

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines a significant but inadequately investigated theme: the Aisyiyah, the female section of the Muhammadiyah<sup>1</sup> movement during 1966-2001. This study will analyse the role and contribution of Aisyiyah in terms of its impact on Indonesian Muslim women in the period. This thesis analyses the social involvement of Aisyiyah during the period within the context of the Indonesian women's movement, and its response to issues concerning women's equality in Indonesia. The key questions this study specifically proposes to address are:

1. What part did Aisyiyah play in the Indonesian women's movement during the period 1966-2001?
2. How did it approach women's issues in Indonesia during the period 1966-2001?
3. What impact did the different governmental policies regarding the women's movement in Indonesia have on Aisyiyah?

The time frame chosen here is a critical period in the process of socio-political change in Indonesia. Three different presidents, Soeharto, Baharudin Joesoep Habiebie and Abdurrahman Wahid, who with their different policies on the issue of

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammadiyah is an Indonesian Muslim modernist organisation founded in 1920 by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. The Muhammadiyah, influenced by the ideas of the Egyptian reformer Muhammad Abduh, aimed to promote the study of Islam and to establish modern educational institutions, mosques, orphanages, publish books and hold public meetings to discuss religious issues. Muhammadiyah thus became known by the Indonesian Muslim community as the pioneer of the Islamic resurgence in Indonesia.

women's rights and the women's movement led Indonesia during the period, had a significant impact on Aisyiyah's development and activities.

In this thesis, I argue that as a Muslim women's organisation, Aisyiyah had a great potential to actively participate in improving the position of women in Indonesia and in challenging the patriarchal system that had become entrenched over the centuries. However, as the socio-political situation has changed from the authoritarian New Order state 1966-1998 to a democratic Reformation Era, from Habiebie's government 1998 until Wahid's presidency 1999-2001, I will put the case that the priorities of Aisyiyah's activities and developments during the period underwent significant change.

Under Soeharto Aisyiyah was forced to design its activities to be in line with government policy in order to be socially and politically acceptable. Once Soeharto stepped down, however, Aisyiyah's participation in the Indonesian women's movement extended to a broader context as political and press liberty became the main agenda for the reformation. Thus, while Aisyiyah's programs may have mirrored government programs as they did during Soeharto's authoritarian regime, Aisyiyah took up the running later in making several strong recommendations to the government regarding women's issues and national problems during the crisis.

Besides the importance of the period as one of transition, this study is worth doing because Muslim women's groups still suffer from a lack of attention, and Aisyiyah, the oldest and possibly broadest-based Muslim women's organisation, is no exception to this rule. Limited attention has been given by scholars who study the Indonesian women's movement to Aisyiyah's activities that emerged during the

period, especially after Soeharto stepped down. The organisation, moreover, is usually treated in the scholarship as a mere adjunct to the Muhammadiyah, and not as an organisation in its own right.

Although during the last forty years there has been growing scholarly interest in Indonesian women's organisations in general, little attention has been paid to Muslim women's movements. As early as 1960, Cora Vreeda-De Stuers looked at the position of women in Indonesian traditional society and the growth of the Indonesian women's movement both in colonial and post-colonial periods.<sup>2</sup> Another study was done in the 1980s by Sukanti Suryochondro, in which she analysed Indonesian women's organisations both as social movements and a set of formal groupings, which grew from one period to another in connection with social development.<sup>3</sup> Some more recent studies can also be cited, such as Saskia Weiringa's dissertation, which examines Gerwani, a women's organisation which was closely affiliated to the Communist party. Instead of limiting the discussion to Gerwani, however, Weiringa provides a historical examination of the Indonesian women's movement, particularly during the pre-independence period.<sup>4</sup>

Another recent study conducted by N. Rifa'i deals with the political participation of Indonesian Muslim women since the colonial period and into the

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<sup>2</sup> C. V. De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievement*, Gravenhage, Mouton, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> S. Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia*, C.V. Rajawali, Jakarta, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> S. Wieringa, *The politicization of gender relations in Indonesia: The Indonesian women's movement and Gerwani until the New Order state*, PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1995.

New Order era.<sup>5</sup> However, this study focuses almost predominantly on the political career of a potential Muslim woman politician, Aisyah Amini. J. Suryakusuma's study<sup>6</sup> canvasses the New Order policy in constructing the image of women in Indonesia. She draws attention to the ways the state, during the Soeharto period, manipulated the concept of women as wives and mothers. J. D. McCormack<sup>7</sup> examines criticism in the media of women's organisations in Indonesia, covering two periods, 1909-1930 and 1990-1996, and compares the language of the Indonesian women's organisation discourses between the periods 1909-1930 and 1990-1996. Another study on women in Indonesia, by B. Baried,<sup>8</sup> discusses the history of the rise of national consciousness and the women's movement in Indonesia including the Muslim women's movement. However, her treatment of the Muslim's women organisation is narrow and relates to its participation in the Indonesian nationalist movement in the early independence period. R. J. Chapman<sup>9</sup> analyses the family planning program (*Keluarga Berencana*) and its impact on Indonesian women's activities in general.

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<sup>5</sup> N. Rifa'i, *Muslim women in Indonesia's politics: A historical examination of the political career of Aisyah Amini*, M.A. thesis, McGill University, Canada, 1993.

<sup>6</sup> J. Suryakusuma, *State ibuism: The social construction of womanhood in the Indonesian New Order*, M.A. thesis, Institute of Social Study of the Hague, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> J. D. McCormack, *Organising women in Indonesia: The language of women's organisations 1909-1930 and 1990-1996*, M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> B. Baried, 'Islam and the modernization of Indonesian women', in *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, eds T. Abdullah and S. Siddique, Singapore, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> R. J. Chapman, *The Significance of Family Planning for Women in Indonesia*, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies Monash University, Clayton, 1996.

Other recent studies which can be cited here are by Istiadah,<sup>10</sup> D. Muchtar<sup>11</sup> and K. Robinson and S. Bassel.<sup>12</sup> Istiadah looks at the struggle of Muslim women to improve their position and to eradicate the patriarchal system in Indonesia. However, Aisyiyah's participation in the Indonesian women's movement is only mentioned in passing. Although D. Muchtar investigates the rise of the Indonesian women's movement in the New Order state, she neither examines Aisyiyah in particular nor even the Muslim women's group in general. K. Robinson and Bassel's study consists of a collection of papers on gender, equity and development in Indonesia; none of the papers, however, dealt with the Aisyiyah movement during the period in question. Another book, edited by M. O. Gardiner and C. Bianpoen, includes an article on Aisyiyah, but only provides brief profiles of several Aisyiyah members.<sup>13</sup> The absence of literature on Aisyiyah during the New Order and Reformation Era onward was thus the impetus for this study.

In short, from a historical point of view, Aisyiyah does not figure substantially in any account of the Indonesian women's movement. Perhaps, this owes something to the tendency of most Indonesian women's organisations to be affiliated to larger male institutions, be they political parties, professional organisations, student groups,

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<sup>10</sup> Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Investigating Paths to Resist the Patriarchal System*, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Clayton, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> D. Muchtar, *The rise of the Indonesian women's movement in the New Order state*, M.A. thesis, Murdoch University, Western Australia, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> K. Robinson and S. Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity and Development*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> M. O. Gardiner and C. Bianpoen (eds), *Indonesian Women: The Journey Continues*, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2000.

or even government institutions. This is even more true of Muslim women's organisations like Aisyiyah, with its affiliation to Muhammadiyah. The result is that it is commonly assumed that Muslim women's associations especially are merely complements of their parent bodies. It can easily be missed that they may have played an independent and important role in improving the lot of women in Indonesia.

This study approaches the institutional development of Aisyiyah by using the normal techniques and methods of historical analysis. The focus is on reviewing the activities of this organisation, and analysing the social involvement of the group, especially in women's issues, from 1966 to 2001. An account of the political context will be included in order to show how this affected the development of the organisation. A comparative approach will also be used in exploring the similarities and differences between Aisyiyah and other women's organisations in Indonesia throughout the period covered. In this way, I try to show how Aisyiyah has grown as an organisation and the extent to which it was involved in the Indonesian women's movement as a whole. Such an approach also encompasses Aisyiyah's relation with other women's groups, which will assist in pinpointing its distinctive identity as a Muslim women's organisation.

The primary sources of this study are the official documents of the organisation, i.e., the reports of its annual meetings (*muktamar*), the journal of the organisation, its pamphlets, and interviews with the main figures of the organisation. This study also consults the available secondary sources in Indonesian and English on Aisyiyah, and Muhammadiyah. These, however, are very limited, since only a few studies on Aisyiyah have been published in Indonesian, and almost none in English.

This thesis itself is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One gives an account of the history of the women's movement in Indonesia and the background of the birth of Aisyiyah, firstly examining the main precursor of the feminist movement in Indonesia, Kartini. It also discusses the rise of Indonesian nationalism which led to the formation of women's organisations in Indonesia, including the Aisyiyah organisation. This chapter also describes the emergence of Islamic modernism in Indonesia which has been most closely connected to the birth of Aisyiyah. It also outlines the development and activities of Aisyiyah in the first thirty years after its establishment.

Chapter Two focuses on the organisational development of Aisyiyah and its activities under Soeharto's New Order of 1966-1998. This chapter starts by analysing the socio-political context in Indonesia in which the Communist Party was disbanded and the New Order government began to apply a tighter political control over the nation. It also discusses the policy of the New Order government regarding the women's movement in Indonesia. The chapter then discusses the effect of the New Order policy on Aisyiyah activities. It looks at how the tight control of the New Order regime forced Aisyiyah not only to design its activities in accordance with government programs, but also to provide organisational activities and programs which seem to be in total accord with government programs. This chapter also deals with some internal problems faced by the Aisyiyah organisation. Special reference is made to the issue of cadre formation, and the dilemma of its autonomous status which seems to underline the undynamic and unprogressive character of Aisyiyah.

Chapter Three focuses on the organisational development and activities of Aisyiyah during Habibie's government, 1998-1999. The first part of this chapter deals with the socio-political situation in which Soeharto's regime fell and Baharuddin Joesop Habibie became the Indonesian president. This period is known in Indonesia as the Reformation Era. This chapter focuses on Habibie's policy toward women, known as the policy of *Wanita Pilar Bangsa*, and looks at the impact of this policy on Aisyiyah's development and activities. Matters to be examined include organisational consolidation, organisation structure, cadre development, publicity, cooperation with other organisations and responses to several women's issues in Indonesia, including the issues of a woman becoming President of Indonesia.

Chapter Four outlines the organisational development of Aisyiyah and its activities under Abdurahman Wahid's government, 1999-2001. This chapter starts by analysing the socio-political situation in Indonesia when Wahid became the president, beating the female presidential candidate, Megawati Soekarno Putri, in the process. Aisyiyah's response to a number of issues, such as women's participation in politics, women's education, and women's health, are examined.

Finally, in drawing together the various strands of the discussion, the thesis ends by weighing up the significance of Aisyiyah both within the context of Muslim organisation and the advance of women within Indonesian society. Like all theses, this is not the last word on the subject. But it will, I hope, fill some gaps. Ultimately, what I have tried to do is to bridge the distance between the Indonesian women's movement on one hand and Aisyiyah as a Muslim women's group on the other.



# CHAPTER I

## AISYIYAH AND THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA

This chapter provides an overview of my analysis of the rise and shape of the Indonesian women's movement which led to the establishment of Aisyiyah. My point of departure is to look at the contribution and career of Kartini, the leading precursor of the women's movement in Indonesia, and to discuss the context of Indonesian nationalism, a context which arguably led to the formation of women's organisations, including Aisyiyah. A pertinent factor in the origin of Aisyiyah was Islamic Modernism, which I will also address here.

### **A. Kartini and the Women's Movement**

The history of the Indonesian women's movement is closely connected with the national independence movement of Indonesia. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, in many parts of Indonesia were found outstanding women who stood up for the rights of their people. Their main concern was to help their men in undertaking resistance against the Dutch. Cut Nyak Dien and Cut Meutia were two such women leaders in Aceh, Northern Sumatra. In Java, Roro Gusik assisted her husband Untung Surapati in an uprising, Martha Tiahahu assisted the Pattimura revolt in Maluku and Emmy Saelan was active in Wolter Mangunsidi's uprising in South Sulawesi.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. Weiringa, *Women's Struggle and Strategies*, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1988, p. 71.

In fact, however, it was not until after the death of Kartini in 1904 that the Indonesian women's movement began to take shape. Kartini's high-standing ideals seemed to have a propensity to reach the upper layers of Indonesian society. According to Vreede-De Stuers, she is generally looked upon as one of the founders of the feminist movement in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

Kartini, who was to be declared a National Independence Hero in 1964 and whose birthday is still celebrated as a national holiday in Indonesia, was born in 1879 in the polygynous household of the regent of Jepara, a district on Java's North Coast. Her mother was chronologically the first wife, but socially secondary to the *Garwa Padmi*, or official first wife.<sup>3</sup> Her father was a progressive man who allowed his daughters to go to the European primary school until age twelve, which was exceptional for the period. Kartini's great ambition was to study in the Netherlands, but her father refused her this opportunity. She, however, had a window open to the West through J.H. Abendanon<sup>4</sup>, a Dutch

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<sup>2</sup> C.V. De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements*, Mouton & CO Gravenhage, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1960, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> S. Weiringa, *The politicization of gender relations in Indonesia: The Indonesian women's movement and Gerwani until the New Order State*, PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1995, p. 57.

<sup>4</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 "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 ambition, they advised and supported Kartini's plan to continue her studies in order to convince 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. The Abendanon couple, however, undoubtedly gave much support to Kartini's family as a whole. After the death of Kartini, Mrs. Abendanon maintained a correspondence with Kartini's

Liberal (who as colonial Director of Education, tried to promote female education) and Ms Ovink-Soer, a Dutch socialist and feminist (the wife of a colonial official), who taught Kartini and exposed her to radical currents of Dutch thought. Moreover, according to Kumari Jayawardena, Kartini corresponded with the editor of a socialist women's magazine, *De Hollandsche Lelie*, and with a penfriend in Holland, Stella Zeehandelaar, who was also a socialist and feminist.<sup>5</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>6</sup> 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 with several Dutch friends,<sup>7</sup>

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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>5</sup> K. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, Zed Books Ltd, London, 1986, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> The close association of the Kartini family with European culture began with Kartini's grandfather, Pangeran Ario Condronegoro. As the *bupati* (regent) of Kudus (northern part of central Java) and in contrast to other Javanese aristocrats, Condronegoro was aware of the importance of European education for his male children. He invited a Dutch tutor, C.E. van Kestern (who later became the editor of the influential journal *De Indische Gids*), to provide such an education. Later on one of Condronegoro's sons, Raden Mas Adipati Ario Condronegoro (Kartini's uncle) replaced him as the Regent of Kudus. 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 education issues. A description of Kartini's family background was given in one of her letters to Stella Zeehandelaar dated May 22, 1899 (Kartini, *On Feminism and Nationalism: Kartini's Letters to Stella Zeehandelaar 1899-1903*, trans. J. Cote, Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Before Kartini began her monumental correspondence with Mrs. Abendanon and Stella Zeehandelaar, 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 organisations interested in Indonesian issues, such as *De Echo* and *Netherlandsche Taal*. Kartini began actively to contribute to these journals by writing articles and letters on women's and Javanese issues.

including Mrs. Abendanon, she won support for her ambitions to ameliorate the social position of Javanese women in particular, and the lives of Indonesians in general.<sup>8</sup>

Kartini was constrained by the usual restriction of high Javanese society, which made her all the more enthusiastic in advocating women's rights and condemning the prevalent practices of polygamy, female seclusion and forced marriage. In spite of these criticisms, Kartini herself in 1903 was married to the Regent of Rembang, who already had some secondary wives by whom he had several children. He was, however, progressive in outlook, encouraging Kartini in setting up a school.

As Kartini herself was denied further education because she was female, this led her to the conviction that education was an essential liberating force for Indonesian women. In 1901 she wrote to Nellie van Kol, wife of one of the founders of the Dutch Socialist Party: "It would be a blessing for Indonesian society if the women received a good education".<sup>9</sup> Kartini thus had in her mind a vision of education for women, not merely as an end in itself, but as a basis for

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Kartini's feminist views and interests developed further in her correspondence with Stella Zeehandelaar, a regular contributor to the *De Hollandsche Lelie* journal. With the help of her letters, Kartini became acquainted with another Dutch feminist author, Nellie van Kol, whose 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 Cote 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. J. Cote, Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1992, pp. xii-xv.)

<sup>8</sup> According to Cote, Kartini's letters to Stella Zeehandelaar had four major themes: rejection of aristocratic or Javanese courtly culture, rejection of colonialism, reclaiming of what may be termed "popular Javanese culture", and demand for access to progressive western intellectual culture and science. See also S. Suryochondro, *Potret Pergerakan Wanita di Indonesia*, Penerbit Rajawali, Jakarta, 1984, pp. 72-74.

<sup>9</sup> C.V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

achieving some economic freedom which would in turn lead to their independence. However, she believed that education should serve not only personal escape but also social progress. Kartini was convinced that education was the most effective instrument for improving social conditions, and for obtaining true emancipation for women.

Kartini was an activist as well as a theorist. She tried to put her ideas into practice by going against conservative opinion and starting a school for the daughters of Javanese officials. Kartini set up a small women's school in her parents' home and in that of her husband. In one of her letters, she wrote: "we ought to strike as quickly as possible and place before the public as an accomplished fact a school for native girls".<sup>10</sup> According to Weiringa, Kartini's approach to education was based on three considerations: 1) she considered education for women to be one of the most important conditions for the elevation of her people, as educated mothers were supposed to be able to bring up their children better; 2) not only poor women, but women of the highest classes too should have opportunity of becoming independent wage-earners, and to take up jobs particularly suited to them, for instance as nurses, midwives and teachers and 3) as polygamy is degrading to women, it should be abolished.<sup>11</sup>

Following Kartini's death in 1904, the colonial administrator still showed little concern for women's education. Abendanon noted in one of his governmental reports that even as late as 1913 there was not a single

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<sup>10</sup> H. Geertz (ed.), *Letters of a Javanese Princess, Raden Adjeng Kartini*, Heinemann, Hongkong, 1976, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup> S. Weirenga 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

governmental school provided for native girls.<sup>12</sup> 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, who established her first school in Bandung in 1904, which she called *Keutamaan Istri* (woman's accomplishment). When she married in 1906, Dewi Sartika did not give up her work. She collaborated with her husband and succeeded in founding nine schools for girls, a remarkable number, representing 50 per cent of all girls' schools in West Java.<sup>13</sup> In short time, other *Keutamaan Istri* schools were established in several regencies in West Java such as Sumedang (1916), Cianjur (1916), Ciamis (1917), Tasikmalaya (1917), Kuningan (1922) and Sukabumi (1926).<sup>14</sup>

Although Kartini is known as a symbol of the women's emancipation movement in Indonesia, she was not the only Indonesian woman who spoke out against injustice early in the twentieth century. Nine<sup>15</sup> Indonesian women, according to Weiringa, were interviewed by a colonial government team inquiring into the declining welfare of the native populations of Java and Madura. The issues they identified as the most pressing for women were: (a) education (b)

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<sup>12</sup> C.V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>14</sup> S. Suryochondro, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> They are R.A. Sosrohadikoesomo (sister of Kartini), R.A. A. Soerio Soegianto (daughter of prince Gondo Sewojo; married to the son of Mangkoe Nagoro V, reigning prince of Solo), Dewi Kalsoem, R.A. Karlinah (daughter of prince Notodirodjo of Djokjakarta), R.A. Amirati (daughter of Paku Alam VII, reigning prince of Djokjakarta), R.A. Martini, Nj. Djarisah, R. Dewi Sartika (headmistress of the girls' school she founded in Bandung) and R.A. Siti Soendari (editor of *Wanita Sworo*).

marriage reforms, (c) combating prostitution, (d) a greater scope for women to appear in public, (e) sex education, (f) equal wages for equal work, (g) improvement in the economic position of peasants, and (h) training for peasant women.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that, inspired by Kartini's ideas, Indonesian women then mobilised to promote, publish and advance the cause of women. They took up women's social-culture issues, and organised themselves on a religious or regional basis and within the major political movement of the time. Thus, on this evidence, Kartini arguably was the pioneer of the Indonesian women's movement and accordingly in 1964 she was declared to be a National Hero of Liberation by the Indonesian government.

## **B. National Struggle and Women's Organisation**

Since the feminist movement erupted in North America and Western Europe during the 1960s and early 1970s, many women throughout the world have been campaigning, organising and working together to improve their lives. Their aims, methods and interests are diverse in the extreme. Nevertheless, they all share an underlying concern with improving the situation or furthering the interest of women, or a particular group of women.

Although the term 'feminism' is still debatable, most women who call themselves feminists would probably accept Alison Jaggar's 'working definition' which identifies feminism with the various social movements dedicated to ending

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<sup>16</sup> S. Weiringa, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

the subordination of women.<sup>17</sup> Many would also agree that feminist theories ultimately are tools designed for a purpose, the purpose of understanding women's subordination in order to end it. This does not mean, however, that there is a united feminist movement; on the contrary, feminists are profoundly divided, not only over political priorities, but also over goals.<sup>18</sup> Using Jaggar's definition above, I consider the Indonesian women's movement as a part of the feminist movement.

The early history of the Indonesian women's movement mostly related to the struggle of nationalism. In Indonesia, it was largely by way of educational efforts by women, and afterward, by way of the women's section of large parties and associations, that the women's movement became the basis for the rise of a national feeling of unity, of nationhood and in resistance to Dutch and Japanese colonialism. In many ways, the history of Indonesian women's movements was linked with that of the nationalist movement. Every nationalist party or organisation tried to establish its own women's wing, whether it was a nationalist, an Islamic, a socialist or a leftist group. In Weiringa's words: "the element of the emerging Indonesian women's movement was the desire for national emancipation".<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the stories of Kartini, Dewi Sartika and others, mentioned above, suggest that any improvement in the status of Indonesian women had to be

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<sup>17</sup> A. Jaggar (ed.), *Living with Contradiction: Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> V. Bryson, *Feminist Debates: Issues of Theory and Political Practice*, Macmillan, London, 1999, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> S. Weiringa, *op. cit.*, p. 73.



accomplished by means of individual efforts. It was soon realised, however, that to maximise the result, it was necessary to work together within an organisation. This strategy was first articulated by Kartini's three sisters (Rukmini, Kartinah and Soemantri) in a letter sent to several prominent social figures, including the leaders of Budi Utomo.<sup>20</sup> This letter subsequently appeared in the daily journal *De Locomotief* published in Semarang, Central Java, on 2 July 1908, bearing the signature of the *Tiga Saudari* (Three Sisters). It read: "...with the symbol of *Jawa Maju* (the progress of Java), let's organise ourselves within the organisation. We can publish our own magazine to improve our national values... who agree with this idea, let us know..."<sup>21</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 organisation, supported the cause of women's rights. With their support, the first formal women's organisation, Putri Mardika (Independent Woman), was set up in Jakarta in 1912. The aim of Putri Mardika was to grant financial help to intelligent girls so that they might begin or continue their studies.<sup>22</sup> It also advocated education for women and encouraged

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<sup>20</sup> Budi Utomo (Noble Aspiration) organisation had been founded in 1908 by Wahidin, a doctor; its members were intellectuals, physicians, law scholars and Indonesian civil servants. While its immediate objectives were chiefly educational and cultural, its program demanded absolute liberty of conscience and its ultimate aim (which, however was not openly acknowledged) was to obtain independence by means of a gradual political emancipation guaranteed by the colonial government. See, C.V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> S. Suryochondro, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

<sup>22</sup> According to *Poetri Mardika Magazine*, No. 5, August 1915, this association had succeeded in giving scholarships to two female students at HBS, one female student at Dutch Primary School, three female students at Bataviasche Kartini School and one female student at Partikelir School. See, S. Suryochondro, *ibid.*, p. 85.

women to appear in public to remove the feeling of “faint-heartedness” and to attempt to secure equality with men.<sup>23</sup> From 1913 this association published a weekly under its name, with the subtitle “*Surat Kabar Memperhatikan Pihak Perempuan Bumi Putra di Indonesia*” (a review fostering the interests of the Indonesian women). The titles of a few articles which appeared in the course of the following years more clearly indicate the type of problem with which the organisation was concerned.<sup>24</sup> Putri Mardika was a modern organisation equipped with an awareness of the possibilities of the print media as a means of propaganda. The campaign of Putri Mardika therefore became a part of the social momentum being generated by the nationalist press. Other women’s organisations were invited to join the struggle.

In about the same year as Putri Mardika was established, several other women’s organisations 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, Wanito 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

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<sup>23</sup> C.V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> For example, in November 1915, it wrote: “The organisation Putri Mardika is aimed to upholding or raising the position of women to join in the race to the era of *kemajuan* (progress)... if Putri Mardika has the result of increasing the skill or knowledge of women... I think those women can quickly maju (progress). See, *Putri Mardika*, November, 1915, p. 78. And in January 1916 edition, it wrote: “we should thank God that our people have begun to throw away the blanket of ignorance and are beginning to understand that from ignorance comes misery. We are beginning to think about which road we must chose, so that our *kemajuan* (progress) can be completely achieved. We must take the example of the Japanese who have come to be comparable to the European without losing their own customs. That is the genuine progress for which we must hope”. See *Putri Mardika Magazine*, January, 1916, p. 7.

Yogyakarta.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile in the region of Minangkabau in West Sumatra, and the towns of Bukit Tinggi and Padang Panjang, three women's organisations were formed: Kerajinan Amai Satia (Diligence of Faithful Mother, 1914), Sarekat Kaum Ibu Sumatera (Association of Sumatra's Woman, 1920) and Keutamaan Istri Minangkabau (The Accomplishment of Minangkabau's Woman).<sup>26</sup> In 1917, women in Sulawesi, the eastern part of Indonesia, formed Pengasih Ibu Kepada Anak Turunan (The Mother's Love for Her Offspring). Besides these independent women's organisations, a number of nationalist organisations began to form women's sections in their organisational 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 later, the Sarekat Islam organisation formed its women's section, Wanudiyo Utomo. This name was later changed to Sarekat Perempuan Islam Indonesia. 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 Sumatera (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>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> C.V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 63 and S. Suryochondro, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> C. V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>27</sup> Adi Negoro quoted in C.V. De Stuers, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Simultaneously, another trend strengthened the cause 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 *al Syarq* (the East) of Sarekat Kaum Ibu Sumatera, *Suara Perempuan* (The Voice of Women) in Padang, *Perempuan Bergerak* (The Active Women) in Medan, *Wanita Swara* (The Voice of Women) in Pacitan, *Panutan Istri* (The Women's Guidance) in Bandung and *Istri Utama* (The Noble Women) 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 organisations, women's associations realised 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 organisations. Nevertheless, one reality persisted in the women's movements, just as it did in the nationalist organisations: dependence on the elite, notably those who had benefited from a European education or belonged to aristocratic families.

## **C. Islamic Modernism and Formation of Aisyiyah**

### *1. Islamic Modernism and Muhammadiyah*

About the turn of the twentieth century many Indonesian Muslims began to realise that they would not be able to compete with the challenging force of Dutch colonialism, Christian penetration and the struggle for progress in other

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parts of Asia, if they continued with their traditional activities to uphold Islam. They became aware of the need for change or reforms whether by digging up the treasures of Islam of the past which had enabled their brethren of the Middle ages to surpass the West in learning and in broadening the Muslim sphere of influence and control, or by applying new methods which had been brought to Indonesia by the colonial and the Christian missionary power.<sup>28</sup>

The seeds of Islamic modernism in Indonesia can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. As more Indonesians went on pilgrimage to Mecca from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Indonesian Muslims were able to meet with Muslims from other parts of the Muslim World. They also became better acquainted with Islamic teachings based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. They were influenced by the reformist movements launched by the Wahabis, and later by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. Returning to Indonesia, they felt motivated to reform Indonesian Islam and expose Muslims to the orthodox Arab interpretations based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.<sup>29</sup>

Three *haji*<sup>30</sup> from Minangkabau -Haji Miskin, Haji Muhammad Arif and Haji Abd Rahman- apparently brought the ideas of the Wahabi movement back with them from Saudi Arabia. In 1802 they launched what was known as the Padri movement. With the goal of assigning the predominance of Islamic law over other

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<sup>28</sup> D. Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> J.K. Peacock, *The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam*, The Benjamin/Cumming Publishing Company, Menlo Park, California, 1978, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> The word *haj* usually added to a Muslim name refers to one who has undertaken a pilgrimage to Mecca.

law, this movement rejected the balance of *adat* (customary practices) and Islam, and condemned *adat* as being against Islamic law. Consequently, Islam had to be cleansed of its customary elements.

The influence of the Padri movement, with its strong Wahabi overtones, led the people of Minangkabau at the turn of the twentieth century to be more predisposed to the Islamic modernist ideas of Muhammad Abduh, the Egyptian reformer (1849-1905). It was through a Minangkabau figure, Syekh Ahmad Khatib, that Islamic reform was first articulated in Indonesia. According to Alfian, there were two important notions that Ahmad Khatib taught his students. The first was a “liberal” attitude, which he personally exemplified by his own behaviour, encouraging his students to perform *ijtihad* (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>31</sup>

In Java, one of the most modern Muslim organisations was the Muhammadiyah, the parent organisation of Aisyiyah. It was set up in Yogyakarta on 18 November 1912 by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in response to suggestions made by his pupils and several Budi Utomo members to establish an institution of permanent character. Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah because he believed that a religious organisation was the best way to spread his ideas to guide and educate Indonesian Muslims. Muhammadiyah declares itself as a movement for *Dakwah Islamiyah Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar* (summons to perform good

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<sup>31</sup> Alfian, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

deeds and forbid the bad ones). The purpose of this organisation was to build a Muslim society based on Islamic principles.<sup>32</sup> This was an idealistic goal which required sufficient means and patience. Efforts had to be channelled through a variety of movements and activities relevant to the people's needs.

Muhammadiyah was also supported by urban and merchant Muslims who are acknowledged as Indonesian Muslim modernists. To them Islam was compatible with the demands of time and circumstance, and foreshadowed progress, by facilitating the search for knowledge, the development of science, and the position of women. Modernists defined their religion in terms of individual responsibility for moral reform and for bringing into being a Muslim community adapted to contemporary conditions. To achieve these goals, according to Lapidus, Indonesian Muslim modernists adapted Western organisational and educational methods and accepted scientific ideas.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, the early activities of the Muhammadiyah were primarily directed towards building an infrastructure in the form of educational institutions, journal publications, health centres, orphanages, and other socio-religious activities. Through all of these institutions, the Muhammadiyah attracted thousands of new members and established its own mass following. The social activities of 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

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<sup>32</sup> *Statute of Muhammadiyah*, Muhammadiyah Central Council, Yogyakarta, 1979, article 3.

reason behind the establishment of the Muhammadiyah was to counter the successes of Christian missionaries.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, despite rejecting Christian doctrines, Ahmad Dahlan expressed a high tolerance for Christianity. Furthermore, with respect to nationalism, and particularly when compared to Budi Utomo which was based on a combination of Western and Javanese culture, the Muhammadiyah appealed to Islam as a weapon to oppose both traditional *priyayi* privilege and Dutch authority.

## 2. The Formation of Aisyiyah

As mentioned earlier, the women's movement in Indonesia grew as an integral part of the growth of nationalist awareness. The Budi Utomo's decision to create Putri Mardika may well have influenced Ahmad Dahlan, who was also a Budi Utomo member, to take the same step in establishing Aisyiyah in 1917. The idea of Aisyiyah certainly had its origins in the activities of Ahmad Dahlan and his wife Nyai Ahmad Dahlan<sup>35</sup>, who had been active in women's issues since 1914. While developing and spreading the Muhammadiyah movement, Ahmad Dahlan devoted some of his time to teaching a classroom full of young girls in

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<sup>33</sup> I.M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p. 765.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see A. Jainuri, *Muhammadiyah: Gerakan Reformasi Islam di Jawa pada Awal Abad Keduapuluh*, Bina Ilmu, Surabaya, 1991.

<sup>35</sup> Nyai Ahmad Dahlan (or Siti Waidah) was born in 1872 in Kauman Yogyakarta, the same town where Ahmad Dahlan was born. She was the fourth of seven children of Kyai haji Muhammad Fadhil, a religious official (*penghulu*) and religious leader in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. See Suratmin, *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan Pahlawan Nasional: Amal dan Perjuangannya*, Bayu Inda Grafika, Yogyakarta, 1990, pp. 17-29.



Kauman. He was very conscious of the importance of female education.<sup>36</sup> Relying primarily on the help of his wife, Dahlan decided to increase his efforts by inviting girls to stay in his house so that they might benefit from longer hours of learning. This developed into a 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 labourers 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 and writing, as well as studying Islam.<sup>37</sup>

On the advice of Haji Mochtar, a prominent Muhammadiyah member, Ahmad Dahlan developed *Sopo Tresno* and his dormitory for girls into a more stable organisation, 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, which he saw as confirmed in the Quran 9:71:

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<sup>36</sup> The first group of school girls were the daughters of Dahlan's relatives and friends in Kauman. They were all associated with the Muhammadiyah, and were only six in number. 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 Aisyiyah.

<sup>37</sup> Suratmin, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

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>38</sup>

Under the guidance of Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, and the organisational supervision of K.H. Mochtar, nine girls from Dahlan's girl's school were selected to manage Aisyiyah and were given specific responsibilities within its organisational structure.<sup>39</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>40</sup>

In the first stage of its development, Aisyiyah was not an independent organisation. It did not have independence statutes and rules, administrative directives or membership administration. These were managed by Muhammadiyah.<sup>41</sup> Aisyiyah began to expand outside its original home in Yogyakarta and Aisyiyah branches were formed in other cities, together with the Muhammadiyah. Ahmad Dahlan himself supported the spread of Aisyiyah to other cities, wherever Muhammadiyah branches existed. Aisyiyah began to be

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<sup>38</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Amanah Corp, Maryland, 1983, p. 461.

<sup>39</sup> The organisational 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 Dalalh (staff), 7) Siti Wadingah (staff), 8) Siti Dawimah (staff) and 9) Siti Busyro. Suratmin, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>40</sup> At this stage, Aisyiyah was not an autonomous organisation.

<sup>41</sup> B. Baried, 'Islam and modernization of Indonesian women', in *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, eds T. Abdullah and S. Siddique, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1986, p. 147.

known in society as a section of Muhammadiyah and not as an independent women's organisation.

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

In the first stage of its development, Aisyiyah's position with respect to other women's organisations in Java was similar to the position of the Muhammadiyah *vis à vis* the Budi Utomo. According to K. Jayawardena, the nationalist movement as well as the movements for women's emancipation in most Asian colonies, including Indonesia, were characterised by three common elements; first, "the desire to carry out internal reforms in order to modernise their 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 mobilised against imperialism."<sup>42</sup> When Jayawardena's perspectives are employed in analysing the Budi Utomo and Muhammadiyah, it can be seen that while the former challenged Dutch colonialism and the authority of traditional *priyayi*

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<sup>42</sup> K. Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, Zed Books Ltd, London and New Delhi, 1986, p. 3.

through a fusion of European and Javanese culture, Muhammadiyah based its struggle on the values of Islamic modernism. In short, both of them struggled against the same problem, but used different approaches.

The same tendency can be seen in a comparison between Aisyiyah and other nationalist women's organisations such as Putri Mardika or Wanita Utomo. All of these organisations expressed their desire to lead their members in the fight against colonialism and to carry out internal reforms for the purpose of modernising society and especially the position of women within that society. These organisations' hopes were manifested primarily in their demand for women's education, for a better legal position for women, and for changing the Javanese attitude towards women. They differed, however, in their ideological outlooks. Nationalist women's organisations such as the Putri Mardika, whose pioneers were mostly European-educated, eagerly adopted Western models and strategies in their struggle for cultural reform. In other words, the women in those organisations advocated a form of "Western Feminism".

Aisyiyah, on the other hand, whose philosophy was Islamic, based its cultural reform on "modern interpretation" of Islamic teachings. Clearly, Aisyiyah's wish was to create what it considered the ideal women according to Islam, in order to replace the Javanese cultural concept which tended to subordinate women.

### *3. Why the Name Aisyiyah?*

The Aisyiyah cultural reform agenda as described above can be seen in many aspects of its activities in the early years of 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 Muhammad, Aisyah, the name Aisiyiah was finally selected from several other proposed names.<sup>43</sup> It was a reflection of what the Muhammadiyah idealised as a Muslim woman; a wife who is independent and able to be socially active, just like Aisyah. 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. 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 Muhammadiyah took the role of father or husband. This combination was part of an effort to maintain the Islamic concept of *zaujah* (a pair). In other words, ideologically, Muhammadiyah and Aisiyiah 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>44</sup> Hence, Aisiyiah symbolised an active mother involved in the decision-making process within the family, a clear

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<sup>43</sup> One of the proposed names was Fatimah, 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 *Wanita Islam Indonesia dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual*, eds L. Marcoes and J.H. Meuleman, INIS, Jakarta, 1993, p. 130.

<sup>44</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 care giver. *Ibid.*

rejection of the total obedience expected from a wife in Javanese culture, an idea known as *suwargā nunut neraka katut*.<sup>45</sup>

If the Islamic concept of family was reflected in the relationship between Aisyyiah and Muhammadiyah, it also signalled changes to Muslim religious culture. It established and reserved *mushalla* (an area reserved for prayer smaller than a mosque) for women and run by women. Beginning in 1922, and with the moral support of Ahmad Dahlan,<sup>46</sup> this policy was designed to offer Muslim women the chance to perform rituals publicly. The step was taken by Aisyyiah in response to a situation where religious practices, both *muamalat* (social intercourse) and *ibadat* (ritual), were dominated by men. 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, Aisyyiah had established a number of women's mosques. Garut, in West Java, built such a mosque in 1924, followed by Aceh in 1928.

The religious concerns of Aisyyiah, 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. Through *Suara Aisyyiah*, a monthly periodical first published in 1926, furthermore, Aisyyiah strengthened its efforts to express its Muslim identity.

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<sup>45</sup> This term is an expression of the non-existence 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>46</sup> See Pimpinan Pusat Aisyyiah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Aisyyiah*, Yogyakarta, 1992, p. 30.

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

#### **D. The Development and Activities of Aisyiyah before Soeharto's Period (1920-1966): An Overview**

The development and activities of Aisyiyah before Soeharto's period spanned two significant periods in Indonesian socio-political change, namely, the pre-independence period, which covers the years 1920-1945, and the post-independence period, which includes the Old Order government of 1945-1965 under the leadership of Soekarno.

##### *1. Pre-Independence Period (1920-1945)*

Aisyiyah's expansion in the first decade of its existence depended primarily on the decision of its parent body, Muhammadiyah. At the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Muhammadiyah meeting held in 1922, for example, Ahmad Dahlan encouraged all branches of the organisation 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 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 in Aisyiyah.<sup>47</sup> In 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 organisation within the Muhammadiyah. Although already forming a section within the Muhammadiyah in 1923, it was not until 1936<sup>48</sup> that the organisation was recognised as a separate legal and institutional entity with the power to formally regulate its activities and programs. Yet even at this stage, except in the case of detailed operational matters, Aisyiyah's activities were still directed by the Muhammadiyah.

In analysing Aisyiyah's activities throughout this particular period, I find that for the most part they had a lot in common with the activities of other women's organisations. Indeed, what Aisyiyah began to undertake in this phase included central activities, such as preaching Islam, the provision of education and the erection of social infrastructures, which lent it the character of a socio-

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<sup>47</sup> During the pre-independence period, the leadership of Aisyiyah was concentrated in four individuals: 1) Bariyah (the first leader of Aisyiyah) who was elected for three successive years (1917-1920) and for two more years (1927-1929); 2) Ny. Ahmad Dahlan, who headed Aisyiyah during the period of 1921-1926, and then was re-elected in 1930; 3) Siti Munjiah who held Aisyiyah 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, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>48</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 was 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. A. Mawadah, *Sejarah awal Aisyiyah*, B.A. thesis, IAIN, Yogyakarta, 1988. p. 63.



religious organisation. Until recent times, Aisyiyah has consistently carried out these activities, and continues to develop them in order to keep pace with rapid social change. So Aisyiyah, in this period, was less involved and less interested in promoting women's rights.

From its beginnings, religious preaching was the main focus of Aisyiyah. Programs such as the building of women's mosques, the celebration of Islamic events, establishing religious training classes for women,<sup>49</sup> and the training and sending of *mubalighaat* (Islamic women 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 Aisyiyah was also one of organisation's main vehicles for transmitting religious education.

Indeed, scientific education in this period was seen by the women's movement as the only means of achieving such progress, and of solving the problem of backwardness.<sup>50</sup> According to McCormack, just like other organisations, Aisyiyah adopted the Muhammadiyah position favouring the modern and western style of education. It differed, however, in terms of placing an emphasis, in McCormack's words, "on bridging the gap between modern

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<sup>49</sup> Inspired by *Sopo Tresno* (a religious group for women workers), Aisyiyah formed a religious training group in 1919 for women, called *Waal Ashr* (adopted from the name of a sura of the Quran, 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 Aisyiyah as donation. It was an effective way to collect funds for organisations, which were used for many activities. A. Mawadah, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>50</sup> The ability to read, made even more possible by the Dutch during the period under their Ethical Policy allowed Indonesians to compare their conditions to people in other countries, especially those in the West. As a result, Indonesians become aware that their people were left behind those in the West who were more educated and more knowledgeable. See J.D. McCormack, *Organizing women in Indonesia: The language of women's organisations 1909-1930 and 1990-1996*, M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1998, pp. 35-44.

education and religious instruction”.<sup>51</sup> It was clear from the position of Aisyiyah and the Muhammadiyah that they both saw education as part of an effort at maintaining their identity as modern Muslim organisations.

Among the Aisyiyah schools established in this period was a kindergarten school. Founded in 1919 and called *Probel*, it was among the first kindergartens established and managed by Indonesians. Another school that came into existence at about the same time was *Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri* (Muhammadiyah School for Female Teachers), established in 1923. Both of these schools were then reserved for female students. Later on, the *Probel* school was to become co-educational, although the *Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri* has continued to be reserved for female students.

The foundation of the *Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri* led to the formation of other important organs within Aisyiyah. In 1930, the Aisyiyah’s congress was held in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra, where the idea to develop an organisation for students of the Kweekschool was put forward. The organisation, 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 Aisyiyah’s cadres.<sup>52</sup> In 1931, *Siswo Proyo Wanito* was renamed as *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*, and the group retooled as a youth section of Aisyiyah which remains active to this day. Above all, in terms of its activities, the 1930 Aisyiyah

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> One of the results of the 21<sup>st</sup> Aisyiyah congress held in 1932 in Makassar was a suggestion that all Aisyiyah branches should establish *Siswo Proyo Wanito*. It was hoped that the members of this organisation 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 establish an Aisyiyah branch in their own milieu.

Congress decided on the formation of five sections within Aisyiyah which were to be responsible for different activities, i.e.: *Siswo Proyo Wanito*, which was responsible for the development of the youth organisation; the *Madrasah* section, which was to manage all Aisyiyah's schools; *Tabligh*, which was charged with the task of dealing with all matters concerning Islamic teaching; *Waal Ashr*, which was expected to raise grants for needy students in Aisyiyah's school; and the *Dhakhirat* section, which was responsible for collecting funds for the organisation.<sup>53</sup>

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

In addition, the strong message of nationalism was another feature of Aisyiyah activities during this particular period. After the 1928 Youth Congress which produced the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge),<sup>54</sup> the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah tried explicitly to conform to its spirit. The first manifestation of this policy was the decision to change the names of all Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah schools, sections or activities into Indonesian and Arabic terms, rather than Dutch,

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<sup>53</sup> Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>54</sup> On 28 October 1928, an Indonesian Youth Congress was held in Jakarta. Still in the context of nationalism, the congress, which was organised 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*.

in the hope that these names would clearly reflect their identity as Indonesian as well as their status as Muslim organisations.<sup>55</sup> Another step was the decision to adopt *Bahasa Indonesia* as the official language for all Aisyiyah congresses, publications and organisational documentations. Aisyiyah furthermore ordered its branches to include training in *Bahasa Indonesia* in their activities.

Thus, in a similar manner to other women's organisations, and in keeping with its own agenda as a Muslim organisation, Aisyiyah spent the pre-independence period trying to ameliorate the position of women. This was manifested clearly in Aisyiyah's contribution to providing female education, combined 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 Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah enjoyed a wide audience which helped form a broad base, something that few of the other women's organisations could claim. One could argue that this last point added to its nationalist credentials.

## 2. *Post-Independence Period (1946-1965)*

The spirit and euphoria awakened by Indonesia's newly won independence were channelled by Aisyiyah into its program of social development, at least during the first ten years of Indonesia's nationhood. The organisation may well have seen this as the best way in which to contribute to the

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<sup>55</sup> As a result of this policy the name of Forbel was replaced by *Bustan al-Atfal* (an Arabic translation of kindergarten, written in Indonesian language as *Bustanul Atfhal*), while the *Kweekschool Muhammadiyah Istri* was renamed as *Madrasah Muallimat*. In the Muhammadiyah itself, Indonesianisation was more clearly reflected. For instance, *Normaalschool*, *Schalkeschool*, *MULO* and *AMS* respectively renamed as *Sekolah Guru Muhammadiyah*, *Sekolah Sambungan Muhammadiyah*, *Sekolah Pertengahan Muhammadiyah I*, and *Sekolah Pertengahan Muhammadiyah II*.

national effort, especially when we consider the fact that upheaval in the political system during this period left little opportunity to the government to focus on socio-economic development. The presence of women's organisations, including Aisyiyah, which placed the social activities in the forefront of their agenda, 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 Centres), orphanages and girls' homes, and had managed several of Muhammadiyah's *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Umat* (best known by its abbreviation PKU, Centre for Public Health). 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* (Schools for Kindergarten Teachers). 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 realised.

Nevertheless, besides these regular activities, some new programs were established 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. Its initiatives here ranged from writing manuals on creating a "happy family" to setting up family consultation bureaux. 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. 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. Another part of the manual gives advice to the parents or *wali* (guardians) on the subject of the marriage of their offspring. Among the considerations it canvassed were 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 the mother's involvement in the decision of whether or not to accept a marriage proposal (the father is not the only decision-maker).

On the issue of polygamy, Aisiyah still held the view that it was not an evil which stood in the way of ameliorating women's status within marriage. Aisiyah, however, tended to offer a very practical defence of polygamy. In doing so, the organisation referred to Quran 4: 3 and 129, which stress that polygamy can only be practised within certain limits, the most important of these being the equal treatment of wives on the part of the husband. In addition, Aisiyah justified this institution by proffering at least two arguments. Firstly, polygamy is an honourable system, which can protect sick or barren wives from divorce, while at the same time preventing a husband from committing adultery (*zina*). Secondly, it should be realised that the verses on polygamy were revealed as a solution to a demographic problem that had arisen in time of war, when a great many men had been killed, and hence, there were not enough males to ensure marriage. In stating this justification, Aisiyah seems to have been influenced by the modernist exegetes, who, according to Jansen, argued that polygamy was not technically in

accordance with the spirit of the Quran.<sup>56</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. In other words, Aisyiyah clearly did not intend to encourage the practice of polygamy, but as an Islamic organisation, it did not want to oppose a practice that was, in terms of external appearances, condoned by Islamic teaching.

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 relation with other women's groups in KOWANI.<sup>57</sup> This, however, was not the problem of Aisyiyah alone. Other Islamic women's organisations, such as Muslimat (the women's section of Masyumi), Muslimat NU (the women's section of Nahdatul Ulama) and GPII (Indonesian Islamic Youth Organisation) were very much in the same position.

Nevertheless, it should be realised that the position adopted by Islamic women's groups on such controversial issues as polygamy and the marriage bill could be traced back to the position of their parent organisations. In other words, to some extent, their "dependent" status meant that these groups had to follow the lead of their male counterparts. When women's organisations 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

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<sup>56</sup> J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*, Brill, Leiden, 1974, p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> *Konggres Wanita Indonesia* (Indonesian Women's Congress).

representative of the Muslim parties, T. S. Mardjohan, delivered the speech outlining the reasons for their objection:

Among other considerations (it had 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 per cent 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>58</sup>

The tendency of the Islamic women's association to maintain harmony with their male counterparts was indeed exemplified by Aisyiyah. Even though in 1951 Aisyiyah had already obtained its autonomous status, which gave it the right to set up its own activities, and to make its own decisions,<sup>59</sup> nevertheless, in most external matters validation from the Muhammadiyah was still required. For certain controversial issues, such as the government's proposed Family Planning Program<sup>60</sup>, Aisyiyah even left it up to the Muhammadiyah leadership, deferring to the latter's decision on the issue. The limitations placed on Aisyiyah's autonomy are described by Baried<sup>61</sup> in the following passage:

He (Muhammadiyah leader) is our counsellor. If the counsellor is good, he will let Aisyiyah find its own way. But if the counsellor is bad he can

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<sup>58</sup> N. Suwondo, quoted in S. Weirenga, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>59</sup> The autonomous status which was given to Aisyiyah in 1951 was still limited by certain conditions, among them the fact that Aisyiyah would not have control over its own budget or the right to establish its own branches. See Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, *Piagam Badan Otonom*, P.P. Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 1951, pp. 14-16.

<sup>60</sup> It was not until 1963 that Muhammadiyah approved the Family Planning Program (known in Indonesia as *Keluarga Berencana*).

<sup>61</sup> B. Baried was Aisyiyah's leader for five years: 1965, 1968, 1971, 1974 and 1978. See J. L. Peacock, *Gerakan Muhammadiyah Memurnikan Ajaran Islam di Indonesia*, Cipta Kreatif, Jakarta, 1986, p. 60.



restrict Aisyiyah. Muhammadiyah has a veto right on our decision but this is very rarely applied. They also can fire members of the Aisyiyah's board, which they have done in the past. We cannot fire them and we do not have a veto right in their organisation. You see it is rather like a husband-wife relationship.<sup>62</sup>

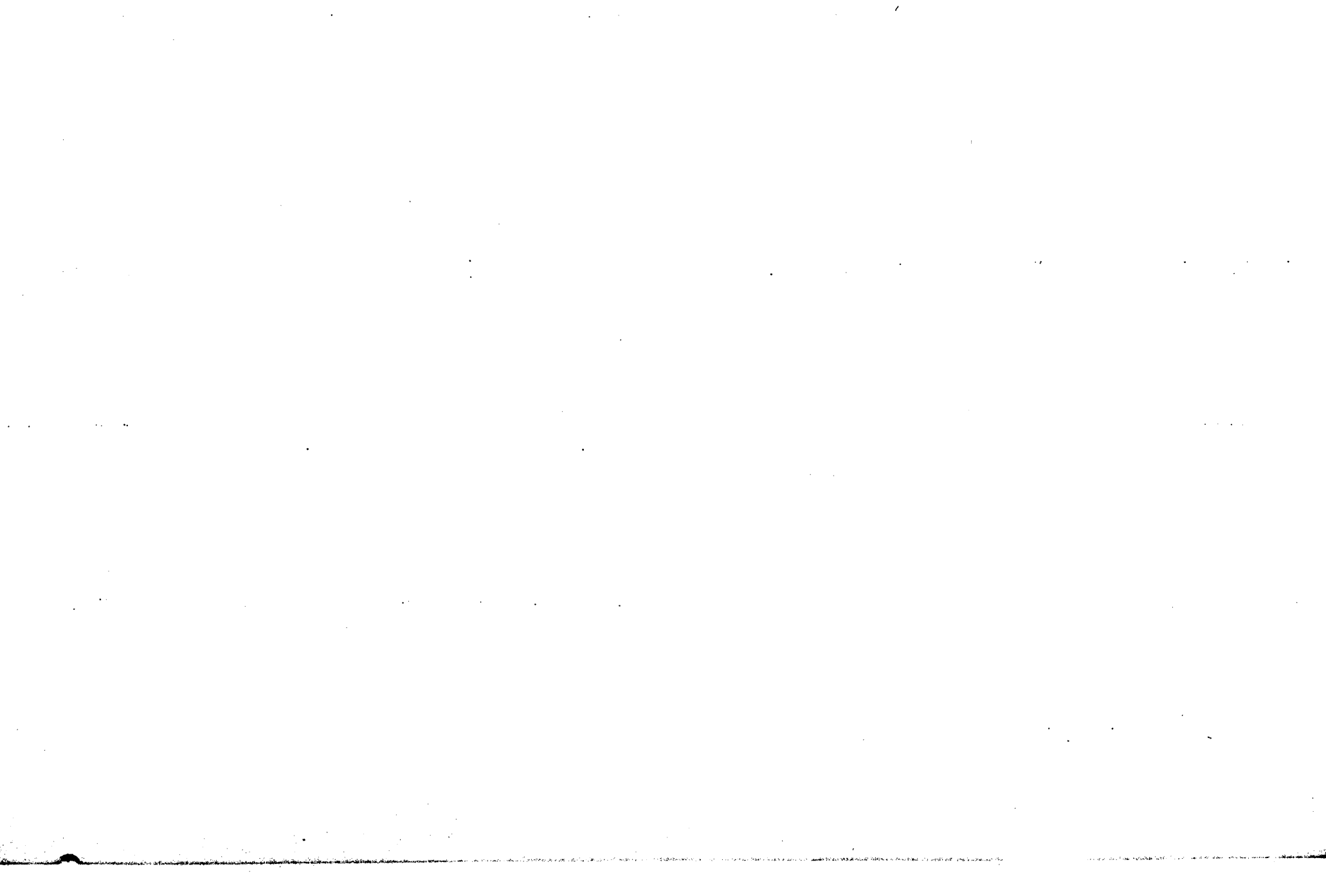
From the discussion in the chapter, it can be concluded that women's groups, including Aisyiyah, functioned as part of the nationalist struggle, while at the same time carrying out efforts aimed at social reform designed to improve the status of women. The ways in which they translated the ideas of nationalism and reform into practical reality, however, were diverse, and were usually in line with the various ideological bases that underlay each organisation. As a Muslim organisation, Aisyiyah also strengthened its efforts in expressing its Muslim identity.

Aisyiyah, in the early decades of its existence, was clearly an active participant in the struggle to achieve, defend and give meaning to Indonesian independence, especially in terms of the women's movement in Indonesia. Although Aisyiyah achieved its autonomous status in 1951, its status was still limited by certain conditions.

In the following chapter, I try to analyse how Aisyiyah faced the change of socio-political conditions in Indonesia under Soeharto's presidency. How did Aisyiyah manage its program and activities during that authoritarian regime? How did Aisyiyah develop after gaining its full autonomy?

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<sup>62</sup> S. Weiringa, *op. cit.*, p. 154.



## **CHAPTER II: AISYIAH'S DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES DURING SOEHARTO'S NEW ORDER (1966-1998)**

This chapter explores programs and activities pursued by Aisyiyah within the socio-political context of the Soeharto regime between 1966 and 1998. This context was very much coloured by the outlawing of the Communist Party and New Order government's decision to apply a tighter political control over the nation. This is followed by an analysis of the policy of the New Order government regarding the women's movement in Indonesia and its effect on Aisyiyah activities during the period. It looks at how the tight control of the New Order regime forced Aisyiyah not only to design its activities in accordance with government programs, but also to provide organisational activities and programs which seem to justify and reinforce government programs. A number of internal problems faced by the Aisyiyah organisation are also addressed. Special reference is made to the issue of cadre formation, and the dilemma of its autonomous status which seems to point to the undynamic and unprogressive character of Aisyiyah.

### **A. New Order Policy regarding the Women's Movement**

#### *1. Soeharto's Government: New Order Period*

The New Order refers to the Indonesian state and government headed by President Soeharto which was formed after a violent coup in October 1965 and ended in May 1998 when Soeharto stepped down as President.<sup>1</sup> Soeharto came to power in the confused and hitherto not fully explained aftermath of an abortive

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<sup>1</sup> Soeharto resigned on 21 May 1998 amidst massive student demonstration and in the aftermath of devastating two day riots (13-14 May) which destroyed large parts of Jakarta's business district.

coup. Whether the events of 1 October 1965 were mounted by dissident soldiers against President Soekarno (the first Indonesian President), or with Soekarno's collusion against the army leadership remains to this day unresolved. The official explanation, however, has always been that it was a communist-inspired coup which failed.<sup>2</sup> The failed communist coup of October 1965 ultimately led to the demise of the Soekarno 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 Soekarno in particular. Led by *KAMI* (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia*, The Indonesian Student's Action Front), many groups, including Indonesian women<sup>3</sup>, formed action wings and participated in these demonstrations. The basic demand of the protest came to be known as *TRITURA* (*Tiga Tuntutan Rakyat*, Three Demands of the People), and consisted of a call to ban *PKI* (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, Indonesian Communist Party), to disband the *Dwikora Kabinet* and to reduce the prices of basic necessities. The growing wave of protest and demonstrations forced Soekarno to write a directive to Soeharto<sup>4</sup>, which became widely known as *SUPERSEMAR* (*Surat Perintah*

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<sup>2</sup> M.R.J. Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics under Soeharto: The Rise and Fall of the New Order*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p. 2.

<sup>3</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 6 March 1966, from a number of women who decided to assist the student demonstration independently without waiting for *KOWANI* (Indonesian Women's Congress). S.A. Douglas, 'Women in Indonesian politics', in *Asian Women in Transition*, eds S.A. Chipp and J.G. Green, Pennsylvania State University, London, 1980, pp. 172-173.

<sup>4</sup> It was widely believed that this directive consisted in Soekarno's instruction to Soeharto, the commander of the army's strategic reserve forces (*Kostrad*), to take all steps to re-establish

*Sebelas Maret*, Eleventh March's Instruction Note). It was on the basis of this letter that Soeharto justified his decision to take control of the country, and even assume the office of president.<sup>5</sup>

The PKI and all its affiliates were formally disbanded on 12 March 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>6</sup> One could even say that it was this communist tragedy which provided the justification for the New Order government's decision to apply tighter political control over the nation, a characteristic feature of this regime.

The New Order regime has been variously characterised by scholars. The outstanding features of the New Order, according to Robison, have been the entrenchment and centralisation of authoritarian rule by the military, the appropriation of the state by its officials, and the exclusion of political parties from effective participation in the decision-making process.<sup>7</sup> Mortimer states that the earliest account of the New Order stressed its militaristic or authoritarian

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domestic tranquillity and to safeguard Soekarno's personal safety and authority. A. Zainuddin, *A Short History of Indonesia*, Cassel Australia, Victoria, 1968, pp. 272-275.

<sup>5</sup> The validity of *SUPERSEMAR* is continuously debated, and these debates have even increased after the fall of Soeharto on May 1998. The debates resolve around whether or not this letter actually exists, since it provided justification for Soeharto to take the power from Soekarno.

<sup>6</sup> This can be seen in many government regulations. For instance, one can never be accepted as a government employee, or get access to any governmental post, if any one of his/her family has, or was suspected to have, relations with communist groups.

<sup>7</sup> R. Robison, *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital*, Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd, Sydney, 1986, p. 105.

aspects, linking them frequently with dependency theories which were then in vogue, as if the state were little more than a puppet manipulated by foreign capital.<sup>8</sup> Later accounts have put more emphasis on the increasing autonomy of the state, although with differing interpretations of the way in which this has worked. The New Order was appropriately characterised as a *beamtenstaat*, a state run by and for officials<sup>9</sup>, and as a bureaucratic polity,<sup>10</sup> along Weberian lines.<sup>11</sup> In J. Mackie and A. MacIntyre's opinion, the term which best characterises one of the key features of the New Order polity is Crouch's, namely *patriomonalism*, for it highlights the extent to which control over key financial resources, licences and essential facilities needed by business enterprises derives from the president and his immediate circle of lieutenants at the apex of the power structure.<sup>12</sup>

Despite differences in these analyses, the similarities which can be used to characterise the New Order state point to the regime as a military dictatorship.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, as D. Muchtar points out, very few regimes have been as long-lasting and stable as Soeharto's New Order. It is an interesting point that the New

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<sup>8</sup> R. Mortimer (ed.), *Show Case State: The Illusion of Indonesia's Accelerated Modernisation*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1973.

<sup>9</sup> See R. McVey, 'The beamtenstaat in Indonesia', in *Interpreting Indonesian Politics: Thirteen Contributions to the Debate*, eds B.R.O.G. Anderson and A. Kahin, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Ithaca, n.d. pp. 84-91.

<sup>10</sup> See K. Jackson, 'Bureaucratic polity: A theoretical framework for the analysis of power and communications in Indonesia', in *Politics and Communications in Indonesia*, eds L.W. Pye and K.D. Jackson, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> See F.W. Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity*, East West Center Press, Honolulu, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> J. Mackie and A. MacIntyre, 'Politics', in *Indonesia's New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-Economic Transformation*, ed. H. Hill, Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd, New South Wales, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> S. Eklof, *Indonesian Politics in Crisis: The Long Fall of Suharto 1966-1998*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 1999, p. 3.

Order regime could hold political power in such highly concentrated fashion for thirty-two years, without significant resistance from Indonesian society.<sup>14</sup>

M. V. Langenberg argues that the authoritarian system of the New Order was able to exist for so long in Indonesia because this regime had built a state hegemony underpinned by a substantial body of ideological formulations. These have constructed a state hegemony based on notions about: “order, stability and national security; inherent dangers within the body political and civil society; material progress and modernisation; constitutionalism and fetishism of law, sacral nationalist philosophy and a corporate nationalism”.<sup>15</sup> In simple terms, A. Heryanto states that the regime derived its legitimation largely from five sources: nationalism, *Pancasila*<sup>16</sup> (Five Principles), the 1945 constitution and its formal embodiment, development program and propaganda on stability and order.<sup>17</sup> In Uhlin’s words, the Soeharto regime had been successful in applying many structures of ideas that supported his authoritarian regime: the concept of an “integralistic” state, the state ideology *Pancasila*, the doctrine of the military’s dual function, the ideology of “developmentalism”, the “floating mass” doctrine,

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<sup>14</sup> D. Muchtar, *The rise of the Indonesian women's movement in the New Order state*, M.A. thesis, Murdoch University, Western Australia, 1999, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> M.V. Langenberg, ‘The New Order state: Language, ideology, hegemony, in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, ed. A. Budiman, Aristoc Press Pty. Ltd, Australia, 1990, pp. 122-123.

<sup>16</sup> *Pancasila* was originally formulated by Soekarno in 1945 and consisted of five principles designed to be broad enough to be acceptable as a national ideology to all of Indonesia’s many ethnic and religious groups, as well as to a broad stratum of political aspirations. The five principles were: belief in the one and only God, just and civilised humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by inner wisdom in unanimity arising out of deliberation among representatives and social justice for all the people of Indonesia. See, A. Uhlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>17</sup> A. Heryanto, ‘State, ideology and civil discourse’, in A. Budiman, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

the negative image of democracy in Soekarno's era, the official version of the coup events of 1965 and the related ideology of anti-communism.<sup>18</sup>

As a congruence of ideology and policy, the hegemony of the New Order is determined largely through an ideology, which Liddle has referred to as "democratic populism". Accordingly hierarchy and deference are legitimised as a kind of *noblesse oblige* or *kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat* (democracy guided by inner wisdom).<sup>19</sup> It is a congruence of ideology and policy that draws heavily upon the notion of an organic integralistic state where all sections of the community are functionally regulated to support economic development. This regime was successful in reconstructing an ideological framework for the Indonesian people by propagating *Pancasila* and claiming it to be the only state ideology. The state itself is a *Pancasila* state (*Negara Pancasila*).

Since 1985, all political organisations in Indonesia have been obliged by law to enshrine *Pancasila* as their sole philosophical base, *azas tunggal*. For any citizen to deny *Pancasila*, or for any social groups to refuse to acknowledge it as *azas tunggal*, is considered tantamount to sedition. A. Heryanto argues that the function of *Pancasila* as the ideological basis of the New Order regime was to reinforce its claim to have saved the nation from the so-called 1965 communist coup. In later years, appeals to *Pancasila* proved effective as a means of undercutting recurrently perceived Islamic-based opposition.<sup>20</sup> The regime could then accuse all opponents of being anti-*Pancasila* or being communist. The

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<sup>18</sup> A. Uhlin, *Indonesia and the "Third Wave of Democratisation": The Indonesian Pro-democracy Movement in a Changing World*, Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey, 1997, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> R.W. Liddle, 'Suharto's Indonesia: Personal rule and political institutions', *Pacific Affairs*, Spring, 1985, 58 (1). pp. 68-90.



propagation of this myth was one of the main techniques through which the regime maintained authoritarian rule.

The problem with *Pancasila* is not primarily the principle itself, but its status as the state ideology and Soeharto's attempt to monopolise its interpretation and accuse any group of individuals critical of the regime's policy of being anti-*Pancasila*. Government propaganda was spread through compulsory indoctrination courses on *Pancasila*, the *Pancasila* promotion program becoming known as program P4 (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*).

Similarly, to support its authoritarian rule, the regime was successful in utilising the ideology of the dual-civilian military function of the armed forces or *Dwifungsi ABRI* (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*, Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia). The doctrine stipulated that ABRI, because of its historical role in the struggle for national independence, had two roles; one concerned defence and security, and the other dealt with social and political management. *ABRI* also saw itself as the essential vanguard for national stability and unity. Politically, the dual function meant that *ABRI* was represented by an appointed faction in parliament, and that active and retired officers held key posts in government and throughout the bureaucracy. Besides the Presidency, *ABRI* clearly was Indonesia's most politically influential institution under the New Order.<sup>21</sup> *Dwifungsi ABRI*, furthermore, gave justification for the military to intervene in every single social and political activity. In the name of stability, the military threatened, intimidated, jailed or even killed activists or groups critical of

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<sup>20</sup> A. Heryanto, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>21</sup> S. Eklof, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

the regime. Muchtar perceives the riots of 27 July 1996 and the kidnapping of activists before Soeharto stepped down in May 1998 as prominent examples of the military's intense intimidation and repression of the pro-democracy movement, which was very discouraging for pro-democracy activists, particularly from the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) community.<sup>22</sup>

Gender politics was another important factor supporting the regime.<sup>23</sup> Uhlin argues that the gender structure, including patriarchal and authoritarian forms of rule, was a fundamental and often overlooked aspect of New Order authoritarianism.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the regime adopted "*ibuism*" (motherhood) to cast Indonesian women as caretakers of the household and loyal supporters of the family. Through state women's organisations, such as *Dharma Wanita* and *PKK* (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Wanita*, Family Welfare Guidance), the government disseminated these values and used them as tools to strengthen women's subordination. Thus, the PKK has often been described as an integral part of the New Order's authoritarian ideology, in which the family is considered the smallest unit of society.

To elaborate on how the New Order strengthened its control on women's subordination in Indonesia during the period, in the following section I discuss in more detail the New Order's policy regarding the women's movement, including the gender politics, and the role it played in supporting the regime.

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<sup>22</sup> D. Muchtar, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> A. Uhlin, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

## 2. *The Politics of Gender: 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 organisations, it also became subject to stricter government control or close scrutiny. Such a contradictory position can be traced back to the political platform of the New Order, where it was clearly stated that the main agenda of the government was to restore the economic well-being of the country.<sup>25</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 industrialised system.<sup>26</sup> One of the main policies introduced to ensure the achievement of this goal was designed to attract foreign investment, but this in turn meant the government had to ensure national stability. In other words, development and national stability emerged at the forefront of government discourse under the New Order.

In the light of this priority, 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

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<sup>25</sup> S.R. Dzuhayatin, 'Role expectation and aspiration of Indonesian women: Socio religious Analysis', paper presented to *The International Conference on Women in Indonesian Society: Access, Empowerment and Opportunity*, Jakarta, 1-4 December 1997, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

process.”<sup>27</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 centralise power, simplify political parties and strengthen its control over mass organisations, including women’s groups.<sup>28</sup>

The issue of women and development gained further justification with the participation of Indonesia in the United Nations’ 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>29</sup> In Indonesia, 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*, Broad Guidelines for State Policy)<sup>30</sup> that women have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as those of men to participate fully in development. The Junior Ministry of Women’s Affairs (*Menteri Muda Urusan Peranan Wanita*) was formed in the same year and given responsibility of raising the profile of women

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<sup>27</sup> N. Sullivan, ‘Gender and politics in Indonesia’, in *Why Gender Matters in Southeast Asian Politics*, ed. M. Stevens, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Clayton, 1991, p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Investigating Paths to Resist the Patriarchal System*, Centre of South East Asian Studies, Monash University, Clayton, 1995, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> One of the important points resulting from this conference was the significance of the issue of women in development, particularly with special reference to the Third World countries. This idea was developed from the belief that most of the policies in development programs in fact have not always had a positive implication for women. Rather, there are often various negative implications, especially for poor rural women. Based on this assumption, the conference, which also launched the United Nations’ announcement of the Decade of Women, propagated the idea of development showing a higher level of concern for women, usually called Women in Development (WID). See S. Van Bemmelen, ‘Jender dan pembangunan: Apakah yang baru?’, in *Kajian Wanita dalam Pembangunan*, ed. T.O.Ihromi, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, Jakarta, 1995, pp. 188-189.

<sup>30</sup> J.D. McCormak, *Organising women in Indonesia: The language of women’s organisation, 1909-1930 and 1990-1996*, M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, 1998, pp. 80-82.

in development. One of the most important programs carried out by this Ministry in the early years of its existence consisted of developing cooperation with other departments.<sup>31</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>32</sup>

The role and responsibilities of the Minister of Women's Affairs evolved over time from 1983 when the position was first raised to the level of State Minister.<sup>33</sup> Institutional arrangements for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, review and appraisal of initiatives to incorporate women in development were established to give the State Minister some clout. As a member of the Cabinet, the Minister interacted with other Ministers and members of the cabinet in the course of cabinet meetings. In addition, monthly consultative meetings were held with government agencies under the coordination of the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare. Close cooperation was also

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<sup>31</sup> There were 14 departments that developed their cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. See S. Suryocondhro, 'Timbulnya dan perkembangan gerakan wanita di Indonesia', in *Perempuan Indonesia Dulu dan Kini*, eds M.O. Gardiner, M.L.E. Wagemann, E. Seleeman and Sulastri Gramedia, Jakarta, 1996, p. 62.

<sup>32</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.

<sup>33</sup> In 1993, furthermore, Presidential Decrees No. 44/1993 specified the functions of the State Minister for the Role of Women as follows: to prepare, plan and formulate government policies pertaining to the enhancement of the role of women in various fields of development; to coordinate all activities pertaining to the enhancement of the role of women so as to achieve comprehensive, balanced and integrated efforts in overall implementations; to coordinate the operational activities of various government institutions and agencies concerning programs for the enhancement of the role of women in various fields of development and to submit to the President

maintained with the BAPPENAS (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional*, National Development Planning Board). Twice a year, the State Minister held meetings on budget and carried out program formulation and program assessments with top level officials from the government departments integrating women's needs and aspirations into their development programs.

To carry out the ministry's responsibilities, the Minister had a staff of policy and program advisers and four Deputy Ministers: Deputy Minister of Family Welfare, Deputy Minister of Women Workers, Deputy Minister of Education, and Deputy Minister of Socio-Cultural Affairs and Environment. The office of the Minister was responsible for policy formulation, planning, monitoring, evaluation as well as coordination and advocacy. Implementation remained the responsibility of the various sectoral departments, for example, health, religion, information, etc. Almost all departments were involved in the implementation of programs to enhance the role of women in development.

These development activities were coordinated through "working groups" established at the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women. The working groups were chaired by the relevant Deputy Minister on behalf of the Minister and included representatives of appropriate women's and community organisations. The work groups initiated and formulated plans, translated them into programs and projects, identified priorities, reviewed budget proposals, developed implementation guidelines and selected the provinces in which the programs and projects were to be located. The Minister's office had monitoring and evaluation functions.

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reports, information and recommendations on matters concerning the enhancement of the role of women in development.

Furthermore, the commitment of the government to include women was also demonstrated by the promulgation of a new marriage law on 2 January 1974.<sup>34</sup> Although polygamy was still justified, some provisions of the bill were expected to guarantee a better position for women.<sup>35</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 of women's organisations for a unification of the marriage law. Indeed, considering the long battle over marriage law reform, as well as the political controversy that surrounded this promulgation,<sup>36</sup> this new law was a great victory for women's groups. The promulgation of the new law also removed a source of conflict between Aisyiyah and other women's organisations, especially since Aisyiyah 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.

From the above discussion, it is almost certainly true that the New Order gave great support and attention to the women's movement. However, the strong control exercised by the New Order over the women's movement was also demonstrated in diverse ways. The first step taken involved giving funding to

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<sup>34</sup> This bill was launched by the government in 1974. It contains equal rights between men and women in terms of marriage before law.

<sup>35</sup> Substantive changes to this bill were stated in the articles concerning polygamy, divorce and registration of marriage. In polygamy, for instance, 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 was performed before the court. *The Indonesian Marriage Law*, Marriage Counselling Bureau, Jakarta, 1988, pp. 10-11.

<sup>36</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 favour of the proposal, the Union Faction Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*), as the Islamic representatives, was the only group which showed opposition.

*KOWANI* (*Kongres Wanita Indonesia*, Indonesian Women's Congress), which resulted in greater government involvement in and control over this organisation.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the role played by *KOWANI* under the Old Order regime, and more importantly, the taint of *GERWANI*<sup>38</sup> and its communist ideas within the organisation, were matters of concern to the New Order regime. For this reason, *GERWANI* tried to establish what it called a "non-political women's movement". The foundation of *Dharma Wanita*, a government-sponsored women's organisation, was directly in line with the New Order policy to control the women's movement.

Formed on 5 August 1974, *Dharma Wanita* served as an important vehicle for the government in involving women in national development.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently, *Dharma Wanita* functioned as an umbrella organisation or replacement<sup>40</sup> for the many associations of wives of civil servants that had been formed at an earlier period. Membership in *Dharma Wanita* was made compulsory for the wives of civil servants and for female civil servants as well. Its organisational structure was

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<sup>37</sup> Istiadah, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Established on 4 June 1950 under the name of *GERWIS* (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia Sedar* (Movement of Alert Indonesian Women), this organisation was a fusion of six women's associations: *Rukun Putri Indonesia* (Association of Indonesian Young Women), *Persatuan Wanita Indonesia Sedar* (The Union of Alert Women), *Isteri 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 (Indonesian Communist Party), although there was a strong indication that PKI made important contributions to the foundation of this organisation. The name *GERWANI* (*Gerakan wanita Indonesia: Indonesian Women's Movement*) itself was used after its second congress on 1954, indicating the change of this organisation into a "huge" mass group. See S. Weiringa, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-183.

<sup>39</sup> *KOWANI, Sejarah Setengah Abad Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia*, Balai Pustaka, Jakarta, 1978, pp. 278-279.

<sup>40</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*.



hierarchical, in the sense that a woman's position in the organisation was determined by her husband's position in the service; thus, the wife of a minister automatically became the head of *Dharma Wanita* in his ministry, the wives of governors heads of *Dharma Wanita* at provincial level and so on.<sup>41</sup> In Suryakusuma's words, "The wives' educational background, organisational skill, and political inclination are of no consequence; only the husband's position counts".<sup>42</sup> Underlying this organisation, which according to Suryakusuma was similar to that 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.<sup>43</sup>

The establishment of *Dharma Wanita* was followed by the foundation of the *PKK* (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, Family Welfare Movement), another government-sponsored organisation which, unlike *Dharma Wanita*, operated at the grassroots level, and targeted both urban and rural society through 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 organisation" aimed at helping the government by improving and creating a social order in

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<sup>41</sup> R.J.Chapman, *The Significance of Family Planning for Women in Indonesia*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Clayton, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> J.I. Suryakusuma, 'State and sexuality in New Order Indonesia', in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. L.J. Sears, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996, p. 99.

accordance with the *Pancasila*.<sup>44</sup> As an organisation with such a broad scope, therefore, the *PKK* was closely in touch with the demands of rural communities, and was 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>45</sup> Officially, the *PKK*'s program had to comply with the ten main criteria already set up by the government.<sup>46</sup> 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*. Moreover, the *PKK* was similar to *Dharma Wanita* in operating with a hierarchical organisational structure; therefore the wife of the village head would automatically determine the priorities in that community.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> R.J.Chapman, *op. cit.* p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> The programs of *Dharma Wanita* and the *PKK* basically underlined the fact that the mobilisation 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 "economic development" for women, was adopted not only by *Dharma Wanita* and *PKK*, but also by other women's organisations. P. J. Eldridge, *Non-government Organisations and Democratic Participation in Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, p. 153.

<sup>46</sup> The 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 (*Kelestarian Lingkungan Hidup*); 10) Developing Family Attitudes Appropriate to the Modernisation Process and Future Planning (*Perencanaan Sehat*). See Mutawali, *Peranan Wanita dalam Pembangunan Desa*, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Jakarta, 1987, p. 117 and Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

As government-sponsored organisations, *PKK* and *Dharma Wanita* could hardly deny the political and ideological mission embedded in their programs. Both groups were not only a principal means for the government to include women in development, but also a medium for government to disseminate its concept of the ideal role of women, 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) in which women were promoted by the *PKK* and *Dharma Wanita*, as: 1) loyal backstops and supporters of her family; 2) caretakers of the household; 3) producers of future generations, 4) the family's prime socialisers and 5) Indonesian citizens.<sup>47</sup>

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>48</sup> emphasising the domestic role of women as well as their role as key agents of the family. Furthermore, this concept is seen as deriving from the state ideology of the New Order, which held up the family as the key indicator of the success of development and modernisation. As Suzanne Brenner states "...the Soeharto regime tried to create an image of a stable, harmonious, prosperous society built on a foundation of moral, apolitical, middle class families". She says

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<sup>47</sup> S. Sunindyo, 'Murder, gender and the media', in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. L.J. Sears, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1996, p. 124.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibuism* comes from the word "*Ibu*" meaning mother. It refers to *Panca Dharma Wanita* in Suryakusuma's words. The term *Ibuism* was also used by M. 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. J. Suryakusuma, 'State and sexuality in New Order Indonesia', in L.J. Sears, *op. cit.*, p. 101, M. Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 'Ibuism and priyayization: Path to power?' in *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*, eds E.L. Scholten and A. Niehof, Foris Publication, Dordrecht, 1987, pp. 45-46.

further “The New Order family, like the government party *GOLKAR* (*Golongan Karya*), was portrayed not as a political entity but as a functional unit, a part of the national whole, that was entrusted with guarding the security, morality, and well being of its members, and of the nation at large.”<sup>49</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 traditions 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 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 organisations, thanks to the support of the government. The latter saw social work as the ideal role of women, if not their only role, in bringing about development.

## **B. Organisational Developments and Activities during the Period**

### *1. Autonomous Status of Aisyiyah, Leadership Succession and Cadre Issues*

In the very same year that the new order was established (1966), Aisyiyah received the decision concerning its autonomous status within the Muhammadiyah.<sup>50</sup> Unlike the 1952 decision, however, this renewed autonomous

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<sup>49</sup> S. Brenner, ‘On the public intimacy of the New Order: Images of women in the popular Indonesian print media’, *Indonesia*, No. 67, April 1999, pp. 14-15.

<sup>50</sup> Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan Aisyiyah*, Yogyakarta, 1992, p. 44.

status placed Aisyiyah on the same level as other independent bodies within the Muhammadiyah, a status the organisation has enjoyed ever since. Besides giving Aisyiyah the right to manage its own programs, and its own budget, it also resulted in an organisational restructuring, whereby a series of hierarchical levels was directly applied. Hierarchy here refers to the administrative ranks of the government, from the highest to the lowest, starting with *nasional* (national), *propinsi* (provincial), *kabupaten* (district) and *kecamatan* (subdistrict) levels. In accordance with this stratification, Aisyiyah had its office both at the national and local levels: in provinces, districts and subdistricts. Usually there was only one branch at the province level, but there were a number of branches at the district and subdistrict levels.

In addition, this hierarchical structure was seen as an effective way for the organisation to publicise and spread its programs, even to the lowest grassroots level and to monitor the development of the organisation.

It seems that the autonomous status of Aisyiyah encouraged its leaders from the start to work seriously to develop the organisation. This is evident from the 1974 Aisyiyah general meeting, held in Ujung Pandang, where the organisation decided to establish a unit to be responsible for recruiting and training cadres, which was to be called the *Biro Kaderisasi*.<sup>51</sup> Originally founded as a small unit within the organisation, it was upgraded in 1985 to a section, called *Bidang Pembinaan Kader* (Section of Training of Cadres), thus forming one of the six

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<sup>51</sup> Previously, the task relating to the cadre was in the hands of the *Biro Organisasi* (Organisational Unit). See Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

sections within Aisyiyah.<sup>52</sup> Among the programs sponsored by this section, and the one that received the most attention, was the training centre for cadres, known as *Pondok Hajjah Nuriyah Shabran*. Operated in cooperation with various Muhammadiyah and Islamic universities,<sup>53</sup> the targets of the program were female university students, who were recruited and trained in Islamic subjects in special classes, usually held in the late evening.<sup>54</sup> It was obvious that this program was expected to produce cadres who were well prepared morally, academically and organisationally. Although there was no financial support from the New Order government, the program proved successful in preparing Aisyiyah cadres.

Of considerable concern was the problem of leadership. As had previously been the case, the Aisyiyah leadership was still dominated by "the old faces" from Kauman<sup>55</sup>, who often repeatedly stood for re-election. During this period, however, there was a general awareness that this tendency had to be rectified. This can be seen, for instance, in the decision taken prior to the 1985 general meeting by Baroroh Baried, Aisyiyah President, to resign, or at least refuse to

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<sup>52</sup> In 1985, the other five sections, which were already established in 1930, were renamed as follows: 1) *Bagian Tabligh* (Islamic Call section); 2) *Bagian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* (Education and Culture Section); 3) *Bagian PKU* (Centre for Public Health Section); 4) *Bagian Pendidikan Paramedis* (Education of Paramedic Section) and 5) *Bagian Ekonomi* (Economic Section).

<sup>53</sup> The training of the first group took place in 1986 in cooperation with 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 Student Association). Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> The subjects taught ranged from courses in the Arabic language to organisational matters, especially those that applied to the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah. The evening classes could be organised easily because the students in this program lived in the dormitory.

<sup>55</sup> Kauman is the place in which Aisyiyah was born.

become a candidate for the following election.<sup>56</sup> The only reason she offered was the fact that she had already headed the organisation for twenty years, and this, according to her, hindered the process of regeneration.<sup>57</sup> The 1985 annual meeting of Aisiyiah resulted in the election of a new president, Elyda Djazman, to replace Baried. Nonetheless 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 the people around the family and friends of the founding fathers within the organisation, can also be found in the Muhammadiyah itself. Bhaskara, for instance, has noted that both Dahlan and his direct successor, Ibrahim, led the Muhammadiyah for ten years. Moreover, in the course of its history the organisation has had only two non-Yogyakarta based leaders; Mas Mansur (1937) from Surabaya and Sutan Mansyur (1953) from Padang.<sup>58</sup>

One of the main reasons behind this phenomenon seems to be the fact that as a non-profit and broad-based organisation whose concerns are mainly charitable, those with strong psychological connections with Aisiyiah, such as the people around the founding father's family, would hardly refuse the responsibility to lead the organisation. Moreover, according to Marcoes, the cadre formation in Aisiyiah (and the Muhammadiyah as well) still relied primarily on family and kinship, which while it proved to be very effective, nevertheless weakened the

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<sup>56</sup> S. Muda, *Kepemimpinan dan Wanita dalam Muhammadiyah: Gagasan AR. Baswedan and Tanggapan-tanggapan*, Surya Muda, Yogyakarta, 1985, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> H. Bhaskara, 'Muhammadiyah faces the future', in *Muhammadiyah dalam Kritik dan Komentar*, ed. R. Karim, Penerbit Rajawali, Jakarta, 1986, pp. 150-151.

organisation due to the resulting lack of open management and criticism.<sup>59</sup> Marcoes goes even further, arguing that the lack of professionalism in the management of Aisyiyah activities was also caused by the motives of its members. As a religious organisation, Aisyiyah always encouraged its members to base their efforts on the hope of finding favour with God, and not for any other compensation.<sup>60</sup> Thus Aisyiyah was faced with difficult choices: between activities which were considered charity work and the demands and needs for more professional work. For this reason, Aisyiyah could not expect its members to devote themselves to any activity for its own sake. Similarly, new members who joined the organisation, and who came to manage its activities, were more often motivated by a 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 it was running.

Another important issue was also raised in the 1985 annual meeting. At the 1978 meeting it had been decided that there were to be no female members on Muhammadiyah's board. In other words, there was an explicit clear-cut division that 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 as a part of the Muhammadiyah, and had to respect the wishes of its parent body. This latter

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<sup>59</sup> L. Marcoes, 'Antara amal dan tuntutan profesional di Aisyiyah', in *Perempuan Indonesia: Dulu dan Kini*, eds M.O. Gardiner, M.L.E. Wagemann, E. Seleeman and Sulastris Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta, 1996, pp. 160-161.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.



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 organisation.

Bearing this in mind, prior to the 1985 meeting, A.R. Baswedan, a prominent Muhammadiyah figure, asked the organisation to allow Aisyiyah members to serve on the central leadership board. He argued that such a step would revitalise the organisation, which was starting to be seen as unprogressive and stagnant, even by its own members. 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>61</sup>

The above situation was a sign that Aisyiyah, though having functioned as an organisation for more than fifty years, was by the New Order period being confronted with several internal problems, such as cadre development and organisational renewal. At this point its dynamism as an organisation, quite modern in outlook, began to be questioned. In addition, the issue of Aisyiyah’s position within the Muhammadiyah, as seen in Baswedan’s case, underscored the implicit dilemma facing this organisation. Indeed, Aisyiyah was only one of several organisations within the Muhammadiyah.<sup>62</sup> However, the fact that it

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-22.

<sup>62</sup> Besides Aisyiyah, there are several other autonomous organisations within Muhammadiyah as follows: 1) *Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah University Students’ Association); 2) *Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah High School Student’s Association); 3) *Pemuda Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Youth Association); 4) *Nasyiatul*

specifically represented the women members of the organisation, coupled with its absence from Muhammadiyah's central board, had reinforced Aisyiyah's image as a separate organisation, or as an independent Muslim women's organisation. In this position, Aisyiyah was often faced with the questions that demanded more freedom of movement compared to other autonomous groups within Muhammadiyah. Such a position raised a dilemma in the minds of Aisyiyah leaders, that of whether to become more involved within the Muhammadiyah or to be totally independent in its decision-making and actions.

## 2. *Aisyiyah Programs: Justification of Government Programs*

Considering the political context of the period, which was marked by governmental involvement in and control over women's organisations under the slogan of national development, Aisyiyah programs toed the government line in order to be socially and politically acceptable. It is not surprising, therefore, to see how Aisyiyah activities during this period were carefully designed to contribute to national development. As regards the various social and charitable activities that were already in operation, such as educational institutions, orphanages and health centres, 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 meagre financial aid from the government.<sup>63</sup>

The following discussion focuses on the Aisyiyah programs during the New Order period.

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*Asiyiyah*; 5) *Tapak Suci* (Muhammadiyah Karate Association) and 6) *Ikatan Guru Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Teacher's Association). See M. Kamal, C. Yusuf and R. Sholeh (eds), *Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Islam*, Penerbit Persatuan, Yogyakarta, pp. 129-130.

<sup>63</sup> For example, out of about 3,000 Aisyiyah kindergarten schools throughout the archipelago, only ten per cent received financial support from the government. J.D. McMork, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

a. *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* (Guidance for Rural Women) Program

Above all else, the issue of women in development was taken 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 organisations, including Aisyiyah. This can be seen for instance in several new programs, known as *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* launched at the organisation'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 the rights and responsibilities in the family and society, and to equip themselves with various skills that would enable them to support the family.<sup>64</sup> The decision to make rural women the main target of the program, coupled with other aspects, such as an emphasis on family values and economic empowerment, gave this program a close resemblance to similar projects organised by the *PKK*.

By selecting five villages as a pilot project,<sup>65</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>66</sup> This resulted

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<sup>64</sup> B. Baried, 'Islam and the modernisation of Indonesian women', in *Islam and Society in South East Asia*, eds T. Abdullah and S. Siddique, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, 1986, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> The selected areas were Bogor, Tangerang, Bantul, Sleman and Sidoarjo. In each location, ten Quranic Reading Groups were selected as implemented groups. Pusat Pimpinan Aisyiyah, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>66</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 USA during 1972-1975; 3) UNICEF, which in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, funded the 1988 program developed by Aisyiyah and known as KIKHA (*Kesehatan Ibu dan Kelangsungan Hidup Anak*, Health Service for Mother and Children). *Ibid.*, pp. 89-91.

in the organisation becoming increasingly like a Non-Government Organisation, a category of organisation which likewise makes a considerable contribution to the country's social and economic development.

b. *Qoryah Thoyyibah* (Prosperous Village) Program

The *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* program was supported and completed by other programs, for example, in 1984 by the *Qoryah Thoyyibah*, a new program which also focused on rural development. Instead of focusing only on rural women, the objective of *Qoryah Thoyyibah* was the under-developed village. As its name suggested, the idea behind the program was an expression of Aisyiyah'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>67</sup> in order to help it pursue a better quality of life in various aspects, particularly in education, health and family economics. The activities covered by this program ranged from providing scholarships to granting credit for home industries; indeed the Aisyiyah members active in this program were expected to invite the villagers to participate actively and contribute to the whole process of the program.<sup>68</sup> The program was first implemented in 1989 by selecting a small village in Bantul, Yogyakarta.

c. *Keluarga Sakinah* (Happy Family)

The importance of the family in the New Order's ideology led Aisyiyah to develop further the family aspect of the *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* through a

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<sup>67</sup> The selected village itself was named *Desa Binaan* (The Village Made Grow).

<sup>68</sup> Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *Sidang Tanwir Aisyiyah II Periode 1990-1995*, Yogyakarta, 1994, p. 26.

program called *Keluarga Sakinah*,<sup>69</sup> which was first established at the organisation's 1985 meeting. Having as its goal the development of the five ideal aspects in a family's life (religion, education, health, economic and social relationships within and between families), *Keluarga Sakinah* was very 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 principal 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>70</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>71</sup> Similarly, with respect to the economic situation of the family, it is obvious that the guidance in

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<sup>69</sup> *Keluarga Sakinah* is defined as a family which is 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. See Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *Indikator Keluarga Sakinah*, Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, Yogyakarta, 1993, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*, Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, Yogyakarta, 1994, p. 42.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

the manual was directed at families with a stable economic status. Take, for instance, the suggestion that in order to manage a family budget, the 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>72</sup>

Over the years, Aisyiyah's involvement in government programs has expanded. During the period 1985-1988 Aisyiyah took part in KOWANI's program aimed at preserving the environment. The organisation also expressed its concerns over the issue of women workers by taking the practical step of founding the *Balai Latihan Kerja Wanita* (Job Training Centre for Women), designed to produce skilled women to fill job openings, and to reduce the numbers of unemployed.<sup>73</sup> When the issue of legal protection for exported women workers became a subject of public debate, and led many women's organisations to force government to pay more serious attention to the issue, Aisyiyah took the step of sending representatives to Saudi Arabia to observe at first hand the conditions of those working there.<sup>74</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the decision to participate in the government's program, such as Family Planning and PKK, has not prevented

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>73</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 organisation assisted the government in reducing unemployment. Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *Sidang Tanwir Aisyiyah I Periode 1990-1995*, Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, Yogyakarta, 1992, pp. 30-32.

<sup>74</sup> Eighty per cent 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. Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Aisyiyah from carrying on the mission of Islamic preaching or maintaining its character as a Muslim organisation. 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 Quranic Reading Group (QRG)*, which included six main subjects in its curriculum.<sup>75</sup> With such an objective and approach to its implementation, those who 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>76</sup> In dealing with the issue of creating the *Keluarga Sakinah* 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 neighbourhood.

In some cases, however, the Islamic element inserted by Aisyiyah in its programs led the organisation to present a different perspective from that of

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<sup>75</sup> The six subjects reflecting these objectives were: 1) The true belief in one God; 2) Disseminating Islamic teaching based on the Quran and Hadith; 3) Health education; 4) Nutrition; 5) Family planning, and 6) Home economics with the stress on job training for income-generating activities. With this curriculum, the intermediate performance objectives of the first year implementation of the program (1979) were: a) train 30 Aisyiyah leaders to implement the program; b) select 50 Quranic Reading Groups 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 and 35; d) maintain a family planning discontinuation rate less than 5 per cent; e) encourage at least 55 per cent 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 Quranic teacher-trained program. See B. Baried, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>76</sup> The manual itself was entitled *Keluarga Sakinah* which was printed by the organisation to be distributed to each Quranic Reading Group. It may also be the religious emphasis of the program which led Aisyiyah to transfer the program from the management of the economics section over, the *tabligh* section.

government on certain issues. The family-planning program represents one such tendency. It is widely known that an important aspect of the government's family-planning program was the restricting of families to two children.<sup>77</sup> Aisyiyah's position, 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>78</sup> Rather, the objective of this program 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 God".<sup>79</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>80</sup> This difference from the government policy, however, is not overly stressed, and has not led to direct opposition.

The above activities make it clear that Aisyiyah has for the most part conformed to the New Order government's agenda. Compared to *Dharma Wanita*, *PKK* or even *KOWANI*, Aisyiyah may have been somewhat more independent in its activities in terms of government financial support. Yet, given the tightly

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<sup>77</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 insurance, which was provided by the government, covered only up to the third child.

<sup>78</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* (forbidden) since Islam encourages Muslims to have many offspring. To support this argument *Majlis Tarjih* quoted Quranic verse (11:6) which states that "there is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on God. He knows the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit; all is in a clear record". F. Djamil, *Metode Ijtihad Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, Logos, Jakarta, 1995, pp. 81-82.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>80</sup> The most important limitation in using an IUD according to *Majlis Tarjih* was the requirement that it should be implanted by a female doctor. B. Baried, *op. cit.*, p. 151.



controlled political situation, Aisyiyah had little choice other than to follow and adopt the New Order's ideology and policies in pursuing its own activities, particularly in the area of development. This has tended to put Aisyiyah on a par with other women's organisations. Furthermore, strong government control obliged Aisyiyah, even while expressing its distinctive message as a Muslim organisation, to support the government's programs. Family Planning, *Pembinaan Wanita Desa* and *Qoryah Toyyibah* all illustrate to varying degrees how Aisyiyah tried to depict the government's programs as conforming to Islamic teaching.

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

The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS) policy, which was ratified in 1985 by all United Nations 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. The establishment of several women's NGOs,<sup>81</sup> which has resulted in an alternative or counter

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<sup>81</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 organisation to raise such issues as gender-based divisions, or violence against women both at home and in the workplace. P.J. Eldridge, *Non-government Organisations and democratic Participation in Indonesia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995, pp. 161-162.
- 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 of 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 work place. Another important program of this group involved conducting a legal education class undertaken in cooperation 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. Istiadah, *op. cit.*, p. 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.

discourse for existing women's organisations, is a prominent feature of this new phenomenon. Despite their different goals and targets, it is clear that these new organisations had at least one thing in common, namely, the desire to abolish the patriarchal system. One obvious drawback to this system, according to these new 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 organisations demanded that it be reviewed and even dismantled, in order to create an atmosphere which guarantees gender equality, and putting an end to the domestication of women. With this perspective in view and by referring to the NFLS, these new organisations, often referred to as feminist groups, began to criticise the ideas of *Women in Development* that have served as a reference for the New Order government in setting up its policy on women. One particular criticism voiced by these organisations 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>82</sup> More importantly, they saw the New Order government's ideology, which emphasised 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

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Due to the seniority of its founders, this organisation was basically expected to be an umbrella organisation for other women's NGOs, and to serve as a pressure group on the government. Concerned above all with the gender gap, this organisation aggressively struggled to 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 to women workers, in particular, the domestic workers and the exported women workers. E. Triwijati, 'LSM perempuan transformatif: Gerakan alternatif pemberdayaan perempuan', in M.O. Gardiner, M.L.E. Wagemann, E. Seleeman and Sulastri (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 368-369.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

women. This latter perspective led to the view that the new women's movement was actually opposed to the kind of society favoured by the New Order, and that their common goal was to "search for a way to challenge it".<sup>83</sup>

Voicing this strong message of gender equality, the new organisations 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 organisations argued that instead of *PKK*, *Dharma Wanita* or other women's organisations showing the way in social causes, those who should be given credit for contributing more to development were women labourers who were "working for low wages under poor conditions" in support of industrialisation.<sup>84</sup> 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>85</sup> the new women's NGOs condemned *peran ganda* as simply imposing a double burden on women. Besides, according to the 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

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<sup>83</sup> Istiadah, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> J.D. McCormack, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>85</sup> The idea of dual role for women emerged in women's discourse at the beginning of 1980, when the process of modernisation and industrialisation began to take off. The demand for greater industrialisation had led the government to invite women, who in general already had greater opportunity to pursue higher education, to participate in the various sectors of the industrialisation 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 *wanita karir* (career women). *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89.

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 than improving standards of living.

The criticisms expressed by the newly founded groups extended even to the use of term *wanita* (women). Meaning "mature women", *wanita* is a Javanese word which in the past was seen as a contraction of *wani di tata* (being ready to be controlled). Beginning with Soekarno's period and until Soeharto's time this word was widely used by the government, women's organisations and society as a whole. Considering its inferior and pejorative meaning, the use of this word was criticised 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 criticising the government, the newly founded groups also criticised existing women's organisations, including Aisyiyah, and their activists. According to the feminist groups, such as Yayasan Anisa Swasti and Yayasan Solidaritas Perempuan, the activities of most women's organisations, for which 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 organisations, including Muslim ones, were clearly intended to perpetuate the traditional role of women.<sup>86</sup> She also states that after the

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<sup>86</sup> W. Hafidz, 'Organisasi wanita Islam dan arah pengembangannya', in *Wanita Islam Indonesia dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual*, eds L. Marcoes and J.H. Meuleman, INIS, Jakarta, 1993, p. 137.

women's movement had accomplished its goals, i.e., the promulgation of the marriage law for 1974, an egalitarian constitution and equal opportunities in education, it lost its momentum and its significance.<sup>87</sup> Some of the organisations even felt that they had already accomplished their tasks, while most of the rest were trapped in romanticism, merely remembering and maintaining what they had already achieved.<sup>88</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 organisations. Dealing specifically with Aisyiyah, Lies Marcoes offers a similar criticism. She argues that despite several exceptions, the division of tasks between Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah mirrored the polarisation of duties in the family, which is totally subjected to gender bias.<sup>89</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, organisational policy and relations with the government.<sup>90</sup>

What is noteworthy, therefore, is the fact that the feminist groups have brought a new perspective to bear on women's organisations in Indonesia. They have questioned and challenged the dominant concept of the ideal role of women

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<sup>87</sup> W. Hafidz, 'Gerakan perempuan dulu, sekarang, dan sumbangannya kepada transformasi bangsa', in *Dinamika Gerakan Perempuan*, eds F. Ridjla, L. Margiyani and A.F. Husein, Tiara Wacana, Yogyakarta, 1993, p. 96.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> L. Marcoes, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

embodied in the women's organisations offered by the New Order government. We see then, that activities like education and social welfare, which had previously been considered as the ideal fields of activity for women's organisations, have come to be viewed as reinforcing gender bias. Given this context, Aisyiyah, as a part of the women's movement, must be influenced by this paradigm. Moreover, since the organisation is Islamic in character, it can be expected to contribute its Islamic perspective to this new discourse.

To conclude, Aisyiyah has constantly made an effort to maintain, and even develop its programs. It is also true, however, that the organisation 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 organisations were made to reinforce the state's perspective on society. The strong control exercised by the New Order deeply influenced the actions of the organisation. This is why Aisyiyah put the theme of development at the forefront of their political platform, in order to meet the New Order's expectations.

While its relationship with other women's organisations seems no longer to be a problem for Aisyiyah, this period witnessed the emergence of several internal problems. The cadre-formation process, and the attendant question of Aisyiyah's regeneration and dynamism, as well as its status with respect to the Muhammadiyah, proved to be among the organisation's most fundamental challenges. In addition to these internal issues, the gender issue, which began to draw the attention and concern of the Indonesian's women movement, may be regarded as an external challenge facing Aisyiyah. Such problems needed to be

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

addressed if the organisation was to develop further and if, as a Muslim women's organisation, it was to respond and adjust to the rapid social and cultural transformation that Indonesia was facing.

After discussing how the New Order policy on the women's movement affected Aisyiyah's activities during the period, in the following chapter I will explore the organisational development and activities of Aisyiyah during Habiebie's government, 1998-1999. How did Aisyiyah respond to the *Reformation Era*? How did the policy of *Wanita Pilar Bangsa* impact on Aisyiyah's development and activities during the period? How did Aisyiyah consolidate and respond to several women's issues in Indonesia, including the issues of a female becoming President of Indonesia?