Pada Awal Abad Keduapuluh* (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu, 1991), 22; M.T. Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret Yang Berubah* (Surakarta: Institut Gelanggang Pemikiran Filsafat Sosial Budaya dan Kependidikan Surakarta, 1990), 40-51; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 162.

Indonesians to pursue a formal education. The director of the Department of Education, J.H. Abendanon, included in the new program of education proposals for female education, especially for Javanese women of aristocratic background. This idea, however, was never taken up seriously by the government, nor was it accepted by the Javanese elite. In the late nineteenth century female education was unthinkable in Javanese culture. Despite this resistance Abendanon continued to promote his ideas. In his eagerness to gain support, accompanied by his wife, he visited a region in central Java. There he met the local *bupati* (chief of the region) Raden Adipati Ario Sosroningrat. This visit would mark the dawn of the women's movement in Indonesia.

*A. Kartini: A Symbol of the Indonesian Women's Movement.*

Abendanon was very impressed with the daughter of the *bupati*, known as Kartini (1879-1904).<sup>26</sup> Born into the third generation of an aristocratic Javanese family which had maintained close relations with the Dutch, Kartini was familiar with European culture.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Abendanon and his wife, Rosa Abendanon-Mandri, were a very important couple in Kartini's life. After their first meeting, Kartini made contact with Mrs. Abendanon, and they exchanged correspondence for four years (1900-1904). Compared to Kartini's correspondence with her other Dutch friends, the importance of this relationship lies in the fact that throughout this period Kartini faced—citing Cote's words—“the reality of her future life” where she was culturally and psychologically forced to choose between marriage and reaching her dream of going to the Netherlands and continuing her studies. At this point Abendanon and his wife played rather conflicting roles. On the one hand, probably because of Mr. Abendanon's own political “ethical” ambition, they advised and supported Kartini's plan to continue her studies in order to ensure both the Dutch government and the native rulers of the importance of women's education. On the other hand, it was Mr. Abendanon who, based on political reasons advised Kartini to cancel her study plans, which in turn led Kartini to opt for marriage. However, the Abendanon couple undoubtedly gave much to Kartini's family as a whole. After the death of Kartini, Mrs. Abendanon maintained a correspondence with Kartini's other sisters, Rukmini and Kartinah. They also financially supported Rukmini after her husband's death, including supporting her stepson during his own course of study in the Netherlands.

<sup>27</sup> The close association of the Kartini family with European culture began with Kartini's grandfather, Pangeran Ario Condrongoro. As the *bupati* of Kudus (northern part of central Java)

This had created high expectations in her that were being frustrated by the cultural restrictions of Javanese tradition, and she was virtually confined to her home once she had graduated from her European elementary school at the age of twelve. Through her friendship and correspondence<sup>28</sup> with several Dutch friends, including Mrs. Abendanon, she won support for her ambition to ameliorate the social position of Javanese women in particular, and the lives of Indonesians in general.<sup>29</sup> Kartini was convinced that education

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and in contrast to other Javanese aristocrats, Tjondronegoro was aware of the importance of European education for his male children. He invited a Dutch tutor, C.E. van Kesteren (who later became the editor of the influential journal *De Indische Gids*), to provide such an education. Later on one of Condronogoro's sons Raden Mas Adipati Ario Condronogoro (Kartini's uncle) replaced him as the Regent of Kudus. Tjondronegoro was a prolific writer. He published numerous articles on education and on Javanese culture. Another of Kartini's uncles, Raden Pangeran Ario Hadiningrat was the Regent of Demak. He was also known for his ideas on educational reform for Javanese nobility. Although Kartini's own father was less eminent compared to his two brothers, he nevertheless was a progressive Javanese aristocrat who also paid close attention to educational issues. He not only provided a European education for all of his children, but also supported for Kartini's struggle. A description of Kartini's family background is given in one of her letters to Stella Zehandelaar dated May 22, 1899. Kartini, *On Feminism and Nationalism: Kartini's Letters to Stella Zehandelaar 1899-1903*, trans. Joost Coté (Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1995), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Before Kartini began her monumental correspondence with Mrs. Abendanon and Stella Zehandelaar, she already had a few Dutch friends, such as Letsy Detmar, her schoolmate. In 1895, she befriended her tutor in drawing, Mevrouw Ovink-Westenenk, which had a significant impact on Kartini's development. She introduced Kartini to an important European feminist journal of the time, *De Hollandsche Lelie*. She also introduced Kartini to Dutch organizations interested in Indonesian issues, such as *De Echo* and *Nederlandsche Taal*. Kartini began actively to contribute to these journals by writing articles and letters on women's and Javanese issues. Kartini's feminist views and interests developed further in her correspondence with Stella Zehandelaar, a regular contributor to the *De Hollandsche Lelie* journal. With the help of the latter Kartini became acquainted with another Dutch feminist author, Nellie van Kol. Her husband Henry van Kol, a Socialist parliamentary deputy, became an important figure in Kartini's life, since he was instrumental in Kartini's effort to obtain a scholarship to study in the Netherlands. In short, as Coté argues the friends of Kartini were part of a colonial network of progressive reformists who wanted to change the "nature of the relationship" between the imperial government and its colonial subjects. Kartini, *Letters from Kartini: An Indonesian Feminist 1900-1904*, trans. Joost Coté (Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1992), xii-xv; Kartini, *On Feminism and Nationalism*, iv-x.

<sup>29</sup> According to Coté, Kartini's letters to Stella Zehandelaar had four major themes: rejection of aristocratic or Javanese courtly culture, rejection of colonialism, reclaiming of what may be termed "popular Javanese culture," and a demand for access to progressive western intellectual culture and science. See also Sukanti Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan Wanita di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Rajawali, 1984), 72-4.

was the most effective instrument for improving social conditions, and for obtaining true emancipation for women.

Years after Kartini's death, however, the colonial administration showed still little concern for women's education. Abendanon noted in one of his governmental report that even as late as 1913 there was not single government school provided for native girls. In Java and on some outer islands of the archipelago, however, a few schools had been founded independently by Indonesian women. The most active among the pioneers was a Sundanese woman, Dewi Sartika (d.1947), who established the Keutamaan Istri (Women's Accomplishment) school, which opened in the very same year that Kartini died. Between then and 1912, Sartika founded nine other schools, a remarkable number for the time.<sup>30</sup> The lack of governmental attention to female education also led Th. Van Deventer to found a system of girls' schools in 1912, and these were named Kartini school in memory of their original inspiration. The first school, intended for the daughters of higher civil servants, opened in Semarang on 1913. Soon thereafter Kartini schools were opened in Jakarta, Malang and Madiun.<sup>31</sup>

#### *B. The Women's Organizations*

The stories of Kartini, Dewi Sartika and others suggest that any improvement in the status of Indonesian women had to be accomplished by means of individual efforts. It was soon realized, however, that to maximize the results it was necessary to work together within

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<sup>30</sup> Cora Vreede-De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements* (The Hague: Mouton and 's-Gravenhage, 1960), 57-8; Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan*, 80-1. For more information on Dewi Sartika see Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1978), 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 59.

an organization. This strategy was first articulated by Kartini's three sisters—Rukmini, Kartinah and Sumantrie—in a letter sent to several prominent social figures, including Budi Utomo's leaders. This letter subsequently appeared in the daily journal *De Locomotief* published in Semarang on July 2, 1908, bearing the signature of the *Tiga Saudara* (three sisters).<sup>32</sup>

The letter met with a warm response from nationalists who saw that the emancipation of women could have positive implications for the anti-colonialist struggle. The Budi Utomo, more than any organization, supported the cause of women's rights. With their support the first Indonesian women's organization, Putri Mardika (The Independent Woman) was founded in 1912. While still emphasizing the cause of female education, and especially the need to find the financial resources that would enable women to pursue their studies,<sup>33</sup> Putri Mardika supported Budi Utomo's emphasis on "cultural reform." It introduced new values, norms and ideas, and challenged what had previously been considered culturally inappropriate for women. Naturally it was concerned that women should gradually develop their self-confidence, express their opinions and actively involve themselves in the public domain. But it also addressed such controversial cultural practices as polygamy and child marriages, which had previously been criticized by Kartini.<sup>34</sup> Putri

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<sup>32</sup> Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan*, 84-5.

<sup>33</sup> It is reported that in 1915 Putri Mardika had already obtained full scholarships for two girls in HBS, one in the Dutch school, and three girls in the Kartini school. Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Through a weekly publication called *Surat Kabar memperhatikan pihak perempuan bumi putra di Indonesia* (A Review Fostering the Interests of Indonesian Woman), these issues were continuously discussed. De Stuers has noted that in 1915 two editions were focused on child marriage under the headline "A Custom Which must be Brought to an End." Another article focused on the issue of polygamy. In the following year, 1916, three volumes were devoted to neglected children and criminal youth. From 1917 to 1918 nine articles were published on the harms of child marriage. Seven editions in 1919 covered the new discourse on Javanese culture as well as a conference held on women's issues in Paris. De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 62.

Mardika was a modern organization equipped with an awareness of the possibilities of the print media as a means of propaganda. The crusade of Putri Mardika therefore became a part of the social momentum being generated by the nationalist press. Other women's organizations were invited to join the struggle.

In about the same year as Putri Mardika was established, several other women's organizations were founded both in Java and the outer islands of the archipelago. Java for example, witnessed, between 1915 and 1920, the foundation of Pawijatan Wanito (The Educated Woman, 1915) in Magelang, Wanito Hado (The Efficient Woman, 1915) in Jepara, Purborini (1917) in Tegal, Wanita Susilo (The Well-Bred Woman, 1918) in Pemalang, Putri Budi Sejati (The True Girls, 1919) in Surabaya, and Wanito Utomo (The Glorious Woman, 1920) in Yogyakarta.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile in three areas of West Sumatra, namely, the towns of Minangkabau, Bukit Tinggi and Padang Panjang, three women's organizations were formed: Kerajinan Amai Setia (Diligence of Faithful Mother, 1914), Sarekat Kaum Ibu Sumatra (Association of Sumatra's Women, 1920), and Keutamaan Istri Minangkabau (The Accomplishment of Minangkabau's Women).<sup>36</sup> In 1917, women in Sulawesi, the eastern part of Indonesia, formed Pengasih Ibu Kepada Anak Turunan (The Mother's Love for Her Offspring) abbreviated as PIKAT.<sup>37</sup> Besides these independent women's organizations, some of the nationalist movements began to form women's sections in their organizational structure and invited women to join their membership. Following the example of Budi Utomo and Putri Mardika, the Muhammadiyah established 'Aisyiyah, in 1917. Three years

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<sup>35</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 63; Sukanti Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan*, 86; The Department of Information Republic of Indonesia, *The Indonesian Women's Movement: A Chronological Survey of the Women's Movement in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Department of Information, 1968), 8-10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

later, the Sarekat Islam formed its women's section, Wanudiyo Utomo. This name was later changed to Sarekat Perempuan Islam Indonesia (SPII). At the same time most of the nationalist youth movements began to encourage female participation. Youth of Java (1915), Federation of the Young People of Sumatra (1917), Youth of Minahasa (1918), and Youth of Ambon (1919) all joined this trend. All of this was clearly reflected in Adi Negoro's statement that "*Soal Kaum ibu lahir di zaman abad ke 20 sebagai adik kandung dari pada soal kebangsaan Indonesia*" (Feminism was born in the twentieth century as the younger sister of Indonesian nationalism).<sup>37</sup>

Simultaneously, another trend strengthened the crusade of Indonesian women. This was the rise of women's publications which began to appear in greater volume due to the spread of education and literacy. These were either published by women themselves or as independent publications. Besides the Putri Mardika periodical, there were the journals *ai Syarq* (the East) of Sarekat Kaum Ibu Sumatra, *Suara Perempuan* (The Voice of Women) in Padang, *Perempuan Bergerak* (The Active Woman) in Medan, *Wanita Suara* (The voice of Woman) in Pacitan, *Panuntun Istri* (The Woman's guidance) in Bandung, and *Isteri Utama* (The Noble Woman) in Solo. The issues addressed in the journals reflected the concerns of the various movements: polygamy, child marriage, and female education. The ideas of independence and anti-colonialism also figured prominently. Therefore, as modern organizations, the women's associations realized the need for a medium to raise the awareness of women's social emancipation in a wider audience, and to develop a network with other organizations. Nevertheless, one reality persisted in the women's movements, just

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 66.

as it did in the nationalist organizations: dependence on the elite, notably those who had benefited from a European education or belonged to aristocratic families.

#### IV. The Formation of 'Aisiyiah

The women's movement grew as an integral part of the growth of nationalist awareness. The Budi Utomo's decision to create Putri Mardika may well have influenced Aḥmad Daḥlān, who was also a Budi Utomo member, to take the same step in establishing 'Aisiyiah in 1917. At the same time, however, the idea of 'Aisiyiah may have had its origins in the activities of Aḥmad Daḥlān and his wife Nyai Aḥmad Daḥlān,<sup>39</sup> who had been active in women issues since 1914. While developing and spreading the Muhammadiyah movement Aḥmad Daḥlān devoted some of his time to teaching a classroom full of young girls in Kauman. He was very conscious of the importance of female education.<sup>40</sup> Relying primarily on the help of his wife, Daḥlān decided to increase his efforts by inviting girls to stay in his house in order to benefit from longer hours of learning. This developed into a

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<sup>39</sup> Nyai Aḥmad Daḥlān (or Siti Walidah) was born in 1872 in Kauman Yogyakarta, the same town where Aḥmad Daḥlān was born. She was the fourth of seven children of Kyai Haji Muhammad Fadhl, a religious official (*penghulu*) and religious leader in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. Like others in Kauman, Nyai Aḥmad Daḥlān's family was in the batik trade (*saudagar batik*). Her family background was very much similar to that of her husband. Nyai Aḥmad Daḥlān was not the only wife of Aḥmad Daḥlān. Aḥmad Daḥlān was also married Nyai Abdullah, Nyai Rum, Nyai Asiyiah, and Nyai Silihan. It is unclear however, if this involved polygamy or if he was married to them at different times. Nyai Aḥmad Daḥlān died on May 31, 1946. She gave birth to four daughter and two sons. Suratmin, *Nyai Aḥmad Daḥlān Pahlawan Nasional: Amal dan Perjuangannya* (Yogyakarta: Bayu Indra Grafika, 1990), 17-29.

<sup>40</sup> The first group of school girls were the daughters of Daḥlān's relatives and friends in Kauman. They were all associated with the Muhammadiyah, and were only six in number: Siti Bariyah, Siti Dawimah, Siti Dalah, Siti Busyro, Siti Wadingah, and Siti Badilah Zuber. This school however steadily grew to become an alternative for parents who could not send their daughters to government schools (which did not accept female students) or to the European schools (which were reserved for Dutch and *priyayi* children). These six girls were trained intensively and were later to form the nucleus of 'Aisiyiah.

girl's dormitory, the first one in Java. Nyai Ahmad Dahlan was responsible for its management. Dahlan's aspiration to educate women was expressed further in the formation of a religious training group for female laborers working in the many *batik* home industries around Kauman. The group was known as Sopo Tresno (Javanese phrase meaning, "anyone who loves"). Its purpose was to encourage women to love learning, reading, writing as well as studying Islam.<sup>41</sup>

On the advice of Haji Mokhtar, a prominent Muhammadiyah member, Ahmad Dahlan developed Sopo Tresno and his dormitory for girls into a more stable organization, to be known as 'Aisyiyah. His hope was that it would help the Muhammadiyah by acting as a partner in conveying the Muhammadiyah's ideas on Islamic reform to women, in particular those dealing with matters of concern to them. Ideologically, the formation of 'Aisyiyah was based on Ahmad Dahlan's belief that women and men are equal in the eyes of God; both have the same obligation to society and to serve God's will,<sup>42</sup> which he saw as confirmed in Q.9:71:

The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey God and His Apostle. On them will God pour His mercy: for God is Exalted in power, Wise.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Noer, "The Rise and Development," 124; Suratmin, *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan*, 31; Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret*, 82-3; Suratmin, *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan*, 72; Baroroh Baried "Islam and the Modernization of Indonesian women" in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, eds., *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 149; Yusuf Abdullah Puar, *Perjuangan dan Pengabdian Muhammadiyah* (Jakarta: Pustaka Antara, 1989), 233.

<sup>43</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corp, 1983), 461.

Under the guidance of Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, and the organizational supervision of K.H. Mochtar, nine girls from Dahlan's girls' school were selected to manage 'Aisyiyah and were given specific responsibilities within its organizational structure.<sup>44</sup> In terms of its legal status, the Sopo Tresno and the girls' dormitory which formed the embryo of 'Aisyiyah were independent bodies belonging solely to Dahlan's family. Later on, with its formal inauguration, 'Aisyiyah became a part of the Muhammadiyah.<sup>45</sup>

From its establishment in 1917 until 1928, the major concern of the 'Aisyiyah was to spread awareness of its message. Accordingly, the 'Aisyiyah's activities during this particular period were carried out in order to introduce the view that Islam regards women as equal to men, both religiously and socially. Like other women's organizations at that time, the 'Aisyiyah also advocated cultural reform. Its specific emphasis, however, was the re-interpretation of existing views, which regarded women as inferior.

#### *A. 'Aisyiyah and Other Women's Organizations in Java: A Comparison*

In the first stage of its development 'Aisyiyah's position among other women's organizations was similar to the position of the Muhammadiyah *vis à vis* the Budi Utomo. According to Jayawardena, the nationalist movement as well as the movements for women's emancipation in most Asian colonies, including Indonesia, were characterized by three common elements: first, "the desire to carry out internal reforms in order to modernize their

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<sup>44</sup> The organizational structure was set up in the following manner: 1) Siti Bariah (chief); 2) Siti Badilah (secretary); 3) Siti Aminah Harawi (finance); 4) Ny.H. Abdullah (staff); 5) Ny. Fatimah Wasaal (staff); 6) Siti Dalalah (staff); 7) Siti Wadingah (staff); 8) Siti Dawimah (staff); 9) Siti Busyro (staff). Suratmin, *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan*, 70.

<sup>45</sup> At this stage 'Aisyiyah was not yet an autonomous organization. It was not until 1936 that 'Aisyiyah had the right to set up its own programs and activities, and have its own basic organizational rules (AD ART) as an autonomous organization within Muhammadiyah.

societies, with the hope that it will enable them to combat imperialism; second, the fight against pre-capitalist structure, especially ruling dynasties and religious orthodoxy, that stood in the way of needed internal reforms; and third, the assertion of a national identity on the basis of which people could be mobilized against imperialism.”<sup>46</sup> When this perspective is employed in analyzing the Budi Utomo and the Muhammadiyah, it can be seen that while the Budi Utomo challenged Dutch colonialism and the authority of traditional *priyayi* through a fusion of European and Javanese culture, the Muhammadiyah based its struggle on the values of Islamic modernism. In short, both of them struggled against the same problem, but using different approaches. The same tendency can be seen in a comparison between ‘Aisyiyah and other nationalist women’s organizations such as Putri Mardika or Wanita Utomo. All of these organizations expressed their desire to lead their members in the fight against colonialism and to carry out internal cultural reforms for the purpose of modernizing society, and especially the position of women within that society. As mentioned earlier, the latter was manifested primarily in their demand for women’s education, for a better legal position for women, and for changes to the Javanese cultural attitude towards women. They differed, however, in their ideological outlooks. Nationalist women’s organizations such as the Putri Mardika, whose pioneers were mostly European-educated, eagerly adopted Western models and strategies in its struggle for cultural reform. In other words, the women in those organizations advocated a form of “Western feminism.” The ‘Aisyiyah, on the other hand, whose philosophy was Islamic, based its cultural reform on “modern interpretation” of Islamic teachings. Clearly, the ‘Aisyiyah’s wish was to create what

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<sup>46</sup> Kumari Jayawardana, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London and New Delhi: Zed Book Ltd, 1986), 3.

it considered the ideal woman according to Islam, in order to replace the Javanese cultural concept which tended to subordinate women.

### *B. The Symbolic Significance of the Name*

The 'Aisiyiah's cultural reform agenda as described above can be seen in many aspects of its activities during the first ten years after its establishment. Even the use of the name 'Aisiyiah indicated its aim of cultural reform. Derived from the name of one of the wives of the Prophet, 'Ā'ishah(d.A.H.58/A.D. 678), the name 'Asiyiah was finally selected among several other proposed names.<sup>47</sup> It was a reflection of what the Muhammadiyah idealized in Muslim women; a wife, who is independent and able to be socially active, just like 'Ā'ishah. Such an ideology was natural to a culture like that found in Kauman, which was a "matriarchal society" in the sense that women were most often the breadwinners.<sup>48</sup> Most housewives in Kauman controlled the *batik* industry along with other home-industries. They were businesswomen and traders. Furthermore, according to Kuntowijoyo's analysis, the establishment of 'Aisiyiah also stood for the role of mother or wife, while the Muhammadiyah took the role of father or husband. This combination was part of an effort

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<sup>47</sup> One of the names proposed was Fātimah, the name of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter. Due to a possible association with the Shi'is this name was dropped. Kuntowijoyo "Arah pengembangan Organisasi Islam Indonesia: Kemungkinan-kemungkinannya" in Lies Marcoes and J.H. Meuleman, eds., *Wanita Islam Indonesia Dalam Kajian Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*, (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), 130; Suratmin, *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan*, 70.

<sup>48</sup> The strong position of women in Laweyan, Kauman, Kota Gede where 'Aisiyiah was formed and flourished is reflected in the honoric title "Mbok Mase." Adopted from Javanese, *mbok* means "mother" and *mase* means "the older brother." This is a paradoxical term (*mbok* is feminine while *mase* is masculine and is always associated with the breadwinner) meant to represent the dual function of women in Laweyan as housewives or mother and at the same time as the breadwinner. See Sudarmono, "Munculnya Kelompok Pedang Batik di Laweyan pada Awal Abad XX," (M.A. thesis: Universitas Gajah Mada, Yogyakarta, 1987); Kuntowijoyo, *Arah Pengembangan Organisasi Islam*, 130.

to maintain the Islamic concept of *ṣawjah* (a pair). In other words, ideologically, the Muhammadiyah and the 'Aisyiyah were envisioned as mother and father, a family. The family concept embodied here was meant to contrast with that of a Javanese noble family, where the mother has very little status and the children belong solely to the father.<sup>49</sup> Hence, 'Aisyiyah symbolized an active mother involved in the decision-making process within the family, a clear rejection of the total obedience expected from a wife in Javanese culture, an idea known as *suwarga nunut neraka katut*.<sup>50</sup>

If the Islamic concept of family was reflected in the relationship between 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah, it also signaled changes to Muslim religious culture.<sup>51</sup> It established and reserved *muṣalla* (an area reserved for prayer smaller than a *masjid*) for women and run by women. Beginning in 1922, and with the moral support of Aḥmad Dahḥān,<sup>52</sup> this policy was designed to offer Muslim women the chance to perform religious rituals publicly. The step was taken by 'Aisyiyah in response to a situation where religious practices, both *mu'āmalāt* (social intercourse) and *'ibādāt* (ritual), were dominated by men.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Kuntowijoyo provided an illustration of what he perceived as the *priyayi* family concept, i.e., one that excluded the mother figure. He noted that the divorced wife of Mangkunegara VII was hired by her former husband to become the babysitter of her own children. The children were her husband's children, and their mother no better than a caregiver. Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> This term is an expression of the nonexistence of women as independent persons. They belong totally to the husband and, therefore, should give them total obedience. Even if their husbands should be condemned to hell, the wives were expected to accompany them.

<sup>51</sup> 'Aisyiyah programs of cultural reform, according to Federspiel, were part of the effort of the Muhammadiyah to put Islam above *'adat*. Howard M. Federspiel, "The Muhammadiyah: A Study of An Orthodox Islamic Movement In Indonesia," *Indonesia* 10 (October 1970): 74.

<sup>52</sup> The establishment of the first women's mosque was a unique occurrence in Java, where previously there had been no such tradition. This institution, however, rapidly spread. By the early 1930s for instance, the 'Aisyiyah had established a number of women's mosques. For example Garut, West Java, built such a mosque in 1924, followed by Aceh in 1928. Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret*, 84; Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan 'Aisyiyah* (Jakarta: Seksi Penerbitan dan Publikasi Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, 1992), 30.

The religious concerns of the 'Aisyiyah, as embodied in its call for a women's mosque, its suggestion that the veil be worn, and its campaign for more extensive religious training, enabled Muslim women to participate more publicly in religious life. The importance of 'Aisyiyah in this regard is evident from Pijper's observation in 1934: "The Muslim women's movement in the last ten years has revealed what religious energy lay hidden in the heart of Indonesian women, especially those of lower and middle classes; this movement increased their religious consciousness and their knowledge of the religion."<sup>54</sup> Through *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, a monthly periodical first published in 1926, the 'Aisyiyah further strengthened its efforts in expressing its Muslim identity.

In quite a short period of time, therefore, 'Aisyiyah emerged as the foremost modern Muslim women's organization within the context of the resurgence of Indonesian women. What made it distinct, however, was not simply the fact that it was genuinely a Muslim organization. Rather, in contrast to other women's associations which represented the *priyayi*, the presence of 'Aisyiyah was an articulation of the resurgence of the middle-lower class, or to use De Stuers's terminology, the "*petite bourgeoisie*," just another analogy of the Muhammadiyah and Budi Utomo.

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<sup>53</sup> Lies Marcos-Natsir, "Antara Amal Dan Tuntutan Profesional 'Aisyiyah' in Mayling Oey-Gardiner, Mildred Wagemann, Evelyn Suleman and Sulastri, eds., *Perempuan Indonesia Dulu dan Kini* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1996), 163.

<sup>54</sup> G.F. Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1934), 27 as cited by De Stuers in *The Indonesian Woman*, 66.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 'AISYIYAH IN THE PRE- AND POST- INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

This chapter will discuss the development of 'Aisyiyah during the pre- independence period, which covered the years of 1920s –1945, and the post-independence period, which includes the Old Order government of 1945 –1965 under the leadership of Sukarno. Each of these periods reflects the different positions of 'Aisyiyah compared with those of other women. Yet in general, this organization shared in common the same features as those of other women organizations, which were largely influenced by the nation's political situation.

#### I. Pre-Independence

##### *A. Organizational Development of 'Aisyiyah*

'Aisyiyah's expansion in the first decade of its existence depended primarily on the decision of its parent body, the Muhammadiyah. At the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Muhammadiyah meeting held in 1922, for example, Ahmad Dahlan encouraged all branches of the organization to establish a local 'Aisyiyah section. In this way, 'Aisyiyah began to expand geographically, not only in Java but also on other islands, just as the Muhammadiyah had done previously. By 1940, there were 546 branches of 'Aisyiyah in existence, spread throughout Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. In spite of this broad distribution, however, it should be noted that the leadership of the movement remained largely in the hands of Ahmad Dahlan's family and friends, in particular the six Kauman girls from Ahmad Dahlan's girls' school, who were trained to assume leadership post in 'Aisyiyah.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>During the pre-independence period (1917-1944) the leadership of 'Aisyiyah was concentrated in four individuals: 1) Baniyah (the first leader of 'Aisyiyah) who was elected for three successive years (1917-1920) and for two more years (1927-1929); 2) Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, who headed 'Aisyiyah during the period of 1921-1926, and then was re-elected in 1930; 3) Siti Munjiah,

other words, the nationwide character of 'Aisyiyah's support base was not reflected in the leadership structure.

During this period, 'Aisyiyah's status was still far from that of an autonomous organization within the Muhammadiyah. Although already forming a section within the Muhammadiyah in 1923, it was not until 1936<sup>2</sup> that the organizational-legal basis of 'Aisyiyah was established, which formally regulated its competency and its operational sectors. Yet even at this stage, except in the case of detailed operational matters, 'Aisyiyah's activities were still directed by the Muhammadiyah.

#### *B. The Activities of 'Aisyiyah: The Religious Call and Education*

In analyzing 'Aisyiyah's activities throughout this particular period—and in the following period as well—one finds that the majority of them had a lot in common with the activities of other women's organizations. Indeed, what 'Aisyiyah began to undertake in this phase included “the central activities,” such as preaching Islam, the provision of education and the erection of social infrastructures, which lent it the character of a socio-religious organization. This statement could be best explained by the fact that until recent times, 'Aisyiyah has consistently carried out these activities, and continues to develop them in order to keep pace with rapid social change.

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who held 'Aisyiyah's leadership for four years (1932-1936); and 4) 'Aisyah Hilal (the daughter of Ahmad Dahlan, who was elected for the first time in 1931, and was then re-elected to lead 'Aisyiyah from 1939 to 1944. Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan and Perkembangan 'Aisyiyah* (Yogyakarta: Seksi Penerbitan dan Publikasi Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, 1992), 125-126.

<sup>2</sup> This regulation, which was entitled *Kaidah Muhammadiyah Bagian 'Aisyiyah* (Muhammadiyah Regulation of the 'Aisyiyah Section) was formally introduced at the 25<sup>th</sup> Muhammadiyah congress in 1936. This regulation stated that 'Aisyiyah is responsible for managing women's schools and mosques, for providing religious guidance to all female members of the Muhammadiyah and for training young women members. Asri Mawadah, “Sejarah Awal 'Aisyiyah,” (B.A. thesis, IAIN Yogyakarta, 1988), 63.

From its beginnings, religious preaching was the main focus of 'Aisiyyah. Programs such as the building of women's mosques, the celebration of Islamic events, establishing religious training classes for women,<sup>3</sup> and the training and sending of *muballighat* (Islamic preachers) to remote areas, were among the tasks that received the most attention. The founding of educational institutions, which formed another of the core activities of 'Aisiyyah was also one of the organization's main vehicles for transmitting religious education.

Indeed, as was noted in the previous chapter, education in this period was seen by women's movement as the only means of achieving such progress, and of solving the problem of backwardness.<sup>4</sup> According to McCormack, just like other organizations, 'Aisiyyah adopted the Muhammadiyah position favoring the modern and western style of education. It differed however, in terms of placing an emphasis on the importance of balancing—or in McCormack word's "bridging the gap" between—modern education and religious instruction.<sup>5</sup> It was clear from the position of 'Aisiyyah (and the Muhammadiyah) that they both saw education as part of an effort at maintaining their identity as modern Muslim organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> Inspired by Sopo Tresno (a religious group for women workers discussed above in chapter 1), 'Aisiyyah formed a religious training in 1919 for women, called *W'a al-'Asr* (adopted from the name of a sura of the Qur'an, but also referring to the time when this activity was held namely after the 'asr (afternoon) prayer). Besides studying Islamic teachings, the participants were encouraged to save some money daily, for which this group acted as a bank. Anyone who wanted to close their account would be encouraged to give some of their money to the 'Aisiyyah. It was an effective way to collect funds for the organization, which were used for many activities. Ibid, 73-74; Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Pemikiran K.H. Ahmad Dahlan dan Muhammadiyah Dalam Perspective Perubahan Sosial* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1990), 32.

<sup>4</sup> The ability to read, made even more possible by the Dutch under their Ethical Policy allowed natives to compare their conditions to people in other countries, especially those in West. As result, they became aware that their people were left behind those in the west who were more educated and more knowledgeable. Justine Doorn McCormack, "Organizing Women In Indonesia: The Language of Women's Organizations 1909-1930 And 1990-1996," (M. A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1998), 35-44.

Among the 'Aisiyah schools established in this period was a kindergarten school. Founded in 1919 and called Frobels, it was among the first kindergartens established and managed by the native people of Indonesia. Another school that came into existence at about the same time was Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri (Muhammadiyah's School for Female Teachers), established in 1923. At the time both of these schools were reserved for female students. Later on, the Frobels school was to become co-educational, although the Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri has continued to be reserved for female students until the present.

The foundation of the Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri led to the formation of other important organs within 'Aisiyah. In 1930, the 'Aisiyah's congress was held in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra, where the idea to develop an organization for students of the Kweekschool was put forward. The organization, known as *Siswo Proyo Wanito*, was expected to serve as a medium for students to develop their intellect and skills, while at the same time functioning as a factory for producing 'Aisiyah cadres.<sup>5</sup> In 1931, *Siswo Proyo Utomo* was renamed as *Nasyiatul 'Aisiyah*, and the group retooled as a youth section of 'Aisiyah, which remains active to this day. Above all, in terms of its activities, the 1930 'Aisiyah congress decided on the formation of five sections within 'Aisiyah which were to be responsible for different activities, i.e.: *Siswo Proyo Wanito*, responsible for the development of the youth of the organization; the *Madrasah* section, which was to manage all 'Aisiyah's schools; *Tabligh*, supposed to deal with all matters concerning the Islamic call; *W'a*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>6</sup> One of the results of the 21st 'Aisiyah congress held in 1932 in Makassar (the area now known as Ujung Pandang) was a suggestion that all 'Aisiyah branches should establish *Siswo Proyo Wanito*. It was hoped that the members of this organization would be able to deliver the Islamic call to their society, propagating Islam to the people around them, which would in turn enable them to

*al-Aṣṣ*, which was expected to raise grants for needy students in 'Aisiyah's school; and the *al-Dhākirāt* section, which was responsible for collecting funds for the organization.<sup>7</sup>

The nation-wide base of 'Aisiyah popularized these activities at every level and throughout the country. Indeed, once a program was approved by an 'Aisiyah congress, each branch of the organization was obliged to implement it. These activities served a dual function, for while they constituted 'Aisiyah's main contribution to the society, they were also a means of socializing and of proliferating 'Aisiyah itself.

In addition, the strong message of nationalism was also another feature of 'Aisiyah activities during this particular period. After the 1928 Youth Congress which produced the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge),<sup>8</sup> the Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyah tried explicitly to conform to its spirit. The first manifestation of this policy was the decision to change of the names of all Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyah schools, sections or activities into Indonesian or Arabic terms, rather than Dutch, in the hope that these names would clearly reflect their identity as Indonesian as well as their status as Muslim organizations at the same time.<sup>9</sup>

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establish an 'Aisiyah branch in their own milieu. 'Aisiyah, "Persidangan Tertotoep Didalam Congres Besar 'Aisiyah ke 21 Di Makassar," [n.d.], 180.

<sup>7</sup> Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 41-2; Suratmin, Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Pahlawan Nasional: *Amal Dan Perjuangannya* (Yogyakarta: Bayu Indra Grafika, 1990), 85.

<sup>8</sup> In October 1928, an Indonesian Youth Congress was held in Jakarta. Still in the context of nationalism, the congress, which was organized for the purpose of creating "Indonesian Unity," produced a monumental agreement generally known as the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge). This pledge consisted of three ideals: one fatherland, Indonesia; one nation, Indonesia; and one language, Bahasa Indonesia.

<sup>9</sup> As a result of this policy the name of Froebel was replaced by Bustān al-ʿAṭfāl (an Arabic translation of kindergarten, written in the Indonesian language as Bustanul Atfhal), while the Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri was renamed as Madrasah Mu'allimāt. In the Muhammadiyah itself, the "Indonesianization" was more clearly reflected. For instance, Normaalschool, Schakelschool, MULO, and AMS respectively renamed as Sekolah Guru Muhammadiyah, Sekolah Sambungan Muhammadiyah, Sekolah Pertengahan Muhammadiyah I, and Sekolah Pertengahan Muhammadiyah II. Most importantly, beginning in 1938 with the *Anggaran Dasar* (Organizational

Another step was the decision to adopt Bahasa Indonesia as the official language for all 'Aisyiyah congresses, publications and organizational documentation. 'Aisyiyah furthermore ordered its branches to include training of Bahasa Indonesia in their activities.

Thus, in a similar manner to other women's organizations, and in keeping with its own agenda as a Muslim organization, 'Aisyiyah spent the pre-independence period trying to ameliorate the position of women. This was manifested clearly in 'Aisyiyah's contribution to providing for female education, albeit with a strong Islamic element. Another way it achieved this was through participating in the spread of nationalist and anti-colonialist sentiment. In addition, benefiting from the spread of the Muhammadiyah, 'Aisyiyah enjoyed a wide audience which helped it form a broad base, something that few of the other women's organizations could claim. One could argue that this last point added to its nationalist credentials.

### *C. 'Aisyiyah and Other Women's Organizations: A Comparison of Ideas on Socio- Religious Reform*

As the 1920s witnessed the resurgence of the Indonesian women's movement through the birth of several new women's associations, whether along religious, regional or nationalist lines, the idea of unifying the movement became an important part its agenda. In other words, the whole idea of nationalism as the driving ideology of the time had led to the need for bridging the differences between the movements, which in turn would enable women to develop a sense of togetherness and thus allow them to participate in the struggle for independence. Particularly, the sense of national unity expressed in the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Indonesian Youth Pledge) of October 1928, inspired the women's organizations to

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Basic Regulation) of Muhammadiyah, the name Indonesia replaced that of Hindia Belanda (the name of Indonesia under Dutch colonialism). Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Pemikiran Ahmad Dahlan*, 38.

consolidate their efforts and to cooperate more fully . In addition, according to Douglas, the idea of cooperation as a means to “achieve more autonomy and influence” was derived from the fact that while these organizations clearly represented nationalist sentiments, their role was unfortunately regarded as “subsidiary.”<sup>10</sup> To correct this perception, three prominent women,<sup>11</sup> and seven major women organizations (Wanita Utomo, Wanita Taman Siswa, Puteri Indonesia, ‘Aisyiyah, Wanita Katolik, the women’s section of Jong Islamieten Bond, and the women’s section of Jong Java), joined forces to hold the first Kongres Wanita Indonesia (Indonesian Women’s Congress) in Yogyakarta, December 22-26, 1928.<sup>12</sup>

Attended by thirty women’s associations, this congress represented a turning point in the history of the women’s movement in Indonesia, as it laid the foundation for its development. At a time when—according to Douglas—“the only test of the legitimacy of each organization came to be whether that organization was committed to the overarching goal of nationalism,” the importance of this congress lay in its contribution to legitimizing the role of women’s organizations within the nationalist movement, and therefore, as full partners in the whole political process.

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen A. Douglas, “Women in Indonesian Politics: The Myth of Functional Interest” in Sylvia A. Chipp and Justin J. Green, eds., *Asian Women in Transition*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University, 1980), 160.

<sup>11</sup> They were: 1) Mrs. Soekonto, head at a Dutch-Native school and a member of Wanita the Utomo Committee; 2) Mrs. Suwardi, the wife of Ki Hadjar Dewantoro (the founder of Taman Siswa); and 3) Miss Soejatin, a head mistress at Taman Siswa and member of the Putri Indonesia Committee. Cora Vreede-De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievement* (Hague: Mouton and Co-’s-Gravenhage, 1960), 89.

<sup>12</sup> Sukanti Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan Wanita di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1984), 89; De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 89; Kowari, *Sejarah Setengah Abad Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1978), 29; Ani Idrus, *Wanita Dulu, Sekarang Dan Esok* (Medan: Waspada, 1980), 50; Department Of Information Republik of Indonesia, *The Indonesian Women’s Movements: A Chronological Survey of the Women’s Movements in Indonesia*, ( Jakarta: Department of Information, 1968), 11; Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism And Nationalism in the Third World* (New Delhi: Zed Books, 1986), 150.

For 'Aisiyah, the importance of this congress lies in the fact that it marked a further stage in the development of the organization. For nine years (1917-1928) the organization had concentrated largely on internal matters. In fact, the involvement of 'Aisiyah in this congress was the first formal organizational contact with other women's organizations. It therefore, inaugurated 'Aisiyah's participation in the nationalist movement and its reception into part of the network of Indonesian women's organizations.

It was hard to argue that the congress conveyed any specific political message. The fundamental issues addressed within the congress were hardly political in nature. Rather, the major focus was on the issues of female education and family law, i.e., the position of women in marriage law and the issue of child marriage,<sup>13</sup> which had basically been the main concern of the women's movement from the beginning. Two well-known lawyers were invited to speak on the legal position of women: R. Supomo, who spoke from the perspective of customary law, and Ali Sosroamidjojo, who approached the issue from the point of view of Islamic law. Among others, the issue of polygamy seems to have attracted considerable attention due to its controversial and debatable nature, and the fact that it "divided" women into two groups. Wieringa describes the debate thus:

The Christian organization, and the non-religious organization on the one hand, and the Islamic women's group on the other hand, however, were deeply and decisively divided on a central issue: polygamy. The Christian and non religious women's organization saw polygamy as an unpardonable humiliation for women, against which they actively fought; the Islamic women's organization only wanted to improve the conditions under which polygamy was allowed to occur, not to abolish the institution itself.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A comprehensive and insightful study of the issue of child marriage in Indonesia has been conducted by Susan Blackburn and Sharon Bessel, and reported on in their article "Marriageable Age: Political Debates On Early Marriage in Twentieth Century Indonesia," *Indonesia* 63 (April 1997): 107-141.

<sup>14</sup> Saskia Wieringa, *The Perfumed Nightmare: Some Notes on The Indonesian Women's Movements* (Hague: Institute of Social Studies Working Paper, 1985), 8-9.

'Aisyiyah was among the Islamic groups that expressed their disagreement with the demand to abolish polygamy during the Congress. In a speech delivered by Siti Munjiyah, an 'Aisyiyah representative, entitled "*Derajat Perempuan*" (The Status of Women), she argued that while 'Aisyiyah did not encourage the practice of polygamy, it disagreed with any move to eradicate it, since it was justified by Islamic teaching.<sup>15</sup> Munjiyah further maintained that marriage was the only institution that placed women in a respectable position in society, and therefore, polygamy was a better solution than the practice of prostitution or illicit polygamy which, in her view, degraded women to the status of mere sexual objects.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the divergent positions taken by participants on the polygamy issue, the Congress ended with an agreement on to found the Perikatan Perhimpunan Istri Indonesia (Federation of Indonesian Women), usually abbreviated as PPII. With its main agenda being "to improve the social position of women and family life as a whole," the PPII immediately sent to the government three principal requests decided on by delegates: an increase in the number of girls' schools; the institutionalization of *ta'liq talaq*, and the provision of assistance to widows and the orphans of Indonesian civil servants.<sup>17</sup>

A woman's legal position in marriage, child marriage and female education continued to be the major concerns of the PPII at the subsequent annual meetings of 1929,

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<sup>15</sup> The original text is as follows: "...[if you wonder] why Islam legalizes polygamy and gives the right of divorce into the hand of men (husband)? Does it mean that Islam subordinates women? If you do have such questions, we would like to answer by a question in return: "Is there any benefit for women in being prostitutes or illicitly poligamized rather than by being legally married? Do not misunderstand; if we have this question in mind it does not mean that we support the practice of polygamy or encourage men to perform it..." Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 159-60; Suratmin, *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan*, 124.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

1930, 1932 and 1933. At the same time, the polemic on polygamy had already become part of the “national” debate, which motivated many elements of society, including male nationalist figures, to voice their opinions. This tendency may explain Jayawardena’s claim “that monogamy, education, and freedom of movement for women were seen as marks of modernity, development and civilization, and therefore, the reformers tried to embody these factors in their political platform and activities.”<sup>18</sup>

Among others, the most radical and “uncompromising approach” to the issue was expressed by Istri Sedar, a newly founded women’s association.<sup>19</sup> In January 1931, Istri Sedar, under the leadership of Suwarni Pringgodigdo, participated in the Congress of Asian Women held in Lahore where a resolution in favor of the abolition of polygamy was passed.<sup>20</sup> In the wake of this decision, Istri Sedar drew further attention at its meeting held in June 1931 in Jakarta to Mustapha Kemal’s abolition of polygamy in Turkey, and called for the same policy to be applied in Indonesia. In an article entitled “The Question of Polygamy,” Pringgodigdo explicitly rejected all forms of polygamy and argued that “the

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<sup>17</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 89; Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 150; Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Established in Bandung in 1930, Istri Sedar showed itself to be a women’s organization of critical importance. Through its journal entitled *Sedar* (Alert), this association struggled for the improvement of women in all classes of society, especially working class women, and insisted on the adoption of a “national education policy” to serve the need of masses. Most of the members belonged to Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI/Indonesian National Party); a nationalist political party established by Sukarno, who was arrested in 1929. This background led Istri Sedar to express its political interest at its congress in 1932 where it demanded women’s participation in politics. This organization also harshly criticized the male nationalist organization, which, considered the women’s movement as subordinate to the nationalist movement. Suwarsih Djoyoseputro, the first leader of Istri Sedar even called this tendency “tyrannizing” women. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 151-2; De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 91-92; Saskia Wieringa, “The Politicization of Gender Relation in Indonesia: The Indonesian Women’s Movement and Gerwani Until the New Order State” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1995), 78.

Indonesian woman has a right to justice and independence, and polygamy is the very denial of justice and independence.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the refusal on the part of Istri Sedar to join the PPII may have been based on the assumption that, as a federation of various organizations, the PPII could hardly “take a decisive step” on the issue of polygamy.

A week after the Istri Sedar meeting referred to above, a counter—argument was offered by various Muslim associations. At a meeting organized by the Jakarta branch of Sarekat Istri (the women’s section of Sarekat Islam) many Muslim women’s associations protested against Istri Sedar’s support for the resolution to abolish polygamy at the Lahore Women’s Conference. Slightly different views on polygamy, however, were noticeable within the religious groups themselves. The Young Muslim’s Association, for instance, expressed a “modern interpretation” of the issue. One of its members, Soepinah Isti Kastiati, put forward the view that in practice polygamy “has become nothing other than disguised prostitution.”<sup>22</sup> She therefore argued that, based on the spirit of Islam, the practice should be abolished. She called for a further and more thorough study of Islam in order to find “the best way to contend with polygamy.”<sup>23</sup>

In response to this polemic, ‘Aisyiyah maintained its traditional position. Using the same argument as stated by Munjiyah at the first congress—the 1932 ‘Aisyiyah annual meeting in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatera—the organization continued to reject demands to

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<sup>20</sup> Besides Istri Sedar, PPII also sent delegates to this congress. De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 91; Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 152.

<sup>21</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 107.

<sup>22</sup> This opinion was expressed in her article in the journal of the Youth Muslim Association, *El Fadjar*. Ibid, 105.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

abandon polygamy.<sup>24</sup> At a time when polygamy was seen as the ultimate symbol of women's oppression, such a position invited bitter criticism. It was no surprise that Istri Sedar was among those who strongly opposed 'Aisyiyah's views. This organization even went so far as to condemn the practice of sex segregation observed by 'Aisyiyah at almost every meeting in which male members of the Muhammadiyah were present.<sup>25</sup> This practice, according to Istri Sedar representatives, was a clear indication that Islam subordinated women.

In fact, 'Aisyiyah's position on polygamy was representative of the Muhammadiyah's attitude toward women. According to Federspiel, while the Muhammadiyah expended every effort to encourage the social involvement of women, it also maintained the opinion that both women and men hold different roles, and that a woman's role is more limited than that of a man.<sup>26</sup> In this way, compared to other Muslim organizations, the Muhammadiyah's attitude toward women may be regarded as liberal, but "it was not liberal at all for secularist group."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that some of 'Aisyiyah's members did not favor polygamy. Wieringa recorded in her interview with Mrs. Mangunpuspito (leader of the Masyumi women's branch and a former member of 'Aisyiyah) and Hayinah Mawardi (three times elected as 'Aisyiyah leader) that personally they never accepted the idea of polygamy. The only reason they "excused" it was the fact that Islam permits this institution. Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 81.

<sup>25</sup> This separation was originally advocated by 'Aisyiyah in response to the events that occurred in Bengkulu on January 21, 1939. On this occasion, Sukarno (the Indonesian first president) left in the middle of meeting held by the Muhammadiyah due to the use of a curtain (*tabir*), which separated women and men and prevented them from seeing each other. Sukarno regarded this practice as a symbol of women's slavery. Eventually, Sukarno's behavior caused many adverse comments from many Muslim leaders. However, an effort to accommodate this opinion was made by the Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah in that they no longer used the curtain, but still maintained the segregation of the sexes. C.L.M. Penders, *The Life And Times Of Sukarno* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1974), 54; M.T. Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret Yang Berubah* (Surakarta: Institut Gelanggang Pemikiran Filsafat Sosial Budaya dan Kependidikan Surakarta, 1990), 84.

<sup>26</sup> Howard M. Federspiel, "The Muhammadiyah: A Study of an Orthodox Islamic Movements in Indonesia," in *Indonesia* 10 (October 1970).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

On the other hand, the slightly “ambiguous” view of the Muhammadiyah and ‘Aisyiyah on women’s issues can be traced to their expansion into other regions where they had to make certain adjustments to their programs in order to be in harmony with local custom. In some cases, the adjustments were made in direct response to the complaints of local religious leaders about the Muhammadiyah’s decisions on certain issues, for example, such as those made at the congress held in Bukit Tinggi, March 14-21, 1930. This congress noted the harsh debate concerning the presence of female speakers in a mixed audience between Kyai Haji Mas Manşūr, a leader of Central Board of the Muhammadiyah from Java, and Haji Abd al- Karim ‘Amrullāh, a leader of the local branch of the organization. Convinced that it violated ‘*ādāt* boundaries and was also forbidden in Islam (*ḥarām*), ‘Amrullāh showed his antagonism toward the ‘Aisyiyah practice of allowing its members to speak in front of a mixed audience.<sup>28</sup> Mas Mansur held a different point of view and did not agree with the textual evidence with which Amrullāh backed up his judgment. His concern for the spread of the Muhammadiyah, coupled with his respect for the local leader, however, did not allow him to reject outright Amrullāh’s ideas. Finally, they were able to agree that it was *makruh* (not recommended) in Islam for women to speak in public when men are present. In keeping with this agreement, the speech of the ‘Aisyiyah’s representative to the congress was canceled.

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<sup>28</sup> In his book “Cermin Terus” Amrullāh further explained the position of women in Islam, in which he presented his views on ‘Aisyiyah’s other activities that encouraged the public appearance of women, such as performing ‘Id prayer in the field (in Indonesia the idea of performing ‘Id prayer in a field, not in a mosque, was largely known as one of the Muhammadiyah’s distinctive practices), and for making trips without *muhrim*. This book also deals with some details concerning women, ranging from the appropriate length of women’s clothes to a woman’s position in marriage. Hamka, *Ayahku* (Jakarta: Penerbit Widjaya, 1950), 121-122; Taufik Abdullah, *School and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra 1927-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesian Project, South Asian Program, Cornell University, 1971), 93.

Such cases suggest that in its effort to arrive at an interpretation of Islam that liberated women, the Muhammadiyah was unable to change fully the existing views concerning women, whether cultural or religious. Consequently, its modernist outlook, in the sense that the Muhammadiyah was trying to make Islam compatible with social advances, encountered an 'unwelcome' response from both religious and secularist groups. The religious groups considered the Muhammadiyah's position as amounting to a form of rationalization or even a de-sacralization of Islam, while the secularist groups regarded religion as a barrier to reform and social change. The Muhammadiyah's position in this respect was mirrored in the experience of 'Aisyiyah.

The continuing debate on polygamy, as discussed above, implied that the congress in particular, and the Indonesian women's movement in general, were more concerned with family law, i.e., women's legal rights, rather than other issues.<sup>29</sup> This tendency reflected and represented the ideological basis of the women's movement in Indonesia, at least until the

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<sup>29</sup> The PPII was short lived. At the second Indonesian Women's Congress, which took place in Jakarta on July 20-24, 1935, it was decided that the congress should be a permanent institution, under the name Kongress Wanita Indonesia (unabbreviated). This institution was a representative body linking all Indonesian women's organizations that would hold regular meetings. Due to the Japanese occupation, this group only succeeded in holding two further congresses during the pre-independence period, in 1938 and 1941. In the meantime, while the issue of the legal position of women still attracted considerable attention, other issues were gradually introduced and formally set up as a program. Three of the most important included the struggle to combat illiteracy, the effort to improve the legal position of women workers (*kaum buruh*) and the right to vote.

The issue of the right to vote could be considered as the first explicit demand by women for full participation in the political arena. In fact, the demand itself, which was first heard at the 1938 congress, was an appositional reaction toward a governmental policy stating that Indonesian women had "the right of eligibility to certain elective offices" ("passive suffrage"), but did not have the right to vote ("active suffrage"). Coupled with their disappointment over the 1935 proposal, a protest meeting attended by eighteen women's associations was held to express their concern over the issue. At the next congress, held in Semarang on July 1941, the political interests of women were further manifested by the decision of the congress to work actively toward founding an Indonesian parliament, whereby women had the full right to vote and be selected for public office. These political activities, however, in no way mean that political issues distracted the women's movement from other issues, and family law in particular. Barbara N. Ramisack, "Women in South East Asia" in Barbara N. Ramusack and Sharon Sievers, eds., *Women in Asia: Restoring Women's History*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 100-103; De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 95.

New Order period. In other words, as Wahidah Zein argues, while there was an acknowledgment of the need on the part of women to be educated and participate in society, their primary role was nonetheless that of "a mother."<sup>30</sup> The strong sense that motherhood is a woman's chief role was reflected in the establishment of *Hari Ibu* (Mother's Day) which is celebrated each year on December 22, in commemoration of the first Congress. An essay that won the first prize in a competition held in honor of Mother's Day reflects this idea:

Today we celebrate Mother's Day in order to extol ...the merit of women in so far as she is a mother to her children, to her husband, and to society. It is to mother the task of managing the household budget falls; it is she who raises and cares for the children, who guards the welfare of the family and dedicates herself to the interest of society...It is the mother who gives form and character to the community, for she is the one who prepares the children to become its worthy members...This date, December 22, 1928, is looked upon as the day on which the Indonesian woman became fully aware of her lot, her duties, her position and her part in society.<sup>31</sup>

The ideal of motherhood also finds its place in Jayawardena's theory. She believes that the women's movement emerged in many Asian countries once they had experienced "the era of imperialist and capitalist expansion."<sup>32</sup> With time, as in the case of Indonesia, it became an integral part of each nationalist movement. In this context, the question of the role and status of women emerged as an important issue. From the perspective of the colonial authorities, "local women had to be educated to be good wives and mothers to the professional and white-collar personnel who were being trained to man of the colonial economy."<sup>33</sup> For the male nationalist reformers who tried to modernize and civilize their

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<sup>30</sup> Wahidah Zein, "Feminism in Indonesia: A Movement Between The West and The Muslim Society" in *Jurnal Studi Indonesia* 8 (August 1998): 48. See also Kathy Robinson, "Kartini's Vision and the Position of Indonesian Women" *Mankind* 17 (April 1987): 104-105.

<sup>31</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 90.

<sup>32</sup> Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism*, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

society, on the other hand, women were an essential component of this effort and needed to be as educated and “adequately” westernized as themselves, in order to be “civilized housewives and mothers” for the next generation.<sup>34</sup> It is apparent that the women’s movement in Indonesia, in which ‘Aisyyah took part, was not an exception to this rule.

#### *D. The Japanese Occupation 1942-1945: The Years of Silence*

The Dutch surrender to the Japanese on March 8, 1942 was another pivotal juncture in Indonesian history as it marked the beginning of the Japanese military occupation of the country. Their promise of Asian brotherhood, as explicitly stated in their slogan “we come as an older brother,” along with their anti-Western propaganda, enabled them to succeed in mobilizing and politicizing the masses. Indeed, at an early point in Japan’s occupation, most Indonesians of almost all backgrounds conceived of them as “liberators” who had brought the dream of independence closer and made it more tangible.<sup>35</sup>

Soon, however, the true nature of the Japanese occupation began to manifest itself. Even as early as 1942, the military authorities began controlling political organizations and put pressure on the growing nationalist sentiment. The first step they took was to dissolve all nationalist and religious organizations, including women’s groups, and put in their place a

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Besides these promises, on a practical level there were certain other factors which neutralized Indonesian suspicions. Kahin mentions some of them: they had very few military personnel, which forced them to offer opportunities to Indonesian to fill their administrative posts. The contacts that Japan made with the Indonesian Muslim groups, especially since the M.I.A.I (Great Islamic Council of Indonesia) congress, October 1939 — which Japanese representatives attended — was also another reason to welcome Japanese overlordship. George McTuan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 102-103; Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (Bandung: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), 103-104, M.A. Aziz, *Japan’s Colonialism and Indonesia* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), 200-208

new body, the Triple A Movement, which was introduced on April 29, 1942.<sup>36</sup> This organization was short-lived, however, due to a decline in economic well-being and the resulting disenchantment with the Japanese. By the end of the same year, Japan had already lost the support of the masses, and was faced with the opposition of prominent nationalist leaders such as Sukarno, Hatta and Shahrir. To regain this support, Japan decided to replace the Triple A with an all-inclusive nationalist organization called the Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Central of People's Power), known by the abbreviation Putera, on March 9, 1943, which promised to grant self-government to Indonesia.

In the case of the women's movement in particular, the Japanese presence forced women to take a step backward in their crusade. The consolidation of all women's associations, strong government control and the economic downturn meant that such issues as a marriage bill or suffrage were no longer essential items on the national agenda. In general, Indonesian women during this period found themselves relegated to their traditional role, as they had to face shortages of daily necessities like food and clothing.<sup>37</sup> Their most important concern was finding an efficient way to use the family's resources or to take other simple steps to cope with the situation. This does not mean, however, that the agenda of independence was put on hold. The underground guerrilla movement, which offered the only possible way to continue the struggle for independence, was maintained by some nationalist leaders, and also included a few women in their political action.

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<sup>36</sup> Triple A stood for Japan's propaganda message: "Japan the Leader of Asia, Japan the Protector of Asia, and Japan the Light of Asia." This group was designed "to mobilize" Indonesians of all backgrounds to give support to Japan in the Second World War. Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> It was recorded that clothing shortages caused a drop in school attendance and a decline in social activities. People no longer visited family or friends due to a lack of proper clothing. Anton Lucas, "Images of the Indonesian Woman During the Japanese Occupation" in Jean Gelman Taylor, ed., *Women Creating Indonesia: The First Fifty Years* (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1997), 70-71.

Nor were women excluded from the mobilization and politicization efforts undertaken by Japan. It was in this context, that the policy of Japan to maintain the existence of a women's movement, either by establishing women's sections in Triple A and Putera, or by founding the Fujinkai (details given below), should be defined. In other words, the only reason that the Japanese could see for allowing women to be part of their political platform was their importance to the war effort and to Japanese plans for a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. This tendency is demonstrated clearly in the activities of women's associations, particularly of Barisan Pekerja Perempuan Putera (women's branch of Putera) and Fujinkai.

Not much needs to be said about the women's section of the Triple A movement as this group was so short-lived. Meanwhile the Barisan Pekerja Perempuan Putra (Troops of Young Women Workers) did engage in some social projects ranging from fighting illiteracy to the setting-up of health-care centers, weaving circles and other programs. The organization itself attracted a wide following since it was established in almost every region, while at the national level this organization was managed by prominent figures, some of whose names have already been mentioned.<sup>38</sup> However, the most important, best-known and deeply-rooted women's group during this period was clearly the Fujinkai. The necessity of this Japanese-made group can be seen in this description:

In February 1940 the cabinet decided to create Dai Nippon Fujinkai (Greater Women's Association) by merging existing women's associations and making membership compulsory for all women above the age of twenty. In close connection with the local administrative sub-unit, Fujinkai carried out activities that were considered to be suitable for it, such as preparation of comfort kits to be sent to soldiers, the collection of recyclable articles, encouragement of saving, crusades against luxuries such as permanent waves and colorful kimonos, and care of those

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<sup>38</sup> Among those were; Mrs. Sunaryo Mangunpuspito, Mrs. S.K Trimurti, Mrs. Sukanti Suryochondro and Mrs. Sunaryati Sukemi. All of them were the key figures in certain pre-war women's associations. Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad*, 59.

households whose men were on the battlefields. As the war situation deteriorated for Japan, Fujinkai assumed more and more militaristic features, and preparing for the landing of the Allied Forces which was considered eminent, women's combat forces armed with bamboo spears were created nation-wide in June 1945 out of network of Fujinkai.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, as can be seen from the above statement, Fujinkai was a multi-faceted phenomenon. On the surface, people could certainly see that it was founded on and for Japanese interests, particularly in view of its objective "to mobilize women's labor to support the Japanese army." To this purpose Japan, on a practical level, recruited and exploited women through several activities, which included producing uniforms for soldiers, setting up public kitchens, encouraging women in rural areas to contribute to solving the wartime economic crisis,<sup>40</sup> and even providing entertainment for the troops.<sup>41</sup> On another level, however, the Japanese used women —according to Sato's analysis —to spread the ideology of *hoko*, a Japanese concept of "obligatory service to the state," which took the form of indoctrination of women ensure that they behaved appropriately and in keeping with the wartime situation.<sup>42</sup> For instance, the media was required to encourage women to save and to

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<sup>39</sup> Shigeru Sato, "War and Peasant: The Japanese Military Administration and Impact on the Peasantry of Java 1942-1945" cited in Anton Lucas, *Images of the Indonesian Women*, 54-55.

<sup>40</sup> The new agricultural system introduced by Japan proved inappropriate for the rice plantations, especially in Java, and this is another crucial cause of the food crisis. Other types of crops, such as cassava, were then encouraged to be planted as a substitute. The target of this particular message were women living in the rural areas.

<sup>41</sup> The Japanese occupation is often considered the worst period for Indonesian women as thousands of them were enslaved and forced to provide sexual services for the Japanese army. Most of these women who were later called as *jugun ianfu* (the comfort girls), were usually recruited by job offers. Hoping to work in restaurants or elsewhere, they were instead trapped in "comfort stations," effectively legalized military rape camps. At the beginning of 1993, the issue of *jugun ianfu* and other war rape victims emerged and became a hot topic in the Indonesian media, when some of the former *jugun ianfu* asked their political representatives to seek compensation for them from the Japanese government. For more information on the issue see A. Budi Hartono and Dadang Juliantoro, *Derita Paksa Perempuan: Kisah Jugun Ianfu pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang, 1942-1945* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1997).

avoid luxuries, when in reality there was no money to save, and no possibility of enjoying luxuries in the first place.

Nevertheless, the Fujinkai contributed to erasing the gap between elite and non-elite women. In other words, as a medium of mass mobilization, Fujinkai included women on all levels regardless of their class or ideological differences. This, in turn, brought a new ethos to the women's movement, whereby women belonging to the elite could no longer dominated it. The only exception to this situation was the fact that in its organizational structure, Fujinkai was totally hierarchical, since the membership was obligatory for wives of civil servants, whose position in the organization corresponded to that of their husbands in the government structure. The hierarchical structure therefore tended to maintain the power of the elite *priyayi*, and in some cases resulted in other negative tendencies, for instance, the association of Fujinkai with *romusha* (forced labor).<sup>43</sup>

It was also through Fujinkai that some activists from the prewar women's organizations continued to meet. This enabled them to maintain their networks, barter information and even participate in the underground movement to prepare the way for independence. In addition, the military training provided, which consisted of physical exercise, air raid drills, and even political speeches was beneficial to many young women both within and outside Fujinkai, thus helping them to prepare in practical ways for the revolution that was to come in 1945.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Anton Lucas, *Images of the Indonesian Woman*, 52-53.

<sup>43</sup> One of the tasks of local officials during the Japanese period was to recruit people into *romusha* (there was a weekly quota to be filled). Practically, the recruitment was often delegated by officials to their wives who automatically were members of Fujinkai or even the heads of the local branches of Fujinkai. Ibid. 55-56.

<sup>44</sup> It was the Jakarta branch of Fujinkai (*Jakarta Tokobetsu Si Fujinkai*), which provided military training to their young female members. Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad*, 60.

Given their commitment to the above activities and their supposedly “wholehearted devotion” to the Japanese war effort, Indonesian women’s organizations, including ‘Aisiyiah, had neither the means nor the opportunities to pursue their own agendas during this period. Formally ‘Aisiyiah had to take part in Fujinkai, since all its activities, including its schools, were officially banned. The only permissible activity was the provision of religious training classes (*pengajian*), but even here the issues discussed had to be written down, and a copy to be sent to the Japanese occupation authorities.<sup>45</sup> This policy was another part of the Japanese attempt at controlling and even stifling the growing awareness of and struggle for independence.

To conclude our discussion of the achievements of women’s movements, including ‘Aisiyiah, during the pre-independence period, it can be said that women’s groups functioned as part of the nationalist struggle, while at the same time carrying out efforts aimed at social reform designed to improve the status of women. The way in which they translated the ideas of nationalism and reform into practical reality, however, were diverse, and were usually in line with the various ideological bases that underlay each organization. We have also seen how there was a cleavage of sorts between religious groups, such as ‘Aisiyiah, and non-religious groups. Nevertheless, the spirit of unity seems to have transcended these differences, as was proved by the great effort to maintain unity within the women’s movement.

## **II. POST- INDEPENDENCE**

During the twenty years that followed the Proclamation of Independence in 1945, Indonesians witnessed several major political changes and crises, of which the post-

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independence revolutionary war,<sup>46</sup> an experiment with liberal democracy,<sup>47</sup> guided democracy (1957-1965),<sup>48</sup> and communist upheaval<sup>49</sup> were the most important. Under the leadership of Sukarno, whose era is widely referred to as the Old Order period, there were, at least, two tendencies in evidence. Firstly, as a newly founded nation, Indonesia was in the process of searching for its identity, and seeking the best model to unify its extremely heterogeneous

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<sup>45</sup> Mawaddah, "Sejarah Awal 'Aisyiyah," 92.

<sup>46</sup> The first five years of Indonesian independence (1945-1950) saw a persistent effort by the Dutch to reoccupy Indonesia, which then led to the Revolutionary War. The return of the Dutch was made possible by the help of the Allies, especially the British and Australian armies which came to Indonesia to accept the Japanese surrender. At least two major military aggressions on July 20, 1947 and December 18, 1948 were launched by Dutch. This situation led to the United Nation's calling for a cease-fire and to mediate a diplomatic agreement between Indonesia and Dutch. Several agreements were signed, most of which the Dutch violated. On December 27, 1949, however, the Dutch formally transferred sovereignty over Indonesia. For more information on the war see M.C. Ricklefs, *The History of Modern Indonesia* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 201-221; R.O.G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 134-212.

<sup>47</sup> The period between 1950-1957 was widely known in Indonesian history as the Liberal Democracy era. This particular moment was characterized by the consensus of key figures on creating a democratic state. This was manifested primarily in the establishment of a number of political parties, which played a prominent role and even controlled the army. Among the biggest parties were PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia: Council of Indonesian Muslim Association) and NU (Nahdatul Ulama Party). Ricklefs, *The History of Modern Indonesia*, 225-244.

<sup>48</sup> When President Sukarno realized that Liberal democracy had stimulated many rebellions that endangered the unity of the nation, he announced in early 1957, what he called 'Guided Democracy' by going back to the 1945 Constitution. The era was characterized by the strong political control of the President through his Nasakom (Nasionalisme (Nationalism), Agama (Religion) and Komunis (Communist)) doctrine. The close relationship between Sukarno and the PKI, which overshadowed the Nasakom doctrine, was generally viewed as an effort to bring the Communist party into power. Baladas Ghasals, *Indonesian Politics, 1955-1959: The Emergence of Guided Democracy* (Calcutta: K.P. Baghi, 1982); Oey Hong Lee, *Indonesia Government and Press During Guided Democracy* (Hull: Center for South East Asian Studies, Hull University, 1971); Ricklefs, *The History of Modern Indonesia*, 245-271

<sup>49</sup> The well-known Communist *coup d'état* on September 30, 1965 ended the period of Guided democracy, even the whole Old Order period. In this bloody coup, the PKI came under suspicion for killing, in sadistic fashion, six army generals. It was also this *coup* which "introduced" Suharto onto the Indonesian political scene, which at that time safeguarded Sukarno and took over control of the army. The end of the Old Order also marked the end of Communism in Indonesia.

society. Secondly, considerable attention was paid to efforts at building the nation, a process to which all elements were invited to contribute.

The resulting political climate greatly influenced the evolution of the women's movement, which under the Japanese occupation had been kept in stasis. Its re-appearance was marked by the return of Kowani as the voice of the women's organizations, while at the same time numbers of other women's groups came into being. This new environment of freedom allowed Kowani to adopt more progressive actions, e.g., by inviting more groups to join it and by addressing a broader range of issues. Several times Kowani had to change its name or its organizational structure<sup>50</sup> in order to meet the demands of its members as well as its political context. However, during 1945-1965 Kowani was always able to hold its annual meeting on a regular basis.

In the meantime, the effort to improve the position of women in marriage remained the major concern of Kowani. During this period, its efforts were primarily directed at forcing the government to impose a new-"reformed" marriage bill, in which an improved position would be secured for wives.<sup>51</sup> This initiative received an impetus with the

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<sup>50</sup> The name was changed three times. In the 1949, at its annual meeting, Kowani established a secretarial unit, called the *Badan Kontak*. Consisting of 19 women's groups, this group operated independently from Kowani, but it managed almost all organizational aspects of Kowani such as its budget, external relations, and information. The presence of this unit brought fundamental changes in Kowani's structure as it left Kowani nothing more than an administrative office which bridged contacts between its members, without having any right to make independent decisions. A year later, at its 1950 meeting, this unit was re-united with Kowani and formed a new organization called Konggres Wanita Indonesia (unabbreviated). The last re-organization took place on February 1969, when the name of KOWANI (abbreviated) was re-used to replace Konggres Wanita Indonesia. A further change was the acceptance of *Pancasila* as the sole ideological basis of the organization, and the foundation of Majelis Permusyawaratan (Board of Deliberation) as the highest authoritative council within Kowani. Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad*, 106-160; Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 139, De-Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 118; Department of Information, *A Chronological Survey of the Women's Movement in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Department of Information, 1968), 17-18.

<sup>51</sup> Given the variety of marriage laws existing at this time—Christian law for Christian citizens, Dutch law for the Europeans, and their own customary law for the Foreign orientals

promulgation of Act. No. 19 concerning the widow's pension,<sup>52</sup> which was met with huge demonstrations throughout Indonesia on December 19, 1953, organized by Perwari. From the women's groups' perspective, besides being wasteful of the governmental budget, this act also implicitly encouraged the practice of polygamy. The demonstrations actually succeeded in persuading the government to revoke this act and to draft instead a new marriage bill. Circumstances worsened, however, when in the face of continuing demands for the marriage bill, Sukarno took a second wife (June 1954).<sup>53</sup> For the women's groups, Sukarno's embracing of polygamy was little short of "political betrayal," particularly when they considered the encouragement, advice and favor he had shown through his public acts and statements, which had had a positive impact on the changing role of women's organizations.

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(Chinese, Arabs and Indians)—Islamic law often came in for criticism on issues such as polygamy, and the absolute right of husband to issue a divorce. Maria Ulfah Santoso, a Kowani's leader, for instance, stated that on the practical level, Islamic law regulated marriage in a way that differed from the spirit of the Qur'an. The new-proposed marriage bill also aimed to produce a single marriage law for all Indonesians. Maria Ulfah Santoso, "Short Summary of the Position of the Indonesian Women in the Republic of Indonesia" in *Women's Affairs in Indonesia* (Ottawa: Information Division of Indonesian Embassy, 1959), 9.

<sup>52</sup> The act consisted of two points: 1) "A male civil servant could designate several wives as having the right to draw a widow's pension. If he designated more than one, the total amount of the pension would be twice as much as that for the one wife." 2) "Since this measure meant an increase in government expenditure, the contribution payable by every male civil servant toward this pension whose scale had been increased, should be fixed at 7 percent of his base rate and at 2 percent for female civil servant." "The civil servant who practiced polygamy would have to pay an extra 2 percent for each additional wife, with further maximum of 4 percent, so that this total contribution could not exceed 11 percent." De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 127; Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan Wanita*, 100-101.

<sup>53</sup> There were plenty of rumors concerning Sukarno's flamboyant lifestyle, in particular his personal predilection for women. People often considered his sexual adventures as emblematic of the sexual prowess of Javanese kings. The list of women in Sukarno's life ranged from stewardesses on international flights to the daughters of Indonesian nationalist leaders. All of these rumors, especially his extramarital activities, were a major concern to the women's movement at that time. For more information about Sukarno's private life see Sukarno, *An Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill Company, 1958); C.L.M. Penders, *The Life And Times of Sukarno* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1974); Abu Hanifah, *The Tales of Revolution* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972).

*A. 'Aisyiyah's Activities under the Old Order: Social Development and the Emphasis on Family Law.*

The spirit and euphoria awakened by Indonesian's newly-won independence were channeled by 'Aisyiyah into its program of social development, at least during the first ten years of Indonesian's nationhood. The organization may well have seen this as the best way in which to contribute to the national effort, especially when we consider the fact that upheavals in the political system during this period left little opportunity to the government to focus on socio-economic development. The presence of women's organizations, including 'Aisyiyah, which placed the social activities in the forefront of their agenda to some extent, made up for the government's inability to deal with this area of concern.

For 'Aisyiyah, social development took the form of establishing an infrastructure, particularly in the fields of education, health services, and charitable activities. By 1963, for instance 'Aisyiyah had succeeded in founding numerous *Badan Kesehatan Ibu dan Anak* (Maternity and Child-Welfare Centers), orphanages, and girls' homes, and had managed several of the Muhammadiyah's *Pembina Kesejahteraan Umat* (best known by its abbreviation: PKU, Center for Public Health).<sup>54</sup> In the area of educational institutional development, 'Aisyiyah's principal accomplishment was the establishment of a number of vocational schools for women, such as *Sekolah Bidan* (School for Nurses) and *Sekolah Guru Taman Kanak-kanak* (School for Kindergarten Teachers).<sup>55</sup> The 1960s even witnessed 'Aisyiyah's attempt at establishing "Ummul Mukminin," a university which would have focused on Arabic- Islamic literature, although this dream was never realized.

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<sup>54</sup> In fact all of these institutions were founded during the colonial period. BKIA for instance, was founded in 1934, while PKU was established in 1921. Independence, however, provided greater possibilities for 'Aisyiyah to develop the public infrastructures in terms of extent and size. Mawaddah, "Sejarah Awal 'Aisyiyah," 88-91; Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 38.

Nevertheless, besides these regular activities, some new-established programs were instituted to answer the demands of the situation. Clearly, the continuing requests by women's associations to reform the marriage regulations led 'Aisyiyah to pay more attention to the problems affecting family laws, ranging from writing manuals on "creating a happy family"<sup>56</sup> to forming family consultation bureaus.<sup>57</sup> Given the criticism by other women's groups of 'Aisyiyah's position on polygamy and its support of Act.19, these programs conveyed the message that Islam did have a "positive" concept of marriage. This positive concept was based on the conviction that a women was an equal partner in marriage, and that child-marriage should be discouraged; the two central points that underlay the women's movement's demands. In one part of the manual on "the happy family," for instance, it was stated that marriage should be based on the willingness of both parties to enter into the contract.<sup>58</sup> Their mutual agreement was essential, for if either of the parties were to become dissatisfied with the other during the course of the marriage, they would each have an equal right to terminate the contract.<sup>59</sup> Another part of the manual gives advice to parents or *walis* (guardians) on the subject of the marriage of their offsprings. Among other considerations, there are the ages of the children (including the age differences between groom and bride), the need for the consent of both parties (avoiding forced-marriage), and the importance of

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>56</sup> The book entitled *Mendirikan Rumah Tangga Bahagia* (Producing a Happy Family) was first published during 34<sup>th</sup> Muhammadiyah congress of 1959 in Yogyakarta. It covered several topics such as Islam and family, rights and duties for husband and wife, the importance of marriage, polygamy, and others. 'Aisyiyah, "Mu'tamar Khusus 'Aisyiyah Dalam Mu'tamar Muhammadiyah ke 34 di Yogyakarta," 1959, 3-18.

<sup>57</sup> The bureau was founded in 1956 with the cooperation of the Ministry of Religious Affair, and later formed BP4 (*Badan Perkawinan, Perselisihan dan Perceraian*: Consultation Bureau for Marriage and Divorce). Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Perumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 43.

<sup>58</sup> 'Aisyiyah, "Mu'tamar Khusus 'Aisyiyah," 5.

the mother's involvement in the decision of whether or not to accept a marriage proposal (the father is not the only decision-maker).<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, in response to the issue of polygamy, 'Aisiyyah still held the view that it was not an "evil" which stood in the way of ameliorating women's status within marriage. However, compared to its earlier position, 'Aisiyyah tended to offer a more "rational" explanation for defending polygamy. In so doing, the organization referred to the Qur'an 4: 3 and 129, verses which stress that polygamy can only be practiced within certain limitations, the most important of these being equal treatment of wives on the part of the husband.<sup>61</sup> In addition, 'Aisiyyah further "justified" this institution by providing at least two other arguments. Firstly, polygamy is an honorable system, which can protect sick or barren wives from divorce, while at the same time preventing a husband from committing adultery (*zina*).<sup>62</sup> Secondly, it should be realized that the verses on polygamy were revealed as a solution to a demographic problem that had arise in time of war, when a great many men had been killed, and hence, there were not enough males to ensure marriage.<sup>63</sup> In stating these justifications, 'Aisiyyah seems to have been influenced by the modernist exegetes, who, according to Jansen, argued that polygamy was not technically in accordance with the spirit

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 18. The two verses of the Qur'an are as follows:

If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four, But if ye fear that they shall not be able to deal justly (with them) then only one, or (a captive) that your right hand possesses. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice (Q: 4: 3). Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (From a woman altogether), so as to leave her (as it were), Hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding and practices self restraint, God is oft- forgiving, Most Merciful (Q: 4:129). A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Armana Corp., 1983), 179 and 221.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

of the Qur'ān.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, when the two verses are considered as a whole, modernists would say that justice among the wives was "impossible," and therefore monogamy was in fact the right form of marriage.<sup>65</sup> In other words, 'Aisyiyah clearly did not intend to encourage the practice of polygamy, but as an Islamic organization, it did not want to oppose a practice that was, in terms of external appearances, condoned by Islamic teaching.

*B. Marriage Reform and Communism. Disturbed Relations between 'Aisyiyah and Kowani.*

Given the emphasis placed by the women's movement on the need to reform marriage regulations and abolish polygamy, it should come as no surprise that during this period, 'Aisyiyah continuously faced challenges in its relations with other women's groups in Kowani. This, however, was not the problem of 'Aisyiyah alone. Other Islamic women's organizations, such as Muslimat (the women's section of Masyumi), Muslimat NU (the women's section of Nahdatul Ulama) and GPII (Indonesian Islamic Youth Organization) were very much in the same position.

Nevertheless, it should be realized that the position adopted by Islamic women's groups on such controversial issues as polygamy, Act 19 and the marriage bill could be traced back to the position of their parent organizations. In other words, to some extent,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 92.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Muḥammad 'Abduh was one of the modern exegetes who best reflected this tendency. 'Abduh maintained that justice in polygamy is something "impossible," to attain because when a husband feels in his heart that he likes one of his wives more than the other, that already can be considered an injustice. In the light of such interpretation, the permission for polygamy in Islam was highly limited (*mudayyiq*), even *darūrah*. Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maṭba' Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣubayḥ, [n.d]), 347-348. In his treatise, *al-Islām wal-mar'a*, 'Abduh even called for the abolition of polygamy, based on his opinion that polygamy has already become a corrupt practice which neglects the values of justice and equality, and is thereby "no longer conducive to the

their "dependent status" meant that these groups had to follow the lead of their male counterparts. When women's organizations finally succeeded in bringing the proposal of a marriage bill to the 1959 parliamentary session, almost all Muslim parties rejected the proposal, due to their disagreement with some points of the draft, especially the abolition of polygamy and *talaq* (repudiation). A representative of the Muslim parties, Tuan Sidi Mardjohan, delivered the speech outlining the reasons for their objection:

Among other considerations [it has to be noted that] women age more quickly than men do. Sometimes even though they are of the same age when they marry, yet when a woman has already given birth to two or three children, her figure has already declined one hundred to three hundred percent from the figure she used to have. It is very rare that a woman is as the old Bugis clothes, the more it is used, the more it shines; the majority of women generally fade quickly while men are still strong and their lust still powerful and they are still boiling with sexual desire...<sup>66</sup>

In the event there were few options open to Islamic women's organizations-- which were mostly the female wings of Muslim organizations or parties -- except to adopt the same attitude as their parent bodies, or at best, formulate more logical arguments in support of their position, which is what 'Aisiyiah did.

The tendency of these Islamic women's associations to maintain harmony with their male counterparts was indeed exemplified by 'Aisiyiah. Even though in 1951 'Aisiyiah had already obtained its autonomous status, which gave it the right to set up its own activities, and to make its own decisions,<sup>67</sup> nevertheless, in most external matters validation from the

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community welfare." Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 121.

<sup>66</sup> Nani Suwondo, *Kedudukan Wanita Indonesia dalam Hukum dan Masyarakat* (Jakarta: Ghalia, 1981), 91; as cited in Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 148.

<sup>67</sup> The autonomous status which was given to 'Aisiyiah in 1951 was still limited by certain conditions, among them the fact that 'Aisiyiah would not have control over its own budget or the right to establish its own branches. P.P. Muhammadityah, *Piagam Badan Otonoom* (Yogyakarta: P.P. Muhammadityah, 1951), 14-16. It was not until 1966 that 'Aisiyiah's autonomous status was fully established.

Muhammadiyah was still required. For certain controversial issues, such as the government's proposed Family Planning program,<sup>68</sup> 'Aisiyyah even left up to the Muhammadiyah leadership, deferring to the latter's decision on the issue. The limitations placed on 'Aisiyyah's autonomy are described by Baried<sup>69</sup> in the following passage:

He (Muhammadiyah leader) is our counselor. If the counselor is good, he will let 'Aisiyyah find its own way. But if the counselor is bad he can restrict 'Aisiyyah. Muhammadiyah has the veto right on our decision but is very rarely applied. They also can fire members of the 'Aisiyyah's board, which they have done in the past. We cannot fire them and we don't have a veto in their organization. You see, it is rather like a husband-wife relationship.<sup>70</sup>

Besides the issue of polygamy, the split between religious and non-religious groups in the movement during the Old Order period was the result of the prevalence of communist ideology, which vividly colored the political situation. In this respect, Sukarno, the president at the time, was the one who was most often blamed for the situation.<sup>71</sup> After

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<sup>68</sup> It was not until 1963 that Muhammadiyah approved the Family Planning Program (known in Indonesia as *Keluarga Berencana*). This is why when in 1957, 'Aisiyyah, together with other Kowani members, were invited by the US to observe women's organizations in that country, representatives of 'Aisiyyah did not participate in a session discussing family planning issues, because its validity was still debatable for many Muslim groups including the Muhammadiyah. Baroroh Baried, "Islam and Modernization of Indonesian Women," in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, eds., *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 150.

<sup>69</sup> Baroroh Baried was 'Aisiyyah's leader for five years: 1965, 1968, 1971, 1974, and 1978. Born in Kauman, she was a professor at the Faculty of Arts, Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta. Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisiyyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan*, 126; James L. Peacock, *Gerakan Muhammadiyah Memurnikan Ajaran Islam Di Indonesia*, trans. Staf Ahli Cipta Kreatif (Jakarta: Cipta Kreatif, 1986), 60.

<sup>70</sup> Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 154.

<sup>71</sup> Indeed, it is worth noting that Sukarno very much influenced, and to some extent politicized the women's movements, even though his personal behavior was often the target of harsh criticism by the latter. During the revolutionary struggle, for instance, he called upon women to participate in the struggle in the pages of his book entitled, *Sarinah*. He lectured other nationalist leaders on the importance of women's involvement in the revolutionary process, and described them as "the second wheel of our chariot, the second wing of *garuda* (the eagle of Indonesian National symbol)." Late in the period of guided democracy, Sukarno's call for the mobilization of women was realized, particularly in the case of West Irian but also in that of the confrontation with Malaysia. He had invited women in one of his speeches to become *sukarelawan* (female military volunteers), and he

the election of 1955, the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) and Sukarno became closer. The fear that both felt toward the growing power of the army strengthened their alliance, while the proclamation of Guided Democracy, to use Wieringa's phrase, served to enshrine "this party's policies couched in Sukarno's language."<sup>72</sup> In the background of this alliance, the PKI's women's section, Gerwani,<sup>73</sup> had emerged as the women's group closest to the president, and was gradually beginning take advantage of its strong position among other women's associations, particularly within Kowani. Compared to the others, for instance, Gerwani expressed greater interest in political practice and was more mass-based, in the sense that it invited more women to join, especially peasant women. This can be seen from the organization's activities. On the one hand, Gerwani carried out several activities in tandem with other women's associations, such as setting up literacy classes, establishing educational institutions, and providing health centers, as well as other social activities. The group also participated in some important Kowani events, such as demonstrations in

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succeeded. In addition, as Douglas states, the symbolic priority that his government had was to favor women's political participation, and he truly believed that cooperation between the sexes was key to the ongoing Indonesian revolution. Douglas, *Women in Indonesia Politics*, 165-166; Susan MacFarland, "Women and Revolution in Indonesia" in Mary Ann Tetreault, ed., *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World* (California: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 199-200. For further information on women's mobilization in the case of Irian see Saraswati Sunindyo, "When Earth is Female and the Nation is Mother: Gender, the Armed Forces and Nationalism in Indonesia," *Feminist Review* 58 (spring 1998): 7-12; Herlina, *Pending Emas di Belantara Irian* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1985).

<sup>72</sup> Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 118.

<sup>73</sup> Established on 4 June 1950 under the name of GERWIS (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia Sedar (Movement of Conscious Indonesian Women), this organization was a fusion of six women's associations: Rukun Putri Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Young Women), Persatuan Wanita Sedar (The Union of Alert Women), Istri Sedar (Conscious Women), Gerakan Wanita Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Movement), Wanita Madura (Madurese Women), and Perjuangan Putri Republik Indonesia (The Struggle of Young Indonesian Women). At an earlier stage in its history, Gerwis was not formally affiliated with PKI, although there was a strong indication that PKI made important contributions to the foundation of this organization. The name Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia: Indonesian Women's Movement) itself was used after its second congress on 1954, indicating the change of this organization into a "huge" mass group. Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 172-183.

support of marriage reform and participation in the National Front of West Irian. On the other hand, it differed in that it paid considerable attention to issues affecting women workers, demonstrated, for instance, in Gerwani's seriousness in campaigning for the legal rights of women workers in rural areas.<sup>74</sup>

Above all, Gerwani's Marxist philosophy often led to disharmony with other women's groups within Kowani, not only religious groups like 'Aisiyiah and Catholic Women, but also non-religious groups as well. The strongest opposition to Gerwani and its influence on Kowani, however, came from the religious groups, Muslim groups in particular. The most visible evidence of this tendency was manifested at the 1948 general meeting of Kowani. On this occasion, four Islamic women's associations; 'Aisiyiah, Muslimat Masyumi, Muslimat NU, and GPII found themselves in opposition to the other women's groups when they insisted that Kowani terminate its membership in the WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation) due to the Communist elements within the latter. At the time the request was unsuccessful because the congress came to decide that, the help of the WIDF, was key to Kowani's submission of a protest to United Nations concerning Dutch aggression.<sup>75</sup>

For 'Aisiyiah in particular, the growing political importance of the Communist group during the period of guided democracy led the organization to find often that its way was banned, or to use Baried's words, "all the time, a red light was given." With Gerwani especially, ideological conflict was unavoidable, although the confrontation was not always

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 178.

<sup>75</sup> At its 1950 meeting, however, Kowani announced its withdrawal from WIDF due to the decision of some Muslim women's groups to leave Kowani. Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 97; Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad*, 112.

centered on, or articulated along religious lines. The following description by Baried gives an idea of the situation:

Our Islamic religious principles simply do not coincide with Communist principles. For instance, they do not respect our central teaching, that there is one God. That is vital to us, our inspiration derives from that. I do not know exactly what Communism is, but I do know that they do not adhere to that principle. So there were many clashes between us. They were often very rude. They would spread gossip about us, for instance that 'Aisiyah was against government. For Gerwani the political goal was always more important than the means by which to reach it.<sup>76</sup>

Despite certain fundamental disagreements, 'Aisiyah tried to remain active in all of Kowani's activities, seeing the virtue of Kowani in maintaining the group's unity and harmony between its members. 'Aisiyah sent representatives to several major Kowani events and made its members serve as Kowani representatives at international forums. In its relations with other women's organizations, the management was handled by Seksi Urusan Keluar (Section of External Affairs), founded in 1958. With special emphasis on foreign affairs, the responsibility of this section ranged from welcoming international guests, attending overseas invitations, communicating with other women's organizations, nationally and internationally, and propagating 'Aisiyah through printed or electronic media. To be able to carry out such activities, therefore, one of the requirements of joining this section was to have mastered English or Arabic. In sum, 'Aisiyah went further in enhancing its image as a modern Islamic women's organization that actively participates in developing the new-founded country.

To conclude, 'Aisiyah and other women's organizations were clearly active participants in the struggle to achieve, defend and give meaning to Indonesian independence. However, a quite essential change occurred along the way. Before independence, their

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<sup>76</sup> Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender." 155.

common "enemies" were the colonial officials, but now their opponent was, to use Wieringa's words, "the male Indonesian politician."<sup>77</sup> In other words, as De Stuers suggests once independence was obtained and women's status gradually improved, men began to consider them as "competitors."<sup>78</sup> This can be seen in the "regressive policies" that followed in response to demands for a marriage law, or Act 19. Moreover, a boundary between the "male political field" and "female social needs" was created through the implicit exclusion of women from the political domain. This was described by Sukarno in *Sarinah*:

...harmony can only be achieved when both [men and women] have an equal position. But each of them has their own *keadrat* (nature). For whoever sins against the natural laws will eventually be demolished by Nature itself. Nature may be patient...but she cannot be conquered.<sup>79</sup>

As a result, the role of motherhood both within the family and in society, a prominent feature of the women's movement in the past, was given renewed impetus. For 'Aisyiyah, however, this was exactly what it wanted. Clearly, the reform and modernization that it sought for women was ultimately designed to create conditions favoring the "good mother" as implied by Baried:

Release housewives from being chained only to responsibilities and duties in the household. They can leave their home to do something, which is necessary to upgrade themselves to be more useful to settle their household,...conscious about their position and function as the saviors of the young generation, as the mother of society...<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 136.

<sup>78</sup> De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman*, 163-164, Susan MacFarland, *Women and Revolution*, 202.

<sup>79</sup> Sukarno, *Sarinah*, 15 as cited by Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 137.

<sup>80</sup> Wieringa, "The Politicization of Gender," 137

## CHAPTER THREE

### 'AISYIYAH IN THE NEW ORDER PERIOD: 1966-1998

In the previous chapter we saw how the failed communist coup of September 30, 1965 ultimately led to the demise of the Old Order regime. Following the coup itself, political instability and economic crisis dominated public life, leading to a series of protests and demonstrations expressing popular disappointment with the government's response to the attempted coup, and with Sukarno in particular. Led by KAMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia: The Indonesian Student's Action Front), many groups, including Indonesian women<sup>1</sup>, formed the action wings and participated in these demonstrations. The basic demand of the protest came to be known as TRITURA (*Tiga Tuntutan Rakyat*/Three People's Demands), and consisted of a call to ban the PKI (Communist party), to disband the *Dwikora* Cabinet and to reduce the prices of basic necessities. The growing wave of protests and demonstrations forced Sukarno to write a directive to Suharto,<sup>2</sup> widely known as SUPERSEMAR (Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret/Eleventh March's Instruction Note). It was on the basis of this letter that Suharto justified his decision to take control of the country, and even assume the office of president.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The women's groups who participated in the demonstration were united under KAWI (Kesatuan Aksi Wanita Indonesia/United Action of Indonesian Women). This group was formed on March 6, 1966, from a number of women who decided to assist the student demonstrations independently, without waiting for Kowani. Stephen A. Douglas, "Women in Indonesian Politics," in Sylvia A. Chipp and Justin J. Green, eds., *Asian Women in Transition* (London: The Pennsylvania State University, 1980), 172-3.

<sup>2</sup> It was widely believed that this directive consisted in Sukarno's instruction to Suharto—the commander of the Army's strategic reserve forces (Kostrad)—“to take all steps to reestablish domestic tranquility and to safeguard Sukarno's personal safety and authority.” Justus M. van der Kroef, *Indonesia after Sukarno* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971), 17; Ailsa Zainu'ddin, *A Short History of Indonesia* (Victoria: Cassel Australia, 1968), 272-275.

The PKI and all its affiliates were formally disbanded on March 12, 1966. Nevertheless, the attempted coup had been a traumatic experience for Indonesia, leaving a mark on its political, social, and cultural life. As a result, the PKI's image was forever afterwards tarnished in the minds of the people, lending support to the New Order policy of trying to "cleanse" the country of all elements of communism, making it almost a taboo subject.<sup>4</sup> One could even say that it was this communist tragedy which provided the justification for the New Order government's decision to apply a tighter political control over the nation, a characteristic feature of this regime.

## **I. Organizational Development of 'Aisyiyah**

### *A. Autonomous Status and Cadre Formation*

In the very same year that the New Order was established (1966), 'Aisyiyah received the decision concerning its autonomous status within the Muhammadiyah.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the 1951 decision, however, this renewed autonomous status placed 'Aisyiyah on the same level as other independent bodies within the Muhammadiyah—a status the organization has enjoyed until today. Besides giving 'Aisyiyah the right to manage its own programs, and its own budget, it also resulted in an organizational restructuring, whereby a series of hierarchical levels<sup>6</sup> were directly applied. In addition, this hierarchical structure was seen as an effective

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<sup>3</sup> The validity of SUPERSEMAR is continuously debated, and these debates have even increased after the fall of Suharto on May 1998. The debate resolves around whether or not this letter actually exists, since it provided justification for Suharto to take the power from Sukarno.

<sup>4</sup> This can be seen in many government regulations. For instance, one can never be accepted as government employee, or get access to any governmental post, if anyone of his/her family has, or was suspected to have, relations with communist groups.

<sup>5</sup> Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan 'Aisyiyah* (Yogyakarta: Seksi Penerbitan dan Publikasi Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, 1992), 44.

way for the organization to socialize its programs, even to the lowest grassroots level, and to monitor the development of the organization.

It seems that the autonomous status of 'Aisyiyah encouraged its leaders from the start to work seriously to develop the organization. This is evident from the 1974 'Aisyiyah general meeting, held in Ujung Pandang, where the organization decided to establish a unit to be responsible for recruiting and training cadres, which was to be called the Biro Kaderisasi.<sup>7</sup> Originally founded as a small unit within the organization, it was upgraded in 1985 to a section, called Bidang Pembinaan Kader (Section of Training of Cadres), thus forming as one of the six sections within 'Aisyiyah.<sup>8</sup> Among the programs sponsored by this section, and the one that got the most attention, was the training center for cadres, known as Pondok Hajjah Nuriyah Shabran. Operated in cooperation with various Muhammadiyah and other Islamic universities,<sup>9</sup> the target of the program was female university students, who were recruited and trained in several extra Islamic subjects in special classes, usually held in

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<sup>6</sup> Hierarchy here refers to the administrative ranks of the government, which—from highest to lowest—started with *nasional* (national), *propinsi* (provincial), *kabupaten* (district) and *kecamatan* (sub-district level). In concordance with this stratification 'Aisyiyah has its office both at the national and local levels; in provinces, districts and sub-districts. Usually there is only one branch at the province level, but there are a number of branches at the district and sub-district levels.

<sup>7</sup> Previously, the task relating the cadre was in the hand of the Biro Organisasi (Organization Unit). Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> In 1985, the other five sections, which were already established in 1930, were renamed as follows: 1) *Bagian Tabligh* (Islamic call); 2) *Bagian Pendidikan and Kebudayaan* (Education and Culture); 3) *Bagian PKU* (Center for Public Health); 4) *Bagian Pendidikan Paramedis* (Education of Paramedic); 5) *Bagian Ekonomi* (Economic).

<sup>9</sup> The training of the first group took place in 1986 in cooperation with one of the University of Muhammadiyah in Solo, Central Java. Although the program was open to the public, most of the participants were members of IMM (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah/Muhammadiyah's [University] Students Association). Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan*, 45. For more information on IMM see Farid Fathoni AF, *Kelahiran Yang Dipersoalkan: Sepenerempat Abad Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah* (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu, 1990).

the late evening.<sup>10</sup> It was obvious that this program was expected to produce cadres who were well prepared morally, academically, and organizationally.

*B. The Un-Dynamic Leadership's Succession and Kinship Cadre Formation: A Sign of Stagnancy?*

Yet, the cadres' greatest concern seems not to have been solving the problem of leadership. Even at this stage, and as had previously been the case, the 'Aisiyiah leadership was still dominated by "the old faces" from Kauman, who often stood for re-election several times. What was new during this period, however, was the awareness that this tendency was "a problem," and one that had to be solved. This can be seen, for instance, in the decision taken prior to the 1985 general meeting by Baroroh Baried, 'Aisiyiah's president, to resign, or at least refuse to become a candidate for the following election.<sup>11</sup> The only reason she offered was the fact that she had already headed the organization for twenty years, and this, according to her, hindered the process of regeneration.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the 1985 annual meeting of 'Aisiyiah resulted in the election of a new president, Elyda Djazman, to replace Baried. However, the same cycle of stagnation has begun once again to set in since, until recently, Djazman has continued to serve as president, while until 1995 Baried was regularly returned to the office of vice-president.

In fact, the above pattern—long leadership and the domination of people around the family and friends of "the founding father" within the organization—can also be found

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<sup>10</sup> The subjects taught ranged from courses in the Arabic language to organizational matters, especially those that applied to the Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyiah. The evening classes could be organized easily, because the students in this program lived in the dormitory.

<sup>11</sup> Surya Muda, *Kepemimpinan dan Wanita Dalam Muhammadiyah: Gagasan AR. Baswedan dan Tanggapan-tanggapan* (Yogyakarta: Surya Muda, 1985), 19 and 28.

in the Muhammadiyah. Bhaskara, for instance, has noted that both Dahlān and his direct successor Ibrāhīm, led the Muhammadiyah for ten years. Moreover, in the course of its history the organization has had only two non-Yogyakarta-based leaders; Mas Maṣṣūr (1937) from Surabaya, and Sutan Mansyur (1953) from Padang.<sup>13</sup>

One of the main reasons behind this phenomenon seems to be the fact that as a non-profit and broad-based organization whose concerns are mainly charitable, only those with strong psychological connection with 'Aisyiyah—such as the people around the founding father's family—would hardly refuse the responsibility to lead the organization.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, according to Marcoes, the cadre formation in 'Aisyiyah (and the Muhammadiyah as well) still relied primarily on family and kinship, which while it proved to be very effective, nevertheless weakened the organization due to the resulting lack of open management and criticism.<sup>15</sup> This also caused difficulties at the operational level due to the fact that the relationships developed within the organization depended more on kinship ties than on professionalism.<sup>16</sup> The following quotation comes from Lina,<sup>17</sup> an 'Aisyiyah activist, which suggests such a situation:

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. She was elected as the president of 'Aisyiyah for five successive terms: 1965-1968, 1968-1971, 1971-1974, 1974-1978, and 1978-1985. Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 126.

<sup>13</sup> Harry Bhaskara, "Muhammadiyah Faces The Future," in Rusli Karim, ed., *Muhammadiyah Dalam Kritik Dan Komentar* (Jakarta: Penerbit Rajawali, 1986), 150-151.

<sup>14</sup> Baried, for instance, has said that there were many members who refused to be elected as leader, or at least to the board, of both the Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah. Surya Muda, *Kepemimpinan dan Wanita*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Lies Marcoes, "Antara Amal dan Tuntutan Professional di 'Aisyiyah" in Mayling Oey Gardiner, Mildred L.E. Wagemann, Evelyn Seleeman, and Sulastri, eds., *Perempuan Indonesia: Dulu dan Kini* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1996), 160-161.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

For me personally, my activities in 'Aisiyah are part of doing my duty to my parents, since they made sacrifices to build organization. Actually, the only reward is the chance to do charity work. I only think of my responsibility to continue to work for my parent's goal. From the point of view of modern organizational management, this type of cadre formation may not be good, but I think kinship is one of the reasons 'Aisiyah continue to survives as an organization.<sup>18</sup>

Marcoes goes even further, arguing that the lack of professionalism in the management of 'Aisiyah's activities was also caused by the motives of its members. As a religious organization, 'Aisiyah always encouraged its members to base their efforts on the hope of finding favor with God, and not for any other compensation.<sup>19</sup> For this reason, 'Aisiyah could not expect its members to devote themselves to any activity for its own sake.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, new members who joined the organization, and who came to manage its activities, were more often motivated by strong desire to find a means of pleasing and worshipping God. The situation as it existed therefore hardly led to professionalism in management, which in turn contributed to the sluggish development of some of the programs.

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<sup>17</sup> Lina was born to a family of Muhammadiyah activists. Her father was a founder of the Muhammadiyah branch in a village in Sumedang, West Java. In support of her husband, her mother, Masnah, she oversaw the foundation of 'Aisiyah's kindergarten, health service and religious class at that village. It was Lina who continued the work of her mother. She headed the 'Aisiyah's kindergarten which was located behind her house, while at the same time she teaching in a Muhammadiyah high school in Sumedang. Ibid, 150-151.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 160-161.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

### *C. The Autonomous Status of 'Aisyiyah : A Dilemma*

The 1985 meeting also raised another important issue. At the 1978 meeting it had been decided that there were to be no female members on the Muhammadiyah's board.<sup>21</sup> In other words, there was an explicit, clear-cut division where the Muhammadiyah was to be for men, and 'Aisyiyah for women. This "division" was reinforced as a result of the autonomous status of 'Aisyiyah which made it more independent, even though 'Aisyiyah remained a part of the Muhammadiyah, and had to respect the wishes of its parent body. This latter phenomenon, coupled with the absence of representatives of 'Aisyiyah on the Muhammadiyah board, gave the impression that 'Aisyiyah simply acted on the orders of the parent organization.<sup>22</sup> Bearing this in mind, prior to 1985 meeting, AR. Baswedan, a prominent Muhammadiyah figure, asked the organization to allow 'Aisyiyah members to serve on the central leadership board. He argued that a step such as this was a way to revitalize the organization, which was starting to be seen as unprogressive and stagnant, even by its own members.<sup>23</sup> Baswedan stated further that the presence of 'Aisyiyah representatives in the Muhammadiyah would not only be emblematic of gender equality in Islam, but would also erase the gender bias which seemed to define the roles of the Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah, in the sense that the latter's role was limited to "peripheral" social activities, while the former was responsible for much bigger issues.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 3. The critics of the stagnancy or "walking on the spot" of the Muhammadiyah continue until the present time. See for instance, M Fadhilah Zaidie, "Tajdid Muhammadiyah: Sang Pembaharu yang Jalan di Tempat," *TIRAS*, July 13, 1991; Mochtar Naim, Muhammadiyah Telah Berhenti Jadi Gerakan Tajdid," in Usman Yatim and Al Misar Hamid, eds., *Muhammadiyah Dalam Sorotan* (Jakarta: Bina Rena Pariwisata, 1993), 225.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 5, 16, 22.

The above situation was a sign that 'Aisiyiah, though having functioned as an organization for more than fifty years, was by the middle of the New Order period being confronted with several internal problems, such as cadre development and organizational renewal. At this point its dynamism as an organization, widely considered to be among the most modern in outlook, began to be questioned. In addition, the issue of 'Aisiyiah's position within the Muhammadiyah, as seen in Baswedan's case, underscored the implicit dilemma facing this organization. Indeed, 'Aisiyiah was only one of several independent organizations within the Muhammadiyah.<sup>25</sup> However, the fact that it specifically represented the women members of the organization, coupled with its absence from the Muhammadiyah's central board, had reinforced 'Aisiyiah's image as a separate organization, or as an "independent" Muslim women's organization. In this position, 'Aisiyiah was often faced with questions that demanded more freedom of movement compared to other autonomous groups within Muhammadiyah. Such a position has raised a dilemma in the minds of 'Aisiyiah leaders: that of whether to become more involved within the Muhammadiyah or to be totally independent in its decision-making and actions.

## II. Aisiyiah Activities under the New Order

We saw in previous chapters that 'Aisiyiah's existence was always closely bound to the socio-political context. In other words, like other women's organizations, 'Aisiyiah's

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<sup>25</sup> Besides 'Aisiyiah, there are several other autonomous organizations within Muhammadiyah such as: 1) Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah [University] Student's Association); 2) Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah [High School] Student's Association); 3) Pemuda Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Youth Association); 4) Nasviatul 'Aisiyiah; 5). Tapak Suci (Muhammadiyah Karate Association); and 6) Ikatan Guru Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Teacher's Association). Musthafa Kamal, Chusnan Yusuf and Rosyad Sholeh, eds., *Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Persatuan, 1988), 129-133; Yusuf Abdullah Puar, *Perjuangan dan Pengabdian Muhammadiyah* (Jakarta: Pustaka Antara, 1989), 120.

concerns and activities were seen as a barometer of change. Djazman's statement that "Aisyiyah tries always to give a critical response to changes of situation, showing its basic character as a reform movement"<sup>26</sup> tends to assume that 'Aisyiyah played a very active role in social change. However, at this point the question that should be raised is whether it was 'Aisyiyah that had more of an impact on the situation or whether it was more the case that the socio-political context which affected 'Aisyiyah's development. This question is particularly important considering the fact that in the New Order period, the latter situation appears to have been the rule.

*A. The New Order's Policy on the Women's Movement: A Contradictory Attitude*

The women's movement in the New Order period received greater government support and attention, while at the same time—as was the case with other mass organizations—it also became subject to stricter government control or "close scrutiny." Such a contradictory attitude can be traced back to the political platform of the New Order, where it was clearly stated there that the main agenda of the government was to restore the economic well-being of the country.<sup>27</sup> In order to achieve this goal, the government began to promote what it called *Pembangunan Nasional* (National Development). Development was tied almost exclusively to economic progress, with the ultimate goal of making Indonesia part of the "global economic network and industrialization."<sup>28</sup> One of the main policies introduced to ensure the achievement of this goal consisted in attracting foreign investment,

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<sup>26</sup> Suara 'Aisyiyah, 8 (1998), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin "Role Expectation and Aspiration of Indonesian Women: Socio-Religious Analysis," unpublished, paper presented in The International Conference on Women in Indonesian Society: Access, Empowerment and Opportunity, Jakarta 1-4 December 1997, 13.

but this in turn meant that the government had to ensure national stability.<sup>29</sup> In other words, development and national stability emerged at the forefront of government discourse under the New Order.

In light of this, government support for women increased, especially in the area of development. In 1973, for instance, the Minister of Internal Affairs issued a statement that “whereas in the past the development of the nation had been virtually the sole responsibility of the state, the time had come for all Indonesians to accept that responsibility and become a part of the process.”<sup>30</sup> Women were to be no exception. Meanwhile, the government tried to exert greater control over society in the name of national stability. To achieve this the New Order started in the 1970s to centralize power, simplify political parties and strengthen its control over mass organizations, including women’s groups.<sup>31</sup>

The issue of women and development gained further justification with the participation of Indonesia in the United Nation’s First Conference on Women, which took place in Mexico in 1975. This conference led the New Order government to officially adopt the idea of *Women in Development* (WID) that resulted from the conference.<sup>32</sup> In Indonesia,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Norma Sullivan, “Gender and Politics in Indonesia,” in Maila Stevens, ed., *Why Gender Matters in Southeast Asian Politics* (Clayton: Center of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 62.

<sup>31</sup> Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Investigating Paths to Resist the Patriarchal System*, (Clayton: Center of Southeast Asian Studies Monash University, 1996), 9; Julia Suryakusuma, “State and Sexuality In New Order Indonesia,” in Laurie J. Sears, ed., *Fantasiizing The Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 95.

<sup>32</sup> One of the more important points, that resulted from this conference, was the significance of the issue of women in development, particularly with special reference to the Third World. This idea was developed from the belief that most of the policies in development programs in fact do not always have positive implications for women. Rather, it often results in various negative implications, especially for poor rural women. Based on this assumption, the conference—which also launched the UN’s announcement of the Decade of Women—propagated the idea of

the adoption of the idea was manifested in the form of "constitutional recognition" of the social status of women, which stated in the 1978 GBHN (*Garis-garis Besar Haluan Negara/ The Principle Outlines of State Policy*)<sup>33</sup> that women have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as men to participate fully in development.<sup>34</sup> The Junior Ministry of Women's Affairs (Menteri Muda Urusan Peranan Wanita) was formed in the same year and given the responsibility of raising the profile of women in development.<sup>35</sup> One of the most important programs carried out by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the early years of its existence consisted in developing cooperation with other departments.<sup>36</sup> This cooperation was manifested in the establishment of a unit in each of those departments called the *Seksi Peningkatan Peranan Wanita* (Section for Improving the Participation of Women) which was usually responsible for designing and managing certain special programs in individual departments aimed exclusively at women.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the commitment of the government to include women was also demonstrated by the promulgation of a new Marriage Law on January 2, 1974. Although

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development showing a higher level of concern for women, usually called Women In Development (WID). Mayling Oey Gardiner and Sulastri, "Kesenambungan, Perubahan Dan Perempuan Dalam Dunia Laki-Laki" in *Perempuan Indonesian*, 4-5; Sita van Bemmelen, "Jender dan Pembangunan: Apakah yang Baru?" in T.O. Ihromi, ed. *Kajian Wanita Dalam Pembangunan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1995), 188-9; Yulfiti Rahardjo, "Perbedaan Antar Studi Wanita Dalam Pembangunan Dan Studi Wanita" in *Kajian Wanita*, 1-5.

<sup>33</sup> Justine Doom-McCormak, "Organizing Women in Indonesia: The Language of Women's Organization, 1909-1930 and 1990-1996," M. A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1998, 80-82.

<sup>34</sup> Sukanti Suryocondhro, "Timbulnya dan Perkembangan Gerakan Wanita di Indonesia" in *Perempuan Indonesia*, 62.

<sup>35</sup> In 1983, the status of Junior Minister was changed to full Minister. Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> There were 14 departments that developed their cooperation with the Ministry of Women Affairs. Suryocondro, Ibid.; Rahardjo, *Perbedaan Antar Study*, 10.

polygamy was still justified, some provisions of the bill were expected to guarantee a better position for women.<sup>38</sup> The fact that this new law applied to all Indonesians, regardless of their origin or beliefs, could also be seen as a response to the call by women's organizations for a unification of the marriage law. Indeed, considering the long battle over marriage law reform,<sup>39</sup> as well as the political controversy that surrounded this promulgation,<sup>40</sup> this new law was a great victory for women's groups.

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<sup>37</sup> The Department of Industry, for example, set up a program that provided training for women to enable them to manage various home-industries ranging from food production to garments. Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Substantive changes to this bill, which was seen as in favor of women, were stated in the articles concerning polygamy, divorce and registration of marriage. In polygamy for instances, articles 3,4, and 5 determined that the proposal of polygamy should be submitted to the court with the enclosed approval letter of the first wife as a prerequisite. Similarly, unlike the previous condition where there was almost no limitation for husbands to grant divorce, the new marriage law advocated that legally a divorce would be accepted only if it is performed before the court. *The Indonesian Marriage Law* (Jakarta: Marriage Counseling Bureau, 1988), 10-11, 21.

<sup>39</sup> As mentioned in an earlier part of this thesis, ever since the first women's congress the pressure for changing the marriage law remained as an important part of the agenda of women's movement. In the post-independence period (1945-1973), this pressure in fact did stimulate various groups, including government departments, to draft several proposals of reforms. None of these proposals, however, ever succeeded in being passed, due to conflicting interests in the society, especially between Muslim and Christian groups. Nevertheless, some "patchwork reforms" were born as a result of the pressure. Among the most important were: 1) Law No.22/1946 which obliged Muslims to register their marriages, divorce and reconciliation; 2) Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 15/1955 declaring the standardization of *ta'liq talaaq*; 3) several judicial reforms in *adat* law concerning the position of women, for example, that all Supreme Court decisions on all *adat* law should grant the widow the right to sufficient support from her former husband, her right to share the marriage property apart from the sufficient support, and rights to inherit a share of the above property. June S. Katz and Ronald S. Katz, "The New Indonesian Marriage Law: A Mirror of Indonesia's Political, Cultural, and Legal System," *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 23 (1975): 658-659.

<sup>40</sup> The proposal for the bill was brought to the House of Representatives on July 31, 1973. While four other parties in the parliament were in favor of the proposal, the Union Faction Party (PPP), as the Islamic representative, was the only group which showed any opposition. Following this a number of young Muslims held huge demonstrations, including the two-hour seizure of the House of Representatives. The disagreement of the PPP was based on the reason that some articles were not in line with Islamic law. Some political considerations, however, were behind this objection. Among others was the fact that the Ministry of Religious Affairs was excluded from drafting the proposal. Finally, consensus with the Union Faction was reached after the President promised to delete all the non-Islamic articles from the bill. Katz and Katz, *The Indonesian Marriage Law*, 660-663;

The promulgation of the new law also removed a source of conflict between 'Aisiyiah and other women's organizations, especially since 'Aisiyiah did not express any reservations over its implementation. What made this possible was the fact that no attempt had been made in the new law to outlaw polygamy. This law gave an impetus behind a new tendency in 'Aisiyiah, namely, a stronger resemblance with other women's organizations. More evidence in support of this assumption is discussed below.

*B. Dharma Wanita and PKK: A Sign of Government Apostasy*

The strong control exercised by the New Order over the women's movement, as mentioned above, was demonstrated in diverse ways. The first step taken involved giving funding to Kowani, which resulted in greater government involvement in and control over this organization.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the role played by Kowani under the previous regime, and more importantly, the taint of Gerwani and its communist ideas within the organization, were matters of concern to the government. For this reason, the latter tried to establish what it called a "non-political women's movement." The foundation of Dharma Wanita, a government-sponsored women's organization, was directly in line with this policy. Formed on August 5, 1974, Dharma Wanita served as an important vehicle for the government in involving women in national development.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, Dharma Wanita functioned as an umbrella organization, or replacement,<sup>43</sup> for the many associations of wives of civil servant

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Muhammad Kamal Hasan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to New Order Modernization in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982), 146-147.

<sup>41</sup> Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1978), 278-279.

that had been formed at an earlier period. Membership in Dharma Wanita was made compulsory for the wives of civil servants and female civil servants alike. Its organizational structure was, moreover, hierarchical, where a woman's position in the organization was determined by her husband's position in the service; thus, the wife of a minister automatically became the head of Dharma Wanita in that department, the wives of governors heads of Dharma Wanita at that level, and so on.<sup>44</sup> In Suryakusuma's words, "The wife's educational background, organizational skill, and political inclination are of no consequence; only the husband's position counts."<sup>45</sup> Underlying this organization, which according to Suryakusuma was a similar one for American military wives, were two tendencies. Firstly, Dharma Wanita retained the pattern of the domination of the elite class within the women's movement. Secondly, Dharma Wanita reflected the fact that civil servants were a potent political force and source of authority in the New Order, besides the army. It was civil servants and their wives who were expected to become the controlling link between government and people, a backbone of national policy and models of loyalty towards the state.

The establishment of Dharma Wanita was followed by the foundation of the PKK (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/Family Welfare Movement), another government-sponsored organization which—unlike Dharma Wanita which operated at the elite level or "official circle"—functioned at the grassroots level, and targeted both urban and rural

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<sup>43</sup> In the earlier years of its establishment, there were 19 associations of wives of the civil servants from various departments, which were all united in Dharma Wanita. Kowani, *Sejarah Setengah Abad*, 281; Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Julia I. Suryakusuma, "State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia," in *Fantasiizing The Feminine*, 99; Rebecca Jane Chapman, *The Significance of Family Planning for Women in Indonesia* (Clayton: Center of Southeast Asian Studies Monash University, 1996), 19.

<sup>45</sup> Suryakusuma, *Ibid.*

society throughout the archipelago. The PKK was set up by the Department of Internal Affairs, based on the Presidential Decree No 28, 1980, as a "grassroots women's organization" aimed at helping the government by improving and creating a social order in accordance with the *Pancasila*.<sup>46</sup> As an organization with such a broad scope, therefore, the PKK was closely in touch with the demands of rural communities, and involved directly in efforts at improving their welfare. This was reflected in its activities, which ranged from reducing illiteracy among rural women, to providing training in the various skills involved in women's domestic duties, and enabling them in the process to supplement their family's income.<sup>47</sup> Officially, the PKK's program had to comply with the ten main themes that were already set up by government.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, all of these ten points referred to ideal living conditions, such as clothing, childcare, shelter, nutrition, and hygiene which lay beyond the capacity of most Indonesian families, especially those in rural areas, who became the main target of the PKK.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the PKK was similar to the Dharma Wanita in operating

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<sup>46</sup> Chapman, *Ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> The programs of Dharma Wanita and the PKK basically underlined the fact that the mobilization of women in the development process of the New Order Indonesia was designed to raise their social and economic condition. On a practical level, however, the emphasis was given to the economic aspect, in which the idea of increasing women's income became a main target. It was not surprising, therefore, to see that the idea, which was usually called as "economic empowerment" for women, was adopted not only by Dharma Wanita and PKK, but also by other women's organizations. Philip J. Eldridge, *Non-government Organizations and Democratic Participation in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), 153.

<sup>48</sup> These ten points are: 1) Comprehension of Pancasila (*Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*); 2). Mutual Help (*Gotong Royong*); 3) Food (*Pangan*); 4) Clothing (*Sandang*); 5) Housing and Household Management (*Perumahan dan Tata Laksana Rumah Tangga*); 6) Education and Skills (*Pendidikan dan Keterampilan*); 7) Health (*Kesehatan*); 8) Developing Cooperation (*Pengembangan Kehidupan Berkoperasi*); 9) Preserving the emotional and physical security and tranquil environment of the home (*Kelastarian Lingkungan Hidup*); 10) Developing family attitudes appropriate to the modernization process and future planning (*Perencanaan Sehat*). Mutawali, *Peranan Wanita Dalam Pembangunan Desa* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1987), 117, as cited in Chapman, *The Significance*. 21; Sullivan, "Gender and Politics," 68.

<sup>49</sup> Sullivan, "Gender and Politics," 70-71.

with a hierarchical organizational structure; therefore, the wife of the village head would automatically determine the priorities in that community.

As government-sponsored organizations, PKK and Dharma Wanita could hardly deny the political and ideological mission embedded in their programs. Both groups were not only a principle means for the government to include women in development, but also a medium for the government to disseminate its concept of the ideal role of women (role expectation), which could subsequently determine the position of women in the whole political process. Evidence of this argument can be seen, for instance, in the so-called *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Five Responsibilities of Women) which were promoted by the PKK and Dharma Wanita, namely:<sup>50</sup>

1. As loyal backstop and supporter of her family
2. As caretaker of the household
3. As producer of future generations
4. As the family's prime socializer
5. As Indonesian citizen

Many writers have argued that the above concept of *Panca Dharma Wanita* carried a strong overtone of motherhood, or in Suryakusuma's words "State Ibuism,"<sup>51</sup> emphasizing the domestic role of women, as well as their role as the critical agent of the family.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, this concept is seen as deriving from the state ideology of the New Order,

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<sup>50</sup> Sullivan, *Ibid*, 64; Chapman, *The Significance*, 20; Surya Kusuma, "State and Sexuality," 101; Saraswati Sunindyo, "Murder, Gender, And The Media" in *Fantasizing the Feminine*, 124.

<sup>51</sup> Ibuism comes from the word "*Ibu*" means mother. It refers to *Panca Dharma Wanita* in Suryakusuma's use. The term *Ibuism* was also used by Madelon Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis who stated that in the New Order society the role of mother (*Ibu*) was not limited to taking care of the children. Rather, the New Order ideology gives them responsibility to hold the task of building the national state. Suryakusuma, *State and Sexuality*, 101; Madelon Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, "Ibuism And priyayization: Path To Power?," in Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Anke Niehof, eds., *Indonesian Women In Focus: Past And Present Notion*, (Dordrecht: Foris Publication, 1987), 45-46.

<sup>52</sup> Sullivan, "Gender and Politics, 64-5; Chapman, *The Significance*, 18; Suryakusuma, *State and Sexuality*, 100-1; Dzuhayatin, "Role Expectation And Aspiration," 14-15.

which held up the family as the key indicator of the success of development and modernization. As Suzanne Brenner states "...the Suharto's regime tried to create an image of a stable, harmonious, prosperous society built on a foundation of moral, apolitical, middle class families." She says further "The New Order family, like the government party Golkar, was portrayed not as a political entity but as functional unit, a part of national whole, that was entrusted with guarding the security, morality, and well being of its members and of the nation at large."<sup>53</sup>

Since family played such an important role in this ideology, women were vital to its success. They were expected by the state to be responsible for guarding the moral, indigenous culture and national tradition through the family. The government felt it necessary to maintain the traditional role of women, since this would yield the desired result. The traditional role here, however—as appears to have been the case in the previous period—is broadly interpreted, meaning a woman's role as a mother (or wife) not only in the family, but also in the society. This was demonstrated in the area of social activism, which increasingly became the province of women's organizations, thanks to support of the government. The latter saw social work as the ideal role of women—if not their only role—in bringing about development.

*C. 'Aisyiyah Programs in Comparison: Islamization of Development and Justification for Government Programs.*

Fasting during Ramadan creates pious people, the kind of people who are needed in the "Take-Off" era of development, in the era of globalization, approaching the twenty-first century. For that reason, we must think rationally about how we begin our life after this month of fasting. (*Suara 'Aisyiyah*, February, 1995)

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<sup>53</sup> Suzanne Brenner, "On the Public Intimacy of the New Order: Images of Women in The Popular Indonesian Print Media," *Indonesia* 67 (April 1999): 14-15.

The above passage, taken from the 'Aisyiyah's official journal, is but one articulation of how in this phase 'Aisyiyah tried hard to prove its credentials as a women's organization, which like others, contributed enthusiastically to the process of national development. Considering the political context of the time, which was marked by governmental involvement in and control over women's organizations under the slogan of development, 'Aisyiyah towed the government line in order to be socially and politically acceptable.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see how 'Aisyiyah's activities during this period were carefully designed to contribute to national development. As far as regards the various social and charitable activities that were already in operation, such as educational institutions, orphanages and health centers, 'Aisyiyah's efforts were directed toward satisfying government expectations more than anything else. Indeed, most of those activities were funded independently by 'Aisyiyah with only meager financial aid from the government.<sup>54</sup>

Above all else the issue of women in development was taken much more seriously by 'Aisyiyah. Having said this, it cannot be denied that the PKK and Dharma Wanita—both of them government creations—served as models, or references, for other women's organizations, including 'Aisyiyah. This can be seen for instance in the several new programs and activities designed by 'Aisyiyah during this period. Among others was the program, known as *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* (Guidance for Rural Women) which was launched at the organization's 1978 meeting. According to Baried the ultimate objective of the program was to provide information and training to rural women, which in turn would make them more aware of their duties as Muslims, to understand their rights and

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responsibilities in the family and society, and to equip themselves with various skills that would enable them to support the family.<sup>55</sup> The decision to make rural women the main targets of the program, coupled with other aspects, such as an emphasis on family values and economic empowerment for women gave this program a close resemblance to similar projects organized by the PKK.

By selecting five villages as a pilot project,<sup>56</sup> the program could be seen as a first step for 'Aisyiyah toward developing cooperation with overseas foundations, especially as it was financially supported by the Path-Finder Fund.<sup>57</sup> This resulted in the organization being seen increasingly as an NGO, a category of organization which likewise makes a considerable contribution to the country's social and economic development.

In its further development, *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* was supported and completed by other programs. In 1984, for instance, 'Aisyiyah announced a new program called as *Qoriyah Thoyibah* (Prosperous Village). Its focus on rural development meant that the program functioned as sort of augmentation of *Pembinaan Wanita Desa*. Instead of focusing only on

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<sup>54</sup> For example, out of about 3,000 'Aisyiyah kindergarten schools throughout the archipelago, only ten percent receive financial support from the government. McCormack, "Organizing Women in Indonesia," 82.

<sup>55</sup> Baroroh Baried, "Islam and the Modernization of Indonesian Women," in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique, eds., *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), 152; Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan and Perkembangan*, 52.

<sup>56</sup> The selected areas were Bogor, Tangerang, Bantul, Sleman and Sidoarjo. In each location ten QRG (Qur'anic Reading Group) were selected as implementers groups. Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, 44.

<sup>57</sup> Besides Path-Finder, there were some other 'Aisyiyah activities which were funded by several overseas foundations such as: 1) NOVIB which gave funds for the foundation of the building of 'Aisyiyah Nurses School in 1972-1975; 2) OEF (Overseas Education Fund), which provided the opportunity for 'Aisyiyah to send its delegates to receive management training in the US during 1972-1975; 3) UNICEF, which in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affair, funded the 1988 program developed by 'Aisyiyah and known as KIKHA (*Kesehatan Ibu and Kelangsungan Hidup Anak/ Health Service for Mother and Children*). Ibid, 89-91.

rural women, however, the objective of *Qoriyah Thayibah* was the under-developed village, with all its natural and human resources. As its name suggested, the idea behind the program was an expression of 'Aisiyiah's wish to participate in the process of achieving the ultimate goal of national development, namely, to create a healthy and prosperous society. The program involved developing a carefully selected village<sup>58</sup> in order to help it pursue a better quality of life in various aspects, particularly in education, health and family economics.<sup>59</sup> The activities covered by this program ranged from providing scholarships, to granting credit for home industries; indeed the 'Aisiyiah members active in this program were expected to invite the villagers to participate actively and contribute to the whole process of the program.<sup>60</sup> The program was first implemented in 1989 by selecting a small village in Bantul, Yogyakarta; currently there are seven other provinces that manage such a village.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, the importance of the family in the New Order's ideology led 'Aisiyiah to develop further the family aspect of the *Pembinaan Wanita Desa*, through a program called *Keluarga Sakinah* (Happy Family)<sup>62</sup> which was first established at the organization's 1985 meeting. Having as its goal the development of the five ideal aspects in a family's life (religion, education, health, and economic and social relationships within and between

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<sup>58</sup> The selected village itself was named *Desa Binaan* (The Developed village)

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 66; Marcoes, "Antara Amal dan Tuntutan Professional 'Aisiyiah" in *Perempuan Indonesia*, 162.

<sup>60</sup> Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisiyiah, *Sidang Tawar 'Aisiyiah II Periode 1990-1995* (Yogyakarta: Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisiyiah, 1994), 26

<sup>61</sup> During the 1990-1995 period, it was expected that each 'Aisiyiah branch at a district level would focus on developing at least one village. Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *Keluarga Sakinah* is defined as "a family which able to provide love and affection to all of its members, enabling them to possess the feeling of safety, harmony, peace, and happiness, and to pursue well-being in this world and hereafter." Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisiyiah, *Indikator Keluarga Sakinah* (Yogyakarta: Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisiyiah, 1993), 5.

families), *Keluarga Sakinah* was very much similar to the *Pembinaan Wanita Desa*. It differed, however, in the fact that while the latter was focused on rural society, the former was created with the urban population in mind, with particular emphasis on the middle class family. At the same time, the main focus of the project—which according to Kuntowijoyo constituted a response to the issue of the family crisis occurring in Indonesia's cities—was not on physical development, but rather on the furtherance of moral and religious values with the principle aim of preserving the institution of the family. It was not surprising therefore, that the project manual—entitled *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah* (Guidance to Create a Happy Family)—included a number of points that applied especially to middle class urban families. For instance, in dealing with the issue of child education, the manual advises parents to train their children from an early age to sleep in separate rooms, where an alarm clock, a personal calendar and a large chest of drawers should be placed.<sup>63</sup> Parents are also advised in its pages to provide private tutors for their children to help them with their studies, and to encourage their children to have extra activities after school.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, with respect to the economic situation of the family, it is obvious that the guidance in the manual was directed at families with a stable economic status. Take for instance the suggestion that in order to manage a family budget, housewife should place her monthly budget in different envelopes, so that each of them would be spent only on specific expenses ranging from food and school tuition to various unpredictable expenses.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisyiyah, *Tuntunan menuju Keluarga Sakinah* (Yogyakarta: Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, 1994), 42.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 60-63.

Over the years, 'Aisyiyah's involvement in government programs has expanded. For instance, during the period 1985-1988 'Aisyiyah took part in Kowani's program aimed at preserving the environment. The organization also expressed its concerns over the issue of women workers by taking the practical step of founding the *Balai Latihan Kerja Wanita* (Job Training Center for Women), designed to produce skilled women to fill job openings, and to reduce the numbers of unemployed.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, when the issue of legal protection for exported women workers became a subject of debate, and led many women's organization to force government to pay more serious attention to the issue, 'Aisyiyah took a step further by visiting Saudi Arabia to observe at first hand the conditions of those working there.<sup>67</sup>

It should be noted however, that the decision to participate in socializing the government's programs has not prevented 'Aisyiyah from carrying on the mission of Islamic preaching, or from maintaining its character as a Muslim organization. This can be seen in the strong emphasis on "Islamic morality" that 'Aisyiyah tries to inject in most of its activities, such as *Pembinaan Wanita Desa*. The dissemination of the religious message in this program was easily accomplished because the program was implemented through the 'Aisyiyah Qur'anic Reading Group (QRG), which included five main subjects in its curriculum.<sup>68</sup> With such an objective and approach to its implementation, those who

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<sup>66</sup> 'Aisyiyah's concern over the issue of unemployment was also shown by its placement of graduates of its Nurses Academy in Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah clinics all over Indonesia, ensuring that all of them got a job after graduation. Through this program, the organization assisted the government in reducing unemployment. Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Laporan Kebijakan Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah* (Yogyakarta: Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, 1990), 30; Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sidang Tahunan 'Aisyiyah I Periode 1990-1995* (Yogyakarta: Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, 1992), 30-32.

<sup>67</sup> Eighty percent of the exported Indonesian female workers went to Saudi Arabia, while the rest were scattered in several Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Korea. The visit itself was in 1993, with the permission of the Minister of Employment. Pusat Pimpinan 'Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan*, 91; Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah, *Sidang Tahunan*, 17.

participated in the program had no doubt that it was designed by and for Muslim women. This impression becomes clearer when one looks at the manual of the program.<sup>69</sup> In dealing with the issue of creating the *keluarga sejahtera* (happy family) for instance, the focus of discussion in the manual is on such themes as how to cultivate Islamic values in the family, how to create an ideal wife-husband relationship from the Islamic perspective, and how to develop a harmonious neighborhood or other social environment.

In some cases, however, the Islamic element inserted by 'Aisyiyah in its programs has led the organization to present a different perspective from that of the government on certain issues. The family planning program represents one such tendency. It is widely known that among other aspects, of government's family planning program has as its guideline restricting parents having to only two children.<sup>70</sup> 'Aisyiyah's family planning propaganda, by contrast, does not refer to any limitation on the number of children due to "the fear of not getting a share of God's blessing."<sup>71</sup> Rather, the objective of this program

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<sup>68</sup> The six subjects reflecting these objectives were: 1) The true belief in one God; 2) Disseminating Islamic teaching based on the Qur'an and Hadith; 3) Health education; 4) Nutrition; 5) Family planning; 6) Home economics with the stress on job training for income-generating activities. With this curriculum, the intermediate performance objectives of the first year of implementation of this program (1979) were: a) Train 30 'Aisyiyah leader to implement the program; b) Select 50 QRGs to participate in the program; c) Attract a minimum of 2,000 women (50 groups of 40 members each) of childbearing age to participate in the program with emphasis on women between ages of 20-35; d) Maintain a family planning discontinuation rate less than 5 percent; e) Encourage at least 55 percent of non-users to accept family planning by the end of the program year; f) Reach at least 10,000 'Aisyiyah members with family planning information in the Islamic context through the work of the Qur'an teachers trained program. Baried, *Islam and The Modernization*, 152.

<sup>69</sup> The manual itself was entitled *Keluarga Sejahtera* (Well-being Family), which was printed by the organization to be distributed to each QRG. It may also be due to the religious emphasis of the program which led 'Aisyiyah to transfer the program from the management of economics section over to the *tabligh* section.

<sup>70</sup> The restriction to having a limited number of children, aimed to decrease the growth of the population, was actually applied to all citizens. However, among other groups, civil servants were the group most affected by this regulation. For instance, their medical care plan—which was provided by government—covered only up to the third child.

was directed more towards improving the physical and spiritual well-being of one's children, which in turn would produce "a worthy person in the eyes of the God."<sup>72</sup> In keeping with this philosophy, 'Aisyiyah does not permit permanent contraception methods, like tubectomies and vasectomies, and has even applied certain limitations on the use of IUDs.<sup>73</sup> The differences from government policy, however, are not regarded as essential in nature, in the sense that they are not overly stressed, so as not to place 'Aisyiyah in direct opposition to the government.

The above activities make it clear that 'Aisyiyah was for the most part forced to conform to the New Order government's agenda. Compared to Dharma Wanita, PKK, or even Kowani, 'Aisyiyah may have been more independent in its activities in terms of government financial support. Yet, given the tightly controlled political situation 'Aisyiyah had little choice but to follow and adopt the New Order's ideology and policies in pursuing its own activities, particularly in the area of development. And this has made 'Aisyiyah much more similar to other women's organizations. Furthermore, strong government control obliged obligated 'Aisyiyah—even while expressing its distinctive message as a Muslim organization—to justify the government programs. Family Planning, *Pembinaan Wanita Desa*, and *Qoriyah Thayyibah* all illustrate to varying degrees how 'Aisyiyah tried paint the government's programs as conforming to Islamic teaching. There is no doubt, moreover,

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<sup>71</sup> 'Aisyiyah's view was representative of the decision of the Majlis Tarjih (Legal Council of the Muhammadiyah) which stated that limiting the number of children is *haram* since Islam encourages Muslims to have many offspring. To support this argument Majlis Tarjih quoted Q:11:6 "There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on God: He knoweth the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit: all is in a clear record." Marcoes, *Antara Amal dan Tuntutan*, 151. Fathurrahman Djamil, *Metode Ijtihad Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Jakarta: Logos, 1995), 81-82.

<sup>72</sup> Marcoes, *Antara Amal dan Tuntutan*, 151; Djamil, *Metode Ijtihad*, 83.

that this complicity was of huge benefit to the government, since it translated and socialized government policies for the Indonesian Muslim audience.

#### D. *The Birth of Indonesian Feminism: Another Challenge for 'Aisyiyah'?*

The *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women* (NFSL) policy, which was ratified in 1985 by all UN members, including Indonesia, and which raised the issue of equality, development and peace, was probably one of the main factors behind the birth of a new phenomenon in the women's movement in Indonesia.<sup>74</sup> The establishment of several women's NGOs,<sup>75</sup> which has resulted in an "alternative" or "counter discourse" <sup>76</sup>for

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<sup>73</sup> Baried, *Islam and The Modernization*, 151. The most important limitation in using an IUD according to the Majelis Tarjih was the requirement that it should be implanted by a female doctor. Djamil, *Ijtihad Majelis Tarjih*, 91.

<sup>74</sup> This amendment formed a part of the Women's Decade of the United Nations, and the development of the idea of Women in Development (WID). Endah Triwijati, "LSM Perempuan Transformatif: Gerakan Alternatif Pemberdayaan Perempuan," in *Perempuan Indonesia: Dulu dan Kini*, 355-356.

<sup>75</sup> Among the more well-known newly founded women's NGOs were:

1). Kalyanamitra: Founded in Jakarta on 1984, this group is quite vocal on the gender issues, as the reason for its establishment was the concern of its founders over gender inequality in society. Instead of action programs, Kalyanamitra -- which has strong links to students and lecturers in the University of Indonesia-- focuses more on research and publication, which enables women to share information. Its concern with gender inequality has led this organization to raise such issues as gender-based divisions, or violence against women both at home and in the workplace. Eldridge, *Non Government Organizations*, 161-162; Triwijati, *LSM Perempuan Transformatif*, 362-363

2) Yayasan Anisa Swasti (widely known by its abbreviation Yasanti)

This group was formed by six young women in 1982 in Yogyakarta, with the aim creating an alternative to the PKK. Yasanti's strategy was to educate women, especially women textile workers around Yogyakarta, by giving them skills training which would enable women to identify and solve their problems at the workplace. Another important program of this group involved conducting a legal education class undertaken in co-operation with Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute. Through this class, women workers were educated to be aware of their rights, i.e. to demand overtime payment, be able to read job contracts or achieve higher wages. Eldridge, *Non Government Organization*, 160, Istiadah, *Muslim Women In Contemporary Indonesia*, 10.

3) Yayasan Solidaritas Perempuan (Foundation of Solidarity for Women).

This NGO was founded on December 10, 1990 by four women whose expertise was in law and politics. Due to the seniority of its founders, this organization was basically expected to be an umbrella organization for other women's NGOs, and to serve as a pressure group on the government. Concerned above all with the gender-gap, this organization aggressively struggled to

existing women's organizations, is a prominent feature of this new phenomenon. Despite their different goals and targets, it is clear that these new organizations had at least one thing in common, namely, the desire to abolish the patriarchal system. One obvious drawback to this system, according to these newer groups, is the gender-based division of society, whereby women are limited in role to the domestic sphere, while men dominate the public sphere. Since this system is socially and culturally constructed, the organizations demanded that it be reviewed and even dismantled, in order to create an atmosphere which guarantees gender equality, putting an end to the domestication of women. With this perspective in view and by referring to the NFSL, these new organizations—often referred to as feminist groups—began to criticize the idea of *Women in Development* that had served as a reference for the New Order government in setting up its policy on women. One particular criticism voiced by these organizations was that *Women in Development*, which had always linked the role of women to their position within the family, had failed to erase the existing gender divisions in society.<sup>77</sup> More importantly, they saw the New Order government's ideology, which emphasized family values and the traditional role of women, merely as an extension of the domestication of women. Furthermore, that ideology was seen as totally patriarchal, gender-biased and even repressive of women. This latter perspective led to the view that the new women's movement was actually a reaction against the New Order, and that their common goal was to "search for a way to challenge" it.<sup>78</sup>

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make women aware of their rights, especially economic and reproductive rights. At a practical level, like Yasanti, this group pays a great deal of attention on women's workers, in particular, the domestic workers and the exported women workers. Triwijati, *LSM Perempuan Transformatif*, 368-369.

<sup>76</sup> For details see McCormack, "Organizing Women in Indonesia," 95-103.

<sup>77</sup> Triwijati, *LSM Perempuan Transformatif*, 356.

Voicing this strong message of gender equality, the new organizations offered a novel and critical perspective on the dominant issues facing women. On the issue of women's participation in development, for instance, McCormack tells us that one of these new organizations argued that instead of the PKK, Dharma Wanita, or other women's organizations involved in social causes, those who should be given credit for contributing more to development were women laborers who were "working for low wages under poor conditions" in support of industrialization.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, while Dharma Wanita and the government promoted the idea of *peran ganda* (double role), whereby women were supposed to lead an existence in which domestic and public life were in constant harmony,<sup>80</sup> the new women's NGOs condemned *peran ganda* as simply imposing a double burden on women. Besides, according to these NGOs, the government's idea of a double role, in the sense that it provided an opportunity for women to participate in development at the national level, seemed to suit only the elite or at least middle class women whose careers were seen merely as supplemental to their husband's income. In other words, the government's definition of the double role had little to do with the "double role" played by poor women in rural areas, where life was more a matter of survival rather than improving standards of living.

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<sup>78</sup> Soendari, "Potret pergerakan Perempuan Indonesia: Berjuang Melawan Kediktatoran Orde Baru" as cited by Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> McCormack, "Organizing Women in Indonesia," 99.

<sup>80</sup> The idea of the dual role for women emerged in women's discourse at the beginning of 1980, when the process of modernization and industrialization began to take off. The demand for greater industrialization had led the government to invite women — who in general already had greater opportunity to pursue high education — to participate in the various sectors of the industrialization process. This invitation opened the chance for women to get involved in public life and to be active in production. However, the ideology of the state whose concern was very much focused on the domestic role of women was still maintained. As a result, there was a new expectation from the state that the ideal woman is one who is able to keep the balance between her domestic and public life, between her reproductive and productive function and between being a mother or wife and a *wanita karir* (career woman). McCormack, "Organizing Women in Indonesia," 87-89;

The criticisms expressed by the newly-founded groups extended even to the use of the term *wanita* (women). Meaning "mature woman," *wanita* is a Javanese word which in the past was seen as a contraction of *wani di tata* (being ready to be controlled).<sup>81</sup> Beginning with Sukarno's period and until Suharto's time this word was widely used by government, women's organizations, and society as a whole. Considering its inferior and pejorative meaning, the use of this word was criticized by the new groups as implying the subordination of women. Instead of *wanita*, these groups promoted the use of the idiom *perempuan* (female), which was regarded as more liberating for women and free of gender bias.

Besides the government, the newly-founded groups also criticized existing women's organizations, including 'Aisyiyah, and their activists. According to the feminist groups, the activities of most women's organization, for whom the emphasis was mostly on education, social activities, and health services, simply perpetuated the gender gap. In other words, social welfare activities were perceived as an extension of the domestic role imposed on women. Wardah Hafidz, for instance, has stated that most of the programs undertaken by Indonesian women's organizations, including Muslim ones, were clearly intended to perpetuate the traditional role of women.<sup>82</sup> She also states that after the women's movement had accomplished its goals, i.e., the promulgation of the marriage law of 1974, an egalitarian

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Triwijati, *LSM Perempuan Transformatif*, 356; Chapman, *The Significance*, 18; Dzuhayatin, "Role Expectation and Aspiration," 16.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 4; McCormack, "Organizing Women in Indonesia," 97.

<sup>82</sup> Wardah Hafidz, "Organisasi Wanita Islam dan Arah Pengembangannya," in Lies Marcoes and J.H. Meuleman, eds., *Wanita Islam Indonesia Dalam Kajian Tekstual Dan Kontekstual*, (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), 137.

constitution and equal opportunities in education, it lost its momentum and its significance.<sup>83</sup> Some of the organizations even felt that they have already accomplished their tasks, while most of the rest were trapped in romanticism, merely remembering and maintaining what they had already achieved.<sup>84</sup> The strong control of the New Order government worsened the situation because it discouraged any critical and innovative attitude on the part of those women's organizations.<sup>85</sup> Dealing specifically with 'Aisyiyah, Lies Marcos offers a similar criticism. She argues that despite several exceptions, the division of tasks between 'Aisyiyah and the Muhammadiyah mirrored the polarization of duties in the family, which is totally subject to gender bias.<sup>86</sup> The mother is for instance supposed to deal with the domestic sphere; educating and taking care of the children, all of which is embodied in 'Aisyiyah's activities of providing education and health for society. The father, on the other hand is seen as responsible for the public domain; he is the breadwinner, and performs other "male" tasks, as manifested in the Muhammadiyah's programs which revolve around politics, organizational policy and relations with the government.<sup>87</sup>

What is noteworthy, therefore, is the fact that the feminist groups have brought a new perspective to bear on women's organizations in Indonesia. They have questioned and challenged the dominant concept of the ideal role of women embodied in the women's organizations offered by the New Order government. We see then, that activities like

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<sup>83</sup> Wardah Hafidz, "Gerakan Perempuan Dulu, Sekarang, dan Sumbangannya kepada Transformasi Bangsa," in Fauzie Ridjla, Lusi Margiyani, and Agus Fahri Husein, eds., *Dinamika Gerakan Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1993), 96.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Marcos, *Antara Amal dan Tuntutan*, 162.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

education and social welfare, which had previously been considered as the ideal fields of activity for women's organizations, have come to be viewed as reinforcing gender bias.

It is not the concern of this thesis to pass judgment on whether or not this new paradigm has succeeded. It suffices here to say that it is an ongoing process, which still colors the discourse of the women's movement, even after the fall of the New Order. Given this context, 'Aisyiyah, as a part of the women's movement, must be influenced by this paradigm. Moreover, since the organization is Islamic in character, it can be expected to contribute its Islamic perspective to this new discourse.

In short, 'Aisyiyah has constantly made an effort to maintain, and even develop its programs. It is also true, however, that the organization has increasingly been affected by the given political context. Thus the more the New Order government strove to include women in its development programs, the more 'Aisyiyah and other organization have been forced to contribute to the state and society. Nevertheless, the strong control exercised by the New Order had deeply influenced the actions of the organization. This can be seen from the expression by 'Aisyiyah of its desire "to contribute to development" as an answer to the New Order's expectations, which put the theme of development at the forefront of their political platform.

Furthermore, while its relationship with other women's organizations seems no longer to be a problem for 'Aisyiyah, this period has witnessed the emergence of several internal problems. The cadre formation process, and the attendant question of its regeneration and dynamism, as well as its status with respect to the Muhammadiyah have proven to be among the organization's most fundamental challenges. In addition to these internal issues, the gender issue, which has begun to draw the attention and concern of the Indonesian women's movement may be regarded as an external challenge facing 'Aisyiyah.

While such problems are to be expected due to the age of 'Aisyiyah, they need to be addressed for the sake of further development of the organization. In other words, these issues seem to serve as an indicator of whether or not 'Aisyiyah, as a Muslim women's organization, will be able to respond and adjust to the rapid social and cultural transformation that Indonesia is presently facing.

## Conclusion

'Aisyiyah, from its birth to its later development, was deeply involved in the socio-political and historical evolution of Indonesian society, which in turn colored the structure, ideology, and activities of the organization. As may be seen from the above discussion, the very birth of the organization was itself the product of a certain historical context, namely, the rise of Indonesian nationalism in the early twentieth century. It was this trend that gave birth to the Indonesian women's movement, of which 'Aisyiyah formed a part. So when Budi Utomo—the pioneer nationalist group—founded its women's section Putri Mardika, other organizations, including the Muhammadiyah, were inspired to take the same step. This last point is also significant in that, since its establishment, 'Aisyiyah has always worked alongside other women's groups, and has often shared the same struggles, concerns, and activities with them. This was true to the extent that 'Aisyiyah began to identify more with the women's movement than with the Muhammadiyah, its parent body.

However, right from the start 'Aisyiyah differed from most other women's groups, not only because it was Muslim in identity, but also because of its representation of lower and middle-class interests. The latter characteristic is especially notable since most other women's organizations dealt only with a few elite, educated people and pursued activities which did not impact upon the grassroots level of society. Moreover, the distinctness of 'Aisyiyah, due especially to its Islamic ideology, was reflected in many other respects, causing the organization often to present different perspectives or stands on different issues. For example, just like other women's groups active in the first half of the twentieth century, the main goal of 'Aisyiyah in its early days was to reform cultural values which were thought to oppress women. Yet, while many of the other groups looked to Western models for

guidance, 'Aisyiyah sought its justification in Islamic teachings. This position was demonstrated in the idea behind calling the group 'Aisyiyah in the first place. Named after 'Ā 'ishah, the Prophet's wife, it reflected the organization's view that the traditional role of a wife in the Javanese family needed to be replaced by the Islamic concept, according to which the wife should play an active role in the family's decision-making process, just as 'Ā 'ishah did. For Muslim women in particular, 'Aisyiyah's influence had brought about a change in the manner of their religious participation. Praying in mosques, receiving religious training, and even wearing a veil were all signs of a new consciousness on the part of Muslim women that they could publicly participate in religious observances, something that they had never experienced before.

Returning to our discussion of the influence of the socio-historical context on the development of this organization, we can see that, as it was born during the early nationalist period, 'Aisyiyah at first made national independence the main theme of its activities. During the first two decades of its existence, the organization actively participated in building networks and uniting Indonesian women's organizations in support of the liberation effort. One result of this was the holding of the first Kongres Wanita Indonesia, which established the foundations of the Indonesian women's movement. During the Old Order era, on the other hand, we noticed that the idea of developing the newborn country became the main focus of 'Aisyiyah's activities. The concentration shifted to social development: more schools were founded, more health centers were built, and more programs were begun. Nevertheless, in maintaining its distinct identity as a Muslim organization, 'Aisyiyah often found it hard to get along with other women's groups. The 'Aisyiyah's position in the debate on polygamy and the marriage bill during the period between the first women's congress and the end of the Old Order is but one illustration of the problem. The issue of communism

under Sukarno's government provides another example of strained relations between 'Aisyiyah and its peers such as Gerwani and Kowani.

The strong political and historical influence on 'Aisyiyah's development was also expressed in its readiness to cooperate with the government in power. While this has led the organization to be elastic and adaptive, it has also made 'Aisyiyah more pragmatic and opportunistic. It has helped 'Aisyiyah survive in spite of shifts in the Indonesian political climate, although it has also led to the unprogressive and sluggish development of the organization. This can be seen in the performance of 'Aisyiyah during the New Order period. The tight control of the New Order government over social organizations, including women's groups, forced 'Aisyiyah to give full support to the idea of national development which was aggressively promoted by the New Order regime. One could even say that 'Aisyiyah provided justification for the government's national development policies, and seldom, if ever, opposed these. The political situation has also led 'Aisyiyah to take the activities of Dharma Wanita and PKK as models for their own initiatives. As a result, the organization produces few original or truly reformist concepts, especially when compared to the new-founded women's NGOs, which are more concerned with the contemporary and practical issues facing Indonesian women. In other words, 'Aisyiyah in its debut tended to reflect the priorities of the reformist Muhammadiyah, both culturally and religiously, but it has moved gradually ever since towards the status quo.

We may conclude then by stating that there is an apparent cleavage within 'Aisyiyah between idea (*ajaran*) and practice (*amal*). In practical terms, 'Aisyiyah no doubt contributes greatly to the causes of Indonesian women generally and those of Muslim Indonesian women in particular. The establishment of numerous educational institutions, mosques, health centers, and orphanages shows that the organization is concerned with the problems

faced by Indonesian society as a whole. In terms of ideas and concepts, however, it is difficult to say that 'Aisyiyah is reformist. Its defense of polygamy during the pre-independence period, and furthermore its rejection of the marriage bill under the Old Order regime represented a conservative approach, in the sense that it did not show any awareness of the cause of liberating women. This is not to mention an unprofessional national board of 'Aisyiyah, in which tenure is based on a kinship system still affiliated to the Kauman family, and the absence of 'Aisyiyah representation on the Muhammadiyah's national board.

The lack of a progressive or reformist attitude on the part of the organization can also be partly attributed to its dependency on the Muhammadiyah. As a part of this organization, 'Aisyiyah cannot disregard the policies already set up by its parent body, which has often led to sluggishness on the part of 'Aisyiyah in responding to certain issues or solving problems. In other words, if 'Aisyiyah were given greater independence or a position equal to that of the Muhammadiyah, a new degree of progressiveness could be reached.

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