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The Changing Lives of Indonesian Women Contained Emancipation under Pressure

The focus of this article is on contemporary Indonesian women and the way their lives are influenced by global change. Because the impact of such influence differs according to one's stage in life, I will use an approach similar to that advocated by Ryder in his well-known article on the study of social change. By employing the concept of cohort, Ryder placed the life span within a time-bound framework (Ryder 1965). I will group women into age categories that correspond with significant phases in life – girls, adolescents and young women, adult women (*ibu*) and elderly women – and I will treat these age categories as cohorts in Ryder's sense. Furthermore, I will pay special attention to marriage as a crucial transition in the lives of Indonesian women. By using this approach, the impact of social change can be assessed in a more meaningful way. Discontinuities become apparent when the experiences of a group now living in a certain phase are compared with those of a group who went through this phase during an earlier period. Thus a picture emerges of the lives of present-day Indonesian girls and women seen against the backdrop of global social change.

Before sketching this picture, I will provide a brief overview of the development of Indonesian women's and gender studies. This is important because it was through these studies that facts about Indonesian women's lives came to light and images about Indonesian women were formed. Then I will briefly discuss the global influences that affect Indonesian women today. These influences can be grouped into two main streams: development ideology and practice, and emancipatory ideologies. To a certain extent these influences can be combined in women-in-development strategies.

The study of Indonesian women

The fact that this volume contains a separate chapter on women reflects the emergence of Indonesian women as a legitimate and relevant object of study. When Cora Vreede-de Stuers's study on the emancipation of Indonesian women was published (Vreede-de Stuers 1959), academic publications focusing on women in Indonesia were still quite unusual. For various reasons, sociological and historical studies on Indonesia were either gender-neutral or male-biased (Locher-Scholten and Niehof 1992:1-12). Kartini's 'light in the darkness' glimmered for a few, but did not enlighten the minds of the majority of scholars in the field of Indonesian studies. A

cautious start was made during the 1960s with the publications of Hildred Geertz (1961) and Alice Dewey (1962). In retrospect, it can be said that their portrayal of Javanese women as social and economic agents foreshadowed the gender-oriented paradigms to come. Long before the devising of gender studies, Jane Belo was prompted by Balinese culture to reflect upon gender in Bali. In her famous study she points to 'the crossing of sex roles as an immensely important feature of Balinese society' (Belo 1949:47).

Ann Stoler resumed this work in the 1970s by applying the concept of female autonomy to women's roles in rural Central Java (Stoler 1977). During the same period the social demographer Valerie Hull did her fieldwork in rural Central Java. In her study she points to the relationships between fertility patterns, the status of women and class (Hull 1976). Also in the 1970s, Gillian Hart focused on women's roles in labour allocation patterns in rural Javanese households (Hart 1978). Indonesian scholars were warming to the subject as well. Social scientists like T. Omas Ihromi, Mely Tan, Yulfita Rahardjo paid increasing attention to the position of Indonesian women (Papanek et al. 1974). The dissertation of Pujiwati Sajogyo (1983) discusses labour allocation patterns as well as time allocation patterns of rural women, this time in West Java.

Since then, bibliographies, monographs, articles and readers on Indonesian women have been published by both Indonesian and foreign scholars. These works deal not only with women as social and economic agents, but also with gender ideology and the influence of the state on women's roles. As a subject of scholarly investigation Indonesian women have become part of a global paradigm shift in the social sciences from gender-neutral or male-biased paradigms to gender-sensitive ones.

Global influences on the lives of Indonesian women today

Since the 1980s, women have also been featured in the discourse on Indonesian development. In a recent book on development and social welfare in Indonesia during the New Order, a separate section is devoted to women and development (Dirkse et al. 1993:117-59). During the past decade, important donor countries appointed WID (women-in-development) experts to their embassies in Jakarta. Projects were drawn up which were either specifically targeted at women or given a gender-oriented perspective. The ultimate aim was to incorporate women's issues and women's interests into mainstream development activities and to avert the danger pointed out in Ester Boserup's classic study (1970) of women becoming the victims instead of the beneficiaries of economic development. Funded by donor organizations, gender-and-development training courses were given to project employees and to the government officials of the receiving country. In this respect also, Indonesian women willy-nilly became part of a worldwide trend.

Development strategies were not the only external influences affecting the position of Indonesian women. Development (*pembangunan*) practice, gender-oriented or not, became a major factor in people's daily lives with the introduction of five-year plans, development projects and a development-oriented administration. The effects of economic development and other processes that emerged in its wake, such as industrialization and urbanization, are being felt to a greater or lesser degree by all Indonesians. Development achievements, particularly in the areas of health, family planning, education, infrastructure and public facilities, have a direct impact on women's lives. In this article I will assess the scope of this impact.

Through mass media and women's organizations, global ideological trends such as nationalism, feminism, egalitarianism, rationalization, secularization and religious fundamentalism are – directly or indirectly – influencing the lives and attitudes of Indonesian women. But global feminist ideologies, notably those emphasizing women's autonomy, encounter indigenous gender ideologies in which interdependency, inequality and complementarity of the sexes are stressed. In Javanese culture, where the notion of hierarchy is paramount, such gender ideologies provide a better fit than feminist egalitarianism or notions of autonomy. In the official ideology, the mission of women (*dharma wanita*) is spelled out in five points. The first four deal with women as housewives and mothers: women as auxiliaries of their husbands (Mulder 1994:63). Only in the fifth place are women acknowledged as members of society and as economic actors (Noviana Titin as cited in Mulder 1994:63). This may well be an example of a cultural lag – official or dominant ideology lagging behind actual practice and common notions. Letting this question rest for the moment, the following sections will discuss how the lives of women of different age categories are affected by the external factors mentioned above.

Girls, their infancy and childhood

During the period 1961-1990, infant and child mortality in Indonesia declined significantly. The infant mortality rate dropped from an estimated 175 per 1000 live births based on 1961 census figures to 145 according to the 1971 census, and then to 71 according to the 1990 census. Likewise, the mortality rate of children up to five years old dropped from 218 to 103 during the period 1971-1990 (BPS 1994:58). Although to some extent the estimates depend on the data source and the precise method of calculation, 'all data sources and methods reach the common conclusion that child mortality was falling dramatically over the period' (Hugo et al. 1987:119). The global spread of biomedical technology, applied nutrition science and the health-for-all ideology played an important role in the fight against infant and child morbidity and mortality.

An important factor in infant and child health is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is nearly universal in Indonesia, not so much as a result of recent worldwide initiatives to promote it, but – in this case – reflecting the resilience of tradition. Almost 98 percent of Indonesia's children are breastfed, a percentage which reveals little regional variation (BPS 1994:101). The time at which children are weaned does differ according to region. For Indonesia as a whole, 90 percent of the children are still being breastfed at the age of two (BPS 1994:107). Based on my own observations in several regions in Indonesia, I would say that the main factor in determining the intensity of breastfeeding and the duration of weaning, apart from a new pregnancy of the mother, is the health of the child rather than its sex.

As sex ratios at birth and sex-specific mortality figures have never shown extraordinary patterns in Indonesia, it may be assumed that girls profit as much from decreasing mortality risks as boys, and continue to do so. A major factor in the decline of infant and child mortality have been the intensive immunization campaigns launched in the early 1980s, which have since been more systematically integrated into primary health care services, such as those provided at health centres and health posts. In 1992, overall immunization of children under five reached 58 percent, varying among provinces between 80 percent in D.I. Yogyakarta and 45 percent in the Moluccas (BPS 1994:105). Tetanus immunization of expecting mothers is included in vaccination programmes as well.

Formal education is immensely important for any child at the end of the twentieth century. To a large extent it determines a child's prospects in adult life. And it is here that in many societies the discrimination of women starts. During the past decades Indonesia has made great advancements in the literacy of its population. New schools were built all over the country with the help of special funds. Literacy rates between 1970 and 1980 increased from 66 to 83 percent for men and from 42 to 65 percent for women. Primary school enrolment ratios increased as well. While in 1960 there was still a substantial difference between male and female primary school enrolment ratios (86 and 58 respectively), this gender gap narrowed during the period 1986-1988 to 99 for boys and 97 for girls (UNICEF 1990: 82).¹ Today, primary education seems equally accessible to both sexes. The picture regarding secondary and higher education is less clear, however. Female students can be found at educational institutions at all levels, but whether their participation equals that of male students is a question for separate analysis. Data on the educational attainment of the Indonesian population during the period 1961-1980 were compiled by Graeme Hugo et al. (1987). Some of their figures are summarized in Table 1.

¹ The enrolment ratio is the total number of children enrolled in a schooling level – whether or not they belong in the relevant age group for that level – expressed as a percentage of the total number of children in the relevant age group for that level (UNICEF 1990:100).

Table 1. Educational attainment of the Indonesian population by sex and year.

Educational attainment	1961		1980	
	% Males	% Females	% Males	% Females
Incomplete primary schooling	22.6	11.2	35.9	30.4
Completed primary schooling	17.7	7.3	25.5	18.8
Completed secondary schooling*	4.8	1.9	15.9	9.1
Academy or university education	0.2	0.0	0.9	0.3

* In the original table this category is called 'Completed Lower or Upper Secondary Schooling', which means completed SMP or SMA or schools at the same level.

Source: Hugo et al. 1987:282 Table 8.18.

The figures in Table 1 reveal several trends: first, a clear advancement in educational attainment throughout the period, presumably continuing up to the present, and second, females lagging behind males at all levels, with the least lag at the lowest level of educational attainment. At the same time, the number of female pupils in relation to males is increasing over time, which again points to a narrowing gender gap.

Non-formal or semi-formal education, notably religious education, has always been a major part of a child's upbringing in Indonesia. In the villages, little boys and girls learn to read and to recite from the Koran in the homes of religious teachers. These *pengajian* sessions are deemed important by most Muslim parents, especially (but not exclusively) in rural areas. Religious education can be continued at various levels. Both girls and boys can be enrolled at a *pesantren*, a boarding school where Islamic theological studies are pursued. *Pesantren* vary greatly in size, reputation and male-female ratio. It is important to note that this type of higher religious education is also in principle open to girls. Pupils often travel from other provinces. Thus education contributes to the social and geographical mobility of adolescent girls.

Adolescence and young womanhood

To a certain extent adolescence is a new phase of life, for girls in Indonesia even more than for boys. Ethnographic data reveal that up until recently in most rural areas in Indonesia a girl's childhood ended at menarche, followed by a longer or shorter transitional period during which she would be prepared for marriage. With the added years of schooling and the rise of age at marriage, this transitional period began to acquire a character of its own. It is now generally accepted that although girls should eventually

marry and bear children, they are to be given some scope to first develop their talents and personality.

Adolescence is not only a period of personality formation. It can also be an economically rewarding period, for the girls themselves as well as for their parents, to whom they are still tied economically as long as they remain unmarried. As Wolf has observed, even after a girl is married but still living with her parents, she can be ordered by her mother to work at home, in a *warung* (coffee shop), or to trade at the market in order to contribute to her parents' household income (Wolf 1992:93). Traditionally the labour performed by girls in the agricultural sector, handicrafts and home industries has always been an important factor in the rural household economy. In this context girls function as unpaid family workers. There are instances of girls employed in hybrid coconut processing who are as productive as their parents but are only rewarded with a small amount of pocket money (Hetifah Sjaifudian 1994:182). Today, increasing numbers of factories in rural and suburban areas in Java offer employment opportunities for these girls. As wage labourers they can earn more than just a little pocket money.

Diane Wolf's work focuses on girls working in rural industries in Central Java, but her conclusions are probably valid for 'factory daughters' in other regions of Indonesia as well. According to her findings, these factory daughters are young and single and come from poor households (though not the poorest). To the employers, they constitute an attractive workforce, largely because they are cheap and docile. For the girls, working in the factory and tolerating minimal conditions is largely related to their desire for emancipation (Wolf 1993). Both commuters (who continue living with their parents) and boarders strive to increase their independence. They become more assertive and feel less obliged to submit to parental authority, even when it comes to choosing a spouse. Although they do not want to come home empty-handed, in fact they do not contribute much to the parental household economy. Wolf notes that 'workers did not remit a steady, dependable flow of cash to their families. Rather, transfers of cash and goods from a worker to her family had more the quality of a gift than an obligatory contribution.' (Wolf 1992:95.) As might be expected, parents – especially mothers – expressed mixed feelings about these developments.

The situation in rural Central Java as described by Wolf contrasts sharply with the mother-daughter relationship as portrayed in the novels of Minangkabau writers: 'Mothers demand – and generally get – total obedience and respect from their daughters. [...] Daughters are expected to serve guests or bring food for the parents to the *sawah*; mothers decide on their daughters' marriages and education.' (Postel-Coster 1985: 98, my translation.) Admittedly, this picture is taken from a different cultural context (the matrilineal Minangkabau) and relates to rural areas not yet affected by industrialization.

Celia Mather's earlier study of female factory workers in West Java shows how Islam and patriarchal notions are used in Sundanese culture to maintain control over female factory workers. There the subordination of daughters is reinforced, not lessened. This is true even for migrant workers, like girls from Central Java. When these girls board with villagers they are 'domesticated' and subjected to pseudo parental control. 'Thus, instead of presenting a challenge to the prevailing paternalist social order, many migrants are in one way or another being drawn into it' (Mather 1985:176). This was the situation during the first half of the 1980s. To what extent the alliance of factory owners, village notables and religious leaders has continued to maintain control over the lives of young female factory workers is a question I cannot answer.

It can be concluded that through the employment of single girls, industrialization exerts pressure on the traditional familial order. A recent paper on gender and household strategies in Lampung provides interesting insights. Among indigenous Lampungese, the spatial restriction on daughters has loosened, 'with *adat* reworked to accommodate [their] working in Tangerang', while the daughters of Javanese migrants work at the nearby sugar plantation to bring money into the households of their poor parents. For the Lampungese, certain practices can be sanctioned for young women either when they are carried out at a distance or, if in the village, when they are in line with tradition (*adat*) (Elmhirst 1995:22). A geographical double standard!

As implied in the above discussion, the lives of Indonesian girls and young women are changing, primarily as a consequence of economic development. The extent to which decreased economic dependency is responsible for decreased social dependency will vary according to ethnic background and regional situation. There are no studies yet concentrating on the social and sexual autonomy of these girls. Premarital sex is still a taboo subject in Indonesia. Girls may have boyfriends, but they are not supposed to be alone with them. Social control is still tight in this area, especially in the villages. It is difficult for adolescent girls and boys to obtain access to contraceptives, since the national family planning programme is targeted at married couples. There are some private clinics providing counselling and help to both married and unmarried women (including contraception and safe abortions), but these are located only in the big cities. Indonesia does not have a problem of large numbers of teenage pregnancies, as some developing countries do. Still, the need for contraception among adolescent girls is expected to increase. Young people are also gradually becoming aware of the danger of HIV infection. In cities like Jakarta and Yogyakarta, which have large student populations, private organizations are active in promoting 'safe sex' among young unmarried men and women. In youth clubs and at youth festivals condoms are freely distributed.

Marriage

Anxiety about preserving their daughters' virginity until marriage and fear of them becoming 'old maids' have induced many parents in most parts of Indonesia to marry off their daughters at a young age. As late as the 1970s, a survey in Madura among women aged 15-49 showed that two-thirds of them were married for the first time before reaching the age of 15. Half were married even before reaching menarche (Niehof 1992:169). At a wedding I attended, the bride was no older than 13. She expressed her disapproval of the marriage by violently throwing away the handkerchief offered to her as part of the ceremony, after which she loudly burst into tears (Niehof 1985:123). Even during colonial times, administrators in Java and Madura were worried about the phenomenon of child marriages, though they understood the reasons behind it. Nevertheless, they were unable to do anything about it. Child marriages could be restricted to betrothal and co-residence only, but could also be arranged without any sexual restriction. Child marriages (and all arranged marriages to a certain extent) now seem to belong to the past.

Weddings have always been elaborate affairs in most parts of Indonesia, as the numerous ethnographic accounts testify. The wedding ceremony, as well as the betrothal ceremony that precedes it, may stretch out over several days. All kinds of marriage goods are involved and food is exchanged. Wedding ceremonial reveals a mixture of religion and *adat*. Marriage is a stage of prime importance in the lives of girls because it marks the transition from asexual childhood to womanhood, paving the way to motherhood. So the ceremonies and decorations are usually filled with fertility symbolism and allusions to sexuality.

At the group level, the significance of marriage lies in the fact that it initiates an alliance between families. Ethnic groups with systems of marriage rules have pre-existing bride-giver and bride-taker relations between clans. (These marriage rules are well documented for eastern Indonesia in the anthropological literature.) A marriage arranged between such groups confirms rather than initiates an alliance relationship. The importance of marital alliance, even among ethnic groups that have no clan organization, such as the Javanese, is evident in the special term used to describe the relationship between the parents of the couple: a *besan* relationship. The parents of your son- or daughter-in-law are your *besan*, and you are *besan* to them. Even if the marriage breaks up, your *besan* remain and are entitled to respect. Rather than asking a widow whether her son has found a wife, you ask whether she has acquired *besan* (personal observation).

These two aspects of marriage – the transition aspect at the individual level and the alliance aspect at the group level – are firmly rooted in Indonesian cultures. The significance of the wedding as an expression of these aspects does not seem to have declined. Even if they are poor, people

tend to spend a lot of money and may run into debt planning their children's weddings. Middle- and upper-class urban families use hotel accommodations for the festivities, and catering for weddings is good business.

The Indonesian Marriage Law of 1974 codified existing practices and set new standards. The minimum age at first marriage, for example, was set at 19 for males and 16 for females. Divorce and polygamy were also regulated. The Marriage Law was especially helpful in providing a frame of reference for the marital rights of Muslim women (Jones 1994:52).

Women's age at marriage has been steadily rising in Indonesia in recent decades. For Indonesia as a whole, the mean age at first marriage of women was estimated at 19.3 in 1971, 20.0 in 1980, and 21.6 in 1990.² The Javanese provinces have always had the lowest ages at first marriage, and among them West Java is the province with the lowest age of all. For Java as a whole the ages at first marriage are estimated at 18.1, 18.7, 19.5 and 21.1 in 1964, 1971, 1980 and 1990 respectively. The same figures for West Java are 17.4, 17.8, 18.5 and 20.2 (Jones 1994:80). The oldest ages at first marriage for women are to be found in predominantly non-Muslim provinces, notably in eastern Indonesia and in the province of North Sulawesi.

In view of the added years of schooling for girls and their growing participation in the labour market, this trend of rising ages at first marriage is not so surprising. The decline of parental authority and of arranged marriages may also contribute to a higher age at first marriage. What is surprising is that marriage patterns were so stable for so many years, especially in Java. On Java, 'what appears to be visible, then, is a traditional pattern, "fossilized", as it were, in a seemingly unchanging social and family structure. Then suddenly, with the 1951-1955 birth cohort – the cohort marrying in the late 1960s and early mid-1970s – the pattern begins to change.' (Jones 1994:81.) This supports my observation of the apparent strong rootedness of the significance of marriage in Indonesia, notably in Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese cultures.

A trend towards later first marriages is also visible in Bali, where the female mean age at first marriage has always been relatively high. Recent anthropological research carried out in the Karangasem region provides a participant's view of the postponement of marriage. While married women are required to work in the ritual, domestic and economic spheres, young single women bear relatively few responsibilities in the spheres of reproductive and ritual activities. They can devote a considerable amount of time and energy to income-generating activities, such as *songket* weaving. 'Acknowledging their own privileged position compared to their mothers and married sisters, these weaving daughters commonly

² Calculated on the basis of proportions of unmarried women per relevant age group (Singulate Mean Age at Marriage).

express their unwillingness to venture into married life, which is, in their eyes, overloaded with multitudes of obligations' (Nakatani 1995:268).

Ibu-hood: mothering and working

In this section I will focus on adult women in the prime of life. After marriage, women are expected to bear children. They are also expected to keep the household going and, to a certain degree, to play a role in social and religious activities. In short, they are up against a 'multitude of obligations', as the above quote puts it. Now I will explore these various dimensions of the lives of adult Indonesian women against the backdrop of ongoing change and impinging external factors.

Between ibu and housewife

The word *ibu* should be translated firstly as 'mother'. It is also a polite form of address for women of all ages, whether they are actually mothers or not. In post-colonial Indonesia, when women were called upon to help build the new nation they were collectively addressed as *kaum ibu*. The extended mother role is conceptualized in various contexts ranging from the level of the individual person and family to that of the state. As an *ibu*, a woman should look after not only her own children's well-being but also that of younger relatives in general (whether younger in generation or age). If she owns a business she is an *ibu* to her employees. The female moneylenders in a Madurese fishing village were expected to provide a minimum level of social security to the people in their debt (Jordaan and Niehof 1982:95-6).³ One could call this matronage.

Among the wives of the elite traditional Javanese families, the role of the *ibu* was and is to safeguard the prestige of the family and the *priyayi* class as a whole, not only by observing the correct etiquette and maintaining the network of social and kinship relations, but also by acquiring the material means necessary for keeping up the desired lifestyle. Ibuism can be defined as an ideology which 'sanctions any action provided it is taken as a mother who is looking after her family, a group, a class, a company or the state, without demanding power or prestige in return' (Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis 1992:44).

Class and *ibu* performance are closely related. For poor women who have no other dependents than their own children, the *ibu* role is restricted to being a good mother to their children. Still, the ideology mentioned above functions as a frame of reference for them as well. At meetings in the villages of the 'Family Welfare Movement' (as the *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, PKK, is officially called in English),⁴

³ All moneylenders involved in fishery were women, for reasons that cannot be explained here. The interested reader is referred to the cited source.

⁴ The word 'movement' is somewhat misleading, since it concerns a governmental

women will be called upon to act as *kaum ibu* at the local level and to take part in local development activities. They are supposed to do this voluntarily and disinterestedly, which is precisely why the response to such summons is usually not overwhelming. As it is, time spent on non-compensated PKK activities is time lost for generating income. In the field, I sometimes observed village women being addressed by PKK leaders in a rather patronizing manner on topics whose relevance was not self-evident to the audience. Nevertheless, most women feel socially compelled to come to such meetings, although – as might be expected – it is difficult to recruit active volunteers among them.

While the *ibu* role model is still a valid one for the majority of Indonesian women, a new role model is gradually making its way into society, primarily the urban middle class. It is the role model of the 'modern housewife'. Women's magazines like *Femina* contain pictures of attractive, mature women, articles on women's issues and matters of general interest, recipes and letters-to-the-editor, in much the same way as women's magazines elsewhere in the world do. Television commercials feature well-dressed and well-groomed women with their equally good-looking husbands and well-fed children who seem to be without a worry in the world. This new role model of the modern housewife was noted by Ingrid Rudie when, after an absence of twenty years, she returned to Kelantan, Malaysia, in the late 1980s. She says of women aspiring to this new role: 'Their role as resource person is reduced, and tends to become restricted to reproductive preoccupations with the nuclear family. These women fill their time with housework of a new standard' (Rudie 1994:270). In another publication she puts it more clearly, pointing to the fact that women whose role in food production is diminished and who do not bring in an income lose their role as providers or even co-providers alongside their husbands. Their role becomes centred on food preparation: 'When women lose recognition as providers, the women-food link changes in character. Instead of being responsible for the whole chain of production as well as preparation of food, the women become responsible for preparing it only.' (Rudie 1995:243.) The fact that women express a strong wish to have their own income should be interpreted as their seeming 'to be trying against some odds to continue an established pattern of economic productivity and relative autonomy' (Rudie 1995:242).

This situation begs the question of the position of present-day Indonesian women in relation to the all-encompassing *ibu* role, in which women may function as providers, and the restricted role of housewife, in which women prepare food and neither produce nor provide it. Putting these two

initiative to enhance the welfare of families by inviting women to participate in activities in the field of, say, community health (immunization campaigns) and nutrition. On the strength of her position, the wife of the village head is automatically the chairperson of the local branch of PKK.

models at the extremes of a continuum and thus implying a sort of linear course from tradition to modernity would be an oversimplification. What we can observe is a trend towards a greater diversity of women's roles, in which variables like rural-urban differentials, class and age play a part.

In Indonesia, the role of women in agriculture is steadily decreasing. This does not necessarily imply a decline in their role as providers, at least as far as rural women are concerned, because there are other options for earning an income. At the same time the pace of urbanization is accelerating. While the urban environment does impose restrictions on women with families to perform a provider role, it also provides opportunities. Poor women take advantage of these opportunities as a matter of necessity. Middle-class women can afford to be more choosy, and many among them opt to be housewives. The more highly educated women are career-oriented. They can afford to have domestic servants, and the role of full-time housewife probably does not appeal to them. According to the 1992 Socio-Economic Survey, the lowest proportion of housewives is found among the group of women with more than senior high school: 31.5 percent (BPS 1994:26).⁵ In another way and with modern means, these women continue to perform the traditional *ibu* role.

Mothering

In her research in a village in South Sulawesi which had been the centre of a nickel-mining and processing facility since 1970, Kathryn Robinson notes that for women modernization has meant that most of the child care is falling to them, and that they feel this as a burden. The fact that men are working away from home during the daytime and hence are unable to concern themselves much with child care, coupled with the urban ideologies of the wives of company managers in which child care is pictured as 'a principal-defining aspect of women's role', has led to an actual and ideological separation of men's and women's domains, associated with working and mothering respectively (Robinson 1985:52). We may assume that this trend is not confined to this particular village in South Sulawesi. It will be visible wherever men are employed outside the home and men and women no longer work side-by-side in agriculture. The emerging role model of the modern housewife, discussed above, presumably includes 'modern' child care patterns, modern here meaning associated with industrialization, urbanization and economic development in general. What actually happens is that diffuse patterns of child care, based on rather implicit traditional notions, become focused on the mother and are related to explicit standards – standards which are propagated by organizations

⁵ The highest percentages of full-time housewives are found among those groups whose educational attainment is at the mid-level (BPS 1994:26), which supports the picture sketched above.

such as PKK, television programmes, women's magazines, teachers and other agents of change.

If modernization in this sense implies increased child care for women, another facet of modernization, namely fertility decline, partly relieves women of this burden. Since the inception of the Indonesian national family planning programme (1969), fertility rates in Indonesia have steadily declined. To implement the family planning programme, the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (NFPCB) was founded in 1970, an interdepartmental institution directly accountable to the President. The budget and activities of the NFPCB have been expanding ever since. During the first phase, the programme was introduced on Java and Bali only. In two subsequent stages, from 1974 onwards, the provinces of the outer islands were included. This geographical expansion was accompanied by a shift from the early centralized clinic-based delivery system to a community-based approach. The NFPCB has always had what is called a cafeteria approach, which means that it offers a wide range of contraceptives. In practice some are easier to get than others. For religious reasons, sterilization is not included in the programme, but it is promoted nonetheless (see Niehof 1994).

Between 1969 and 1985 the total fertility rate⁶ in Indonesia declined from 5.61 to 3.26. The average pace of fertility decline for Indonesia as a whole accelerated during the period 1980-1985, with an average annual decline of 5.4 percent, whereas it had been 2.4 percent during the preceding period (1969-1980). There is a clear pattern of regional differentiation. In West Java, for example, fertility decline set in relatively late. For the earlier period, the average annual percentage was the same as the Indonesian average (2.4) and lower than the percentage for Java (2.6), but for the period 1980-1985 it was 11.9. Bali is outstanding in the sharp drop of its total fertility rate. It was 5.96 in 1969, and decreased to 3.50 in 1980 and 2.53 in 1985 (Hull and Dasvarma 1988:119). Use of contraceptives increased over the years. According to the 1992 National Socio-Economic Survey, 61 percent of all married women between the ages of 10 and 50 had practised contraception at some time, and of those 80 percent were currently using contraception (BPS 1994:46-7).

Thus the quality of mothering is changing, but the additional burden this implies is partly offset by the declining number of children per woman. In a research project in West Java it was found that, when asked about the meaning of family planning, 28 percent of the women said that to them it meant fewer small children to care for and more time for themselves. Others (16 percent) said that family planning enabled them to work. For another 16 percent the main benefit of family planning is that

⁶ Total fertility rate is the number of children that would be born per woman, if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children at each age in accordance with prevailing age-specific fertility rates.

families can take better care of the children they have and that it improves the well-being of the family. A relatively small group (10 percent) interpreted the meaning of family planning in terms of costs of children (NFPCB 1991:41).⁷

It can be concluded that Indonesian mothers are caring for fewer children, but more often than in the past they are now virtually on their own. As parents, they are confronted with 'modern', objective standards of child rearing and education. The significance of having children is also changing. As I observed in West Java during a period of 16 years (1972-1988), the idea that many children are a source of prosperity for their parents changed to the idea that fewer but healthier and better-educated children are a source of prosperity.⁸ This shift in thinking also influences the nature and quality of mothering.

Working

Generally speaking, female workforce participation rates in Indonesia show an increase in all but the youngest (10-14) and oldest (55+) age groups (Oey 1985:23; Niehof 1991:179). According to the 1992 Socio-Economic Survey, most working women can be found at the highest and lowest ends of the scale of educational attainment (BPS 1994:26). In an analysis based on 1980 census data, the highest (urban) female participation rates were in the provinces of Central and East Java, D.I. Yogyakarta and Bali (Hugo et al. 1987:247). Presumably, this regional pattern will not have changed.

Female workforce participation shows variation not only according to age, educational attainment and region, but also according to sector. The agricultural sector has seen a notable decline in women's labour. Many authors relate this to the profound changes in the sector itself resulting from the introduction of high-yielding rice seed varieties and technological innovations. Because of these new varieties, the rice-harvesting tool traditionally used exclusively by women, the *ani-ani*, has been rendered less suitable. In its place came the more efficient sickle, which can also be used by men. Mechanical rice hullers have replaced women's manual labour. There were institutional changes as well. The traditional *bawon* system, in which the harvesters (chiefly women and children) are paid a portion of the harvest, was gradually replaced by the *tebasan* system, in which the produce is bought before the harvest (Oey 1985:31-2).

In other sectors such as trade, services and manufacturing, women's participation in the labour force has increased. The extent to which women are employed in small trade and cottage industries is difficult to establish with any precision. In the latter, much of the work done by women is

⁷ The other answers were about the meaning of family planning in a general sense, not in the personal sense.

⁸ Expressed in the Indonesian saying: '*Banyak anak, banyak rezeki*', a saying which is rarely voiced nowadays.

through sub-contracting or putting-out arrangements. A great deal of this work is usually subsumed under the heading 'informal sector', and the reliability of figures relating to this sector leaves much to be desired. The statistics for some of the women working in the informal sector can be found under the heading of self-employed women. According to such statistics, in 1992, 26.7 percent of all urban working women and 16.4 percent of all rural working women were self-employed. According to the same source, 50.3 percent of rural working women and 18.5 percent of all urban working women were classified as family workers (BPS 1994:27).

Like the work performed by men, women's work can be classified according to status, as in the figures presented above. Grijns et al. (1994) relate the status of women's work to their stage in the life cycle. They distinguish three main status levels: unpaid family worker, labourer, entrepreneur. These are not to be seen as discrete categories. Unpaid family workers begin with the status of apprentice; eventually they get paid and move to the category of labourer. By doing sub-contracting, a woman may become an entrepreneur. In home industries there is a thin line between being a family worker and being an entrepreneur in a joint family enterprise. Young women usually start their working lives as family workers, and then become wage workers. After marriage and the birth of their first children, they often work in the home as unpaid workers in family enterprises or as workers in a putting-out arrangement. When the children are somewhat older or after divorce, they switch back to wage work or become self-employed entrepreneurs. Most older women end their working lives as unpaid family workers again or as entrepreneurs with very small-scale businesses (Grijns et al. 1994:193). This seems to be a fairly stable pattern, at least for rural and lower- to lower-middle-class women.

Anita van Velzen has described women entrepreneurs with food-processing household enterprises in West Java. In such enterprises there is a delicate balance of power between husband and wife, who own and manage the business together. 'Women usually control all financial affairs. Men (and women) often know that the women could manage their business without them and that women contribute far more to the household's budget than they do. On the other hand, in some household enterprises men have appropriated important fields of power such as marketing and management' (Van Velzen 1994:166).

One final point to be made is about the meaning of women's work. Grijns describes the position of female tea-pickers in West Java as mothers and workers. While labour conditions, working status and income are crucial for maintaining the families of these women (especially since the women often have to raise their children single-handedly as a consequence of high divorce rates in West Java), the staff of the estate clings to the middle-class notion of the husband as the provider, and sees women's work

as being only secondary to that of their husbands (Grijns 1992:112-4). Thus, women are underpaid and exploited because they are seen as working wives and mothers, while they see themselves as mothering workers. The latter image is closer to reality than the former. It is a clear case of women's work not being taken seriously. A different trend has been observed among domestic women workers in the Karangasem district in Bali (referred to above). There, the transformation of the village economy and the integration of large numbers of women into the weaving industry have led to women's work being seen as true work, even if it is carried out in the domestic context. 'The process [of economic transformation] has contributed to the recognition of women's weaving activity as "work", thereby preventing it from being characteristically undervalued' (Nakatani 1995:267).

Women and the public domain

The role of women in the public domain is subject to different interpretations. Women are called upon to be good wives and mothers. At the same time they are expected to contribute to *pembangunan* (development) by performing volunteer services or participating in development programmes. As good wives they have to be active in the *Dharma Wanita* organization if their husbands are civil servants. In rural areas they are expected to join the PKK. Under the Old Order they were called upon to help build the nation.⁹ In the New Order era, they are again reminded of their natural destiny as wives and mothers (*kodrat wanita*), but are also told what kind of wives and mothers they should be. They have to be smart (but not smarter than their husbands), responsible and modern. At the same time, they have to work, not so much because it is expected of them but because most of them have to in order to support their families. About 13 percent of all households in Indonesia are headed by women (Oey-Gardiner and Surbakti 1991). These women have no husband to fall back on as the 'breadwinner'.

In spite of all this pressure, many women find time to participate in informal local women's organizations. Two that can be found in many villages or urban *kampung* will be mentioned here. The first is a rotating credit-and-savings association (*rosca*) called *arisan*.¹⁰ All members of an *arisan* make daily, weekly or monthly contributions to the group fund, depending on the type of *arisan*. There are as many meetings as there are members. At every meeting the chairperson draws a winner by lottery. The

⁹ In Indonesia as well as in other formerly colonized countries, the nationalist spirit for women was also an emancipatory spirit. After these countries became stabilized new nation-states, women were more or less referred back to domesticity.

¹⁰ The term *arisan* seems Javanese in origin. Although it does not appear in the 1952 edition of Poerwadaminta's Indonesian dictionary, it has been listed ever since the third edition (1961) (personal communication Prof. A. Teeuw). As an institution, however, it is indigenous in many regions of Indonesia, though often known by other names (see also Hospes 1996:145-61).

amount deposited by each member – and thus the amount to be won – varies in size depending on the members' economic background. When each member has had her turn, a new cycle starts.

An *arisan* has an economic as well as a social function. The institution is especially firmly rooted in Indonesia's female population.¹¹ Undoubtedly this has to do both with women's reduced access to formal sources of credit and with their actual responsibility for household budgeting. The *arisan* seems resistant to all pressures to 'modernize'. Indeed, in a description of the ways women in Ambon use *arisan*, Hospes (1996:183) relates the many types of *arisan* that have evolved to the increased importance of money in the local economy. According to a recent book on rotating savings and credit associations, their importance to women is a global phenomenon (Ardener and Burman 1995).

The second institution of importance to Indonesian women (in this case Muslim women) is the *pengajian*. It is a get-together held to recite the Koran under the guidance of a female religious teacher or a pious woman. In the field, I personally observed that for the women attending, the *pengajian* is also an occasion to relax, to gossip and to have fun. It is a way to get out of the house, for no husband will forbid his wife to attend to her religious duties. Often *pengajian* groups set up an *arisan* as well.

For Muslim women, Islamic organizations provide a framework for action and reflection. Global and national reformist and modernizing influences reach these women through these organizations. An organization like Aisyiyah, which was founded as an independent organization in 1923, has branches all over Indonesia. It initiates activities for women, on behalf of women and by women in various fields, particularly those related to spiritual well-being, education and health. In her article, Baroroh Baried (1989) emphasizes Aisyiyah's efforts to equip women for their responsibilities and their role in modern society, which in fact amounts to an emancipatory agenda.

For the average Indonesian woman, the public domain has become larger and more accessible. The coming of electricity and television to once remote areas and the activities of women's organizations have enlarged the world of local women. More and better roads and transport facilities have increased rural women's mobility. Through such supralocal networks, women are being exposed to global influences.

Elderly women

Since fertility is declining rapidly in Indonesia and people's life spans are increasing, the proportion of elderly people is increasing as well. Indonesia forms part of a demographic trend of population ageing that is occurring worldwide, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa. This process of

¹¹ In Tulehu, Ambon, only 2 of the 24 *arisan* groups are male. The other groups have either members of both sexes or consist exclusively of women (Hospes 1996:138-9).

population ageing is most notable in the provinces of East and Central Java, D.I. Yogyakarta, Bali and North Sulawesi (Niehof 1995). As in many parts of the world, women in Indonesia live longer than men. Hence in the future there will be an increasing number of elderly women who no longer have husbands.

The position of these women will differ greatly according to their household situation, the amount of family support they get, whether they are living in an urban or a rural area and their economic background. So far, not much research has been done on this group. Hugo, when doing fieldwork in rural West Java, was struck by 'the loneliness, poverty and deprivation of older widows and never married women who lived on their own and often had to rely on the charity of the community to survive' (Hugo 1992: 214). Evans (1985) observed that in rural Central Java more elderly women lived on their own than men, and they more frequently had no income of their own. In the absence of any public provisions for old-age security other than pension schemes for civil servants, elderly women depend on their kin, notably their children, for their means of support when they can no longer provide for themselves. This will become a major social problem in the future in spite of prevailing values based on kinship solidarity and the moral duty of children to take care of their parents when the latter reach old age. There will be fewer children to care for more elderly people.

Conclusion: contained emancipation and global pressure

Indonesian women's roles develop within a framework of tradition, Islam, and state ideology. As *ibu*, women are provided by tradition with manoeuvring space and are sanctioned to act for the benefit of their families and dependents. Women are allowed to be strong and resourceful, within the confines of their role as caregivers and providers of basic security. Even if the husband is the token 'breadwinner', the wife is expected to see to it that the family is fed. Indonesian Islam provides women with spiritual resources and a framework for moving beyond the domestic domain. State ideology stresses women's roles and responsibilities as wives and mothers, but also as partners in development. Women can make use of all the emancipatory loopholes tradition, Islam and state ideology provide, but they can only do so within the boundaries of women's natural destiny, the idea of the *kodrat wanita*.

Nowadays, however, young women are marrying later than their mothers did. They earn money or go to school before marrying and, unlike their mothers, they have a say in when and whom they will marry. 'Development' provides them with opportunities to get an education and earn an income that their mothers did not have. In a study about social change in Minahasa it was observed that there is a growing gap between the generations, and that in the villages a youth sub-culture is developing.

Youth and adolescence are emerging as new cultural categories, particularly in relation to consumption patterns and time allocation. These resemble those of young people in other parts of the world. Although 'opportunities for female youngsters to join these sub-cultures, and demonstrate a behaviour deviant from the families' expectations, is more difficult to realize than it is for males' (Weber 1994:95), female adolescents are also affected by this cultural change.

Once these young women marry, they have the means to control their own fertility and to avoid being burdened with childbearing if they do not wish it. They have new standards to live up to for becoming good women, wives and mothers. These standards are not so much dictated by the idea of women's natural destiny, but rather are influenced by ideologies of modernization and global developments that affect people's aspirations and circumstances. The *kodrat wanita* and the limited emancipation it entails is under global pressure.

When today's young Indonesian women grow old, they will be living in an ageing society with fewer children or none at all to look after them in old age. But they will have grown up in an age in which traditional boundaries became more open, and they will be accustomed to controlling their own destinies to a larger degree than their mothers ever could. At the same time, the Indonesian state will have assumed notions of societal responsibility in areas where in former times only private and familial support could be counted on. From the perspective of Indonesian women, globalization offers a mixed blessing: more opportunities and a greater variety of roles on the one hand, and less security based on shared fundamental notions on the other.

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