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IN NESIAN WOMEN

Journey Continues



EDITORS

Mayling Oey-Gardiner Carla Bianpoen

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INDONESIAN WOMEN

The Journey Continues



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December 2000

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INDONESIAN WOMEN
The Journey Continues

Edited by
Mayling Oey-Gardiner
and
Carla Bianpoen



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies

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Finally, our thanks must go to all the original authors. Their efforts have served to enlighten all of us on the gains and frustrations faced by Indonesian women as they move forward on their continuing journey.

The editors

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FOREWORD

Indonesian women: Is there a journey's end? We refer to the Indonesian Women's Movement as a long journey, but never mention the journey's end. Should we now dare to look forward and hope that the women's movement will bring more happiness to women, and to mankind? And even then, what about the tacit assumptions about patriarchal society and the predominantly male values that shape the direction of progress and which women accept, conform to and support?

According to Helene Cixous — a prominent feminist linguist — a major consideration is our tendency to think in binary opposites, denoting explicit and implicit inequality. A typical masculine question may arise: *What do women want?* And when women keep silent, men will be all too eager to answer in our stead. When the luxurious cruise ship *Titanic* foundered, *that* was the time for suffragettes to fight for women's rights. A newspaper presented the choice as:

Boats for women is the cry...
Or
Votes for women is the cry...

The question still unanswered is: Do women want protection or do they want equality? Women have not yet solved this dilemma — we remain divided. We are biologically female, but are we feminist or feminine? Striving to achieve the ideal silhouette with ideal contours, we have become what we are through conformity to stereotypes moulded by men — of Mother, Virgin, Whore, Career Woman, Spinster, Tomboy, and Seductress or Femme Fatale. But our utmost censors and sternest critics are our own mothers, sisters, aunts, women friends and neighbours. The 'Women's Movement' means moving against other women first, not against men. The ability of women to work

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together with a single purpose is still a major problem, in spite of our sisterhood. This is territory not canvassed in this volume.

Even before women's studies programs complete their research on *what women want*, there is a clear consideration. That is, in order to find our place in the feminist paradigm, we have to take the biological clock into account in deciding whether to be a radical or a mellow feminist. Acquisition of wisdom at an older age may come far too late.

This interesting anthology consists of seventeen chapters introducing the reader to issues of continuity and change in women's lives in a *man's* world. We are familiar with the image of the ideal women in accepting her natural role as wife and mother, fully and solely responsible for the social development of her children. She is often described as hard-working and self-sacrificing, unaware of gender inequalities. And she perpetuates these inequalities within her own family — with almost no recognition of herself or other women as individuals (Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri).

How then are women depicted in literature, film and the fine arts? Art as creativity and expression aims to intensify values, but is often made to be entertaining to enable us to cope with life. We have the easy forms of art, the popular novels, and the popular films presenting the stereotypes of whiny, bitchy, finicky and stupid women (Sita Airpurnami). But even these unpleasant images still do not omit women's power of seduction. And the artists are predominantly male — presenting women as continually subversive to male dignity and self-sufficiency.

Women provoke the battle between the sexes by their sheer existence. As noted by Virginia Woolf, 'Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man as twice its natural size. Without that power the earth probably still would be swamp and jungle. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of

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women, for were women not inferior, they would cease to enlarge. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism, how impossible for her to say this book is bad, this picture is feeble. For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished.'

In the Indonesian context a supposed battle between the sexes is simply too disconcerting. The State has promoted women as dependants or consorts in terms of *suwargo numut neroko katut* (sharing heaven and hell) to *mitra sejajar* (equal partners). Over three decades, through the bureaucracy of the civil service and armed forces, wives have functioned to empower their husbands and, through this, to empower the State. They serve to promote men in implementing development projects designed to accelerate a Third World country towards the *take-off phase*, according to Rostov's economic development theory.

From myths and ideal images reflected in literature and film we move to writings about institutions, systems and structures through which the ideal images became effective, reproduced and remained uncontested, becoming absolutes and imperatives. But how do these affect real life, the lives of individual women?

The life histories in this volume provide clearer examples of just how images of myths regarding the ideal woman and images of a better life motivate these strong women to accomplish what they see as their mission: to be nurturing, supporting and autonomous. Yet they always respect a code of honour, the honour of their men, their husbands. Socially it is more appropriate for an Indonesian woman to conclude that a woman's nature (*kodrat wanita*) is to protect her husband's self-esteem. If she always keeps this in mind, then through appearance and rituals she can go a long way — being a feminist in appearance, misleading her menfolk and finally misleading herself. However, becoming tough, self-sufficient and resilient, but showing to the world her

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mask of feminine appeal and attraction, means living at the threshold of continual hypocrisy.

Let us turn from myth and structures to realities and events. The realities of women artists and the subsistence lives of poor women are two different ways of achieving a breakthrough — contesting the validity of myth and system. Every work of art produced by a woman is a challenge to established and accepted convention. Referring to the idea that more has been lost to mankind, we are reminded of *the lost continent of women's genius*, according to Stendhal, or was it Elaine Showalter? Carla Bianpoen's description of individual women artists depicts their efforts as a continual struggle, and their achievements as breakthroughs. Since the founding in 1973 of *Group Sembilan* (Group of Nine), women artists have come to feel more confident by working in a group, developing individually later to realise their artistic aspirations. Another widespread phenomenon is the Indonesian informal sector where, in spite of their inadequate education and limited sources of formal support, women struggle in order for their families to survive.

The outstanding articles on women artists (Bianpoen) and women in the informal sector (Chamsiah Jamal) are not always success stories. But they tell us how myths and formal structures can be challenged, and how successes can serve as models for others to follow.

We must also be cognisant of recent changes, from the precipitous end of the New Order Regime through to *Reformasi*. The political changes that started in 1998 have been a strong catalyst for women's involvement. One example is the first series of demonstrations by the Voice of Concerned Mothers (*Suara Ibu Peduli* or SIP) in front of the Hotel Indonesia in Jakarta. These demonstrations were the first of their kind organised by a small group of alumni in philosophy who had earlier established a women's journal (*Jurnal Perempuan*). They were very much aware that the shift — *from milk to politics* — was a protest against the government's

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masculine paradigm of power and violence which had brought the country to economic disaster. The motherly appeal against expensive baby milk — the *Demo Susu* — started on Monday, 23 February 1998. On Wednesday, the first student demonstrations took place, the mothers preceding the students by two days. Later the SIP included in their concerns the kidnapped activists, the rape victims and the victims of student protests centred at the Parliament. Baby milk and *nasi bungkus* (rice packages) were the cries of those memorable days.

Ten thousand food packages were delivered to students demonstrating for the fall of Soeharto. This occurred a few times daily, from the same building supplying affordable baby milk, and coming from the same place where the Women's Coalition for Democracy was established, and where the office of the Indonesian Corruption Watch was located for the first critical months. Now the building is deserted. History brought these groups to prominence, but the promising *Reformasi* became the pretext for political power, corruption and incompetence, and a cause for widespread disillusion among activists.

An all-women fine arts exhibition with the theme *Women in the Realm of Spirituality* at Gregorian University, in the Vatican, Rome, protested against violence. We reflected on the question: Is spirituality identical with the non-violent movement and struggle in our material existence and culture?

While many of the themes in this volume follow the stereotypes, myths, systems and structures contributing to the barriers obstructing the women's movement, there are two breakthroughs emerging from the depressing setbacks in the progress of the women's movement. The first is through women artists and the second through those women whose story is one of survival. Can we conclude that survival and creativity are the real foundations of a woman's life in man's world?

Toeti Heraty Roosseno

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1

CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD

Mayling Oey-Gardiner and Sulastri

Background

In 1996 *Perempuan Indonesia: Dulu dan Kini* was published to mark the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. As we begin the year 2000, also known as 'Beijing-Plus-Five', a new momentum has arrived for publishing a book on the Indonesian women's movement: the English version, *Indonesian Women: The Journey Continues*.

It is true that some time has passed since the articles which became the book were first prepared; and Indonesian society in general, and Indonesian women, have been affected by widespread turmoil. For one thing, the Asian economic crisis that spread to Indonesia in August 1997 was followed by major social and political upheavals. The end of President Soeharto's 32-year rule on 21 May 1998 following the students' demonstrations brought hope for *Reformasi*! and the end of KKN (*Korupsi*, *Kolusi*, *Nepotisme*) as demanded by the students. During B.J. Habibie's reign as third president of a transition government, continuing and even escalating violence and upheavals were changing the lives of thousands of people, including women. *Reformasi* became just a hollow word, with only slight changes at the top of government. Although civil society gained strength on the surface, most elements of the government bureaucracy

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and institutions have remained and can be expected to continue, at least for a while.

Tense moments preceded the victory of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri as President and Vice-President through a fairly democratic election by the MPR (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, or People's Consultative Assembly) on 20 and 21 October 1999. Megawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president, is the first woman to occupy this high post.[1] While still not nationally accepted, this pair is the best the political situation has to offer at the time.[2]

Even though earlier criticised by women activists as being gender-insensitive, in the division of responsibilities between the President and Vice-President, Megawati has been given responsibility for empowering women. This assignment is placed at the same level as resolving the problems in Ambon, Irian Jaya and Riau, which all want to secede; handling problems of human rights violations; and dealing with the environment. Considering that this government is more socially and politically oriented and sensitive, it can be assumed that it is serious about the need to empower women (*Media Indonesia* 1999).

Besides, on 25 October 1999, Megawati Soekarnoputri announced the appointment of two fairly vocal women activists

---

1 In fact her party, the PDIP (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*) won the largest number of votes (34 per cent) in the first democratic election held in Indonesia for more than four decades on 7 June 1999. Because she is a woman, her potential presidency was opposed by various Moslem parties. On the other hand, her numerous loyal supporters among the youth and the *rakyat*, the people, especially the poor and downtrodden, were prepared to fight for her victory.

2 Following the East Timorese decision to break away from Indonesia through a referendum held on 30 August, the results of which were announced on 4 September 1999, the most easterly province of the archipelago, Aceh, is also in turmoil. On 9 November 1999, it is claimed, some 2 million Acehnese held a demonstration in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, similarly demanding a referendum with a choice of independence from Indonesia.

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to the cabinet[3]: Ms Erna Witoelaar has been appointed Minister for Housing and Regional Development, and Ms Khofifah Indar Parawansa State Minister for the Role of Women.

When her appointment as Minister for Housing and Regional Development was announced, Ms Witoelaar was a member of the MPR, the People's Consultative Assembly, as representative of the vocal and widely respected YLKI (*Yayasan Lembaga Konsumen, Indonesia* or Indonesian Consumers Association Foundation). This is the first time a woman has been appointed to a non-female-biased post.[4] This ministry is now also responsible for physical infrastructure development, which used to be the domain of the Directorate General of *Cipta Karya* (Human Settlements) of the Ministry of Public Works.[5] This Directorate General used to be in charge of fairly large-scale projects worth several hundred million US dollars; it is claimed that this agency was a major source of widespread corruption. Ms Witoelaar has already announced that no one should even try to bribe her or any of her family members for they are already sufficiently well-off.

Similarly, Ms Khofifah Indar Parawansa was a member of Parliament (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*), and therefore automatically also a member of the People's Consultative Assembly, when Megawati announced her name as Minister for the Role of Women. At 34, Khofifah is the youngest member of the Cabinet. She made her political debut as a member of Parliament representing PPP (better known as P3, one of three political parties allowed by the Soeharto regime) when she stated her party's 'doubt' about Soeharto's accountability speech in 1998. A long-time politician, she

3 The Vice-President was given the task of reading the announcement of the newly formed cabinet because the President's vision is impaired.

4 To accommodate half the population, in the past there were two 'women's' posts: Minister for Social Welfare and State Minister for the Role of Women. In this government the Ministry for Social Welfare has been eliminated.

5 This ministry has now been 'demoted' to a state ministry.

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was elected to Parliament through her party PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*), where she holds a deputy chair. The party consists mostly of members of NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*), a religious group, which claims some 34 million followers, and is headed by Gus Dur, the President. Interestingly, Khofifah had been a vociferous proponent of the abolition of the office. But, she says: 'As a person raised by NU, I could not possibly refuse the task assigned by Gus Dur. I will carry out the task at whatever risk' (*Jakarta Post* 1999). As Khofifah gained prominence as an outspoken member in her party, it is no surprise that, soon after taking office, she has already changed the name of the office to the Ministry for the Empowerment of Women. She is determined to also change the image of the office as one with greater authority and not just playing a complementary role (*Jakarta Post* 1999).

While social change does not occur overnight, the appointment of these women to public office raises expectations that future public policy will be more gender-sensitive. It is in the light of both continuity and change that this book is presented.

The English version contains most of the same chapters as its Indonesian original. Continuity on the one hand and change on the other are two realities within the context of which Indonesian women's dynamics should be viewed.

The character of the Indonesian women's movement is shown through a study of the images of women in Indonesian literature, views on the self-image and role of women in Indonesian society and their involvement in women's organisations. An historical perspective is given through the life stories of older women and those at the peak of their productive years. The range of writings can be seen in the wide variety of topics presented, covering not only women who are public figures but also those in the domestic sphere, and those who make their living in the informal sector. The diversity of women's organisations is shown through examination of large organisations such as *Dharma Wanita*, PKK and religious organisations.

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The Indonesian women's movement is part of a worldwide movement. Periodically the United Nations holds international conferences, which bring international attention to women's problems. Women's issues in Indonesia have much in common with those of women in other parts of the world. Even though women do share in the fruits of development, there continues differing access, determined by gender, as well as by social, economic and political opportunities. Relatively few women have managed to break through the 'glass ceiling' and join the ranks of decision-makers.

Nevertheless, although the women's movement may bear similarities throughout the world, the geographical and ethnic diversity alone renders the Indonesian women's development its own features. In the socio-political conditions of the country, one may well speak of an evolution as the journey continues.

The impetus: The United Nations World Conferences on Women

The United Nations First World Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975 was followed by a declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women, a decade of dedicated efforts to advance the status of women and enhance women's participation in the development process. 'Equality, Development and Peace' were adopted as underlying universal themes. A mid-decade review was held in Copenhagen in 1980. In 1985, the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were adopted by the Second World Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985 to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. At that event, measures were presented to overcome the obstacles to achieving the decade's goals and objectives of Equality, Development and Peace. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing proposed the adoption of a Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

The global women's movement continues to develop and grow. While old issues of gender inequalities in the home,

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access to education and health services, the job market, the political arena, and in society at large, remain unresolved, other issues have been added to the agenda of concern. These include not only getting access to some of the fruits of development through women-specific development projects, but also the need to empower women to enable them to participate more fully in mainstream development projects. Women are making greater demands for power sharing in decision-making processes. Attention is being drawn to the issues of violence against women, the impact of the media on women, women's role in managing resources and safeguarding the environment, and persistent discrimination and violation of the rights of the girl child (United Nations, Draft Plan for Action, 24 May 1995).

As an active member of the United Nations, Indonesia is always represented at UN conferences, seminars and other activities. It is, therefore, not surprising that issues raised during the United Nations conferences are brought back home. Such issues have often guided, at times directly but more often indirectly, the activities of the office of the State Minister for the Role of Women, government-supported women's organisations and individuals.

Indonesia is a developing society where poverty is widespread and expanding as a result of the economic crisis. The major concern of poor Indonesians, half of whom are women, remains that of gaining access to basic services and facilities which others take for granted. This objective guides the activities of public institutions and women's organisations and activities. While past achievements have been substantial, gender concerns have not received the attention they deserve.

Increased access to opportunities, but ...

Even though Indonesia honours R.A. Kartini (1879–1904) as an important independence heroine, it was only after participation in the United Nations First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 that the government gave

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greater attention to the role of women in the development process. In 1978 a Junior State Minister for the Role of Women was appointed in the third Development Cabinet. Five years later, this post was elevated to State Minister for the Role of Women.

This acknowledgement and worldwide calls for a greater role for women in the development process emphasised the need for women-specific or Women in Development (WID) projects. The Ministry for the Role of Women was responsible for P2W (*Peningkatan Peranan Wanita*, or Enhancement of the Role of Women) programs and projects. As a State Ministry, its mandate is co-ordination, not implementation of projects. It is the line ministries that implement projects. These projects usually carry low priority and are under-funded, and thus address the needs of only small numbers of beneficiaries. Consequently, the ministry's impact at the macro level has been limited.

Indonesian women have achieved important gains in access to education, health care and economic opportunities. However, their status and their role in national decision-making have increased only slightly.

During the good times, macro-economic policies resulted in rather high economic growth (on average 5–6 per cent per annum) for a period of about 25 years leading up to the crisis. In addition, substantial investments had been made, not only in directly productive sectors of the economy, but also in human resources development and other social infra-structure. Consequently, girls and women have benefited substantially, and in some cases disproportionately. It can be said that, while the gender gap is generally declining, it remains substantial in some areas.

Education

Impressive gains have been made in increasing access to educational services (Oey-Gardiner 1989). The demand for education had increased in parallel with rapid economic

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growth before the crisis, as parents recognised market signals of the benefits of education for their children. Not just sons but increasingly daughters too were given opportunities to attend school; as a result, girls have benefited proportionately more than boys from continuing educational expansion. Although it is narrowing at the primary level, there remains a substantial gender gap at the secondary level and beyond.

With almost universal primary school enrolment (95 per cent in 1995, BPS 1996), the nation is now moving towards a system of compulsory nine-year basic education, but at a slower pace since the economic crisis. The introduction of a special primary school scheme, known as the *SD Inpres* (primary school program conducted by Presidential Instruction), providing at least one primary school per village, brought a marked improvement in the education of women. With schools closer to the home, the element of distance and the fear for daughters' safety were eliminated. Statistically, school attendance of primary school-age girls increased from only 58 per cent in 1971 to 83 per cent in 1980, 92 per cent in 1990, and 95 per cent in 1995. Comparable figures for boys were 62 per cent in 1971, 84 per cent in 1980, 91 per cent in 1990 and 94 per cent in 1995 (BPS, 1983; 1990 Indonesian Population Census; 1995 Intercensal Population Survey).

The gender gap initially widens with higher levels of education to narrow again at the upper end of the education ladder. Data for 1995 show, for instance, the following differences in age-specific enrolment ratios. Among primary school-age children of 7 to 12 years, a slightly higher percentage of girls attended school than boys (94.7 and 94.5 per cent). Starting at the lower secondary level, among those aged 13–15 years, boys were 3 percentage points more likely than girls to attend school (77 and 74 per cent for boys and girls respectively). The gender difference widens further among upper secondary school-age youth of 16 to 18 years, as males were 7 percentage points more likely than females to attend school (49 and 42 per cent for males and females).

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Interestingly, among the post-secondary population of between 19 and 24 years old, the gender difference in attendance ratios was slightly lower at only 5 percentage points (14 and 9 per cent for males and females).

The crisis may well have put a damper on the rapid progress attained in the past, as many parents can no longer afford school expenses, especially beyond primary school. Besides, during the boom years of rapid economic growth, parents were quite willing to invest in both their daughters and sons when employment opportunities, especially in the formal sector, were growing steadily for those with a secondary education.

As a result of rapidly rising enrolments, educational achievements have risen significantly over a period of about 25 years. This is not only true of the lower end but also of the upper end of the education spectrum. For the pessimists and the impatient, the achievements are still too slow, as only a very small elite proportion has enjoyed post-secondary education.

Because of their later start, females have made greater gains than males. Among females 10 years and older in 1971 slightly more than half (51 per cent) had never attended school; by 1995 this was true of only 16 per cent, an incredibly sharp decline of some 35 percentage points. Comparable figures for males are a decline from 29 to 7 per cent, or 21 percentage points, during the same period between 1971 and 1995.

On the other hand, the percentages of those with post-secondary degrees are still minimal. Only 12 per cent of females and 18 per cent of males 10 years and over had completed post-secondary schooling by mid-1990. Only 0.1 per cent of females and 0.5 per cent of males 10 years and over had completed their post-secondary degree in 1971. Twenty-five years later 1.9 and 3.0 per cent of females and males 10+ had similar qualifications. For females that meant a 19-fold increase and for males only a six-fold increase during the period.

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Health

Significant improvements also occurred in the fields of health and sanitation. The crisis has, however, also put a damper on pre-crisis achievements as poverty widened and also deepened. Concerns are often raised in the media, with regular reports of hunger and the health consequences of poverty.

Family planning and child health care services are the primary focus of population and public health policies and programs. This has caused a sharp drop in both fertility and mortality rates. During a period of about two decades, total fertility, or the total number of children a woman would have by the end of her child-bearing period, declined from 5.52 children in the early 1970s to 2.83 children in the early 1990s. During the same period, infant mortality declined from 142 to 57 per 1000 live births (Sastrasuanda 1995; Soemantri 1995; BPS *et al.* 1995: 40, 138).

Immunisation coverage also spread rapidly. For example, 43 per cent of babies born during the five years before the 1991 survey had not received tetanus immunisation, while by 1994 the percentage had dropped to 33 per cent (BPS 1993: 121).

Public infrastructure also improved, particularly during the 1980s. For example, in 1980 only 14 per cent but a decade later already 47 per cent of all households had access to electricity for lighting. Access to piped drinking water increased from 7 to 13 per cent of households. The percentage of households with their own bathrooms rose from 26 to 42 per cent (BPS 1983; 1990 Indonesian Population Census).

Despite fairly rapid development and improvements in the lives of women with regard to housework, attention to the concerns of women themselves remains low. Maternal mortality in Indonesia is one of the highest in the world, and is the highest in the five Southeast Asian societies constituting the earlier ASEAN.[6] For the 1989–94 period

6 Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

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approximately 390 mothers per 100,000 live births died during delivery (BPS *et al.* 1995: 210). Compare this rate to those of neighbouring countries: Malaysia 59, Philippines 100, Singapore 10 and Thailand 50 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNDP 1995, Table 7: 168).

This high maternal mortality is not surprising as at least two-thirds of all births are assisted by traditional midwives, having limited knowledge of proper health and sanitation needs. In spite of the high risks, most rural women choose traditional midwives for their ease, low cost and flexible payment methods, post-delivery service and comfortable atmosphere with births taking place at home. To this day the expansion of provision of trained midwifery services has had limited impact on the use of traditional methods of delivery.

There are at least two views of this unfavourable situation, at least for observers of women's issues. On one hand is the view that the current conditions indicate that the main problem is the quality of the service provided, not simply improving access to such services. Another view, from the medical profession, program managers and service providers, remains sceptical of the need for improved quality of services. As the latter are male-dominated, the question arises whether there may be a gender bias in identifying priorities within their policy framework.

While the views espoused will affect policy directions, from the point of view of women themselves, who probably have never been asked for their opinions, the problem remains one of how to lower maternal mortality, or how to lessen the risk of death of mothers during delivery.

As a result of the crisis, poor women, especially young mothers of infants, have the additional disadvantage of insufficient food intake and anaemia that they themselves have to bear. Consequently, they have the additional suffering of hunger and malnutrition among their infants, some even ending in death. Humanitarian assistance has been provided

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to poor mothers, but as this assistance remains limited, it has only slightly relieved some of their hardships. In the meantime their suffering continues.

The labour market

Women's participation in economic activities has increased significantly in all sectors, particularly among younger women and in the modern sector. Unrecognised gender constraints tend, however, to perpetuate gender inequalities in the labour market. These issues and some women-specific constraints are discussed below.

The overall labour market, particularly the formal sector, is feminising, and women workers status has improved. These improvements occurred in a period of rapid economic growth and structural changes. And, as Tzannatos (1994) has shown, Indonesian women workers' earnings increased both in relation to men's and also in real terms. More importantly, the analysis shows that female wage gains did not provoke an adverse reaction in the male wage structure.

On the other hand, women's earnings remain lower than men's, and women's increased participation in economic activity has yet to be accompanied by the effective integration of women's interests and concerns in decision-making regarding development issues. A large proportion of the female workforce remains in the informal sector. The ability of women to share in the benefits of development is constrained by their lower levels of human capital, as women remain disadvantaged compared to men in terms of access to education and training.

While Indonesian women are actively involved in income-generating activities, they tend to be involved in small businesses as part of their household's survival strategy. In this context, they continue to have difficulty obtaining credit, for both venture capital and working capital. They are handicapped by the lack of collateral, as most land titles are in a man's name, even when the property is jointly

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owned or even originally owned by women. Besides, they lack understanding and information about lending procedures and many rural women face the additional constraint of distance from formal sources of credit. Thus poor rural women tend to borrow largely from family and friends, as well as from professional moneylenders and pawnbrokers who set high interest levels on these high-risk loans, but are more lenient. Women are likely to pay higher interest rates rather than face the administrative bureaucracy and less flexible repayment conditions of formal sources of credit.

Even though women's labour force participation has increased significantly, discrimination against women workers remains a major problem. It is said that part of the wage differential between women and men can only be explained in terms of discrimination against women on the grounds of gender alone (ILO 1993: 46). Discrimination is often expressed through different terms and conditions of employment. More female than male workers are employed on a temporary (limited-term contracts or without contracts) or casual (hired informally) basis as part of the putting-out system. Women are disproportionately represented in the temporary workforce, working mainly on piece rates without contracts.

Although women are increasingly represented in the private sector and in businesses in Indonesia, many women at senior levels lack role models and the level of support and networks to which men have access.

Women in both the public and private sectors are often excluded from training and staff development opportunities. This is partly a lack of awareness by employers who often stereotypically think and decide that women will either not be interested, or not be willing to abandon family responsibilities.

Because sex-disaggregated data are not used for planning and programming in government ministries, there is limited awareness of the special problems and constraints that women may face in gaining equal opportunity and treatment in the mainstream development programs (ILO

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1993: 11). Decision-makers (mostly male) believe that all major development programs are open to both men and women and that if women cannot seize opportunities it is their own fault. Senior officials are often heard to state that they do not differentiate between women and men. This indicates that they are not in touch with the real-life situation surrounding them, for which they should be responsible.

It must be said some women-targeted programs have been set up in response to pressure, even in the economic sectors. Nevertheless, these programs tend to focus on the inseparability of women's productive and reproductive roles, and thus to accord priority to family welfare concerns. Economic programs for women are often focused on traditional skills, duplicate efforts of several ministries, and tend to be small-scale with problems of sustainability.

The impact of the crisis has also meant an increase in the role of women as household providers. Even though women have always played an important economic role in poor households, there is evidence that employment impacts of the crisis on jobs and job security may have even further increased the importance of that role. Increases in open unemployment during the first year of the crisis were greater for men than for women.[7] This was in spite of much more rapid growth in female labour-force participation, reflecting women shifting from more passive housekeeping roles to more active participation in the labour market.

Decision-making positions

The legal basis for equal rights and opportunities for women is solid. However, within this formal legal framework, and despite its generally progressive character, many constraints continue to hinder women's sharing of power and decision-making at all levels. Many women remain ignorant of their

7 Based on the 1997 and 1998 National Labour Force Surveys, conducted in the month of August (Oey-Gardiner 1999).

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rights through lack of information and awareness. Many men also are unaware of the importance of women's equal participation in power and decision-making and of the extent of their exclusion. The socio-cultural environment is not conducive to women's full participation in politics or national decision-making, and institutional obstacles continue to restrict women's access to power.

Thus, despite Indonesia's early achievements in women's representation in politics and in establishing a ministry for women, relatively few women participate in policy formulation and development planning, or occupy decision-making positions affecting implementation of development programs and projects. Women's representation in key political decision-making bodies has changed little during the last decade. In fact, women's participation in the formal political process at the national level decreased slightly, but 'they are of better quality', as claimed in some quarters.[8] The proportion of women in the People's Consultative Assembly rose slightly from the last Soeharto government, when 7.6 per cent were women (BPS 1994: 162); today 8.9 per cent of the members are women.[9] Among parliamentarians, however, the proportion of women declined from 12.6 per cent (BPS 1994: 162) to 8.9 per cent today.[10] In mid-decade women were also greatly under-represented in provincial legislative bodies; on average only 12 per cent were female. Women make up only 15 per

8 During the Soeharto regime many women became parliamentarians because of affinity to power holders, the phenomenon also referred to as KKN for corruption, collusion and nepotism. Even though there are still some women parliamentarians related to the power elite, there are more women who gained their seats in Parliament and the People's Consultative Assembly in their own right.

9 Information obtained from *Koalisi Perempuan* (Women's Coalition), a national women's NGO concerned with empowering women. This figure may still change depending on the replacements for Megawati Soekarnoputri, who became Vice-President, and Erna Witoelaar and Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who became Ministers.

10 Similarly obtained from *Koalisi Perempuan*.

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cent of the members of the Supreme Court but not one woman is a member of the Supreme Audit Board, and only 6 per cent of the members of the Supreme Advisory Council are women (BPS 1994: 162).

Female office-bearers at the higher levels of the civil administration are not yet common in Indonesia. The highest position currently held by a woman is that of regent, and there were only 927 women village heads (14 per cent) out of 66,371 villages (BPS 1992: 141). Similarly, only a minor proportion (12 per cent) of decision-making positions within the government bureaucracy is held by women, even though one-third of the civil service is female (BPS 1994: 52, 141).

The role of women

As development progressed and Indonesians were heading towards an even brighter socio-economic future, the definition of women's role as mainly motherhood was being even more emphasised and reinforced. Consequently, the role of women as wives and mothers has been integrated into the civil service administration. The wives of governors, regents, district and village heads were important in implementing development programs and projects at each level of government, although limited mainly to activities for women, such as the PKK (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, or Family Welfare Movement).

The portrayal of the Indonesian women's movement throughout this volume can best be understood within the socio-economic context discussed above. On the one hand, women have benefited substantially from the fruits of development; on the other hand, their ascribed roles as wives and mothers were being highlighted and strengthened.

Introducing the book

Continuity, change and women in a man's world are the major themes which best characterise the issues addressed

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in the following chapters on women and their activities and organisations as a reflection of the Indonesian women's movement.

The theme of continuity is presented through reflections and illustrations of women's role being that of homemaker and service provider, responsible for the family, serving as the basis for continuing gender discrimination practices. The image of an ideal woman which has been promoted and publicised is that of someone 'accepting their natural role' as a wife and mother, fully and solely responsible for the social development of her children. As the wife of an official, the ideal image is that of 'consort' to her husband. There is almost no recognition of women as individuals. Self-actualisation among the elite is achieved through networking with friends, creating or participating in women's organisations that conduct social welfare work, such as *Aisyiyah* or PKK. Women are often described as hard-working and self-sacrificing. Many of them are unaware of gender inequities and some tend to perpetuate them within their own families. Meanwhile poor women in the informal sector face the double burden of being poor and being female.

The emphasis on the role of women in the domestic sphere is recorded both in literary works by women and also through glimpses of the lives of women portrayed in some of the chapters. Through a review of literature written by women, Jakob Sumardjo finds that women themselves tend to write on themes of domesticity, and to take an idealised view of a happy home with marriages based on mutual trust, loyalty and understanding. Family break-ups are usually due to the appearance of 'another woman' and domestic problems arise from sterility or childlessness and religious differences. Henny Supolo Sitepu describes how elite and educated women have chosen the profession of housewife, influenced by their socialisation and the impact of social pressures on the options of these elite women's choices of life goals and directions.

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Despite their high levels of education, they were directed to becoming 'queens of the household', adored but not appreciated.

Household matters do not fulfil the self-actualisation needs of women. Elite women find self-actualisation through networks of friends and through creating or participating in a variety of women's organisations involved in social welfare activities. Lies Marcoes-Natsir shows how the first generation of *Aisyiyah* supporters was looking for some form of social work to occupy their time. After completing their housework they were able to work in and through *Aisyiyah* for friendship and worship. Similar chords were struck by Binny Buchori and Ifa Soenarto about *Dharma Wanita* leaders, and by Carla Bianpoen about PKK figures. Besides the promotion of women as consorts to their husbands in these two organisations, involvement in the organisations also fulfils the need for self-actualisation.

Housewives are not simply weak figures. On the contrary, they are often pictured as hardworking and self-sacrificing. Women who have succeeded in becoming prominent figures generally stress their hard work and the support of their husbands as the key to their success. Hanna Rambe describes how female public figures, generally coming from elite families, are hardworking and dedicated. They have supportive husbands, have reached the peak of their careers, and do not stop working in their old age because work has been a habit from youth. The fate of women who are expected to be compassionate throughout their lives is told by Annie Bertha Simamora. Maria Hartiningsih tells similar tales of unfortunate women relegated to facing harsh daily lives as home-based workers. Unlike elite women, these poor women accept their lot, unconscious of the profit made by those who exploit them.

Some women perpetuate gender differences within their own families. The story of a housewife who gives different rights and opportunities to her son and daughter is told by

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Annie Bertha Simamora. Many women artists are not aware of discrimination in the world of art, but a new wave has been emerging since 1998; Carla Bianpoen records this development. Chamsiah Djamal shows that a poor woman must play a dual role: as a poor person and as a woman. Women's view of themselves is so broad that they appear to be figures without an identity. In this social context it is not surprising that government programs, which are generally developed by men, do not address the real needs of poor women. Most government programs are gender-blind, unaware of and thus not aimed at the needs of women.

Secondly, an interesting phenomenon which can be seen from writings on the Indonesian women's movement concerns change in women's organisations. Before independence, Indonesian women felt that they were part of the same struggle as men. They fought alongside men against injustice and the Dutch colonial powers. In the independence and post-independence period, particularly during the New Order development-oriented era, the role of women and women's organisations supported by the government changed to reflect an ideal role of women as providing service and social work for the future generation and for the general population.

Symptoms of change in the existence of women's organisations can be seen in the chapters on the women's movement in various women's organisations. Sukanti Suryochondro provides an historical context on the growth of the women's movement. At the start of the century the Indonesian women's movement was inseparable from the international social movements aimed at emancipation, nationalism and freedom from colonial bonds. Women and women's organisations fought alongside the nationalist movements to eradicate injustice from the colonial system. The roles of women's organisations since independence have undergone many changes.

With freedom and the rapid pace of development under the New Order government came a process of depoliticisation. Women's organisations existed either as social organisations

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to support development or to aid those less fortunate. Kristi Poerwandari describes her observations of changes in the aims of Christian organisations in Indonesia. In the past, PWKI (*Perkumpulan Wanita Katolik Indonesia*, or Christian Women's Association of Indonesia) and WKRI (*Wanita Katolik Republik Indonesia*, or Republic of Indonesia Catholic Women) were strong women's groups, playing important roles in the independence struggle. Over time and with the growth of government organisations, memberships in both organisations fell and the organisational aims changed to a social welfare emphasis. Anita Rahman contends that Islamic women's associations – *Aisyiyah*, *Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama*, *Wanita Islam* and *Persatuan Wanita Tarbiyah Islamiyah* – have followed a different path. Islamic women's organisations were originally established for purely religious purposes and to support their parent organisations. At present they have begun to play a role in national development. Along with their growth, the activities of these organisations have adapted to the government's development programs which want women's participation in all sectors and aspects of development. The wider context of socio-political change in the position and role of women, within the organisations and in society, is discussed by Mildred Wagemann.

The third theme is that of women in a man's world. Women's existence in a man's world is marked by harassment, discrimination, lack of power, and domination by men. Patriarchal ideology still exerts strong domination over the position of women, both individually and in groups. It is not surprising, therefore, that there remains a great deal of harassment of women. Sita Aripurnami looks at sexual harassment occurring in Indonesian films and concludes that it has continued throughout the nearly seven decades of the history of the Indonesian film industry. Producers, nearly all of them male, tend to assign negative images to women, showing them as whiny and slow, fussy and sexy. As films are commercial commodities, the emphasis is on

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such aspects of life as adultery, kissing, disrobing and erotic moaning.

Discriminatory treatment is also experienced by women who are forced to work in the informal sector. Not only men but women too still consider their activities in household economics as assisting husbands, as secondary earners. Not surprisingly female poverty rarely attracts the attention of high-level decision-makers and leaders, who are nearly all well-off males. It is difficult for the bureaucratic elite to consider programs for the improvement of the fate of poor women.

Some women have benefited from their husbands' positions and power over the bureaucracy. The government, consisting mostly of men, established the *Dharma Wanita* for wives of civil servants on 5 August 1974. Membership in *Dharma Wanita* was compulsory, as the government declared that one of the duties of women as wives is to support their husbands in the development struggle, meaning that *Dharma Wanita* had to guarantee unified family votes for *Golkar*, the government's political party. While it is often regarded cynically by non-members and activists who refer to the organisation as *Drama Wanita*, many of the members themselves have enjoyed the benefits of what the fairly well-funded organisation has to offer, thanks to their husbands and especially their husbands' positions within the government bureaucracy.

Dependence and benefits derived from husbands' positions have also created widespread benefits for millions of women, many of whom are poor and living in rural areas, through the good works achieved by the PKK (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*), the family welfare movement. PKK can be found practically throughout the country because the founder, Mrs Kardinah Soepardjo Roestam, was able to rely on assistance from her husband and his office[11] and the overall bureaucracy.

11 As Governor of Central Java and later Minister of Home Affairs.

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Of course, in daily life among the elite it is men as husbands who give labels to their wives, such as 'queen of the household'. Husbands decide that their wives are not allowed to join the labour force; a woman should be a good wife and mother and her husband will provide her with all her needs. Some women are content with such male definitions of women's needs, superficially demonstrated by consumerism; but others are not.

While Indonesian women have to be content that most aspects of life will persist, change is in the offing. Not only individuals but women's organisations too are changing, including *Dharma Wanita* and PKK, initially established by the government. At the turn of the millennium women have become more politicised, they are creating their own political agenda; Indonesian women are continuing the journey.

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2

INDONESIAN WOMEN AND LITERATURE

Jakob Sumardjo

'Women and literature' has been a topic of discussion since at least 1954, when there were still few literary works written by Indonesian women. Sitti Nuraini (1954) in her article 'Tjatatan tentang perempuan dan Kesusasteraan' (Notes on women and literature) discussed the novels of S. Rukiah and Selasih as well as the novels *Siti Nurbaya*, *Salah Asuhan* (Improperly Cared For), *Atheis* (Atheist), *Layar Terkembang* (With Sails Unfurled) and *Andang Taruna* (The Torch of Youth), most of them written by men. Critics H.B. Jassin and A. Teeuw then started to sporadically include in their reviews literary works by Indonesian women. Jassin (1959) discussed the poems of Waluyati and the short stories of Titie Said and Titis Basino in *Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern dalam Kritik dan Essei* (Modern Indonesian Literature in Criticism and Essays); Teeuw (1952) discussed both men and women authors more comprehensively in *Pokok dan Tokoh dalam Kesusastraan Indonesia Modern* (Issues and Leaders in Modern Indonesian Literature). However, it took more than two decades, until 1977, for Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi, a woman critic, to publish a book specifically dealing with women writers of fiction. Even so, there were only nine women authors she deemed worthy to discuss in detail.

The first publication by a woman writer dates back to 1933, yet a comprehensive study of Indonesian women

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writers has yet to be written. The same is true of fiction, poetry, drama, essays and reviews by women.[1]

This chapter does not pretend to cover the history of Indonesian literature. Instead, it will endeavour to give a brief overview of what Indonesian women writers of modern literature have produced against the social background of their time. Specifically, it will discuss the works of authors reviewed by literary critics, including myself. Comments by selected literary critics in this regard will also be incorporated. The picture emerging as a result is expected not only to present women's achievements in literature, but also to provide a glimpse of their thoughts, their aspirations and their views on the typical problems they faced.

Of women writers in Indonesia, about 53 have often been discussed in literary forums. These include writers of popular literature. In the collective number of women writers there are 37 novelists, 18 writers of short stories, 13 writers of books for children and young people, 12 poets, and seven essayists and reviewers. Some writers appear in more than one category, for example, when a writer of novels for adults also writes short stories and books for children and young people.

The *Leksikon Kesusasteraan Indonesia Modern* (Dictionary of Modern Indonesian Literature), compiled by Pamusuk Eneste, lists a total of about 253 Indonesian literary figures, not including women writers of popular literature. But only 27 had outstanding quality, which is less than 10 per cent of the total number listed by Pamusuk Eneste. This estimate is based on several anthologies of Indonesian literature, covering men as well as women writers of outstanding quality.[2]

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1 The first publication of a woman writer was *Kalau Tak Untung* (If Not of Fortune) by Selasih, published in 1933 by *Balai Pustaka.* Two of her other books, *Nakhoda Lancang* (The Impudent Captain) and *Rancah di Lubuh* (Scaffolding in the Pool) were published in 1982. They were based on local legends.

2 See the anthologies *Gema Tanah Air* (Echoes of Home) and *Angkatan 66* (The 66 Generation) by H.B. Jassin (1948, 1968), *Laut Biru*

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My own list does include women writers of popular novels, which increased significantly during the 1970s and 1980s when women's and family magazines began to boom. Of the 53 women writers I have identified, 37 (70 per cent) are novelists.

While Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi's publication (1977) considered only nine women authors worth discussing, or in her words useful to discuss,[3] the number of women writers in this chapter is definitely larger, highlighting women writers who have often drawn the attention of literary critics, including those who have been featured in my own literary discussions. (See the reviews of novels written by women in Sumardjo 1979, 1981.)

The emergence of women writers

Indonesian women began to appear in the world of modern literature during the *Pujangga Baru* (New Writers) movement early in the 1930s. *Pujangga Baru* was a cultural movement composed of young Indonesian intellectuals with a growing sense of national belonging. At that time, women of the Indonesian nobility had been given some access to education. It is, therefore, not surprising that most of the women writers of that time came from the intellectual elite who belonged to the middle and upper strata of society. Some had obtained doctoral degrees in a variety of fields. Even

Langit Biru (Blue Seas, Blue Skies) by Ajip Rosidi (1977), *Tonggak* (Milestones) by Linus Suryadi A.G. (1987), focusing on poetry, and *Cerita Pendek Indonesia* (Indonesian Short Stories) by Satyagraha Hoerip (1979). The first anthology includes works of 49 writers of whom only five are women, the next presents only six women authors in a total of 55, followed by a presentation of five women out of 62 writers, while Satyagraha Hoerip includes only seven (or 5.9 per cent) women in the total of 120 authors in his anthology.

3 The nine writers discussed are Hamidah, Selasih, S. Rukiah, Waluyati, Soewarsih Djojopoespito, N.H. Dini, Titie Said, Salsiah Tjahjaningsih and Titis Basino.

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just before and right after World War II, it was from the intellectual elite that women writers came.

One may wonder why women writers first appeared in the 1930s, whereas the development of modern literature had started a decade earlier. Why could Saadah Alim (1898–1968) publish her book no earlier than the 1940s? She was in fact the first woman writer of short stories and dramas, who also made translations of children's books. In contrast, her contemporary Merari Siregar (b.1896), the first male author, published his first novel as early as 1918.[4]

The first women writers appearing in the 1930s were Selasih, Hamidah and Soewarsih Djojopoespito. They were born respectively in 1909, 1914 and 1912, contemporaries of the literary men of the *Pujangga Baru* movement. Like their male compatriots, they were inspired by a collective consciousness of national belonging.

A little different was the situation of women of Chinese descent. They were well ahead of their time with regard to literature. Claudine Salmon has noted that, as early as the 1890s, Chinese women wrote poetry in Low Malay.[5] But, just like 'Selasih', a pseudonym for Sariamin Ismail (Jabbar 1985), Chinese women writers also used pseudonyms, such as 'Nona Boedjang', 'Nona Botoh', 'Nona Manis' and 'Nona Glatik'. Sometimes, they put only their initials, like K.P. Nio or L.L. Nio. They received European education and were taught by private, retired, Dutch teachers who came to their homes. At the same time, they learned to read and write 'Market Malay' at home. The poetry they wrote was generally meant to entertain and included humorous poems, but they also wrote serious, educational poetry.

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4 Siregar's first novel, *Azab dan Sengsara* (Torment and Misery) (1920), is considered the beginning of modern Indonesian literature. However, before that he had already rewritten a Dutch novel, *Si Djamin dan Si Djohan* (1918).

5 See Salmon (n.d.: 475–500). I obtained her original paper from Myra Sidharta.

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In 1925 the Chinese authors started writing novels which mostly dealt with the emancipation of girls in relation to arranged marriages. By this time, they had become sufficiently courageous to use their own names.[6] A more advanced formal education, compared to their predecessors' in the 1890s, seems to have been a major stimulus for these writers to tackle women's issues in their literature.

Quite remarkable is the fact that the indigenous women authors appearing during that period in time were natives of Sumatra, specifically of West Sumatra, and the command of the Malay language seems to have been a major reason. Soewarsih Djojopoespito from Bogor, West Java, was an exception. However, although she did start writing relatively early, she did not write in the Indonesian language until the 1950s. In the 1930s she still used Dutch and Sundanese. Evidently, language was a major factor for educated women from Sumatra to be the first to appear in the world of modern Indonesian literature.

Soewarsih's prominence among the early women writers was not because of her proficiency in Indonesian, but rather because of her excellent command of the Dutch language. Specifically, her novel *Buiten het Gareel* (Outside the Harness) received high marks from Dutch critics. It was written in Dutch and published in 1940. As with her contemporaries, Dutch was the language of everyday life, with which she communicated with her family and her friends (Jassin 1968). She graduated from the *Europese Kweekschool* (European Teacher Training) and, together with her husband, was active in the nationalist movement.

In 1975, Soewarsih translated the novel into Indonesian and published it under the title *Manusia Bebas (*A Free

6 Salmon (ibid) mentions the novels by the Indonesian Chinese woman author Chan Leong Nio, *Tamper Moeka Sendiri* (Slapping Your Own Face), 1925 and *Terboeroe Napsoe* (Urgent Desire), 1926. Another novel she mentions is *Pertjintaan jang Sedjati* (Steadfast Love), n.d. by Kwee Ay Nio.

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Person). She then continued writing and publishing works in the Indonesian language during the 1950s, including *Empat Serangkai*, a collection of four stories, in 1954. But, like her Sundanese novel *Mardjana* of 1937, it lacked the quality of her Dutch novel. Evidently, her main constraint was the language in which these novels were written.

Until the 1940s, four women authors from Sumatra dominated women's literature. At that time, there were only two authors from West Java and one from Central Java, Arti Purbani, the pseudonym of Mrs Husein Djajadiningrat, wife of the well-known historian from Banten. But in the 1950s more women from West Java, most of them born in the 1930s, began to take the stage. When Indonesian independence was proclaimed in 1945, a national language, the Indonesian language, was taught in school, and the language barrier was no more.

Most women writers received secondary to higher education before as well as after the war. Quite a few of them pursued higher education in the fields of literature, philosophy, theology, medicine or law. They were proficient in foreign languages, which facilitated their access to foreign literature. Many of them have become career women, working along with men in the wider society. With such backgrounds, they were presumably involved in addressing social and national problems. But do their works reflect issues of their own social environment?

Indonesian women's issues in novels

If it is true that literature depicts the soul of a society, we might be able to grasp something of the soul of Indonesian women in our literature, Sitti Nuraini wrote in the column 'Gelanggang' of the magazine *Siasat*, 1954. How is the soul of Indonesian women reflected in novels written by women before as well as after the war for independence? The first novels by Indonesian women were those of Hamidah and Selasih. They both used pseudonyms, which

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suggests a shyness about standing out as individuals. Hamidah, the pseudonym for Fatimah Hasan Delais, wrote *Kehilangan Mestika* (The Lost Jewel) in 1933 and *Pengaruh Keadaan* (The Influence of Circumstance) in 1937. As can be expected, the topics in these novels did not move beyond the home and the harmony in the household which was hard to attain. Although the authors were educated, they all shared one ideal: a happy home, in which the woman was considered the queen of the household. Apparently, the issue of women in the public sphere was practically non-existent, let alone a cause for unhappiness. Major problems for women were childlessness and true love wrecked by marriage, as was broken love destined by fate like in *Kalau Tak Untung* (If Not of Fortune).

However, somehow, happiness and freedom in the modern sense were felt, albeit not made a big issue. For girls, school-time was a time when they got a taste of freedom and happiness. Siti Nurbaya, the main figure in Takdir Alisjahbana's novel *Layar Terkembang*, for instance, could enjoy being with her lover on a mountain trip, because the trip was a school picnic. A similar case was the girl who wanted to kiss her lover in the railway station in Djauhar Arifin's novel *Andang Teruna*. Sitti Nuraini in her above-mentioned essay states that the picture drawn by women novelists of that time was not much different from that of men novelists, namely women should keep to the *adat* (customs and traditions) as soon as they had married.[7]

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7 Nuraini wrote: 'in Abdul Muis' novel *Salah Asuhan*, Indonesian women suddenly don't have any rights. And as goods already out of fashion, we try to reshape ourselves into something new. This element can be seen in novels up to and including *Layar Terkembang* by Takdir Alisjahbana. Subsequently Armijn Pane gives women a certain amount of freedom, but still he does not really seem to know what to do with the women he portrays. Finally we reach Achdiat Kartamihardja, author of *Atheis*. To him, women are creatures wearing sarongs, which they occasionally open to show a white calf. Indonesian female writers from

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Such themes stand in sharp contrast to Soewarsih's Dutch novel *Buiten het Gareel* (Outside the Harness), in which women leave their homes to join the nationalist movement alongside their husbands. Sulastri, relatively well educated for that period (1930s), does not choose the easy life of a civil servant in the colonial government. Instead, she helps Sudarmo, her husband who is a law school graduate, to establish a national school and joins Sukarno in his struggle to spread nationalism among the people. The suffering of this young couple for the sake of national ideals contrasts sharply with the themes discussed in other novels of the same period printed by *Balai Pustaka*, the colonial governmental publishing house. Soewarsih's novel depicts modern women who are free to realise their ideals, and who are ready to suffer for them.

How could these two very discordant aspirations arise in novels written by women? Again, the main reason is the language in which they are written. Soewarsih used Dutch, which means that her audience consisted of those able to read Dutch, the Indonesian educated elite and, of course, the Dutch themselves (the novel was published in the Dutch magazine *Vrij Nederland* (Free Netherlands). This reading public was progressive in its way of thinking and did not have any constraints on accepting the problems addressed in Soewarsih's novel. If the novel had been written and published in the Malay language at that time, the issues discussed by Soewarsih would probably not have appealed to Indonesian women of primary or secondary school education, or the general Malay-speaking public. But for the politically conscious intelligentsia, such issues were highly interesting.

Hamidah's and Selasih's works published by *Balai Pustaka*, on the other hand, were in Malay and their readership consisted of Indonesian women with primary (Malay language)

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before the war, like Selasih, provide a picture which does not differ much from the picture given by men' (Nuraini 1954).

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education. In the social environment of these readers, local *adat* or traditions continued to prevail.[8]

Evidently, the targeted readership and the wishes of the publisher were determinants for the type of work written by any author. Soewarsih Djojopoespito, for instance, had to swallow *Balai Pustaka's* rejection of her Sundanese novel *Mardjana* (1937) because the language usage was found to be too much like Dutch. However, in 1959, the same publisher decided to publish the manuscript, since its editorial staff had in 1952 found some positive elements, that could raise moral standards: 'love for the wealth and beauty of nature, love for God's creatures; ... has a good purpose and contains beautiful descriptions' (Jassin 1968). The novel still remains in the domestic world of women, love and a happy home, very much like the works by Hamidah and Selasih. Mardjana falls in love with a married man, but does not want to disrupt his marriage. So she bides her time, until he separates from his wife. Soewarsih adjusted her topics to the taste of the readers when she began to write for the readership of *Balai Pustaka*, at the cost of her intellectual struggle and her determination to struggle in public.

Even Hamidah's and Selasih's poems (about sick children) are about unhappiness in love and family life. Their world is still restricted to the household.[9] Author Saadah Alim also sticks to domestic realms when she describes the principal figure in her novel as a wife seeking refuge in her

8 Books published by *Balai Pustaka* were not circulated among Dutch-language schools like HIS and MULO, but were read in the Malay-language primary schools in urban and rural areas. Women readers in this milieu were still close to traditional life as prescribed by the *adat* of their respective ethnic groups.

9 See Selasih's poems *Cinta yang Suci* (Sacred Love), *Ratap Ibu* (Mother's Lament), *Bertemu Pandang* (Meeting Glances) and *Petaruh Ibu* (Mother's Testament), and Hamidah's poems *Ah Venus*! (Oh Venus!), *Merenungi Kesakitan Anak* (Thinking of a Child's Sickness), *Iba Hatiku* (Compassion of My Heart) and others, which are found in Suryadi (1987, vol. 1).

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parents' home as her spouse commits adultery. There is, however, a slight difference from the other authors, for although Alim's character would eventually receive her husband back if he recovered his common sense, she would nevertheless make it a point to let him know she was upset; of course, all within the rules set by the *adat*. After all, a woman's self-esteem lies in her loyalty to her husband. And a traditional (arranged) marriage is not always bad (Endarmoko 1985).

What about the soul of women after independence?

Just before and after independence in 1945 there were seven female writers, four of them Sumatran and active in writing poetry and essays, and three Sundanese and Javanese. The latter, Waluyati, S. Rukiah and Arti Purbani, were writing novels. Of the three, Rukiah attracted the most attention from literary critics with her novel *Kedjatuhan dan Hati* (The Fall and the Heart). The story is set in the time of the national revolution, and is about a woman who had to struggle against traditional and bourgeois conventions of marriage, a struggle she ultimately lost. Susi, the central figure of the story, does not love the man her parents have selected for her to marry. She loves Lukman, and she is determined to marry him. Yet, in the end, she has to yield to her parents' wishes and step into a pre-arranged marriage. Decision-making then was still a far cry for women, in spite of equality for all citizens, which was stipulated in the 1945 Constitution.

Between the 1950s and the 1960s, hardly any novels were published in general, and certainly none written by women. But, interestingly, dozens of short stories were written and published in cultural and literary magazines. In these short stories, mostly written by Javanese authors, the struggle of women against the persisting confinement of social conventions remained as a topic. This will be discussed below.

Novels which did appear during this period focused on adolescent girls, providing lessons on how to become a

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good housewife. *Tati Tak Akan Putus Asa* (Tati Will Not Give Up) by Luwarsih Pringgoadisurjo, and *Anggia Murni* by Mrs Johanisoen Iljas are two examples of this genre. The only exception was Erni Sumargo's novel *Sekeping Hati Perempuan* (A Sliver of a Woman's Heart) which was published as a popular literary pocket book, a format which spread rapidly in the 1960s.[10] Teeuw's short comment is telling: a woman finds happiness only with her husband after a mental crisis resulting from her first love for a young Catholic.

With the start of the 1970s, a boom for women authors set in. They belonged to different generations, ranging from women born in 1928 to those born in 1951. Some novelists had made their debut as early as the 1950s, others appeared for the first time in the 1970s. With increasing access to formal education after national independence, and the improvement of the economic situation following the Five-Year Development Plans, a new social stratum of educated and wealthy middle and upper class emerged. Most of them, including women, were office workers. Women graduates from higher and secondary education were in great want of reading material, as were women who chose to be housewives, very much like women in the novels of the 1930s–40s; as analysed by reviewers, novels between the 1930s and the 1950s still describe women in the household as wives and mothers who aspire to domestic harmony.

This time was also marked by the emergence of women's and family magazines. Such magazines had a permanent column on cooking and sewing, considered an absolute requirement for good housewives. At the same time, magazines on interior decoration, gardening and the ideal layout of modern homes emerged, responding to Indonesian housewives' aspirations of making their home a haven for

10 In modern Indonesian literary history, popular novels and novels intended for children and young people are rarely discussed as literary works or considered as having literary quality.

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their family.[11] The magazines also included short stories and serialised novels, occasionally attaching a bonus in the form of a novella. The kind of fiction presented of course conformed to the mission of these magazines: to make perfect housewives, with a modern taste. Most fictions were melodramatic love stories with a contemporary woman as protagonist.

Thus developed the genre known as the *popular* novel, written by women as well as men, but targeting women readers. This type of literature developed over more than two decades and produced hundreds of novels which were published by women's magazines or their subsidiary publishing houses. Yet, the market demanded more, and it became necessary to also publish translated English and American popular novels.

It is difficult to find in these novels any serious themes which deal with the problems of women of that time. Themes usually revolved around love and contrived problems, affirming the appropriateness of conventional values for middle-class women. For example, matters involving facial care, physical fitness, modern social etiquette and gymnastics to improve sexual performance were presented as important and serious issues for women. Even simple matters were turned into weighty issues. All of these centred around the effort to preserve an ideal household, with mutual loyalty in marriage and love, to create a happy family. The problem of a third person intruding into a marriage and love, the lack of offspring and the coming of misfortune in a marriage were favourite topics in this type of popular literature.

These novels depicted the established world of middle-class and upper middle-class women. The protagonist was always an educated woman with a high office position or a

11 These magazines offer ideals instead of reality. The women in them reflect the aspirations, such as to own a luxurious house, electronic devices, a fashionable car, which women hope to turn into reality in their lifetime.

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professional such as doctor, engineer or judge, who was accustomed to international travelling by air, with the setting of the novel abroad. Productive authors included Marga T., Mira W., La Rose, Maria A. Sardjono and Yati Maryati Wihardja.

Meanwhile, there are works of women authors in the preceding period which have not yet been analysed: such authors as Titik W.S., Titie Said and Aryanti.

In the 1980s, this popular literature developed into specific genres, such as mysteries and detective stories, as written, for example, by Mustika Heliati, V. Lestari and Mara Gd. These novels generally are well structured, rational, set in a refined, genteel atmosphere, providing ample information on the middle class.

In addition to the flood of popular novels intended to entertain while teaching established middle-class norms, more serious novels levelled criticism and raised women's issues, expressing women's own thoughts about their problems. In relation to this, N.H. Dini (born in 1936) should be noted as an author who has been writing since the 1950s and continues to be productive. Indonesia's most frequently discussed writer, she has objections to being referred to as a woman author. She states in *Dua Puluh Sastrawan Bicara* (Twenty Literary Figures Speak), 1984:

> My creative world is universal; it may be female or male; it may be French, Puerto Rican, Algerian, Cambodian or Indonesian; it may be about an ironwood tree that crashes down, but it may also be about a cat or a dog. I cannot see and feel only one kind of life, since I admire the earth with all its phenomena as the creation of God ... what motivates me to write? First of all something I hear or see which moves my human instinct which is sensitive to justice, good manners/beauty and honesty ... basically I don't like extremes.

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But she admits that

> themes or topics I never invent. These involve things happening around me to which I add imagination or fantasies which according to simple reasoning are not too far from reality ...

Her books then frequently discuss her social environment and her experiences as a woman, and there is hardly any doubt that she does have a special sensitivity to issues faced by women. Teeuw (1989) notes that 'In all her books, albeit not always equally clear, the reader is made aware of the oppression, sometimes rude and sometimes benign, of modern women dominated by modern men'. Teeuw's judgement is reinforced by Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi's analysis which says that 'prevailing social norms are not fair towards women ... with her writing she does not intend to teach or lecture and the like, but to protest, because peace, calm and tranquillity, and understanding are the basis of family happiness' (Prihatmi 1977).

Typically from a gender perspective, N.H. Dini's (male) colleague and contemporary Ajip Rosidi (1959) was of the opinion that 'there is no longer any protest focused on women's issues from women who feel squeezed in a men's world ... the rebellion of women against men is not merely aimed at their own satisfaction but consciously directed at the fatherland, the state and the nation'.

Women's most often discussed domestic problems concern their relationship with their husbands. Unfaithfulness of husbands in marriage has been a major topic from Saadah Alim's writings. This continued to be a favoured theme in popular novels of the 1970s and 1980s. Before the war, women's reaction to their spouse's betrayal was mostly passive. All they could do was run back to their parents, and subsequently forgive their husbands when they came back. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, a substantial change set in, with the central characters in novels refusing to pardon a husband, even if he was dying, as in Titis Basino's *Pelabuhan Hati* (Harbour of the Heart). In Dini's

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novels, wives have relationships with other men, not out of revenge, but out of considerations of justice and honesty. In *Di Atas Puing-Puing* (Upon the Rubble) by Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi, the betrayed wife starts another life. She could not be bothered by gossip or people's disapproval, something quite unusual for that time.

Fiction written by women also highlighted the hardships of widowhood or divorce and childless marriages. Such circumstances brought specific problems for the women who tended to be left out of social life and faced other kinds of disadvantages as well. Widowhood, divorce and sterility were viewed as shameful and women had to struggle hard to ward off gossip, as in *Kabut Sutra Ungu* (A Fog of Purple Silk) by Ike Supomo.

Short stories

Novels written by women remained within the private sphere of the middle class and upper middle class and were filled with domestic problems. But the short stories written by women had a broader focus. Although such short stories continued to be about women respected in society, the focus changed after Dini published her collection of short stories *Dua Dunia (*Two Worlds) in 1959. Stepping out of the domestic sphere, Dini let her main character manage a coffee stall, harassed by men and treated like a prostitute.

It is true that domestic issues of middle-class people continued to occur, but several stories illustrate a broadening of horizons. S. Rukiah's short story of the 1940s *Istri Prajurit* (A Soldier's Wife) relates the story of Siti, a village girl who becomes a city woman after marrying Hasyim, a journalist who joins the army and becomes a revolutionary fighter. Siti endures the hardship of being left by her husband who is sent to Yogya. She has to work as a seamstress to sustain herself and her baby. The character Siti portrayed here is very different from the bourgeois Susi in Rukiah's novel. After Dini and Rukhiah, Titie Said also

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talks about the time of the revolution in her short stories *Hidup dalam Pertempuran* (Life During the Fighting) and *Orang-orang Buangan* (Exiles) in which a young nurse and a freedom fighter want to escape from their place of exile.

Nearly all fiction written by women, Prihatmi (1977) concludes, portrays women heroines who call for emancipation and protest against old-fashioned shackling traditions and against male despotism. Oetari, a nurse during the revolution, in Titie Said's short story *Hidup dalam Pertempuran*, fights together with male freedom fighters. Of the 89 freedom fighters, only 15 survive. *Orang-orang Buangan* tells the story of Djojoredjo, a freedom fighter in the nationalist movement who is exiled to Digul, but remains loyal to his nationalist principles. Titie Said was the first Indonesian author of fiction to write about exile to Digul. It must be mentioned, however, that in 1928, Kwee Tek Hoay wrote *Drama di Boven Digoel* (Drama at Boven Digoel), a book of 800 pages which has the failed 1926 Indonesian Communist Party uprising as its main topic.

Women short story writers, mostly highly educated, appeared to take up the other sex, in addition to discussing women outside their own social class. In *Jakarta,* a novel by Totilawati Tjitrawasita, for example, a man as the narrator describes the nature of the world of men.

Interestingly, younger women writers tended to be more apt at leaving the world of women. In her short stories of the 1970s, Rayani Sriwidodo (born in 1946) tells of a fugitive Gerwani woman, who becomes a lower-class prostitute noted for her straightforward and non-puritan attitude.[12] Yet writers hardly discussed oppressed women at the level of

12 These short stories are compiled in *Balada Satu Kuntum* (Ballad to a Bud), Puspa Swara, 1994, although some of the stories were written in 1970. In *Antara Riak dan Ombak* (Between Ripples and Waves) she tells the story of a prostitute in Ancol who struggles as a fisherman against the waves of life, in order to finance the education of her younger siblings. Moreover, in her book *Bukan Arca* (Not a Statue) Rayani does not hesitate to depict a man masturbating.

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domestic servants, factory workers or outcasts like prostitutes. The emancipation of women in fiction was still targeted to middle-class and upper-class women, the authors' own world which they knew intimately. Perhaps Rayani Sriwidodo is the only one among these writers who is somewhat closer to the world of the lower class. The large number of short stories written by women, but not yet compiled in book form, must be studied further to confirm or refute the above assertion.

Of course, the setting of a story in an upper-class or lower-class milieu is not a measure of quality in itself. Critics agree that the quality of short stories lies in their 'intellectual and poetic nature' (Jassin 1989) and in 'the greater weight they give to thought rather than feeling', while the 'theme of feminism is expressed through men themselves' (Sudyarto 1993). Even though short stories written by women contain thoughts on women's emancipation, their world is nevertheless more 'public' than 'domestic' in nature.

Women as poets

Indonesian women have written poetry for as long as they have written novels. Selasih and Hamidah did write poems, but are better known as novelists. The same is true for women poets after them; very few were seriously discussed by critics. Toeti Heraty once compiled a list of 24 women poets (Heraty 1979); while Suryadi (1989) gathered 21 names. In this list only Waluyati, S. Rukiah and Toeti Heraty were discussed together with male poets. To these we can add the names of poets who are included in several anthologies, Poppy Donggo Hutagalung, Isma Sawitri, Maria Amin, Nursjamsu, Samiati Alisjahbana, St. Nurani, Rayani Sriwidodo and Upita Agustine. The poetic themes of Indonesian women, such as divinity, mysticism, loneliness and isolation, do not differ very much from those of men. Until the 1950s, poetry was still filled with lamentation about human suffering resulting from poverty or separation, and with efforts to

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formulate a philosophy of life. The style of expression was still close to prose. Only Waluyati had already adopted the style of the men of the romantic *Pujangga Baru* movement. She did so in the way she blended conditions, feelings and ideas through descriptions of nature. H.B. Jassin (1959) describes her work as, 'comparisons with nature which produce inner calm and perfect harmony'.

S. Rukiah, on the other hand, was often reviewed, but was not regarded as a good poet. Teeuw noted: 'as a poet I don't hold her in high esteem ... she doesn't succeed in expressing experiences which exceed her own limited personal experiences' (1989). Another woman poet, Samiati Alisjahbana, was promising in the 1940s, but, unfortunately, she has not been very productive.

Talented women poets of the 1950s were Sitti Nuraini, Dwiarti Mardjono and Poppy Donggo Hutagalung. They wrote until the 1970s, but, except for Poppy's works, their poetry has not been collected in book form. Their poems are rich in imagery, filled with suggestion, intelligence and refined subtlety. The love theme is there, but it is far removed from the sentimentality of their predecessors. Here, it is worked out thoughtfully, sometimes through brilliant images (e.g. Sitti Nuraini). Poppy's work includes a Christian religious idiom and atmosphere. There are also feminist poems, which like lyrical poems in general, go beyond the boundaries of domestic and social problems.

To be acknowledged as a poet, certain requirements have to be met. Apart from linguistic acumen, other essential requirements are depth of perception, sensitivity of conscience, creativity of imagination and maturity of thinking. These qualities have led many poets, both women and men, to become essayists. Poets having those qualifications usually had advanced education in an academic discipline.

In the 1960s, Isma Sawitri, Rita Oetoro and Toety Herati appeared as poets. Toety Herati was the most prominent of the three. The quality of her poems and the level of her

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productivity soon drew the attention of literary critics. Toeti is actually of the same generation as Sitti Nuraini and Dwiarti Mardjono, who were born during the 1930s. In his discussion of ten prominent Indonesian poets,[13] A. Teeuw includes Toeti Heraty as representing women authors, thereby implicitly conforming to the statistic of women authors as 10 per cent of Indonesian writers.

It must be noted that most Indonesian men of letters made their debut in their twenties, whereas women writers have tended to appear when even younger,[14] but Toety Herati started her literary career when she was about 30 years old, or rather it was at this age that she started to attract attention.

Toeti has a doctorate in Philosophy and an undergraduate degree in Psychology. Teeuw, who is an influential critic of Indonesian literature, recognises Toeti as the only prominent female poet. She is an intellectual whose poetry is filled with a sharp irony cloaked in humour. The themes of her

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13 *Tergantung Pada Kata* (Depending on Words); Teeuw (1980) reviews the poems of prominent Indonesian poets Sitor Situmorang, Ajip Rosidi, Subagio Sastrowardojo, Toeti Heraty, Sapardi Djoko Damono, Goenawan Mohammad, Rendra, Abdul Hadi W.M. and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, among whom there is only one woman. Similarly, the book *Dua Puluh Sastrawan Bicara* included only two women writers, N.H. Dini and Toeti Heraty.

14 In my review of 180 Indonesian novels I have provided data on authors' ages at the time of publication of their novels. The information is as follows:

author's age: between 15 and 20 years: 3 novels
author's age: between 21 and 25 years: 34 novels
author's age: between 26 and 30 years: 14 novels
author's age: between 31 and 35 years: 24 novels
author's age: between 36 and 40 years: 18 novels
author's age: between 41 and 45 years: 18 novels

followed by 7, 2 and 6 novels respectively in the following five-year age groups. The year of publication for some of the popular novels is not known. Hamidah is one of the authors who started to write when she was in her teens.

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poems revolve around the disadvantaged status of women, which she sees as low and dependent. This disadvantaged position, however, is often the result of women's own mistakes, of their own ignorance and foolishness. She denounces the arrogance and despotism of men who trample women underfoot (Teeuw 1989).

Another reviewer, Joko Pinurbo (1992), values the combination of strong reasoning and emotional sensitivity in Toeti's poems, which he describes as rich in nuances. Linus Suryadi A.G., on the other hand, deplores the exaggeration of problems involving relations with the opposite sex (Suryadi 1989: 100).

In her speech on the creative process, in Taman Ismail Marzuki in December 1982, Toeti Heraty asserted that literature as a form of expression is not a question of the object which must be given attention, but a question of the sensitivity of the subject. Toeti's sensitivity to feminist issues is based on her experience and history of marginality as a woman. 'We are so worried about being marginalised by the group, yet this feeling of isolation also means that we are not really expelled but just pushed aside into a marginal position' (Heraty 1984). Toeti, who changed disciplines several times, was always the oldest in college, pregnant while studying and the only middle-aged woman in an environment of young artists. All these experiences explain her attitudes and sensitivities.

A poet who is often valued equally with Toeti Heraty is Isma Sawitri (born in 1940). This intellectual university graduate chooses more varied themes. In her poetry, Sawitri demonstrates an extensive knowledge of history, religion, sociology, psychology and anthropology. Like Toeti, she has succeeded in blending the expression of feelings with intellectualism in her poems. Her idioms are simple, genuine, intimate and expressive in nature (Suryadi 1989: 100–106).

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Rita Oetoro (born in 1943) has not been very productive, publishing only one collection of 63 poems in 1986. Like Darmanto Jt., she too, likes to include foreign (English, French and Latin) expressions in her poems. Many of her personal reflections end with philosophical conclusions. Her world consists of books.

The poems of Rayani Sriwidodo (born in 1946) are characterised by a broader horizon. She dares to leave the world of middle-class women and enter the world of lower-class men, as she also does in her short stories. She has been very productive, but unfortunately not much of her work has been published in book form so far. Korrie Layun Rampan considers Rayani's poems as religious, short impressionistic poems filled with suggestions and beginning with simple events and written in sparing but expressive language (Rampan 1980: 31–34).

The same age as Rayani is Upita Agustine (born in 1947), who is also known as Raudha Thaib, a descendant of Pagaruyung nobility. Her poetry is characterised by sadness, feelings of oppression and loneliness. It is written in a simple, prosaic but clear language. Love and spiritual reflection are the main themes of her poems (Rampan 1980: 166–168).

The youngest poets appeared in the 1980s. Most of them were born in the 1960s, like Dorothea Rosa Herliany, Nana Ernawati, Dhenok Kristianti and Ida Ayu Galuhpethak, whose development we still await. Most of them discuss topics of love, reflection, loneliness and religion against a contemporary background.

Essays and reviews

Women as thinkers disseminate their ideas through essays and critical reviews. According to my notes there are eight women who are active in these fields.[15] Two of them have

15 Female essayists and literary critics worth noting are Sitti Nuraini, Boen Sri Oemarjati, Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi, Toeti Heraty, Rayani Sriwidodo, Julia Suryakusuma, Marianne Katoppo and Riris Sarumpaet.

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become literary critics, while the others are poets. No one has yet collected their essays, except for those who act as literary critics. Of the women critics, Boen Sri Oemarjati (born 1940), a Doctor of Literature, is well respected. Another literary critic is Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi, also a Doctor of Literature. They are both very thorough and analytical in their observations, and their reviews are supported by sufficient knowledge of relevant literature. Remarkably, women critics tend to stress reasoning and objectivity more than their male counterparts who tend to be empirical–subjective, although many male critics also reason objectively. The emergence of women essayists can be explained by the fact that they are generally highly educated and many of them have doctoral degrees.

Drama

Surprisingly, the role of women in writing drama is limited. So far, only one work written by a woman is known. It is *Pembalasannya* (Revenge) by Saadah Alim. It has been published in book form, but is seldom staged. Although women have participated in the modern theatre since the beginning of the twentieth century in *Komedie Stamboel dan Bangsawan* (Travelling Theatre), their activities have consisted primarily of acting or directing. They have not been involved in script writing. Only recently has a female director and author of drama appeared in the person of Ratna Sarumpaet.

Conclusion

This brief discussion allows some preliminary conclusions concerning literary works and their sociological characteristics. Literary characteristics can be observed in the genre of novels, a genre towards which many Indonesian women authors were drawn. Not surprisingly, their productivity in this genre is outstanding. Next in line are short stories,

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poetry and essays. Only one drama written by a female author is known, in spite of women's long-time involvement in the theatre.

Domestic and household issues constitute the central theme in women writers' works, the prototype being a happy home, characterised by a marital tie based on mutual trust, loyalty and understanding. Stereotypical is the appearance of another woman in the marriage, breaking the wife and the household to pieces. Polygamy, female sterility and childlessness are haunting issues. A domestic issue often discussed is the obstruction of a woman's love and interests by social and family conventions. Another obstacle is a different religion between the couple, particularly between Moslems and Christians. Usually this problem is easily solved by one of the couple sacrificing her or his religion. Divorced women or widows are a recurrent theme, presenting problems due to the negative perceptions rooted in conventional rules. Divorced men or widowers never have these problems. Indonesian women are not entirely free to choose their spouses, mainly because of pressure from their parents.

Themes covering the public world of women were generally found in short stories and poetry. Indonesian women are often anxious because of their alienated position, or, to use Toeti Heraty's term, their marginal position. Although most men accept the presence of women in their environment, a disturbing awkwardness persists between them.

In aesthetic matters, literary critics recognise the skill of women authors with regard to style. They generally succeed in combining intellectual and emotional aspects in their work.

The social environment, which forms the setting of women writers' works, is mainly the upper and middle strata of society. Very few works are set in lower social strata, let alone in the environment of outcast women like prostitutes or domestic servants.

Indonesian women have reached positions in each of the various literary genres at the same level as men. Examples

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are N.H. Dini in fiction, Toeti Heraty in poetry and Boen Sri Oemarjati in literary criticism. Their eminence is acknowledged in the Indonesian literary world.

Sociologically, most contemporary women writers are of Javanese descent, followed by women of Sumatran, Sundanese and Menadonese background. Although Javanese women writers appeared relatively late, only in the 1950s, they soon became dominant among literary women. This may explain the importance of the issues of women's marginality and all conventional ties.

Many Indonesian women authors have received higher education, and a few of them hold doctoral degrees. Most of them have a literary education, so it is not surprising that they have a high level of appreciation for literature and that two of them have become literary critics. Interestingly, many women physicians write popular novels (Marga T., Mira W., Veronika Lestari). Many of these women have careers, and therefore they are less productive in writing, especially in serious literature.

The last characteristic which should be mentioned is the considerable attention women writers give to educational literature. Particularly writers born before the 1930s were drawn to writing children's stories and stories for adolescent girls.

Overall, a female touch can be sensed in literary works written by women. Starting in the 1980s, however, this characteristic is less prominent in works produced by the generation born in the 1960s.

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3

WHINY, FINICKY, BITCHY, STUPID AND 'REVEALING'
The Image of Women in Indonesian Films

Sita Aripurnami

'Sooner or later, the Film Censorship Board in Indonesia will pay attention to the way women are portrayed in Indonesian films' (Sen 1987: 100). Krishna Sen's statement was based on her research on Indonesian films produced between 1965 and 1982, which she conducted to obtain a doctorate at Monash University, Australia, in 1987.

Now, seven years later, the question arises whether Krishna Sen's expectation has come true or whether it has continued to be wishful thinking. Guided by a review of eight movies and building on discussions with a number of people working in the film industry, this essay tries to trace how Indonesian films have presented women in the course of time, and what picture can be drawn against the background of social and institutional realities.

Women in Indonesian films

Ever since the first film was produced in 1926, subject themes in films have determined the story lines (Gunawan 1990; Sani 1990[1]). During the Netherlands East Indies era, for instance, romance was a favoured theme. This shifted to propaganda during the Japanese occupation. It changed again during the

1 I am greatly indebted to both authors for information on the history of Indonesian cinema.

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initial years of national independence, when national awareness and a sense of national belonging were important issues. Thereafter, until 1965, themes were taken from American movies, though problems facing the population at large were also included. A comprehensive view of topic trends is still hard to get, as interest in documenting Indonesian films began only in the 1970s (Gunawan 1990; Sani 1990).

From available documentation, we may assume that, in general, films of that period primarily showed women actors in supporting roles. If a woman did have a leading role, it was based on the premise that a woman's place is in the home: as mother, wife, lover or obedient daughter (Sen 1987). Men's roles, on the other hand, always related to activities in the public sphere, where they were portrayed as rational decision-makers.

Let us now scrutinise two films considered representative of those produced during the 1970s. *Karmila* (1974) is based on a popular novel from the late 1960s, written by an equally popular woman author, Marga T. The film tells the story of the girl Karmila, a medical student planning to continue her studies in Australia, where her fiancé is a student of engineering. But rape, and the resulting pregnancy, bring her plan to a sudden end. Abortion is out of the question, given Karmila's strict Catholic background, and so the only way out for her is to marry Feisal, the man who raped her. She marries Feisal, on condition that they live separate lives, though she agrees to nurse their son Fani for as long as the baby needs nursing. For that, Feisal pays a fee.

Just as she prepares to take up the thread of her own life and is on the point of leaving for Australia, Feisal telephones her. Fani, their son, who now lives with his father, has a high fever, and Feisal asks her to come. Following her instinct as a medical doctor rather than that of a mother, she decides to come. That ties binding her to the child eventually emerge, is natural. However, she ultimately decides to stay and build a happy family with her former rapist. It is

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a stereotypical end for films of that time, actually in line with contemporary conventional perceptions of women, but totally contrasting with the portrayal at the beginning of the film, when Karmila was shown as a woman with strong personal principles.

Zaman Edan (A Crazy Time), a movie made in 1978, proceeds in the same vein. It tells the story of Jalal[2] and his wife Sri. Jalal is a teacher with a very small salary, so Sri has to take a job to make ends meet. When their domestic helper resigns, Sri decides that Jalal should resign his job and take care of the household and the children, as Sri's income is higher than Jalal's. Of course Jalal is not very happy about this switch of role, though he is praised by Sri's colleagues as an ideal husband. As the film shows Jalal's clumsy handling of the household chores, it highlights Sri's rise in her career. She even drives a motor vehicle.

Meanwhile, Jalal does everything to get a job. As is usual for a permanent assignment, he needs a health certificate. To his great distress, the medical check-up finds him pregnant. No pleas to the doctors can help him into an abortion, for they say his is a rare case. But his luck turns, as they discover it is his wife's urine and not his.

The story continues with him getting a good job, boosting his self-confidence, which brings his wife back to the confines of her household.

As hilarious as the comedy is, it makes a clear statement that a woman's place is in the house, and it is a man's role to do work outside the house. Switching these responsibilities creates funny situations, and Jalal's clumsy handling of the household chores is bound to evoke laughter, but also pity from the audience. In contrast, his wife, who might be smarter in pursuing a career, and brings in more money, is portrayed as finicky and bitchy, an image which can only find rejection by the audience.

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2 Jalal is the name of the actor. Taking advantage of his popularity as a well-known comedian at that time, he also played Jalal in the film.

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Apparently, a working woman is accepted for as long as she can manage to combine her job with the household and the care of the children. In the film, even the maid has to give up her job, because she, and no one else in her family, is expected to look after her children. The fact that she makes both ends meet by working as a maid is not touched at all. The film ends with Sri returning to the role considered proper for a woman, and Jalal to the role perceived proper for a man.

Perhaps men prefer helpless women. At least that is what *Suami* (The Husband) is about. Produced in 1988, it tells the story of husband Bram, a diplomat, and his wife Marsya, an interior designer. With two children, a son and a daughter, they are a modern, middle-class family. Marsya is an intelligent, hard-working woman who is pursuing a successful career. Perhaps she spends too much time building her career, which leaves her with too little time to spend with her family and too little attention to household matters. As she proceeds professionally, she gains self-confidence. Her husband Bram, however, who is striving for an ambassador's position, could use some more attention from his wife. Eventually he finds another woman, Romina, who seeks his help and boosts his masculine sense of providing protection.

Whereas Marsya is presented as a modern independent woman, Romina, the other woman, is a singer facing problems and needs Bram's shoulder to lean on. The story then unfolds as Marsya discovers her husband's affair, and has a breakdown. Instead of doing some logical thinking to overcome her marital crisis, she attempts suicide. Conveniently, the film solves the problem by Bram being appointed as ambassador, and Marsya and the children joining him in his new post.

The film suggests that once a woman is married, no matter how intelligent and successful she is, she cannot afford to be too independent, lest her husband turn to another woman who needs him more. There is the notion that women are

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essentially witless and emotional beings, which is reinforced by the intelligent Marsya swallowing sleeping pills instead of trying to find a solution.

A similar problem in the film *Selamat Tinggal Jeanette* (Good-bye Jeanette) provides a more justifiable portrayal of women. Jeanette, the central figure in this film, is allowed to deviate from the traditional Indonesian pattern, since she is not Indonesian, but French. Because she comes from another culture, the Jeannette character is allowed to talk about her feelings regarding her marriage to Suryo, even to the point when she decides to divorce him.

How are women portrayed in the films of the 1990s? Let us look at the film *Perempuan di Persimpangan Jalan* (The Woman at the Intersection), 1994. Gita, the main character in the film, flees to Jakarta to forget she was raped by her stepfather and rejected by her lover. Ironically, the big city is not much different when it comes to rape and love. Here too, she is confronted with rape and the agonies it brings. In the big city, Gita is again raped, but she also encounters kind men who take her in and care for her. Meanwhile, she is helped by a friend, who pays her rent at a time when she has no money. Desiring to return the favour, she offers to replace her friend in a sex game which her friend did not feel like playing but was unable to refuse. Unfortunately for Gita, the man in this sex-game turns out to be the father of a young photographer she was going to marry. The photographer leaves her in shock. The photographer for the modelling agency, who was secretly in love with Gita, has died in an accident. That she is eventually married anyway, to a rich widower, a secret admirer, is an unexpected happy ending.

Different from the aforementioned films, portrayals of women in this film are not shaped only by the story, but also by the visual presentation of the women. From the very beginning, sex spices the story. The women wear transparent clothing, and the sex scenes are fairly explicit.

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Similar scenes are also found in films like *Gairah Malam* (Night Desire). The opening scene shows a woman fast asleep with her clothing in disarray. The soundness of her sleep is suggested by a careless body position which makes her appear virtually naked.

Karmila, Zaman Edan, Suami, Selamat Tinggal Jeanette or *Perempuan di Persimpangan Jalan*, all are films about women with the message that a woman's place is in the home, as a good wife and mother; and that efforts to become more skilful, desiring higher education or working for an income are all inappropriate for women. The film *Karmila* suggests how cruel and heartless Karmila would have been if she had chosen to continue her education and leave her child. In *Zaman Edan*, the woman who decides for a role reversal with her husband is considered crazy. In *Suami*, the wife who is pursuing a professional career, thereby bringing in additional money for the household budget, is presented as a woman whose independent behaviour 'pushes' her husband to another woman. *Perempuan di Persimpangan Jalan* treats a woman's work as an adventure and suggests that, after marriage is proposed, a woman should stay at home and become a good wife.

It is remarkable that there is a complete disregard for matters related to women's reproductive function in *Karmila*. In addition, rape and its traumatic aftermath are never discussed. Instead, the film focuses on Karmila's non-compliance with the expectations based on stereotypical assumptions about the roles of mothers and wives. The story line ignores the role and the moral responsibilities of the rapist. The description concentrates on the process that leads to Karmila's surrender to society's expectations of wives and mothers, and ignores the fact that she becomes her rapist's wife.

The role reversal introduced in *Zaman Edan* is based on the assumption that a woman's role should be domestic, while a man's role is in the public sphere. There is no

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discussion of the potential of men's and women's involvement in both environments.

The assumption underlying *Zaman Edan* is echoed in, and to some extent also serves as the foundation for, the film *Suami*. Both films deal with a wife's independence and her greater economic contribution to the household. Of note is the films' evident intent to emphasise for their audiences that, no matter how intelligent or rational a woman is, she will still be emotional when dealing with problems. Diverging descriptions of women's independence are, however, forgivable if the woman in question is not Indonesian, as in the film *Selamat Tinggal Jeanette.*

Perempuan di Persimpangan Jalan follows almost the same line as the previously discussed films. Yet it contains an interesting aspect lacking in the other films, i.e. the use of women's bodies. Explicit, visual depiction dominates the film but is often irrelevant to the story line. For example, Gita is very sad when she is unable to pay her rent; so, she runs into her room crying and changes her clothing. After she has changed clothes, she assumes a pose on the bed, which, once more seemingly unintentionally, exposes certain parts of her body. This film creates a strong impression that women's bodies are used to make the film lucrative. Films of this type, including *Gairah Malam*, have largely dominated the Indonesian film world in recent years.

Nevertheless, there are also films presenting women in a different light. Among these are the 1977 film *Suci Sang Primadona* (Suci the Prima Donna) and *Doea Tanda Mata* (Two Gifts), produced in 1984. *Suci Sang Primadona* describes how a woman is able to control what she wants. She decides when and with whom she wants relationships. She also decides what she wants to be, and what kind of life she wishes to lead. This film revolves around an employee in the sex industry who is also a popular star in *Srimulat* (a popular theatre group). At the end of the story the woman Suci decides to return to her native village, rejecting the

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protection offered by her fans, be it as a husband, a financier and keeper, or a hired guard.

Doea Tanda Mata, 1985, is analysed apart from the debate regarding its historical accuracy (Heider 1991: 99) and the fact that the main character, Goenadi, calls his wife 'dear wife', without using her name. This film depicts a woman of a different character. She is a teacher and an activist in the nationalist movement. One scene even shows her discussing the women's movement in Lahore, India. This 'dear wife' leads a number of women in joining the struggle for Indonesia's independence.

The latter two films offer a different, more emphatic image of women, portraying strong characters who make decisions on their own, for themselves and for others.

An examination of women's portrayal in Indonesian films from 1965 onward reveals women who are no longer mere 'accessories'. A few films have introduced more forceful and positive images of women as main characters. Nevertheless, the main message continues to describe women as stupid, quick to cry, bitchy, fussy, and objects to be enjoyed for their beauty and their bodies; the latter particularly in films produced in the 1990s. Nowadays, the image of women in Indonesian films is nearly always nude or exposed, meaning that in most of the recent films they are explicitly used as objects.

In a 1988 discussion co-ordinated by the *Komite Film Dewan Kesenian Jakarta* (Jakarta Art Council's Film Committee), Myra Diarsi concluded that the women who are acceptable in Indonesian films are those who marry and are subservient to men. Women who try to be independent, on the other hand, are cursed and depicted as examples of failures in life (see Aripurnami 1990).

Comparing Myra Diarsi's conclusions with the above observations regarding the depiction of women in films with the conclusion drawn in the discussion six years ago, no substantial change can be detected. This view is supported

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by one of Indonesia's talented directors who notes that 'Indonesian films very much lack idioms of expression in film scenes. This is related to the lack of media through which film-makers can reflect on and capture social phenomena. Thus, the scenes or problems introduced now are still identical with those of the 1950s. This is especially true for women.'[3]

However, is the repetition of these idioms caused only by the lack of ways to reflect and capture social phenomena?

Imagining women in real situations

Indonesians often assert that women should be responsible for household tasks, be good mothers and true wives. This is in line with the definition given by the *Garis-garis Besar Haluan Negara*, or GBHN[4] (Broad Guidelines for State Policy) and the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (The Five Obligations of Women), the precepts of the Family Welfare Movement (PKK)[5]. The GBHN is the basis of all regulations issued by

3 From discussion with a film director, 28 June 1994.

4 At the beginning of the discussion relating to women in the 1993 GBHN, it is observed that Indonesian women naturally have different roles from men, and that they are equal partners of men. Women are also described as having the same obligations, rights and opportunities as men. The subsequent description, however, notes that the development of women's roles is steered towards elevating their dignity and status, and is focused on increasing their active participation in various developmental activities including efforts to realise the healthy, prosperous and happy family, and to develop children, adolescents and youths in the context of the advancement of Indonesian society. For further information see GBHN 1993.

5 *Panca Dharma Wanita* (The Five Obligations of Women) is part of the explanation of PKK (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* – Family Welfare Movement), released by the Directorate General for Rural Development, Jakarta, in 1978. The explanation which was disseminated throughout Indonesia describes Indonesian women as having the following five roles:

1. wife, standing by the husband;
2. household manager;
3. mother, responsible for reproduction;
4. educator of the children;
5. citizen of Indonesia.

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the government, as is *Panca Dharma Wanita* for the PKK. The Indonesian perception of women is very much shaped by the principles laid down in the GBHN and the *Panca Dharma Wanita.* Likewise, the view that domestic matters must not be neglected even though women are active outside their homes, also leads to these official documents. The concept of working women with continued responsibility for the household is frequently referred to as *peran ganda*, or the dual role of women. The emphasis on domestic activities, which goes back to traditional rules, draws the line between women's space and men's space, thus reinforcing the separation between men and women while making the understanding of women's dual role even more actual.

In turn, this view reinforces social, cultural, educational and media structures with the general consciousness about men and women being shaped through the interaction of these structures. People in the film industry are not exempt from the effects of these interactions.

Re-examination of the film director's statement above suggests that the failure of the media to reflect and capture social phenomena is not the only reason for the lack of alternative women's images in Indonesian films. Institutional factors found throughout society, including the state, also participate in creating the images of women found in our films. The idea that only women are responsible for activities within the household has led to an assumption that it is appropriate for women to be subordinate to men. Thus, women are always described as stupid, quick-tempered, 'sappy' and too talkative. Portrayals of independent women, if any, always become portrayals of women going against social reality.

For further information see Sullivan (1983). Reportedly, the second role in *Panca Dharma Wanita* has been changed to 'supplementary breadwinner for the family'. This information was obtained from discussions with activist friends from women's NGOs in the meeting *The NGO Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* in Jakarta, 4–8 June 1994.

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It is as if there was only one valid and acceptable view. However, in everyday life, images of women are varied and wide-ranging. In real life, we can also observe that being a man does not always mean working away from home, as it would if the social division of labour were strict and rigid. In the lower classes, for example, fathers are often seen tending children and house-cleaning while their wives are selling in the market. In middle-class society, it is no longer unusual to see the husband doing the shopping for the household and sharing responsibility for the daily menu, while the wife goes out of town on a business trip. Facts such as these are never shown in our films, unless they are used to demonstrate that these roles are wrong and inappropriate.

The rich phenomena of women's lives are reduced to a single image, disregarding other factors related to those phenomena. The relationships among the various factors are buried under the 'impressions' created and captured by film-makers, scenario writers, directors and actors and by the audience. These impressions then come to be seen as realities.

At this point, film-makers are doing exactly the same. Films do have the potential to present the public with only those images they deem important, eliminating others they consider irrelevant or undesirable. This means the media, in this case films, are 'controlling our world' (Aripurnami 1990).

From the current film portrayals of women, the picture emerging always revolves around women's lives in the household. Women are seen crying frequently when facing problems, talking too much and lacking resourcefulness. In films produced in the 1990s this portrayal is accompanied by the presentation of women in daring and 'revealing' ways, thus reinforcing the image of women as sex objects in current Indonesian films.

But why should recent films increasingly depict women as sex objects? Laura Mulvey attributes this to the cinema world's extreme dependence on men's perceptions of women,

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as mentioned in theories of film-making. The increasing frequency of the image is closely related to the social processes reflecting disparities within the social power structure. According to Catherine MacKinnon, 'Creating sex as an object is actually the main process in defeating women. By doing this, sex becomes reality and not just something psychological or presenting certain attitudes or ideologies' (Humm 1989; see also Mulvey 1975; MacKinnon 1982).

Yet, is the emergence of the 'revealing' portrayals of women caused by the factors suggested by the above experts? One interesting aspect is the observation that the depiction of women as sex objects is very much connected with disparity in the social power structure. Hence, it seems that the construction of relationships between men and women places women in a position in which they are untrained. Therefore, whatever definition is put forward about men or women tends to be generally accepted as reflecting the real man and woman. Moreover, because men have long been in the position of power, they freely decide what is proper for men and women. If women were in a power position, they would probably imitate and copy men. So, ultimately there would be no difference whether men or women were in power positions, they would act in similar ways. As noted by a worker in the film industry:

> it is the same whether the producer is a man or a woman. The important thing for them is to make a lot of money, so they can make other films. It is difficult for filmmakers not to go along with the producers' wishes. In the current film industry, the important thing is to attract viewers. So, add sex, and it will sell. Also, put up racy posters, even if the actual film may not be as racy ...[6]

The same sentiment was expressed by one of the few Indonesian movie stars consistent in demanding quality in a role:

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6 From discussions on 26 June 1994 with a worker in the film industry who requested anonymity.

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> this is a really serious problem. I once served as a member of the Film Censor Board, and I can only lament the condition of our films. Whenever I suggested to the Board to be more discerning, the other members thought I was overreacting. For them, the important thing is to liven up the film industry. Thus, since the film world is currently not performing well, the Board is lax with its quality standards, so that production can be carried out quickly. In this way Indonesian films can survive. The sad thing is that the other members tend not to look at quality ...[7]

The above comments suggest that Indonesian films can survive only if they incorporate sex as a principal ingredient. This observation, together with the earlier explanation, suggests that the 'revealing' portrayals of women are the combined result of the belief that those indeed are the social roles of men and women, and of the stagnation in our film industry. In this situation, with women presented as sex objects, and considered attractive for this purpose, women and sex are used to lure audiences.

After 1965, the Censorship Board decided to go easier on violence and sex (Gunawan 1990). In the 1990s, this situation seems to have recurred, with renewed emphasis on sex. People may still recall the film *Langitku Rumahku* (My Sky My Home), 1991, a film which received awards mainly outside Indonesia. This film, which describes the friendship of two boys from different social classes, did not pass the censor. Perhaps scenes depicting *kesenjangan sosial* or social disparity were considered more dangerous than those in which obedient women are used as sex objects.

Conclusion

After 68 years, the Indonesian film industry still seems to centre around the depiction of women who are quick to cry

7 From discussions with a movie star who served on the Film Censorship Board last term. The person requested anonymity.

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and slow-witted, who talk too much and like to show their bodies. Nevertheless, there have also been a number of films in Indonesian film history which have offered positive portrayals of women. *Doea Tanda Mata* and *Suci Sang Primadona* are two examples of this type.

Film-makers have created the impression that they are indifferent to the concept of positive female roles. For them, films are mere commercial commodities. These films are made at minimum cost and must be saleable, regardless of artistic values and story lines. The only thing that seems to matter is the selling quality of the film, with flirting, kissing, shedding of clothes, and heavy moaning as the easiest modes (Sullivan 1994). Unfortunately, this attitude continues to prevail among film-makers.

On the one hand, women are seen as wives and mothers. They are domestic creatures and, even if they work, they are considered only supplementary breadwinners. Women are deemed capable only of crying, excessive talking, and stupidity. Men, on the other hand, are heads of households, breadwinners and decision-makers. They are smart, calm in facing problems and strong, and are never seen crying. So, the portrayals of men and women in our films have remained consistent and dichotomised over the years.

As mentioned earlier, film as one form of the media can influence opinions. Throughout the years, films have persisted in presenting unchanged portrayals of men and women, ignoring empirical reality in which men and women are not like those presented on the wide screen. One role often seen on the screen is that of a woman with a family, working outside the home. Her working is almost always equated with selfishness and seen as a threat to her family. Her husband will turn to another woman, while her children will be neglected and become delinquents or fail in school. Is this realistic? Do all working women bring misery to their families? How does their situation compare with that of women who do not work? Is it certain that the children of

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non-working women will be smarter and more successful than those of mothers who work outside the home? (Aripurnami 1990).

An observation made by a young director, one of the few honoured with an award for best picture, suggests that the recurrence of topics and the repeated stereotypical portrayal of women as well as of men in Indonesian films is due to the failure of the media to reflect on and capture social phenomena. While this may be true, the definitions of men and women contained in numerous government regulations (especially those affecting women) continue to place women and men in opposing positions, thereby complicating the process of reflecting and capturing phenomena. This means that a high degree of perceptiveness is needed to capture the phenomena within society, and to attempt to eliminate policy-based ideas regarding women's – and ultimately men's – place in society.

Returning to Krishna Sen's prediction at the beginning of this essay, that sooner or later the Film Censorship Body in Indonesia would pay attention to the portrayal of women in Indonesian films, we must regretfully conclude that Sen's prediction has not been fulfilled. After tracing the course of women's portrayal in our films and taking note of what has been presented so far in 1994, hopes for a re-evaluation of women's portrayal in a more positive image still seem far from realisation.

It is time we made every effort to achieve a more positive development of gender balance in the Indonesian film presentation.

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4

INDONESIAN WOMEN ARTISTS
Between Vision and Formation

Carla Bianpoen

The gender perspective

All over the world, at one point or another, there has existed uneasiness among women about their place and their status in society. In Indonesia, the women's movements at the beginning of this century were very much inspired by the struggle of R.A. Kartini, a young girl from the Javanese aristocracy, who fought predominant customs of polygamy, and sought more education and information for girls and women. She initiated petitions to the colonial authority, wrote articles in the Dutch language newspaper published in the then Netherlands Indies, and formed classes for girls which she taught together with her sisters.

Finding momentum in the rise of a national ego and the subsequent freedom struggle, women seemed to have won the battle when the 1945 Constitution, the supreme law in the country, accorded them equal rights with men.

However, *de jure* rules turned out to be no guarantee. De facto realities did not move much, and in some instances even deteriorated. Women's movements, which had proudly succeeded in uniting themselves under one umbrella in their first congress in December 1928, had to succumb to a new hierarchy in the post-colonial order. But other, smaller, women's groups emerged. Indeed the struggle for a place for women equal to men is still continuing.

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Of course, the deliberate emphasis on women as an independent category for the purpose of development programs established by the UN, of which Indonesia is a member country, and international agencies, is an important impetus for governments to co-operate for the advancement of women. Similarly, it is a support for those seeking equitable access to partnership in deciding the direction of development in key aspects of life.

The First UN International Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975. Five years afterwards, the UN organised its second Conference on Women, this time in Copenhagen. In 1985 the Third UN Conference on Women was held and produced the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. The UN Fourth Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 moved even further. 'Action for Equality, Development and Peace', as the Conference was titled, indicated determination to act instead of merely talk.

All of these UN conferences on women were attended by officials and delegates of the Indonesian government, and the conferences' resolutions were endorsed by their participation. The Indonesian government has responded positively to UN directives. In 1975 a junior Minister was appointed to handle Women's Affairs, and was elevated to State Minister in 1978.

Various UN conventions have been ratified, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women. In addition, the Broad Outline of State Policy, formulated every five years to form the basis of the Five-Year Plan, has a chapter in which women's concerns are included.

In light of the official policy on the advancement of women, the path to achieving the ultimate goal should be without obstacles. But in spite of noble visions and rhetoric, that path is not as smooth as one would expect. The gender perspective, which focuses on the socio-cultural concept to

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assess the role, function and behaviour of men and women in society, still shows a big gap. Indeed, the issues of R.A. Kartini's struggle over a century ago are still valid. This is evident in the works of several women artists.

Even with more women being educated, more women entering the work force, and more women taking positions in the government and in leading institutions, many of them find themselves stuck in societal expectations that they give priority to their roles as wives, mothers and the keepers of the household.

In the world of art, the stereotypical gender biases may be even more accentuated. It is no secret that male curators and art institutions often feel reluctant to include women artists in major and mainstream exhibitions.

Until recently, women artists were almost left out of art representations of national significance. Of the 60 artists participating in the KIAS event in the USA (1990–1992), for instance, only four were women. The Exhibition of Modern Indonesian Art in Amsterdam (1993), with 22 participants, did not include a single woman. The Art Bourse organised by the Indonesian Fine Arts Foundation in May 1997 at least made an effort by including ten women in the selection of 82 participants. However, the selection for the Bonhams-Glerum auction in Singapore, December 1997, had only four women artists out of a total of 117. The *Modernities and Memories* travelling exhibition (1997), which focused on recent works from the Islamic world, also failed to include a single woman from Indonesia, in contrast to Turkey and Pakistan. The argument that no appropriately skilled women artists of quality are available could be valid, if the quality of works by male artists had been of superior quality. True, some of these exhibits were curated by a team including women known for their serious concerns about gender disparity. So could it be that women in that curators' team had no choice but to abide by decisions of which they did not necessarily approve?

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In some instances, women artists themselves have been unable to break away from the behavioural system in which they were raised. When asked, some said that to openly file a protest would go against their own dignity. So when confronted with gender discrimination, they just keep silent, as is expected from them. But this in no way means that they are muted, as is evident from their works.

Such behaviour is often attributed to cultural restrictions. Yet, in a country as large and diverse as Indonesia, generalisations about culture and behaviour need to recognise the likelihood of local deviations. The first female painter of name, Emiria Sunassa, for instance, does not fit the image of women described above.

Blazing the trail

Emiria Sunassa was born as Emiria Emma Wilhelmina Pareira in 1894 in North Sulawesi. She is said to have married an aristocrat from Tidore in the Moluccas, an unusual step in those days when marrying outside the island of your birth was considered to be marrying a stranger. That she was different from all stereotypes was evident in both her lifestyle and her paintings.

The variety of non-traditional activities in which she was involved is stunning even by today's gender standards. Alternately she was Indonesia's first professional nurse, and the first female plantation manager. She was also a goldminer in Kalimantan, and she became a painter at the age of 41.

Unfortunately, Emiria disappeared in the late 1950s, leaving even her family and best friends guessing as to what might have happened. Had she fled to the forests of Sumatra to hide her shame of a possible disease? Had she remarried in Malaysia and died peacefully? Or had she left in a whim of the moment? Her nephew Wija Wawo Runtu reveals that her personal life was a mystery. Was she divorced, or widowed? She never talked about her life, he said. He was not even certain that she actually did marry the Sultan of

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Tidore. But he revealed that she was a pleasant and apparently happy person who liked to go into seclusion and meditate.

Emiria's peers recalled her as capricious and strong-willed. S. Soedjojono said of her: 'she is like a volcano, erupting when she wants to and sleeping when she likes to'. He also considered her 'more manly than the men in this country', while Kusnadi said she was more aggressive than most males.

Just as her personality was different from the usual female image, so were her paintings and their subject themes. Unlike the flavour of her time, she liked to paint realistic life scenes of the indigenous people: a Dayak hunter, bridal couples, Menadonese women, small traders in the market place, women reaping the harvest, and nudes. A mysterious glow used to lighten up dark hues in brown–blue, black–brown or dark subdued green–brown and pink, often with a fluorescent, surrealistic touch. She was an autodidact, and this shines through in her works. But there is a striking quality of unusual energy, pervaded by a sense of intriguing magic and mystery; a mood which continues to shroud her personal life.

Emiria was an active member of *Persagi*, the first association of indigenous painters known as the trail-blazer of contemporary Indonesian art. *Persagi* grew out of an increasing national fervour which pervaded various segments of the Indonesian progressive and young intellectuals whose rising sense of national belonging sought to break away from the *Mooi Indie* (Beautiful) style, a romantic and naturalistic style, prevalent with Dutch painters at that time.

It is hardly surprising that Emiria joined the group. Agreeing with S. Soedjojono that they had to pursue a style of their own, she used to encourage her peers saying 'Let's go on with the pencil, forget the technique'. She strongly advocated the point that it was more important to express one's inner self on canvas rather than to follow rigid technical structures. Technical skills only stifled freedom of

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expression, she contended. 'A genius', said S. Soedjojono of her. 'Her style of painting is unashamedly straightforward. Her way of expression comes out like a rash' is Kusnadi's view.

The rarity of her subject themes, her primitive style, her ignorance of academic rules, and the boldness of her expression did not fail to draw the attention of critics. Controversial as the comments may have been, she was a painter to be reckoned with. The awards she received during the Japanese occupation for the paintings '*Pasar*' and '*The Angklung Player*' testify to her significance as a painter. Although *Persagi* had been disbanded during the Japanese rule, she continued to paint and exhibit.

In view of her productive life, the collection of paintings left behind seems disproportionate. The exhibition at the Hotel Tanjung Sari's Nata Ayu gallery in Sanur, Bali, from 28 August to 7 September 1994 had 32 paintings and was probably the most complete exhibit of Emiria's available works.

Emiria Sunassa was one of just a few female members of *Persagi*, an outstanding artist and an equal among her male peers, such as S. Soedjojono, Agus Djaja and Abdul Salam. Yet, while art historians have dedicated ample discourses and documentation to the male members of *Persagi*, equivalent attention for Emiria has yet to eventuate.

As in the case of Emiria Sunassa, little also has been written about Trijoto Abdullah (1917–1989), the first female sculptor. This is even more surprising, as she lived until nine years ago. Fortunately, the art critic and curator Agus Dermawan saw the importance of Trijoto: he dedicated a whole article to her, an obituary, in *Kompas* on 29 January 1989.

Born into a family where painting was an all-men's business, she started to paint like her father and all her brothers (one of whom was Basuki Abdullah). But gradually she felt she should do something else, and sculpture was a field to

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which not many had been attracted at the time. When the tiny sculptures of faces started to attract attention, she was given the chance to enter Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), even without formal education in sculpture. Dermawan reveals that her busts of many members of the nobility and national heroes were astounding for that time. Also the huge monumental statues she later made on commission to keep her household going after the death of her husband were significant. One of these was the Garuda bird in marble, made for the gate of AURI Maguwo (now Adisucipto) in Yogyakarta. Another memorable work was '*Banteng Ketaton*' in Madiun, East Java. The painter and art critic Sulebar says these two statues are still in place. Not only Central and East Java, but also the capital city Jakarta had her work. '*Sinar dan Bayangan*' was commissioned to be placed in front of the MABAK Jakarta office in 1954. The statue, made of stone from Kaliurang, Yogya, became a landmark at the time, but has since vanished into one of the storerooms of old works.

Trijoto had only one exhibition in her whole life, and that was together with her older brother Basuki Abdullah. She died after a long illness. Given the significance of her works in her time, it is surprising to find so little about this sculptor in the historical documentation of the arts.

In Bali, where painting and sculpture are usually regarded as men's activity, Ni Made Suciarmi (b. 1932) is probably the oldest, and the first, Balinese female artist. However, except for a description of the Galeri Seniwati by Mary Northmore, Suciarmi's name does not occur in documents about Balinese art.

Different types of artists

Since Emiria and Trijoto, the number of women involved in the arts has increased beyond imagination. Besides women professionally involved in the arts, there are also women who have taken up painting as a leisure activity. Their works usually sell well, though not necessarily because of

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their quality; some purchased by friends and family, and some by young couples wishing to give their homes a touch of prestige.

There are also competent artists with works of professional quality, but they do not engage in the arts as a profession. A good example is Kartini Basuki whose paintings of flowers are in a class apart. Other semi-professionals have felt the need to form associations like Group Sembilan, initially an association of semi-professional Indonesian and expatriate painters which has now expanded to include professionals; the *Ikatan Pelukis Wanita Indonesia*; and other loose associations formed as the need arises.

Yet another type comprises those who like to claim themselves as professional artists, but whose works fail to show much effort at exploration or new creativity.

Differing from the categories mentioned above, a number of artists view the arts as their vocation. They continuously explore new ways and experiment with innovations while striving to regularly participate in exhibitions. A special focus will be contemporary artists who either have outspoken gender issues in their works, or have persevered from a gender perspective, and have had international exposure.

Artists of focus

The impetus for becoming a painter or a sculptor is different for every artist. Some have benefited from stimuli in their family or their environment, others were affected by looking at art works. Whatever it is that motivated them, personality was probably the most important after talent. This is particularly true for women artists, as they are still expected to comply with conventional female roles set by traditional rules and beliefs which continue to dominate the society.

Probably the first Indonesian female painter to fill her canvases with the turmoil that ravaged her life and her being is Kartika Affandi (b. 1934), daughter of the late Affandi. She married a fellow artist, but, instead of solidarity and

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sharing of spirit and material, she was not allowed a place as an artist. Even worse was his polygamous behaviour. In a society where the place of women was set by tradition and religion, even having a famous father like Affandi did not help much in freeing her from the strong traditional restrictions. 'Chances are small for women,' she said some time ago. Her paintings of that time are stirring reflections of her inner revolt. Astri Wright's descriptions of those paintings entitled 'Undermining the order of the Javanese universe' are self-explanatory.

> In a culture where the individual self rarely is put to the fore, Kartika has made the self-portrait one of her main themes. In a society where emotion is suppressed both publicly and privately, Kartika fills her canvases with intense feeling. In a culture where genitals are considered taboo in representation, Kartika has painted her own nudity graphically and without the prescribed, distancing sweetness. Going against the Javanese insistence that harmony and beauty of both material and spiritual kinds be normative for all forms of creative expression, Kartika creates turbulent and disturbing images of real life, at times turning traditional iconographies on their head.[1]

Like Kartika, Lucia Hartini (1959) was quite young (19 years) when she married her artist spouse. When he left her with two children but without any money, she was at once the head of household, the provider, as well as the keeper of the household. Painting became necessary for the survival of her children and herself, and in order to buy paint for works that reflected her inner feelings.

Her status as a woman deserted by her husband did not make life easy in a *kampung* where neighbours wanted to know every move anyone made. She felt as if there were holes in the walls of her house, holes through which people's curious eyes peeped day and night. A painting from that

1 Asian Women Artist, *ART Asia Pacific*, pp. 92–94.

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time (1989) entitled '*Lensa mata-mata*' (spy lens) depicts a figure frightened and curled up against the wall, with prying eyes all around. Such nightmares continued to haunt her until she felt herself growing in personal strength. Countering those spying eyes, she produced '*Srikandi*' (1993) depicting a strong and daring character with clenched fists and muscled arms, and a light beam radiating from one eye.

Lucia's agony is captured on the many canvases in various local and international exhibitions. Surrealistic, and personalised by her own creative strength, her depictions of nightmares and daydreams contain strong impulses of yearning for another, better world. A touch of marvel is tangible in almost all of these works. A spiral line, or a hurricane, it all indicates her belief in the cycle of life which moves on, continuously providing new beginnings.

New beginnings have certainly happened for Lucia.

Her recent painting '*Umbrella Two Thousand*' (1996) may have been her vision of the world's situation in the new millennium. The painting depicts a figure (mankind) amidst what could be a raging sea (the turmoil in the world). Remarkably, the figure holds an umbrella, perhaps a symbol of protection against the storms of life. Little could she foresee, however, that it was to be a turning point in her own life. Whether it was a coincidence or predestination, her painting happened to be the emblem of a group which she had never known or seen before.

When the followers of the group saw the painting, they came streaming to her house, urging her to join them. Whether Lucia's spiritual life does have an unconscious link to the belief of the group, which Lucia says any religion can relate to, is probably of no relevance here. What is important is that she has somehow overcome the issues that hampered her totality as a person. 'I am at peace now,' she says.

For Marintan Sirait (b. 1960), who also married a fellow artist, a place of her own seems to be all-important. Eight

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consecutive installations or performances circle around the theme of constructing a house. '*Kami Membangun Rumah*' is the title of these installation–performances which she started with '*Kami Membangun Rumah I*' in 1994. After a series of performances in and outside Indonesia, she was to perform the ninth edition of the installation in Havana, Cuba. However, she became pregnant, which made performing impossible.

Marintan's explorations are rooted in her not too distant past. Jim Supangkat says: 'She [Marintan] revealed that she had found it queer when her playmates appeared not to accept her as one of them. Only when she grew up to be a teenager did she understand that she had a different complexion, being from mixed German–Indonesian descent'. As usual in the stage of adolescence, one becomes aware of one's body, and so did Marintan. Supangkat reveals that, as an adult, she realised how hard it was to make one's body one's dreamhouse. Drawing an analogy between her body and a house built by someone else according to someone else's wishes, Supangkat concludes: 'through her works Marintan tries to make her body a house she herself builds ... Body and home are two themes which preoccupied this talented artist in all of her art, whether it is on canvas or expressed in her installation-performances'.[2]

Marintan's explorations began with ceramic art. Wanting more than the glazed ceramics, she tried to leave out the glaze, then leave out the kiln-drying, and so on, until she ended up only with the finest form of clay, a sand-like dust. Her installation–performances are intriguing by the hope they reveal to succeed in building a house, the touching details of trying to make small heaps of fine sand paralleling the stages of house construction, and the revealing reality in the end that it has to wait, for other more urgent matters must take priority.

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2 Jim Supangkat and Asikin Hasan in *Menjurus Arus*, a book in observance of *Femina* magazine's 25th anniversary, Jakarta 1997, pp. 161–165.

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Will she ever complete her dream house? Most probably, for as Marintan is seeking her identity, she does so in relation to the other, the environment and those around her. The work with which she is currently involved for the travelling exhibition *Cities on the Move* includes her husband. It may be an indication that she is pulling together the different entities into one overarching whole. Their joint work, an installation–performance, is entitled '*home—body—home*' which started in Vienna and will go on to Paris and New York.

Marintan's recent works are illustrative of her overarching concern and motivation: the plea for human rights, which of course includes the rights of all: women, men and children.

Arahmaiani (b. 1961), like Marintan, did not stick to one aspect of the arts. When the canvas becomes too small to bring out her ideas, she writes poems or essays, or she takes to the performing arts. When she was still a student of Fine Arts at the Bandung Institute of Technology (1980), Yani, as she is called, made news in the city of Bandung by wrapping the electric poles along Dago Street with bandages smeared with 'blood'. Then she stopped the traffic and distributed a flyer carrying data of the accidents on that same street.

As she opposed every form of convention, it was not easy to get her parents on her side. But she persevered, leaving school before she finished her studies. First she went to the Paddington Art School in Sydney, then she got a scholarship from the Netherlands.

Some of her early paintings reveal her feelings of being shackled in the restrictions of traditional customs. Three paintings exhibited in a joint exhibition in April 1994 displayed '*Red Chest*', '*Golden Chest*' and '*Yellow Chest*', as part of a series of boxes reflecting her struggle for more freedom.

Among her obsessions is the idea of balance, the Yin and Yang. One work consisting of four faces is like a self-portrait in which both the Yang and the Yin elements are of equal value. Preoccupied with disparities, which are ultimately an issue of equilibrium, Yani hits at industrial development

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and its devastating impact on nature. Coca-Cola bottles in giant condoms made up the installation she presented at the second Asia–Pacific Trienniale of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia, 1996.

Another installation had cases covered with pornographic pictures and a board hanging on the wall with the text 'For Sale'. Dressed in traditional Balinese attire, black spectacles, and her body bedecked with all kinds of products related to mass culture, including a plastic toy and a toy pistol in her hands, she airs her concern and frustration at what is happening in Bali.

With a similar performance, Yani also hits at the sex industry in New York, 1996, at the Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Asia, entitled *Traditions/Tensions*. The same installation–performance was staged, with just a slight difference in the exhibit on Art in South Asia 1997, Glimpses into the Future, held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo. A monumental picture of Diabolos, the symbol of power and devil in one, in the Greek mythology with a *lingga* replacing his phallus, was her critique of the power domination which occurs even in such intimate relations as sex and fertility.

Later, Arahmaiani's paintings put more bearing on the abstract representation of her feelings, thereby not making any specific difference between men and women. Women may be the weaker sex, but the heart of the matter, according to the artist, is oppression of the weak, of which women happen to be a major part. The painting '*Tetes Darah Tetes Air Mata*' (A Drop of Blood, A Teardrop) depicts the masculine with bullets, grenades and guns, while the feminine is expressed with blood and tears. In a unique performance to open the December exhibit on Violence Against Women at Cemara-6 Gallery in Jakarta, Arahmaiani brought her poems, tales of the violence of 13 November,[3] with a grieving voice accompanied by the rhythm of a single tambourine. The

3 This refers to the shooting which is known as the Semanggi Tragedy.

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tales became even more impressive with the slides of her pencil drawings. The same performance with situational adjustments was repeated at the opening of the historical Women's Congress in December.

Arahmaiani's most recent solo exhibition in Jakarta, the first since she was excluded from participating in exhibitions, relates the woman's condition in this country. While the twenty charcoal drawings and one installation in the *Rape 'n Rob* exhibition relate to the violence suffered by women during the May rapes, they essentially convey the artist's statement about gender injustice, about the imbalance in power distribution. The works are drawn in the fashion of the naive: women nudes stripped of all the attributes that usually denote beauty or are usually covered up; her males are set in an overpowering position and holding guns. Always there is a little house, referring to the most sacred part of a woman's body, and smoke, as a signal of danger. Her titles are meant ironically, such as '*In my penis there is only you*', '*I love you, Come Baby Light my Fire*'. In her installation entitled the '*Ballad of the Matches*', matchsticks are arranged to form the larger islands of Indonesia, while the seas in between take the shape of a woman, and a simple white underdress hangs overhead. Paralleling the position and state of women with that of the country, Yani sounds a warning of acute danger.

Yani comes from a strict Moslem religious background. Her father is an *ulama*, and when she was a little girl, reciting Koranic verses was a daily routine. She used to listen with admiration to the stories about the *Nabi*, and he became the idol of her young life. She shocked her entire family when she stated she wanted to be a *nabi* when grown up. In turn, she was shattered when she was told she could never be a *nabi*, being a girl. It was like a verdict, she confesses, the impact of which has haunted her ever since.

Freedom and taking her own decisions are the concepts by which she likes to live. Protecting herself from people who

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think they should put her on the right track as a woman, she is almost always on the move, a nomad. 'I just do not wish to be pushed because of my gender,' she contends.

Of a totally different force is Astari Rasjid (b. 1953) whose preoccupation with gender concerns has led to an exceptional art form. Honouring the Javanese culture and tradition into which she was born and in which she was raised, she nevertheless succeeds in reinterpreting traditional symbolism to adjust to the needs of the present time. In the colour and the tone of her works her cultural roots are tangible, while the concept and technique show a definite contemporary intensity.

Astari's concern with the issues of gender disparities does not stem from the past few years, though she has become outspoken and bold in her artistic statements. Remarkably, as her tone is increasingly forceful, so is the professional quality of her works which have met with approving nods within Indonesia as well as abroad.

In fact, Astari's earliest works already gave some hints of an impatience with having to hide true feelings behind the various masks that women need to put on. Masks began to occur on her canvases. To a certain extent, masks play a role in her own life as they do in everybody's life with a myriad of different tasks involving different people. Perhaps these take more prominence as she rushes between family, society, the arts world and her studio.

Serious concern and exploration began about four years ago. Initially she explored the issues using the Western style in which she was trained: modern, with bold strokes, glaring colours and surrealistic overtones. '*Nexus*', comprising two autonomous entities held together by a strong link, runs parallel to the feminist concept adopted by Western feminism. Yet a touch of her upbringing shows when she links two autonomous entities in a plea for equality in the sense of true partnership. '*Ambiguous Borders*', '*Intoxicated Red*', and '*Unexpected Reposition*', displayed in the same year, explore the relationship of emotions of both men and women. '*Irreversible Passage*'

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seems to speak of a woman's determination to follow the direction of her own conviction. The work, featured on the cover of this book and which has purple overtones, depicts the shape of a vessel within a vagina, ready to escape through the narrow outlet and untying the strings that have held her until then. The work was hailed by the chairperson of the World Bank's Art Society in Washington DC, which held an exhibition of women artists of the Bank's member countries following the issues of the UN Fourth International Conference on Women.

But, apparently, Astari needed a more profound reflection of the issues. Tracing and exploring, Astari retreated to the sources of her own tradition. Her works then became stirring accounts of the drama revolving around women's lives. '*Loro Blonyo*' is a series in sombre hues and profound emotions: a closed door, a stiff white-faced female figure in traditional attire sitting outside the door, a mask, a *wayang* puppet, and other attributes symbolising tradition.

'*Resurrected Core*', an installation, presents Astari's visions about conventional gender perceptions confining women to the backroom. Symbolising women's aspirations with a bare upper body, the artist adds a lotus flower to reflect a sense of sacred significance. Left and right of the painting's centre is a piece of Javanese wedding cloth, or *cinde*, and a pair of sandals at the end of each piece. Marriage ties and egalitarian relationships are the issues. An antique door is positioned to cover most of the painting, indicating the constraints that women still face in their effort to break from conventional roots. The installation can evoke different sensations, for standing in front of it is like standing in front of an icon, while a view from the side gives the sensation of peeping into a woman's room.

Reflecting on the realities of gender issues then led her to a firm determination: change there must be, albeit not radical. '*Temple of Efflorescence*' is a self-portrait, at the same time symbolising the situation of many Indonesian

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women of the present, who are determined to claim the place they desire since times have changed and there is no going back. Honouring the Javanese concept of equilibrium and avoiding open disharmony, Astari dresses her figure in the Javanese ceremonial attire, set against the background of the Borobudur Temple, the giant sanctuary which also symbolises the womb as the most sacred place of the life cycle's beginning. With subtle changes in the traditional demeanour of a woman, the figure is placed in an unusual upright position and, unlike the traditional prescription, her gaze is straightforward and determined, her arms are straight, her hands loose.

The reliefs in the Borobudur Temple continue to inspire the artist, for the values contained in them are basic and timeless. In a design for the cover of a book entitled *Women and Empowerment*, Astari illustrates that the future grows out of the past and the present. She does so by taking a relief of the Temple depicting a woman holding a lotus flower in her right and left hands, indicating the value of balance, and links it to the lotus flower in larger format. Astari uses the lotus flower as a symbol for the cycle of life. The lotus speaks of continuity and continuous development. It speaks of hope and new visions for the equality of men and women as human beings in their own right, explains Astari. The colour combination of purple, pink, subdued brownish–yellow and black contains a quality able to evoke emotions corresponding to the basic issue of balance in gender relations.

Though she basically works in oil paint, the techniques Astari uses are varied. Often it is a mixed media of oil paint with batik cloth, photographs, silk screen and real pieces of antiques pasted on. Lately she has taken to art installation and making sculptures. Drawing inspiration from the sources of her culture, Astari's statements on gender disparities are taking shape at an astounding tempo. Her artistic imagery is rapidly expanding and her professional skill making major leaps.

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Yanuar Ernawati (b. 1959) was born in Padang on the island of Sumatra. She had to fight for her parents' approval to go to Yogya and enrol in the Department of Painting of the Indonesian School of Arts (ISI). Today she is a recognised professional painter, whose paintings are in demand by collectors from Switzerland, where she has been an artist in residence. She lives and works in Bali, but goes abroad when invited. Her paintings at the Cemeti Gallery in Yogya, the Seniwati Gallery in Ubud, Bali, and Galeri Cemara-6 in Jakarta as well as in several galleries in Europe speak of a promising young and productive professional. They also indicate an artist whose experiences as a woman add a particular dimension to her artistry.

Her works often stem from an intuitive inner journey, with deep awareness of her surroundings and her position as a woman. Expressions of such emotions usually take an abstract style, although several of her works show a combination of abstract and realistic elements. Yanuar, or Yenny, says what she perceives as related to the world outside her inner self, she depicts in figurative language, but when she addresses the feelings and tensions of her inner world, she uses an abstract language.

An example is her painting '*Refleksi Gereja dalam Diri Saya*' (The Church on My Mind), in which she is moved by experience of the atmosphere in a church. Her work '*Mengarungi Kehidupan*' (Life's Travel) depicts a mermaid grasping the moon with both hands while coming out of the sea with only the upper half of her body. It seems to tell of women's realities today; in pursuit of personal aspirations, but as yet unable to reinterpret the rules of their traditional upbringing. More articulate is the artist's vision of the future woman: strong without surrendering any of her female attributes. This is exactly how she lives her life as a professional artist.

Yanuar Ernawati has no side-jobs, but her works provide her with enough income to sustain her life as an artist.

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Inda C. Utoyo Noerhadi (b. 1958) has emerged as an artist of a different type of art. Although she has been painting for some time, it is her most recent paintings that have attracted considerable attention. Inspired by archaeological findings in the environs of the Borobudur Temple, Inda shows on canvas how life's conditions continue to victimise the weak, particularly the women. The trilogy she created for the exhibition of 16 Indonesian '*Women in the Realm of Spirituality*' at the Vatican (October 1998) draws a line from the '*Karmawibhangga*' legend to the present time. *Karmawibhangga* is a world ruled by human desire, of lies and intrigues: women are flattered and honoured in public, but mistreated and victimised when hidden from the public eye. In '*The Myth*', a scene that could have come straight from the world of *kamadhatu* is about life in distortion: figures kneeling and bowing in respect for a woman figure. But in strong contrast are the bare legs and the woman's bearing, which denote anxiety and fear. Inda's painting entitled '*The Realm*' seems to speak of the present time, but maintains links to the past: a sharp object pointed at a woman without defence, some macho youth, a smirking mask with a cruel mouth, and a figure from antiquity, small but clear in the background. Sombre colours like maroon and moss green mark the mood of pessimism that pervades these canvases, which might be attributed to her study as an archaeologist. However, this may also draw upon the mood she was in at the time, as she was preparing for her divorce.

Dolorosa Sinaga (b. 1952) is a sculptor, in spite of her parents' disapproval. Since she was born into the Batak Sumatran culture, where art is in the carved houses and the megalithic sculptures, it should be no surprise that Dolorosa wanted to go into the arts. But her father strongly disapproved. 'No future', he exclaimed, and when Dolo remained unrelenting and enrolled in the Jakarta Institute of Fine Arts, he stopped sending her money.

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Today, Dolorosa Sinaga is a sculptor of note, and the Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design. As with many artists in Indonesia, her works are like mirrors of the social condition in which she finds herself torn between the Yin and Yang forces. Inspired by the human condition, she initially tended not to give too much attention to gender disparities and their impact, though some of her earlier sculptures did indicate concern. Lately, however, Dolorosa appears to put more emphasis on the issues that women face in a male-dominated society. 'There is no doubt that women are the most oppressed creatures,' she once said, and the harrowing figures in her sculptures of women testify to her vision.

Describing women's conditions, Dolo's works reveal that while change has set in, women's condition has changed little in reality. '*Olympia*', one of her earlier works, depicts a woman in an enclosure. '*Tragic Tendency*', also an early sculpture, depicts a lifeless woman figure against the harsh lattice of a cage, reflecting desperation of the worst kind vis-à-vis a struggle that seems to bring no relief. 'Wailing' (1996), depicting three women in suppressed suffering, speaks for itself, while the two women in her most recent work (1997, no title) covering their ears with the palms of their hands also indicate desperation. One of her latest works depicts a woman caged in barbed wire, a pessimistic view of the woman's position.

All of this does not mean that Dolorosa, or Dolo as she is called, has no vision for a better future. In fact, women should seize the moment, she said three years ago, with development issues coming to the fore. '*Resistante*' (1996) is a statue where a woman draws strength exactly from a desperate situation. Pain and anger mix in the suffering expression of the woman's face and her hand squeezing her breast, but at her back she clenches her hand into a fist in firm determination to fight and win.

At times Dolo makes sculptures presenting her vision that traditional values and standards are not carved in stone.

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Seeking and pursuing change, her strong hands then start moulding women figures in beautifully flowing lines, but always with that tension evoking an indomitable strength. '*Bedoyo Dancer*' draws from the Javanese dance tradition, a sculpture in which the artist makes innovative changes to the gestures. She even lets the traditional dancer hold the tip of her skirt in a modern mannequin-like fashion. Traditional, yet contemporary, elegant yet strong, these are features which found appreciation with most of the public. It was a model for the trophy presented by the Minister for Women's Affairs to the President's wife in April 1994.

Since she mostly worked with bronze, Dolo's health became impaired by poisonous chemical substances contained in the material. For two long years she was unable to work, but this condition has not diminished her affinity to bronze.

Tension is the basis of her work. 'Sculpting is an act of tension,' she once said, and almost all of her works testify to that. Indeed it is her skill and her power to evoke that tension in her sculptures that make her works rank among the most impressive and imaginative in Indonesia.

Unlike Dolo, Iriantine Karnaya (b. 1950) did not have to face her parents' objection to being a sculptor. Her father had even wanted her to be a medical doctor, like himself. A graduate from the sculpture studio of the Department of Fine Arts and Design at the Bandung Institute of Technology, Iriantine became a teacher at the Department of Architecture of the University of Indonesia. She also lectured at the Jakarta Fine Arts Institute where she is still working as Deputy Dean. Meanwhile, sculpture has been her life and her joy for as long as she can remember. But making sculptures, working with bronze, was quite heavy and unhealthy, and she dearly wanted to have a child. So the doctor advised her to slow down.

After twenty years, however, she started working as if she was in great haste. After a minimum of time, she was ready for her solo exhibition, which stirred the imagination.

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Elements of nature like leaves and ants set in installations of unusual whimsical forms were presented together with sculptures denoting stereotypical motherly themes. It was not until quite recently, however, that Iriantine became aware of the deep-rooted differential treatment of men and women. This was exacerbated when, together with Amrus Natalsya and Anusapati, she won a prize in the Triennial '98, but was not mentioned by any newspaper or magazine, except for the *Indonesian Observer*, where a woman writer highlighted the achievement.

In her sculptures shown in October 1998 at the Vatican exhibition of 16 Indonesian '*Women in the Realm of Spirituality*', a sense of injustice against women already emerged, though still denoting the features that mark women's resignation. The works in the December 1998 exhibition on 'Violence against Women', held with 17 other artists at Cemara-6 Gallery, were boldly rebuking victimisation of women, with particular focus on the May riots.

Nunung W.S. (b. 1948) belongs to the strong and fortunate among the women artists, probably not in the sense of material wealth, as she has consistently followed the track of her own convictions, but the way she has been able to carry out her artistic urges is exceptional compared to other female artists married to fellow artists. Dedicated to her involvement in the arts, she established her conditions when Sulebar started courting her. Nothing should prevent her from being, first and foremost, an artist. Sulebar himself does not object to that. 'We are like sparring partners,' he says. 'If Nunung has to go into the field for her sketches, I take care of the child and the household,' he contends, explaining that he was a Boy Scout in his younger days. Nunung admits that she has become more flexible as her son grows up, giving priority to matters she considers urgent to her responsibility as a mother and a spouse.

To be a painter was all Nunung wanted from life, ever since she first saw Kartika Affandi's paintings. At that time

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she was only a fourth-grader. It became her life vocation and she was bold enough to take up the struggle, eliminating the constraints she faced as a young girl whose father was opposed to the whole idea. But with an exceptional attitude of perseverance, she managed to be the first student to enter the Surabaya Art Academy (AKSERA).

Painting then became her destiny, and she has followed that destiny ever since. 'For me, painting is like food that one has to take to remain whole, or like fluid to prevent dehydration,' she once explained. A student and initial follower of the painter Nashar, Nunung, who started by painting in the realistic expressionist style, gradually moved to a more abstract mode.

Colours became the vehicle of her expression. No forms, but a single line to indicate her position. At the time, she was probably the only female to paint in the abstract mode. 'Stark and masculine', commented art critics. Fellow-artist and curator Teguh Ostenrik commented: 'Nunung is a woman who never fails to free herself of conventional standards of life. She turns to us the mirror of herself'.

At some time, she became aware of the issues most women were facing. '*Women and Problems*' (1987) expresses her concern, as did her involvement in establishing the 'Nuansa Group' with Kartika Affandi and Farida Srihadi. The Group sought to provide exhibition opportunities for women artists, but somehow it did not last long.

As Nunung is growing older, her orientation is moving from the dynamics of life towards the mystique of the supernatural: a reflection of the depths of her own psyche. Her travels towards the spaces of the supernatural are inevitably crossing the spaces of mystique, something that has brought her back to the roots of the cultures spread out in the Indonesian archipelago. Sitting for hours in a *wayang* performance, walking in the old Javanese palaces, or exploring the Dayak culture in Kalimantan, the Torajas in South Sulawesi, and the Baduy in West Java, Nunung let the colours and the

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mood sink into her being, while feeling that the texture of their cloths emphasised the spiritual depth of these cultures.

Her solo exhibition held at the Taman Ismail Marzuki Cultural Centre in Jakarta, 21–30 October 1997, was an excellent presentation of the stages of her life. Spiritual intensity, fascinating imagery and total honesty speak from Nunung's current colour spectrum, which now includes carmine, deep green, deep blue, ochre, red, yellow and gold. Accentuating the spiritual mood are the colour combinations referring to cloths from Madura, Aceh and Kalimantan, which are known to have colours based on spiritual meaning. Mood indeed is what seems to encompass everyone. 'Nunung's works are no longer preoccupied with the balance of space, nor with the harmony of colours, but with *suasana*, the atmosphere that touches the heart,' comments Amang Rahman, one of her gurus and himself a surrealistic painter of note.

Nunung says her explorations in the arts are proceeding in the direction where she may enter yet another stage of life, a stage where her personal needs are vanishing into something which is indescribable. In some of her paintings that usually have this line of direction to indicate her position in the space she is creating, the line is not there any more. Instead, vague outlines of a door or a step are emerging on the wide colourfields in dark hues. As she enters spiritual maturity, Nunung's individual needs as an artist have changed slightly, blending with those of her husband and their only son.

When Marida Nasution (b. 1956) talks about her art, it is as if new energy flows into her slender body; her large eyes come to life and her hands begin to gesture. For Marida, her art is her life. At 42, she is the only graphic artist to have ventured into installation art. This is an achievement in the world of Indonesian graphic art, a major breakthrough which many have hailed, but no one has been able to follow so far. Perhaps this is also the beginning of the end of gender biases in the world of art. Perhaps ...

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Graphic art has not been a field of much attraction, and most artists who did enter graphic arts have switched again to painting. But Marida has been committed to graphic art ever since she switched from painting.

Her works have travelled the world, where she has been recognised with a number of awards.

Marida entered the world of art without a problem. 'I went to the Jakarta Fine Arts Institute, simply because it was the closest school to home,' she explains. The third girl in a family of five daughters, she had both a heart ailment and an ear infirmity. It was therefore quite a surprise when she switched from painting to graphic art. The reason for her switch was also very simple: Jakarta Fine Arts Institute (IKJ) got a brand new machine for the graphic art section. Following her inquisitive nature, she found that graphic art offered more varied possibilities to her than painting. That was in the early 1980s.

Even more surprising was her purchase of a machine for her personal use and her determination to do without an assistant. A room in her parents' house serves as a graphic art studio. The little room of about nine square metres is in fact Marida's 'home'. It is here she dwells, day by day, and night by night, unrelenting, working out her designs, going through the stages of all the technical work without any help. While she also does etching, serigraphy is her major mode. This is supported by photographic techniques. Marida usually blends drawing with photographs she takes with her old camera. Unlike other graphic artists who usually take an assistant to do the complicated technical procedures, Marida does everything herself, by hand. It is hard work, and her physical condition allows her to make a maximum of only 15 prints per design, but she loves doing the work herself. There are the sensations of personal touches, the communicative vibrations during the process of creation.

Serious, committed and hardworking, and continuously experimenting with new ideas, Marida Nasution can boast

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three solo exhibitions, in 1991, 1994 and 1997. Her themes have changed with the progress of years. In the first period of her career, she used to dwell in what she calls 'the higher planes', with birds flying in the sky and images from myths and legends. But, as her two latest exhibitions show, her focus has changed to the daily realities with major emphasis on the environment and the urban poor.

Her latest solo exhibition in October 1997, with her impressive installation '*Urban Dynamics*', gave a valuable boost to the slumbering world of graphic art. The installation has been added to the treasures of the newly opened National Gallery.

The youngest in the selection of artists here is Erica Hestu Wahyuni (b. 1971). As she was born into the Javanese nobility living near the *kraton* in Yogyakarta, Erica's artistic talents should not be surprising. Yet her works are in complete contrast to the traditional art abounding in her living environment. Colourful, Erica's paintings are in the style of the naive. Erica started painting at an early age. As a little girl she loved to draw, and her parents let her go to a painting *sanggar*, a kind of small intimate school where children are taught how to paint. Erica did not have to face reluctant parents. On the contrary, they supported the talents of their daughter by letting her enrol at ISI, the Indonesian School of Arts. Soon she found she had nothing to learn there, and she dropped out, making a career with a style of her own.

Erica married her colleague in art school, Masril, who hails from Padang in West Sumatra. They have one child, a daughter, and have to divide their time to take care of her. Fortunately, they have someone to look after the child when they are not there. 'She used to nurse me when I was a little girl,' says Erica, whose success takes her abroad more often.

Drawing in the naive style, Erica likes bright colours and simplified contours. Her paintings usually emanate from a happy family life or the little, simple events of everyday life. She is a prolific painter. At the early age of 26 Erica had

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already made hundreds of paintings, the whereabouts of which she does not always remember. But her fame in the Asia–Pacific region rose with her participation in the Tresors in Singapore. Promoted by Santi Gallery, Jakarta, Erica's '*The Mystery of the Ninth Woman*' was presented at the prestigious Tresors Fair in 1995. Her huge work (2 x 10 m) '*Elephants Travelling in Metropole*', in which huge elephants in brownish red were depicted as if taking over the city, was a great success, which was repeated the following year. This time she surprised everybody by depicting eight women nudes in various positions. '*The Mystery of the Ninth Woman*' came out of a condition that many would call frustration. Painted in a childish manner, as is the style of this young artist, the large work consisting of three panels measuring 2m x 2m, with strong colours and a touch of the imaginative appeared to appeal to many collectors. 'I painted this as a kind of protest against people who did not tire of telling me why I paint in this child-like manner,' she reveals. 'You can't even draw a figure properly,' they used to tell this 26-year-old artist who was at the time still a student of the Yogyakarta Arts Institute, but dropped out later to follow her own determination. The eight positions of the figures in the painting reflect the process to find herself, the ninth woman. Evidently, Erica is very much attracted by the elephant, an animal in which she seems to seek protection. It is for her a symbol of strength and power, qualities she would dearly love to have.

Closing remarks

Although gender biases continue to grow in fertile ground, social changes have allowed women more room to pursue personal aspirations, and the gender map is slowly changing.

It is, however, not yet forgotten how potential was aborted or subdued in the past. Kartika Affandi, for instance, was unable to paint professionally during the more than 20 years of her first marriage. Only after the birth of her eighth child,

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when she decided to file for divorce from her polygamous husband, was her painting career set in motion. Her then husband, an artist himself, found purchasing art materials for Kartika a waste of money. Lucia Hartini, who also married a fellow artist, was left alone with the responsibility of two children when her husband deserted her.

But gradually more women have found the courage to make their own decisions, some hesitantly by seeking to assess their identity, like Marintan Sirait who in her installation–performances grapples with her identity in relation to her place and environment. Others, albeit very few, have taken bolder steps, like Arahmaiani who has decided to move constantly as a rule of life to protect herself from meddlers in her decision-making.

Astari Rasjid, who used to reconcile traditional concepts with contemporary views, has lately grown increasingly bold in opening up to the realities of life, and while her works tremble with the pangs of pain, they also emanate firm resolution.

The year 1998 may be considered a year of overwhelming shockwaves but also of newly emerging dynamics. For many women artists it meant a 'virtual revolution'. Not only did professional women artists take their rightful place in an important exhibition in Italy, they also came out as real feminists. The May rapes had awakened people to the horrible reality that racial attacks had included brutal rapes and sexual assaults, and many women who had never had any interest in women's issues, suddenly felt they themselves were *women* too and a firm sense of solidarity began to flow through their veins. Anger rebuking violence against women, and firm determination to demand justice, speak from the canvases which were supposed to bring out women's realm of spirituality in a unique exhibition at the Gregoriana University of the Vatican (October 1998). What was remarkable was their political orientation and a growing sense of legal rights.

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In December 1998 Cemara-6 Gallery, which had organised the Vatican exhibition, again supported the participation of women artists in an unparalleled exhibit which took a stance on violence against women. This time the participants consisted of 15 women and three men.

It seems a light is breaking through into the dark tunnel that used to constrain women artists. Now, will they be able to seize the momentum and participate in more significant roles? Will they be able to make a difference in the direction of their own lives, their own future?

To answer the question, one should refer to the overall condition of women. In the last five years, Indonesian women have advanced significantly, particularly in terms of recognising themselves. Only five years ago, women artists generally rejected being 'women' artists. They were artists, they said, and there should not be any gender attached. But the year of 1998, which shattered the nation with an unprecedented amount of violence against women, has made women aware of the strong links between what were considered 'typical feminine' concerns and politics, from which women used to be excluded. There is today a firm belief that feminine, or rather women's, issues have everything to do with politics. Therefore, women are intent on entering the political arena, both as decision-makers and as lobbyists to get the concerns of women on the political agenda. This awareness is also affecting women artists.

However, while all kinds of empowering efforts are carried out for women, such efforts should also include men, since they too need to disentangle themselves from the traditional biases. For only when men and women artists can work as equals, in the true sense of the word, can a situation be created in which art can flourish.

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5

SENIOR WOMEN'S PROMINENCE SHINES THROUGHOUT TIME

Hanna Rambe

In the early decades of this century, only a few Indonesian women could afford to have personal aspirations; yet some managed to pursue a professional career. In general, they came from the aristocracy, which had the privilege of enjoying Dutch education during the Dutch colonial rule. Their parents were more inclined to support their daughters in stepping outside the domestic barriers. Proficiency in at least one foreign language was an important entry point to a wider world of thought. Remarkably, their advanced level of learning strengthened their sense of national belonging. In this, their parents' involvement in the national struggle and their own experiences were critical. Six women have been selected to be highlighted in this article. Retired, some of them remain active, albeit at a slower pace.

These women are S.K. Trimurti, who started her career as a media correspondent, and climbed the ladder to be the first woman Labour Minister; Herawati Diah, the first indigenous woman journalist and the founder of the first English-language newspaper, the *Indonesian Observer*; Nani Suwondo, a prominent lawyer of her time who helped draft the Indonesian marriage law; Titi Memet Tanumidjaja, who started on the staff of UNICEF and ended up as the UNICEF Director for East Asia and the Pacific; A. Sulasikin Murpratomo, who was the State Minister for Women's Affairs; and Sandiah Suryono, better known as 'Ibu Kasur', well known for her involvement in pre-school education.

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Education and the course of life

S.K. Trimurti was born in Central Java in 1912, the daughter of R. Ng. Salim Banaransari Mangusuromo. After graduating from the school for women teachers in 1930, she prepared for teaching at an elementary school for girls. Upset with the way the Dutch treated the indigenous people, she developed an interest in political literature and often attended meetings of the *Boedi Oetomo* organisation, which is considered to be the first organisation with national objectives. Her acquaintance with Sukarno (who later became the first president of Indonesia) completely changed the direction of her life. She joined Sukarno's political cadre in Bandung, writing articles and making public speeches relating to the independence struggle. This cost her her job as a teacher, as one article was considered too radical an attack on the colonial government. *Fikiran Rakyat* newspaper, which printed the article, was banned.

At that time, as Tri recalls, fighters for freedom, political parties or organisations never made an issue of woman's role in managing the household and her reproductive functions (pregnancy, giving birth and breastfeeding). She, herself, underwent physical tortures during pregnancy and breast-feeding when she was a political prisoner of the Dutch and the Japanese. An exception among the women at that time for whom going out at night was a taboo, Tri went as far as seeking a cemetery to clandestinely make pamphlets at night.

She later studied in Yugoslavia and obtained a degree in economics in the 1960s.

Herawati Diah's parents belonged to the intellectual elite who mixed with the Dutch rulers. Her father, Dr Latip, was attached to the tin-mining company on Belitung island, east of Sumatra. Her mother was a keen reader who had progressive aspirations for women. Herawati was fortunate to be allowed further studies like her brothers. Wanting an education for their daughter which was different from Dutch

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education, they sent Herawati to Japan and the USA. She became the first woman journalist trained abroad.

Nani Suwondo, too, was fortunate, in that she (and her two sisters) had a mother who was educated at the Dutch *Hogere Burger School* (HBS), a secondary school accessible only to Dutch citizens and selected indigenous elite. Much younger than Trimurti, Nani completed her education when Indonesia had obtained its independence. She graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of Indonesia.

Titi M. Tanumidjaja did not have all the luck of the aforementioned women, although her mother too was well educated, a Dutch-language teacher in East Java, and her father was a civil servant in the Dutch bureaucracy. Titi's father died when she had just finished senior secondary school, and, as she was the oldest child in the family, this did not leave her any alternative but to find a job to help sustain the household. She would have liked to be an engineer, while her teacher thought her fit to enter the faculty of medicine given her high grades in the physical sciences. While she did not pursue either of the two, she carved out a professional career through working and studying at the same time. 'I consider myself a self-made woman, for I have advanced in this career starting from the lowest step in the field of social work. I worked while studying,' she said. Working in the service of UNICEF, she became its representative in a number of countries.

A. Sulasikin Murpratomo studied English at the Faculty of Letters in Jakarta. She went on to become a teacher of kindergarten and a teacher of English at the higher secondary school. She was often told stories about the courage of her ancestors in facing the Dutch. Such stories evidently inspired her to fight for the rights of women.

Mrs Sandiah Suryono, better known as Bu Kasur, followed the Dutch school of further learning. During the Japanese occupation, she worked as an administrative staffer. Although her parents were well-off, they taught her not to depend on other people but to stand on her own.

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The effect of education on the direction of their lives

Did education affect the lives of these women at all?

One may be inclined to answer the question in the affirmative. After all, they did not follow the usual pattern of being the queen of the house after being married. But perhaps it was not a matter of education only. They had supportive parents and spouses, and they had strong character and integrity. Trimurti was a writer and correspondent in her own right and was involved in politics and the struggle for independence when she met Sayuti Melik, her future husband, who was a freedom fighter like herself. Pregnancy and giving birth did not prevent her from continuing her political activities, and vice versa. Together with a friend, Tri founded the *Persatoean Marhaenis Indonesia*, whose main objective was to provide its members with political and organisational education. The organisation also made it a point to have special activities for women, not for the women's cause, but rather as a pretext to prevent excessive Dutch scrutiny. Evidently there was no gender differentiation when it came to imprisonment and torture, for Tri got the same treatment as men in this regard.

As the association's magazine *Soeara Marhaeni* (The Voice of Marhaen) came to life, Tri became its editor-in-chief. To protect her parents from the then colonial government, she used the pseudonym Sulastri Karma or Trimurti, a name under which she is known to this day. After the Indonesian Independence Proclamation in 1945, Tri continued her political activities.

She established the Indonesian Labour Party and became one of its chief leaders. Later she was appointed Labour Minister, the first and only Indonesian woman to occupy this position. Now she aimed at improving the condition of workers, including women workers. As a woman, she paid special attention to paid leave for women workers before and after giving birth, as well as paid leave during the first two days of monthly periods. 'The regulations were made

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in an effort to create a good and healthy labour force.' With good care and breastfeeding from the very beginning, there is reasonable expectation for the child to be a good worker later,' said Tri, recalling the final years of the 1940s. In the autumn of her life, she sustains an active mind.

For Herawati Diah, education abroad gave her a broader perspective and a chance to mingle with the international society. At that time, most parents who could sent their children abroad would send them to the Netherlands. Not so with Herawati's mother, so Herawati was sent to study in Japan and the USA. Although she might not have been intentionally attracted to politics, her study in Japan gave rise to suspicions that she might have pro-Japanese sentiments. So when she returned to Indonesia, just before Japanese forces attacked Southeast Asia, she was detained on arrival, but freed soon after.

With an American Master's degree in journalism, she reluctantly took a job with the Japanese official broadcasting agency, and was assigned to read letters from allied prisoners of war. It was at this stage that she met B.M. Diah, the man she married in 1942. He worked for *Asia Raya* (Greater Asia), a Japanese-subsidised newspaper. Later the newspaper was taken over by the freedom fighters and named *Merdeka* (Freedom), a battle cry during the struggle for independence. B.M. Diah became the editor-in-chief and Herawati was on the editorial staff. But children were born, and nursing and raising the children in addition to a full-time job became too cumbersome. She was thinking of giving up her job and staying home, but her husband objected and, joining forces with her mother, he argued: 'Why spend so much money and time to secure education so far abroad if you end up staying home? Such knowledge should be turned to good use for the benefit of the public and for the progress of the nation'.

It appears to have been quite hard for her. Although her husband as her office chief showed tolerance and flexibility,

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she remained responsible for her home duties and the children, so she had to juggle her time between settling home affairs and job responsibilities, and feeding the baby had to be done between interviews and office work. But she managed to get to issues of actual interest. She recalls that, at the time, she was the only woman journalist chasing news in the field. The gender issue had not yet emerged, let alone gender-specific considerations. Thus, with regard to the load of work and salary, there was perfect equality. But the nature of assignments did differ. Men were in general assigned to cover 'hard' news like politics, economics, the war, industry and technology, which were generally given more weight in terms of importance, while women were considered apt to cover such news items as education, social welfare, movies, health and other items thought to be of the lighter variety.

Inadequacies continued to mid-1950, according to Herawati. As a wife and a mother, a woman had to make all the necessary arrangements first before leaving the house to do her job, while it was considered quite normal for a man to 'forget' his family because of his job. For Herawati, family and her job were of equal importance, and in her view this should be the case for men as well. She founded the Indonesian-language family magazine *Keluarga* and the English-language newspaper *The Indonesian Observer*.

As mentioned before, Herawati's political interest was aroused by being detained on arriving back in Indonesia after her study abroad. Her marriage with B.M. Diah no doubt strengthened her political involvement. As a reporter, she accompanied three Indonesian women who were invited to represent KOWANI, the Indonesian Women's Congress, to the all-India Women's Congress in New Delhi. This included sharing the hidden mission as the country's secret envoys to promote the Republic which, at that time (1947), had not yet obtained official recognition. As mentioned before, gender was not an issue, even if this included travelling in an Air India plane, which had to break through a Dutch blockade

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against Indonesia. After all, what counted was nothing less than the interest of the nation.

Meanwhile, Herawati Diah's profile drew the attention of international institutions. In 1976 she was asked to join the board of UNESCO, the international donor for the promotion of culture. She held the position until 1982, the only woman among 16 board members. Today she remains active, with moral and material support to several initiatives and activities such as the *Gema Madani* (Echo of Civil Society), the *Suara Ibu Peduli* (Voice of Concerned Mothers), the *Masyarakat Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan* (Civil Society on Violence against Women), the National Commission on Violence against Women, and the Women's Movement for Voters Education.[1]

Nani Suwondo busied herself with legal issues after she graduated from university. During the Japanese occupation, she worked in Jakarta for *Sihoabu*, which later became the Republic's Ministry of Justice. During the first Dutch aggression, she followed the office to Yogyakarta, which at that time was the centre of the political struggle for the Republic. Subsequently, she was assigned to the secretariat of the Commission of Three Nations in Yogyakarta, a commission which was established to supervise negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands before the official handover of Independence. Nani Suwondo is known for her involvement in formulating the marriage law and her participation in the organisation of the PKBI (*Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia* – the Indonesian Family Planning Organisation). Nani's activities in these two issues are of special note, due to the various sensitivities involved in the first, and the courage needed to go against the first President's belief that family planning was not needed. She was also part of the PERWARI, the Indonesian Women's Association.

Titi M. Tanumidjaja was not as fortunate as the aforementioned women, although she was from a family where

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the father was a civil servant and the mother a Dutch-language teacher in East Java. When her father died, she had to help support the household. Freshly graduated from senior secondary school she had to find a job, not because educational priority was given to her brothers, but rather because she was the only one who had finished high school and was able to get a job. In fact she had wanted to be an engineer, though her teachers had found her fit to enrol in the medical faculty. But having a job did not prevent her from studying. In fact it was learning by doing. After her experiences in social welfare issues at the then colonial Department of Trade, and as a translator who made laws in the Dutch language understandable in English, the Minister for Social Affairs of the Indonesian Government asked her to join the Department of Social Affairs. Titi was to develop a system to educate social workers in the newly liberated country to overcome lack of progress in this regard. She managed to design what she was asked to do, and did so with the help of models she found in medical studies, and through a written UN course in social development planning.

Meanwhile, orientation and policies for social work were changing (1960s), and the physically handicapped were included in the development design and planning to achieve a more equitable distribution of opportunities. Titi Tanumidjaja took part in designing the new development model for the Department of Social Affairs. For her involvement she received the *Satya Lencana Pembangunan* (Development Award). 'I think of myself as a self-made woman. I worked and studied at the same time,' she contends. The nature of her work brought her in frequent contact with the UN Agency for Child Welfare (UNICEF), where she eventually was offered the post of supervisor of its aid program in Bangladesh. Dacca offered her the opportunity to uphold Indonesia's image in international circles. It became an important point of departure for a bright career.

In 1973 she was appointed Adviser on Women and Family Welfare at UNICEF's New York headquarters. Since then,

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she has frequently represented the UN in various countries. In 1974 she went to Bucharest and in 1975 she attended the launch of the Women's Decade in Mexico. In 1980 she participated in the Copenhagen Conference titled Equality, Development and Peace, and in 1985 she was at the Nairobi Conference establishing the Forward-looking Strategies.

Subsequently, she was appointed the UNICEF representative in Pakistan, a position equivalent to that of an ambassador. She was believed to be capable of adjusting effectively in a developing country with a traditional Moslem background. However, protocol and social distinction still adhered to traditional convention, and even her position as a full representative of a world organisation could not override that. The Pakistan Government's invitation to a state banquet in honour of the then UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, for instance, placed her in the same room with the President's *wife*. Although she initially declined, as she was not a wife but the chief UNICEF delegate, and notwithstanding UNICEF's official insistence that Titi be given a seat facing the Secretary General and Pakistan's President, she had to attend for the sake of good diplomatic relations. The incident, however, did make a difference; UNICEF cancelled its Executive Director's planned visit to Pakistan as a result of the discriminatory treatment. After that, Pakistani protocol acknowledged and included her in the protocol for official delegates.

Gender discrimination also occurred at the very heart of the UN headquarters, and women professionals sought her support to improve their positions, which she gave through providing good advice, such as lodging protests through the delegates of various member countries.

She reached her peak when she became UNICEF Director for East Asia and the Pacific region, a position she held until 1984. She was the first woman to hold such a post.

A. Sulasikin Moerpratomo studied English literature at the Faculty of Literature in Jakarta. She held a number of

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teaching appointments at levels ranging from kindergarten to high school. From early childhood she had heard family members tell the stories about daring ancestors who courageously resisted the Dutch. These stories, she said, inspired her to join the fight on behalf of her peers. She has followed this direction consistently, heading the *Dharma Wanita* (Wives of Civil Servants Organisation) of the Post and Telecommunications department (as the wife of her husband, a senior official), respectively as a member and chair of the Steering Committee of the Women's Congress KOWANI. She was also active in *Perwari* women's organisation. She has been actively involved in politics and was appointed a member of DPR (*Dewan Permusyawaratn Rakyat*), the Parliament. Her appointment as State Minister for the Role of Women was the culmination of her career, which included 25 years service at UNICEF. Today she is still active in her foundation which deals with street children, and in advocating the advancement of women.

Sandiah Suryono, better known as *Ibu*[2] Kasur, obtained her high school education in a school using Dutch as the medium of instruction. During the Japanese occupation she took an administrative office job. Her parents were economically comfortable, but they did not spoil her. She was instead trained to be self-sufficient and independent. For instance, she cleaned her own room and prepared the meals for the family. She used to travel by herself and went to the office unescorted. After she married, she gave up her job. But as her children became teenagers, she had more time to herself. Together with her husband, she set up a playgroup in the large yard of their house. The playgroup eventually grew into a popular radio and television group, and finally became a well-known kindergarten in the Cikini area of Jakarta. She continued this undertaking after her husband died in 1992.

2 *Ibu* is a form of address to older woman.

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The gender issue in their lives

All six of these well-known women are still active outside the home and continue to carry out many of the duties they performed long before they formed their own households and raised their families. Each has her own special interest, but they shared an urge to participate in educating their people in the widest sense of the word. Even though they did not 'plan' their involvement in public life, their activities outside the home grew into extended careers and followed a natural course as a combined result of character, education and integrity, combined with parental and spousal support.

In a way, they all enjoyed a high degree of equal treatment, but it was not always in their favour. Trimurti had to endure equal treatment for political prisoners; and Herawati got equal pay and an equal workload, but had less access to dealing with topics generally given more weight. In addition, she had to succumb to age-old discriminative societal conventions. Herawati Diah had to carry a triple responsibility, as a mother, as the controller of the household, and in her job, and what is more, it was expected as the most natural thing in the world that she managed the household first before leaving for the office. And Titi Memet had to swallow the bitter pill of accepting the Pakistani protocol which placed women in a separate room, no matter the occasion and their professional positions.

Nevertheless, they managed to overcome with grace, as evident from their life stories, all obstacles. And times have changed. Trimurti finds that women have achieved what they fought for, independence from the Dutch, including access to education, important posts, and freedom of movement. Herawati notes that women reporters have gone into the more serious subjects of journalism usually assigned to their male colleagues, while sharing household duties between man and wife is no longer an alien concept.

In fact, education as applied in the teachings of Ibu Kasur never instilled any ideas of discrimination between men and

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women. 'Children can observe real life,' she contends. They have male and female teachers, they play or perform a dance together, and when they are naughty they receive the same punishment. In social intercourse, boy and girl students respect and help one another. They enjoy their activities as a group with the appropriate spirit and without gender discrimination. They are trained to bear the same responsibility in work. Only their natural functions distinguish between men and women and their duty to care for their homes.

However, much remains to be done. While Nani Suwondo thinks the marriage law in which she was involved is basically good, the implementation still requires stringent regulations. In this respect Nani mentions the treatment of women workers as an example. Sulasikin Murpratomo hails the inclusion of a chapter on women's role in the GBHN, the Broad Outline of State Policy, an advancement in comparison to 1978. But she also notes that women's access to development has been at a slower pace than men's, and women's benefits less significant.

Concluding remarks

Generally it can be said that the growth of the emancipation movement of women and women's organisations in Indonesia was prompted by the nationalist movement which sought to be free from the Dutch colonial rule. The 1945 Basic Laws emphasise equal responsibilities and equal rights of all citizens. No distinction was made between men and women. This is quite significant, since even the USA, a modern industrial country, did not grant their women the right to elect and be elected until after the First World War. In other developing countries, women are still in the process of fighting for their rights, such as equal pay for equal work, and rights over their own bodies, including the right to abortion.

In many developed countries, the women's movement found impetus in moral considerations and social disparities resulting from industrial development. The women's movement

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in developing countries, on the other hand, was influenced by several closely related factors, in which the national struggle against the colonial power was dominant. The influence of modern Western thought through education and distribution of books is undeniable. All of our women in this article said reading has been a favoured activity until the present day.

If most women's organisations during the colonial time were active in politics, after Indonesia's Independence they moved to social, religious and development sectors. Movements related to government institutions gained in prominence: *Dharma Wanita*, the organisation of the wives of civil servants, and *Dharma Pertiwi*, the organisation of wives of the armed forces. While their activities were also meant to benefit women in the rural areas, their primary objective was to support their husbands in their careers as civil servants and staff in the armed forces. Critics of such organisations see them as a setback of women's position, as members depend upon the ranks their husbands hold.

Not that all is negative about these organisations. As Titi M. Tanumidjaja sees it, the organisations are unique communication channels, through which ideas find their way, particularly to the rural areas. Family planning, improvement of nutrition, the fight against illiteracy, and village hygiene campaigns could not have been spread as widely without the help of these organisations. 'In my opinion, these organisations have been put to effective use throughout Indonesia,' she insists. In the end, it is the women leaders who have to substantiate the content of their movement.

The disadvantages of women still continue, and our women have not put their energies to rest. Trimurti was recently seen at the inauguration of the *Barisan Nasional*, a political party which has declared itself an opponent of the current government (August 1998), while Herawati Diah is actively supporting the anti-violence-against-women campaign.

Evidently, the dynamics of their early youth continue to dominate their lives.

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6

ASSERTIVE BUT COMPASSIONATE
A Picture of Four Women's Lives

Annie Bertha Simamora

As everywhere else, women in most parts of Indonesia have for a long time been invisible in the public sphere. Rules of long-standing cultural traditions in certain parts of the country have for ages set the pattern in which men and women should take their place. The struggle for independence, which increased access to education and skills, made a marked difference. Yet, in many instances, even women in the public sphere still have one foot stuck in the cultural traditions in which they were brought up. This is evident in the four profiles described here.

All four women of our focus had opportunities to develop their innate talents; they had supportive fathers and understanding husbands; and they proceeded in life to be personalities whose activities had significant effects on the lives of other people in their communities. They are examples of modern women who have not shunned working in the public sphere. In one way or the other, however, they have perpetuated the gender disparity during their married life. With Santi Pudjo, a noted Master of Ceremonies, for instance, there was not any feeling of discomfort when her husband bequeathed their house to their son and nothing to their two daughters; Lestari Soejono, a successful businesswoman, speaks highly of her son, though it is her daughter who shoulders the bulk of the work in the company, and Wawa gave up her job to type her husband's thesis.

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Undoubtedly the time of *revolution,* or struggle for independence, had lasting effects on the further flow of these women's lives. Some started to be real partners with men during that time, for others the spirit of independence emerged only after their children had grown up. Today, as they have reached the autumn of their lives, they continue on the way they have paved for themselves in the course of time. In so doing they are strengthening the foundations of the future.

Santi Pudjo (70): an MC with an impact

Santi Pudjo was standing in front of a microphone, addressing the audience packing the hall at the Sogo Shopping Centre in Jakarta. Switching from English to Indonesian, and back again, her voice penetrating to all levels, Santi was the image of a professional woman with a traditional touch. Shoppers slowed their pace to look and to listen to what she had to say. In this shopping mall, Santi appeared to be the Master of Ceremonies introducing the latest trends of fashion or describing the advantages of a new product. But, in fact, her speciality is introducing cultural performances, specifically held for visiting heads of state.

At 70, Santi is as energetic as a woman in the prime of life, and she would not think of decreasing her activities of at least ten functions every month. Fashion shows, product promotions, meetings of all sorts, she does them all.

Talking into a microphone is nothing new to Santi, for she started doing so during the revolution. At the peak of the revolution she used the microphone to announce to the world the English version of the Indonesian Independence Proclamation. Working from a hidden radio station at Mount Lawu, Tawangmangu, Central Java, Santi broadcast the English text of the Proclamation as well as other news of the fight for independence in an effort to counter Dutch reports that Indonesia's struggle had collapsed.

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Public speaking was not her only skill. During the revolution, she also helped in public kitchens, preparing food for the freedom fighters and thousands of refugees. Now and then she slipped to the front lines with messages, letters or medicines. It is difficult now to imagine Santi wearing a jumpsuit made from jute and dyed green so she could disappear in the jungle. 'I just put whatever cotton cloth I could get hold of under the jute suit, so it would not itch,' Santi recalls. She jumped in and out of trucks along with her male comrades.

Back in the capital after independence, and married to Semadi, a civil servant, life for Santi revolved around the responsibilities expected of a mother and the need to earn additional cash. While raising two sons and two daughters, she also worked as a full-time announcer of the English program of *Radio Republik Indonesia* and as a part-time secretary at the United States Information Service (USIS). Family life was quite unusual for that time, as she and her husband had only limited time together: when her husband came home from office work, Santi had to leave for her paid job. By the time she left the house, she had finished her other unpaid job, the work related to the household and the care of the children. When the children entered junior high school, her role outside her house widened and she realised that her life's aspirations were in fact different from those of her husband. Tawangmangu, she says, has left its mark on her.

Santi owes much of her sense of discipline to her father, Dr Raden Soetardjo, whose name is part of Indonesia's history of independence. As a member of the *Volksraad* (Parliament), he sent a petition to the Dutch authority, requesting preparations for handing over independence to Indonesia within ten years. Independence indeed came ten years later, in 1945, not exactly because of the *Volksraad.*

Discipline was strongly emphasised in the Soetardjo family, and Santi's father was very strict about it. But evidently,

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discipline was not carved in stone. At times he just closed his eyes or pretended not to notice when Santi and her sisters Sri and Tati occasionally slipped out of the house in the evening. He must have known they went to the youth meetings and, a nationalist himself, he approved, although he did not show it openly.

Obedience to her husband and care of the family became her main duties once Santi was married. Until the children entered junior high school, it was she who raised them and helped them with their homework. However, during the children's adolescence, it was her husband who kept them in order. He ruled with an iron hand whenever it was necessary for the children's own sake. She eventually realised how much the pattern of her own family was a replica of her parents'.

In 1968 her husband died, and she had to take on the role of a father as well. It was not always easy to keep the children to the rule of discipline, particularly in the 1970s, when the erosion of discipline and slackening moral values began to dominate the lives of the young. Santi, however, stood firmly by the discipline she had known as a girl, becoming more vehement as her children tended to follow the fashionable trends. So far, she had never used physical punishment, but when she discovered that one of her daughters had visited a discotheque and was smoking, she somehow lost control of herself. 'I stepped on her body,' she recalls. Like her parents, Santi gives prominence to religious teaching as a stronghold in a world of high technology and fast changes.

Mr Soetardjo, who later became governor of West Java, had also raised his children in traditional Javanese fashion. Santi and her eleven brothers and sisters went to Dutch Christian schools, but each of the children embraced a religion they personally believed in — Islam, *Kejawen*,[1]

1 Mysticism associated with the Javanese view of the world.

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Catholicism, Protestantism or Buddhism. The same is true for Santi's children. 'I think it is due to the *Pancasila* principles my father advocated. He first proposed the concept,' Santi explained. Soetardjo's descendants hold a reunion every 22 October, on his birthday, to imbue the younger generation with the lofty values of Soetardjo's teachings.

It has always been Santi's ideal to help shape the future of the young. To this end, she is tirelessly involved in education. Whether it is at the Toastmasters Club where she helps members improve their skills in giving forceful speeches, or at training courses where she introduces new TV presenters to successful reading, there is no greater joy for her than to watch her one-time students grow into skilful professionals.

In private, Santi leads a simple life in a public housing complex. She has moved from the big house where she and her husband raised their family and left it to her two sons, complying with her husband's wishes. When Santi married Semadi, his parents had died, leaving him with nothing in material possessions. For Semadi, a believer in Javanese traditions and rules, it must have been quite a humiliation to enter marriage without a single hint of material wealth to offer. He did not wish his sons to have the same experience and made sure they would inherit the family property. Of course, it did not cross his mind at all to give his daughters a share, and neither did it bother Santi.

As Santi continues to share her knowledge, skills and experiences, she builds up the cadres preparing them for a brighter future. In spite of her advanced age, her posture is still straight, and her sparkling eyes tell of a mind brimming with ideas. Retirement? Not a chance.

Lestari Soeyono: peanuts and a human focus

Lestari Soeyono knew little of doing business when she first started selling peanuts in 1967. Little could she know then that she would be a businesswoman of repute sending out

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five trucks of her products every morning to different parts of Jakarta, even as far as Europe. Even less could she have foreseen that she would be a lecturer at a well-respected school of business in Jakarta. Born in 1938 in the poor, arid area of Gunung Kidul, the daughter of a cattle trader who had not had any higher education, Lestari may owe her success to her inherited business talents, but perhaps a more important asset has been her fair and honest way of doing business.

It all started 30 years ago, when Lestari and her husband Soeyono moved to Jakarta and Soeyono's salary as a simple school teacher was not enough to make ends meet. Some extra income was urgently needed, so she decided to sell snacks for school children. Peanuts would do, she thought. Buying one kilogram of peanuts was quite easy, but more effort was needed for the frying and packaging in tiny plastic bags. It appeared to be a good business, though she had many competitors. The school children liked her snacks as they were much tastier.

In fact, selling peanuts was not Lestari's first business venture. When she was in her second year of junior high school, she organised her pretty classmates into a local cultural dance troupe called *ronggeng*. They travelled around the neighbourhood of Gunung Kidul, Central Java, performing, going into the mountains to remote villages. People liked their show and village leaders and local government appreciated their entertainment for the villagers. However, one of her uncles did not like it at all. She was degrading the family, he said, and she had to stop this activity.

Lestari may have inherited such business talents from her father who was a trader in cattle and grain. Even as a little girl, Lestari had noticed that her father did not work hard, but made a lot of money. In fact, he lent out money at no interest to farmers and cattle breeders for the various Javanese ceremonial occasions. They in turn appreciated his help by giving him first choice of the crops and the

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cattle, which he bought at market price anyway. He also gave calves to farmers, on condition that they give him the right of first refusal. Lestari, who idolised her father, closely observed her father's business practices. Concern for one's fellow human beings was always his primary consideration, and in her own way she has replicated this.

Today Lestari employs over 200 people. More than 90 per cent live in company dormitories and enjoy a much higher level of welfare than employees of other companies. In addition, they often receive bonuses. Lestari goes by her vision that a good employer relies on his or her staff whose capabilities are the company's asset. No wonder none of Lestari's workers has asked for a rise nor has anyone resigned because of poor pay.

Lestari did not learn management from textbooks. She developed her own style which, with reference to her religion, she calls Christian management. She starts every new venture with a prayer and tries to follow the precepts of her faith. She admits prayer helps her find solutions to her problems, though one must not forget her innate business talents.

Lestari never risks all her capital on a new venture, putting in only 50 per cent at a time. So if she loses, she loses only half of her capital. Lestari's strongest business strategies have been developed in personnel management. New recruits are taught the house rules including attendance at morning and evening services. When an employee complains, Lestari needs only to remind her of their agreement on the house rules.

When she meets an employee who seems ill-mannered, she calls her and lets her know what good manners are. 'Maybe your parents forgot to tell you,' she will say, taking care not to hurt the girl's feelings.

The bulk of the work in Lestari's office is now shouldered by her oldest daughter, Endah, who graduated from a secretarial academy with several management courses. Lestari's first son,

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Aldoko Cahyono, who is majoring in economics and management, is 'given the crown', as she puts it, when she talks about the company. He enjoys the highest education in the family and attends negotiations and seminars in order to – as his mother hopes – absorb knowledge useful for the company.

Lestari's husband Soeyono studied bookkeeping and now heads the company's financial department. He is also vice-principal of a senior high school and sits at his company desk only part of the day, leaving the basics of finance to someone else. Soeyono must approve sums exceeding a certain amount of money. 'Even if everything is ready for signing, I never close any negotiations without consulting my husband,' Lestari says. She tells her business partner about it and also makes sure that her employees view him as their boss and respect him accordingly.

Lestari does not have any of the complexes of a successful business wife. She feels neither superior nor inferior to anyone, accepting her success with equanimity. She is readily accepted in her surroundings and society. Does she apply her business strategies there, too? 'Why, of course I do,' she responds quickly. 'At times,' she said seriously, when she herself is unable to do all her work and she has to rely on her husband, 'I have a spare tyre'.

Lestari's products come in two grades. The better packaging caters to the middle and upper class. The simpler packaging is intended for middle and lower customers. Some of the profits from the first-grade product are put towards the second one, to make sure her product is not beyond anyone's reach and remains a household word.

Market surveys are a never-ending task. Although certain products are still selling, Lestari's instinct tells her that they could be pushed off the shelves by competing products or that popular preference might change. Before this happens she quickly changes a product's appearance, at the same time making sure to retain some distinctive characteristics, like a special flavour, no preservatives and attractive packaging.

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Unlike other brands that deteriorate after a successful start, Lestari's products continue to be of excellent quality. She takes special care in this respect. The rice flour she uses, for instance, is always home-made to ensure good quality, her utensils are made to order, and the factory retains a high standard of hygiene. Approximately 70 types of typical Indonesian snacks now bear her brand.

As a businesswoman, she is also very generous and sharing her good luck with others is one of her main qualities not readily found in other business people. 'I have already made profits. Let other people also get a share,' is her simple explanation of her principle of growing strong together.

Her success story now travels. At 60, Lestari, without the benefit of higher education, is now a regular lecturer at a prominent school of business in Jakarta. She responds generously to those who want to tap into her experience, and the three hours allocated to her as a lecturer often stretch to four. A devout Christian, she is of the opinion that the church is not the only place for serving others. Her church does not always agree with her on that. While her interpretations of the church teachings are sometimes too progressive for the more conservative, Lestari is not the image of a radical. Certain traditions must be kept intact. Playing the organ in church is one of the duties her children cannot evade. 'That is one of my offerings to God,' she insists.

A woman who has achieved a certain level of wealth, Lestari has not become a big spender, and neither have her family. In fact she has taught her three children important lessons in how to deal with money. She proudly tells the case of her youngest, who saves transport money by staying on campus instead of going home for lunch. In the company, her sons get equal pay and equal treatment with the other employees. This way, she hopes, her sons will have a firm basis, mentally and in business.

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As she grows older, the intensity of her interests has moved from business to the immaterial, from herself to other people. If selfishness was one of her main features in her earlier years, today she is a changed person, attending to the needs of others. This started when her friend's daughter came out of the mental hospital where she was treated after her boyfriend died. Feeling sorry for the girl, she started chatting with her, making sure to listen, letting the girl tell her own story. She also gave the girl some small tasks to get her away from her haunting thoughts. The girl recovered after a few months and was even able to take a job. Since then, counselling has become almost a second profession.

Wawa Wardoyo: early visions fulfilled

While ethnic conflicts are producing war-mongers in many parts of the world, Wawa Wardoyo, the former secretary to an Indonesian Foreign Minister, is making fishmongers of West Javanese villagers. A two-hour drive from Jakarta in the village of Mekar Sari, a fish nursery pilot project has become an income-generating venture for Budi and his brother Muljadi. It is only one example of Wawa Wardoyo's involvement in community development, started well before the idea was included in development projects.

When Wawa was a teenager, she had a dream, one that she cherished throughout the years. She grew up, had a job, married and had children, but the dream was always there. Then, when she came back from the Netherlands ten years ago, she saw a chance to make her dream come true. Settling with her husband in Bogor, she became impassioned about the plight of the many drop-outs who were idling along the roads, while the land was left uncultivated. Something had to be done, and so Wawa started to gather volunteers who would help her care for these high school drop-outs in a creative and sustainable manner. They became *motivators* of village development. Just imagine, they who might have lost all motivation, now became the ones to motivate others provoking

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the will in people to help themselves. It was a real boost to their self-respect. Slowly, but surely, some results emerged with people starting to take initiatives instead of waiting for instruction, as had been the feudalistic pattern previously.

The Mekar Sari pilot project shows how *papaya* gardens have benefited from terracing on a sloping terrain, while seed fish has become an enormous help to substantially increase fish farmers' ability to meet the rising demand for fish. This beginning motivated people to use the terrace system as in the Mekar Sari project, and others started their own fish nurseries. The ball kept rolling: another former drop-out, Hadi, has now set up a motor repair shop, Moen repairs watches, and Dedi sells traditional medicines. To Wawa's delight, quite a number of drop-outs, who used to hang around aimlessly, are now motivated persons who work with enthusiasm and a zest for life. Wawa also helps to start new projects that villagers determine for themselves. Much more could be done if Wawa had more capital. More seeds are needed so that more people can plant *papaya*. Unfortunately, all her savings have already been used, including her husband's salary. Not that donors did not help. Recognising the benefits of such initiatives, several international donors, from Germany, Belgium and Japan, have provided substantial funding. A new concrete building on the outskirts of Bogor is a gift from Japan, which promised more funding to Wawa's relief. 'We need more money,' she said. Indeed she does. There are not many fish nurseries in Mekar Sari because the necessary starting capital is beyond the financial reach of the villagers. There was not enough *papaya* seed for everyone because Wawa's office was short of money.

Wawa's day is quite long, for when she comes home from the office the day is not done yet. Patients with cancer or tuberculosis come to her for help, as do people who are struggling with family problems such as marriage, unwanted pregnancy, divorce and work. It seems that talking to them alone relieves their suffering. But as with her strategy with

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the drop-outs and the villagers, she tries to make them help themselves by empowering them to solve their own problems. She co-operates with the social work office in her town to provide financial assistance where needed. As is her good nature, she treats everyone equally, in a kind and friendly manner, making everyone feel important no matter where they come from, whether poor or rich. It is something she learned early in her life. As a child, her father often took her with him on prison visits, showing her how inmates lived and explaining to her the reason why they were incarcerated. It is there that the seeds of compassion were sown.

Wawa is an example of women of Chinese descent who spend their time doing social work. While the general assumption is that Indonesians of Chinese descent are enviably rich, and like to stick to their own social circle, Wawa provides another image. Her simple lifestyle and her continuous focus on helping other people have endeared her to many who have the privilege to know her. Her conversion to the Moslem religion may have been an added value.

Wawa says her work has enriched her life. 'I am happy that I can give something others find useful,' she says, determined to continue despite declining health after the stroke she has suffered.

In fact, she should sit back and enjoy the fruit of her work. Work to her, however, is equal to life. Life is work, no matter what. The only luxury she allows herself is reading books on psychology or philosophy, and listening to classical music.

Although she has had to strive hard to pursue her personal visions, Wawa says she has no regrets. She would do exactly the same if she had to repeat the last 25 years of her life. Surely she is no ordinary woman.

Sri Moenarti Koesnoen: from the battlefield to the destitute

Sri was only 17 years old when nationalist emotions surged to the level of fighting for independence from the Dutch

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colonial rule. As anywhere else in struggle and war time, there was a lot of suffering and numerous people gave their lives in the struggle for national independence. Often, frontline fighters disappeared, leaving their families in eternal ignorance of their fate. Such conditions have in some ways shaped Sri's orientation in life. But perhaps it is her uncle, a medical doctor, who gave her the main push when he took her with him to a medical centre where he treated the wounds of freedom fighters.

Sri became a Red Cross volunteer and looked after the seriously wounded. 'I cleaned the blood from their bodies and dressed their wounds,' she recalls. She also vividly remembers helping an old woman whose back had been torn by shrapnel from a grenade. Sri cleaned the wounds, her uncle stitched them. She had to clench her teeth to refrain from crying, as if to help the old woman bear the pain. When she was going to help the old woman to eat, the patient refused the food. 'No, no,' she said, 'wait until *Maghrib*.' Apparently when she was hit while selling sweet meats, she had been fasting. Even in her condition, she did not want to break her fast.

Medical supplies and equipment were scarce. Sri had to learn to make do with whatever was at hand. She did so well that people took her for a real pharmacist. But Sri wanted to be a midwife, and she enrolled for a two-and-a-half-year midwifery training program. Soon she was given important responsibilities for prominent patients, such as Fatmawati, the wife of Indonesia's first president, and Rahmi Hatta, the wife of the vice-president. Subsequently she was chosen from among the graduates to supervise midwives. After a while, she realised she wanted something different. Her heart was with the people and she involved herself in public health. She got a job in the mother and child division or the BKIA (*Badan Kesejahteraan Ibu dan Anak* – Mother and Child Healthcare Committee), and worked as a field worker focusing on school health care.

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Her most rewarding experience was at the *Puskesmas* (*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat* – public health centre) where she worked for 16 years, supervising medical students training at the BKIA and the family planning centre. She often replaced doctors in assisting at births. After a while, people started to greet Sri with 'Good morning, Madame doctor'.

Still staying in the same field of interest, Sri, together with friends, set up a well-staffed maternity ward near the old airport of Kemayoran, a neighbourhood in Central Jakarta. She left the BKIA at the time the government was launching a nation-wide family planning campaign. The maternity ward was successful, and Sri went on in search of something else to which she could dedicate herself. She herself had eight children when her interest was drawn to displaced and destitute children.

In 1981 she opened an orphanage, '*Panti Muslim Putra*', near her present residence in Rawamangun in East Jakarta. 'As in all my old jobs, here I am dedicating myself to others; but I think this last one is the best,' she says.

The idea for the orphanage came from her daughter Koestaminingsih who, with three children of her own, had adopted several orphans. She had always been deeply moved by the plight of displaced children. Sri's husband immediately agreed to the idea.

The initial funds for construction of the orphanage came from many sources. There was some money from the maternity ward at Kemayoran. Sri had saved some of her salary from the BKIA. The family owned a small printing business and a workshop run by Sri's nephew. Some friends helped. After six years, enough money had been collected and a 3000 square metre plot of land, owned by her daughter, was ready.

The orphanage is run by members of her family and other relatives, 'to avoid potential problems in the future', Sri explained. Twenty-eight children find refuge in the orphanage at any time. Everything is free, from formal education outside the compound, to lessons in health, ethics and morality given by highly dedicated teachers.

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The children 'graduating' from Putra Mulia have a high school or polytechnic education. They are independent, working and living outside. The girls make cakes, become dressmakers or beauticians, or are trained as nursemaids. The more ambitious take the midwife training course. Sri and her family no longer have to work hard to finance the running of the orphanage; donors come of their own accord. One of her late husband's friends regularly sends money from London. At present Sri is renovating and extending the orphanage to take in more children. The new plan includes a mosque which neighbourhood people will also be able to use.

Sri does not spend all her time on the orphans. A small catering business also keeps her busy. She needs the proceeds for her monthly gatherings of the elderly who come to her house to pray together and attend lectures. Since they are women from poor families, they receive everyday necessities such as soap and toothpaste. At the Moslem New Year each one is given a new set of clothes. Sri is now concentrating on these people.

'No, there is no difficulty that I cannot cope with,' Sri says of her busy life. 'Small problems are easily solved, and do not bother me.' She laughs when asked whether she has ever encountered any difficulty because she is a woman. She does not deny that family friends help readily. She also agrees that her Western education has made a great difference to her way of doing things and to her attitude toward life. She is very close to her children, and it is rare for any of them to be absent from their regular Sunday gatherings. Sri, who is 68 and has 17 grandchildren, does not look her age. She dresses well in traditional Indonesian clothes and wears jewellery. She covers her hair, as befits a Moslem woman. 'I am always happy,' she says.

Sri does not pretend to know a lot. She has very little general knowledge, reads little, and is not a television addict. She travels far from home to buy material for clothes or to

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shop for her personal needs. Most of her time is for social work, 'but I do forget about myself'. Of course, she is not against women working outside the house. There must be some social tolerance to allow women to take a role outside the home. However, they must first attend to their families in the best way possible and get to know their surroundings.

'If I were a member of Parliament I would encourage women to be more advanced, give them more skills and make them understand their rights, and their duties,' Sri says. Like her father, she gave equal education to all her children. Sri's father was a train controller, the first native to get such a high-ranking job during the Dutch occupation. Her mother graduated from a Dutch elementary school, a privilege for children of Dutch employees. Their daughter, who married a journalist 16 years her senior, is not impressed by special privilege. Right now, Sri is still not satisfied with what she has done. 'Not to the maximum of my capabilities,' she says. If she had more funds she would like to open businesses for other people. There is no denying, the compassion and energy of her younger days continue the way she started when she first became a Red Cross worker. 'I will stop working only when there is nothing left to do,' she asserts.

Concluding remarks

The women profiled here may not have been aware of any discrimination. They knew what they wanted to do and were able to take the initiative in pursuit of their goals. Yet Santi Pudjo remained an obedient wife and only when her children entered junior high school did she discover that her life was actually distinctly different from her husband's. She 'rebelled', as she herself says, then assessed her own goals in life. She would probably not have been able to undertake the activities affecting the future cadres and bringing her fame, if her husband had not died.

While each of these women claims she has never been aware of a gender problem, each of them has contributed to

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perpetuating the gap. Santi did not think it was wrong when her husband did not leave anything to their two daughters. She herself left the house her husband had bequeathed to their sons, even though she knew the law would have protected her in this situation. To Santi this was merely the Javanese custom.

Even such a liberated manager as Lestari, who travels everywhere to share her success story with others, appears to still have discriminatory views. Endah, her firstborn, will not inherit the company, although she is the eldest and shoulders the bulk of the company's effort. Lestari will pass the company's helm to her son who is allowed to pursue higher education. 'Sons must have degrees,' Lestari says, unconsciously implying that girls do not need them.

It will need special efforts to redefine traditionally accepted values, and while some are in the process of doing just that, it will take a longer time for women who were brought up in the circumstances of the women of our profile. Yet their marked compassion, genuine sincerity and strong will set them in a class apart.

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7

AISYIYAH
Between Worship, Charity and Professionalism

Lies Marcoes-Natsir

Women in *Aisyiyah* must face a growing demand for professionalism vis-à-vis the changing dynamics of society. *Aisyiyah* is the women's department of the *Muhammadiyah* organisation, the oldest and second largest Moslem organisation in the country. Founded over 70 years ago, its main purpose was to support the parent organisation. Charity was the overpowering motivation, and charity was very much based on religious considerations, in line with the general tenor of religious organisations of that time. Religious teachings, educational classes, and providing health and financial assistance were charitable activities in which women involved themselves on a voluntary basis. In this situation, there was no question of payment, nor were any professional skills needed. But times have changed, and so have values of work and employment which demand professional skills and payment.

The *Aisyiyah* organisation is currently faced with a dilemma of having large numbers of unskilled volunteers motivated by worship and charity, and a growing demand for professionalism in the changing dynamics of society. Some progress can be recorded as the new generation has taken to more formal sectors of teaching, as teachers and professors, and in health as medical doctors, nurses, midwives and office workers. Nevertheless, women in *Aisyiyah* continue to struggle with their dilemmas, as the following women's profiles illustrate.

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Masnah,[1] the prototype

Immediately after saying her first prayers of the day, Masnah (72) leaves her house. Walking along the village streets she hurries to the mosque. As daylight breaks on the village, the quiet streets start to fill with sellers carrying their wares to the morning market. In her right hand, Masnah holds a bag she has knitted herself. It contains the Holy Book, the *Koran*, and the mosque's financial records. The mosque's loudspeakers have started to chant the *Salawat Nabi* (prayers of adoration for the prophet), and she knows her friends, about 15 retired women, will have arrived before her. As she quickens her pace, Masnah thinks of the day's program.

This morning, as on every other morning, they study the *Tafsir Qur'an* (interpretations of the Koran) and discuss each chapter, weighing arguments against wisdom. The *Ajengan* (religious official) takes the lead at the session, and Masnah will do her best to facilitate the discussion.

Masnah is the chairperson of the group and, as such, closes the session towards 6 a.m., presenting the financial report which includes the transactions of that morning. They then sing a song of praise before they all return to their respective activities.

For Masnah this means going home to look after the store of her 37-year-old daughter Lina, who has lived with her for the last four years. Lina is the mother of three children. She is also a teacher of physics at a junior high school of the *Muhammadiyah*, and the principal of the *Aisyiyah* kindergarten located in the backyard of Masnah's house. Lina's husband is pursuing graduate studies in Jakarta, so Masnah looks after both Lina's children (Masnah's grandchildren) and the store.

In the afternoon, when her daughter comes home, Masnah prepares lunch and feeds the many chickens. Then she takes a brief siesta before she goes to another discussion group which deals with *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) or *tauhid* (theology).

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1 Not her real name.

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Masnah also leads the co-operative's savings and credit activities, managed by younger members of the group. In July 1995, the co-operative had 84 members with savings of over Rp. 6 million.

While the above profile may be considered an example of the prototype in *Aisyiyah*, some may question whether someone like Masnah could be considered as a member of the *Aisyiyah* organisation which has approximately two million members.[2] Similarly, there is a question whether the kindergarten organised by Masnah can be included in the statistics of *Aisyiyah*'s charity activities. For one thing, Masnah has never had a membership card, but this may be due to the somewhat inaccurate system of the organisation's data recording. What intensifies the question is, however, that the discussion sessions she attends and facilitates are not always reformist as is the line of the *Muhammadiyah*.

Nevertheless, Masnah herself firmly believes she is part of the *Aisyiyah*. After all, her husband was founder and a leader of *Muhammadiyah* in one of the villages in the Ciamis *kabupaten* (regency) in West Java. He said he started the organisation in 1954. Masnah, whose business was flourishing at that time, wholeheartedly supported her husband's activities within the organisation. If he needed school uniforms for the students of the *Muhammadiyah*'s afternoon school, he needed only to ask Masnah and she would provide the necessary cloth from her store.

After the attempted communist coup in September 1965, *Muhammadiyah* activated their proselytising activities through afternoon religious education sessions for the general public in which Masnah's husband was actively involved. The purpose of these activities was to offer protection and identity, a sense of security, to those who felt restless and threatened, he explained.

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2 Interview with Dr Malichah Muchtaram, a member of the board of *Aisyiyah*.

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For Masnah, and maybe also for her other friends in *Aisyiyah* in that village, her current involvement in *Aisyiyah* activities stems from a firm sense of duty as part of the *Muhammadiyah* family. Such activities include the kindergarten and the plans for the development of a BKIA (*Balai Kesehatan Ibu dan Anak* – Health Centre for Mother and Child). While most consider such involvement as a part of *dakwah bil hal* (spreading their mission through concrete actions), Masnah concentrates on her activities as a way of worshipping God.

In fact, the importance of a person like Masnah is not to be underestimated. It is people like Masnah whose efforts make the organisation's mission and ideals tangible at grassroots level.

Darojah, a housewife beyond the stereotype

For Darojah, *Aisyiyah* is an alternative family and provides her second schooling. Darojah, or Jah as she is generally called, lives in Yogyakarta. She does not hold a particularly high or important position in *Aisyiyah*, nor is she noted as an outstanding initiator within the organisation. The most noteworthy position she has held so far is her current one as a member of the branch board and secretary of the Tabligh activities at *Aisyiyah*'s central office.

Twenty years ago, her husband died of a heart attack, at only 42. This was a turning point for Jah, as she then had to be both mother and father for their seven children. She also became an active member of *Aisyiyah*.

After her husband's death, she received a pension of Rp. 47,000 per month, and a semi-permanent rental house. At the time, four of her children were still in elementary and secondary schools. The other three were in tertiary institutions: the *Tarbiyah* (education) faculty of the IAIN (State Islamic Institute), ITB (Bandung Institute of Technology), and dental school at Gadjah Mada University.

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It was not easy for Jah to handle her problems alone. She gave no thought at all to remarrying which, in hindsight, she did not see as a viable solution. Instead, Jah then tried hard to overcome her problems by herself. Of course, her abilities did not develop in a vacuum.

Born into a traditional Moslem family of farmers and traders, she had been accustomed to seeing both her parents work since she was little. Jah and her seven siblings had grown up in a free atmosphere common for middle-class farm families. Jah and her sisters played like their brothers; climbing fruit trees, flying kites, bathing in the river, drying bananas, tobacco and rice.

Distinctions were made, though, when it came to educational opportunities. To obtain an education, Jah had to become rebellious. As Indonesian independence approached, discrimination against women in the field of education was still very strong. Even though her father was a Masyumi activist from a rather prosperous economic background, he would not consider allowing his daughters to go beyond elementary school. For his sons it was a different story; they could go as far away as Solo or Yogyakarta.

When her eldest brother came home for vacations, Jah could no longer contain her longing to go to school. Crying, she ran along the railroad tracks, following her brother to the station when it was time for him to return. Without a ticket and only with the clothes on her back, she boarded the train to Yogyakarta. To her parents, who went after her to the station, she just said, 'I am going with Mas (elder brother) Samsi, I want to go to school'.

That was her introduction to Yogyakarta, and at the same time to *Muhammadiyah* and *Aisyiyah*. Her brother enrolled her in the Muallimat *Muhammadiyah* school and placed her into a dormitory run by *Aisyiyah*.

Her move to Yogyakarta was quite a cultural leap for her. Antiseptic carbolic acid to clean the bathroom was something totally novel to her. Even using underwear as part of daily

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wear was something she had to get used to. During her childhood in the village she had known only the *cawat*, a very simple form of underwear used by her elder sisters when menstruating.

Her most important lesson, however, was during her involvement in the organisation for women students at *Muhammadiyah* known as *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*. The political situation at that time was highly conducive to a growing interest in organisational and political activities. Jah, for example, still remembers that in third grade of Muallimat, she, together with four friends, represented their school in a course on politics for women held at the presidential palace with President Soekarno and S.K. Trimurti as the main speakers.

After graduating from the teachers college, Jah married. Unlike her elder sisters, whose marriages had been arranged, Jah chose her own husband. The young couple settled in Yogyakarta after having lived in East Java for a few years. In Yogyakarta her husband pursued a career at the Department of Religious Affairs. Initially, Jah tried to continue working as an elementary school teacher at *Muhammadiyah* and attending *Aisyiyah* functions from time to time, but she had to give up teaching because of her responsibilities as a mother to take care of the children.

In 1962 she started a business with the money she received from selling her earrings for Rp. 60,000. With that money she bought a second-hand box, scales, rice and various small household necessities. She was to rely on this business as her capital in the future to make a living for herself and her children after her husband's death.

After her husband's death, Jah became more active in *Aisyiyah*. Asked why she did not do that while her husband was still alive, she said, before her husband died, her main duty was to serve. After he died, there was nobody left to serve, because the children were already grown and could take care of themselves. 'So, I told my children that I would like

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to get together with my friends and study while worshipping,' she explained.

Her need to worship was satisfied in her 'alternative family', a place to discuss various problems, one of which was selecting the right candidates for her daughters to marry. Three out of her six married children chose people from *Muhammadiyah* or *Aisyiyah*.

Jah has done her share for her children. She has supported her seven children in getting an education, and all of them have succeeded. She achieved this through hard work and because of her awareness of the importance of education which she had acquired through *Aisyiyah* and *Muhammadiyah*. She has given her children the chance to obtain the best possible education. She did all this, because she believes this is the duty and responsibility of parents towards their children. 'I do not demand anything from my children. As for my rights, let God repay me later,' she said.

Jah's story provides a general idea of the vertical and horizontal mobility of *Aisyiyah*'s members. Although they were not the only influences, *Aisyiyah* and *Muhammadiyah* seem to have had a significant effect on Jah, particularly by emphasising the importance of education in the family and by stressing the role of the mother.

The *Aisyiyah* organisation was introduced into the urban communities of Laweyan and Kauman in Yogyakarta, two communities where the position of mothers is very important. Mothers own and manage businesses, their husbands and children are their assistants. Mothers are referred to by the honorific *mbok mase*[3]; from this the husband and the children obtain other honorary titles (Sudarmono 1987). In Laweyan and Kauman, the title is an important social category, not merely a myth or intended to soothe or mystify. The active role of *Aisyiyah* women and the social recognition of their importance protect them from being exploited.

3 *mbok* = mother, *mase* = older brother.

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This differs from the custom of the *priyayi* in the upper-class community, in which the father is the only decision-maker, while the wife merely follows: *suwargo nunut neroko katut* (following to heaven or hell). A description of active *Aisyiyah* women at about the time of the organisation's establishment portrays women as traders, businesswomen, large-scale merchants and members of the emerging middle-class society in the early twentieth century; not at all the kind of women who follow or who are attached to their husbands' position and status. This clearly differs from the custom of the upper class where the father or husband is the only person to make decisions and the mother or wife merely follows to heaven or hell.

Jah's role in the overall organisational map may not be large, but *Aisyiyah*'s influence has made a difference by its emphasis on the mother's role as an educator, as well as on the need for women to be economically independent and take decisions of their own.

Jah represents a generation of women describing themselves as housewives, but already a process of transition is visible. The following portrayal is of an *Aisyiyah* member of the younger and more educated generation. By chance, this woman was one of Jah's students when she was teaching at the *Muhammadiyah* elementary school in Kauman.

Dr Malichah Muchtaram, the educated type

Born in Kauman, Yogyakarta, in 1945, Malichah is a typical 'pure' descendant of *Muhammadiyah–Aisyiyah* who has committed her life to *Aisyiyah*. Her mother was a batik trader and an *Aisyiyah* activist, while her father taught at *Muhammadiyah*. Although her parents could be described as successful batik traders, they did not bequeath these business skills to their four children. All their children were encouraged to obtain an education and work in 'more formal and respected' fields. In addition to Malichah who became a doctor, there are other children who pursue

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careers in the fields of pharmaceuticals, economics and architecture.

Malichah obtained her elementary schooling in Kauman's *Muhammadiyah* environment. In addition to elementary school, she also attended religious classes in the afternoons at the *Madrasah Diniyah Muhammadiyah*. In the evenings she participated in study groups at Kauman's *Muhammadiyah* mosque. Thus, her socialisation within the environment of *Muhammadiyah* and *Aisyiyah* was comprehensive.

After graduating from high school, she entered medical school at Gadjah Mada University. Her extracurricular activities were not carried out in *Muhammadiyah* circles like IMM (*Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah* – the *Muhammadiyah* Student Association), but rather in independent organisations such as HMI (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* – Moslem Student Union), whose activists were considered more progressive than those of other student organisations at that time.

In HMI she met Muchtaram, also a medical student, whom she later married. Muchtaram did not come from a *Muhammadiyah* family but from the traditional Moslem environment of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU). But their differences in *mazhab* (religious orientation) did not prevent Malichah from remaining active in *Aisyiyah*. Their children also attended *Aisyiyah* schools, particularly at the elementary level.

While meeting her *wajib kerja sarjana* (graduate's work requirement), Malichah again entered the *Muhammadiyah–Aisyiyah* environment by deciding to practise at a *Muhammadiyah* polyclinic (PKU). From that time on, Malichah knew that both *Muhammadiyah* and *Aisyiyah* were her destiny.

After her marriage, Malichah worked for several years developing the gynaecological clinic of the *Muhammadiyah* PKU in Yogyakarta. When her husband was transferred to Pertamina Hospital in Jakarta, Malichah also moved to Jakarta and entered YARSI (*Yayasan Rumah Sakit Islam* – The Islamic Hospital Foundation). In addition to her activities

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at YARSI, she also became active in *Aisyiyah*. Specifically, she was responsible for managing the paramedic program, which was developed with two purposes: to establish a maternity hospital and health services, and to train paramedics. Dr Malichah also headed YARSI's nursing academy for several years. It was entirely run by *Aisyiyah*.

Shifting values

Dr Malichah's profile illustrates a shift in orientation towards values of work and education developed in *Muhammadiyah–Aisyiyah* families, just like her own. This shift may have resulted from an exposure of these families to the values championed by *Aisyiyah* and *Muhammadiyah*, particularly the emphasis on education. Malichah's profile also illustrates the way *Aisyiyah* develops programs strategic for regulating the well-being of the religious community, such as health programs.

Another vital aspect of Dr Malichah's case is the process of cadre formation in *Aisyiyah* and its effect on the dynamics of the organisation. Even though they view themselves as modern organisations, *Aisyiyah* and *Muhammadiyah* still rely on family ties and kinship for cadre formation. This is articulated in an interview with Lina, Masnan's daughter.

Lina said she joined *Aisyiyah* activities to please her mother. 'While I was in school, I was never really interested in organisational life. I preferred outdoor activities such as mountain-climbing or camping,' she says. But of course *Aisyiyah* was by no means alien to her. 'When I attended the *Aisyiyah* convention in Surakarta in 1984, I already felt as if I was in my own environment, even though that was actually the first time I participated in a formal *Aisyiyah* event. I had not expected to meet my sister, a cousin and an aunt, who were either delegates or organisers. My aunt was a member of the central board of *Aisyiyah*, while my cousin who lived in Solo was one of the convention organisers, and my sister, who was still attending university in Jakarta at the

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time, was a member of the organising committee sent by the Jakarta chapter.'

For Lina, her involvement in *Aisyiyah* is really very much a part of her duty to her parents who have made many sacrifices building the organisation. Nevertheless, she does acknowledge her involvement in the activities of charity as rewarding. Although this type of cadre formation may not be good from a modern management point of view, the kinship factor is still one of the reasons *Aisyiyah* continues to survive as an organisation, she says.

However, while cadre formation through family relationships may indeed be an effective way to recruit members, foster solidarity and strengthen the organisation, it is also a potential constraint. At a time when the organisation needs openness and transparency, feelings of *ewuh pakewuh* (unwillingness to trouble or insult another party) prevail.

The changing tides do bring changing attitudes, even in an organisation in which family ties and kinship seem to have strong roots. The younger generation shows less interest, if any, in the organisation. An *Aisyiyah* official from West Java worries[4] because none of her own or her friends' children are showing an interest in continuing their parents' work. At most, they agree to help out occasionally according to their areas of expertise or educational background. Unlike the previous generation, they are of the opinion that their parents' activities are not necessarily appropriate for them.

Aisyiyah and the dilemmas within

Aisyiyah, the women's branch of the *Muhammadiyah*, is steered by *Muhammadiyah*. In general, they are expected to take care of matters considered appropriate for women. Charity, worship, education and health are in this category, with charity a basic element. Thus, members are expected not to

4 Interview with Lili (55).

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demand remuneration. In return, the organisation is equally not expected to demand full dedication from its members. Education and health programs, which are the principal focus of the main organisation of *Muhammadiyah*, require a high degree of commitment and professional skill. An *Aisyiyah* branch manager whose profession is in the catering business confesses she is very often aware of the economic potential of *Aisyiyah* women if they only had professional skills and discipline. But as the organisation is of a charitable nature, none of that could be demanded. The same is true for educational facilities. One *Muhammadiyah* kindergarten teacher reveals her firm belief that they could compete with other Moslem-run kindergartens. But again, there is a lack of professional skills in running the school. Often the position of teacher is filled by students, who initially thought they would help out while they were doing their final thesis at the teacher training college. One woman disclosed she had been teaching at the kindergarten for eight years, and, by necessity, ended up as the principal, but her salary can cover only transport costs.

There is a similar situation in the realm of health where Moslem morality prevails. In family planning, for example, any kind of permanent birth control is firmly rejected, as is pregnancy termination. Such strong values can be very hard on the paramedics. They can refer women asking for abortions to other medical facilities, but they are not allowed to issue letters of recommendation.

In labour division, *Aisyiyah* follows the traditional gender division of labour: men (the main organisation of *Muhammadiyah*) relate to the public sphere which includes politics, organisational policies, issues of religious law, development of macro-economic enterprises, administration of *wakaf* (property donated for use by a religious community), and government relations. Women are restricted to the home and stereotypical activities of education and health. Even the 1984 convention of Surakarta, which supposedly put more emphasis

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on women's role in development, has not moved further as it still limits women to the fields of education, health and economics.

To be fair, it must be noted that there have been incidents when *Aisyiyah* women did step outside their homes and prescribed agendas. In the 1950s, for instance, an *Aisyiyah* demonstration in front of the governor's office protested at the selling of women and children for work on plantations. Another sign of change was the establishment of a *mushalla* (small place of worship) exclusively for women, where women led their own prayer sessions: a small token that women were beginning to be recognised for themselves.

Aisyiyah women at a crossroad

As in any other women's branch of a larger organisation, *Aisyiyah* cannot make their own decisions when it comes to the important fields of politics and religious laws. For this, they must follow decisions made by the *Muhammadiyah*, consisting of all men. Although *Aisyiyah* is legally independent, in reality it is not. Following the line the state has so far drawn for women, *Aisyiyah* women's duties are the same as the *Panca Dharma* (the Five Tasks), the motto of *Dharma Wanita*, the Civil Servants' Wives Organisation. The only difference would be some religious teachings inserted here and there as the basis of truth.

Aisyiyah, the largest and oldest Moslem women's organisation which was established under the banner of Moslem reformism, is faced with difficult choices: between activities which are considered charity work and the demands and needs for more professional work; between organisational demands, rules and norms, and realistic demands from the community; between activities solely for women which are heavily gender-biased, and ideas of women's independence which first led to the birth of the organisation.

At a time when echoes of gender equality and justice as part of human rights are reaching the most remote corners

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of the world, *Aisyiyah*, like other female branches of larger organisations, must address the dilemmas faced by its members if it is to continue developing in a changing world.

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8

DHARMA WANITA
An Asset or a Curse?

Binny Buchori and Ifa Soenarto

Among women's organisations after the 1970s, *Dharma Wanita* is probably the most notorious from a gender perspective. Hailed by the government, it is loathed by women activists. Set up with the objective to ensure support for the government, *Dharma Wanita*, in the eyes of women activists, has diminished women to objects of men's domination. But how does it work in real life? This chapter looks into the background of the organisation and positive aspects vis-à-vis negative comments based on an interview with several members in the organisation.[1]

The ideology

The establishment of *Dharma Wanita* is closely linked to the mission of unity and cohesiveness among civil servants. It was to be the support of KORPRI (*Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia* — Indonesian Civil Servants' Corps) which was established at the beginning of the New Order regime, on 29 November 1971. Both organisations were based on the overall consideration that all civil servants and their wives should share the same ideology, so as to eliminate conflicts of ideology, religion or ethnicity between the various levels

1 For this chapter we interviewed 12 women. Seven of them are still active board members, three were former board members and two were regular members. The informants are not identified at their own request. All names used are fictitious.

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of staff and between the wives and their husbands, which could constrain the corps of civil servants in proceeding towards the objective of development.

Of course there was a measure of ensuring political support from the wives. It is no secret that a civil servant, whose KORPRI membership is automatic, is also automatically a member of the Golkar Functional Group. The wife of a civil servant is expected to share her husband's political aspirations, though this is not openly expressed in so many words. In fact, this is very much in line with the prevailing gender bias which holds that it is a wife's duty to 'support her husband's struggle and work for the success of development'.

Dharma Wanita is not the first organisation for the wives of civil servants. There was the '*Pertiwi*' organisation in the Ministry of Home Affairs, '*Idhata*' in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and '*Rian*' in the Department of Industry.

In fact, wives themselves initiated a loose form of association as they felt a need to foster stronger ties between themselves, and the ties of friendship included mutual assistance in times of need.

Initially, these organisations were extremely informal. Membership was voluntary, and programs were truly aimed at promoting the welfare of their members. Funds needed to run the organisations were obtained through membership fees. In time, however, this informal aspect gradually disappeared. The ministry in which the husbands worked took over the management of the wives' organisation, changed its status to a functional one, and made membership obligatory. In addition, the pay cheques of civil servants were cut to fund the organisation's activities. Nevertheless, diversity in these wives' organisations still persisted because each department was permitted to have its own wives' organisation and its own programs.

The element of diversity faded in the New Order era, as the number of wives' organisations increased, among both

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civil servants and military personnel. Membership became obligatory, meaning that the wife of a civil servant is automatically a member of the wives' organisation in the department where her husband works. Activities which were initially only intended to serve the welfare of the organisation's members, now give more weight to supporting government programs such as family planning, eradication of illiteracy and general elections (Suryochondro 1984: 177).

There is a distinct difference between the wives' organisations described above and the women's organisations at the beginning of this century, of which *Poeteri Mardika* (founded in 1912) was the first. Whereas support for the husbands' performance was the overall purpose of the government-established women's organisations, *Poeteri Mardika*, and other women's organisations thereafter, were engaged in fostering the sense of national belonging. The concern for a national identity also accentuated the then simmering sense of the self. Women's criticism of polygamous practices found a more penetrating voice through their organisation and the fight against polygamy also emphasised the need for girls to have greater access to education and health programs. In some way, these organisations had more in common with current NGOs which highlight egalitarianism for women through their programs promoting gender equality, justice, women workers, equal pay for equal work, issues which have somehow been sidelined in the *Dharma Wanita*. It is no surprise that many have regarded the emergence of such wives' organisations as a setback in the women's movement.

Julia Suryakusuma, a staunch activist for women's rights, declares that:

> socially, it [*Dharma Wanita*] mediates the notion of domestication of women through mobilization and volunteerism. Economically, the notion of housewives supports the 'modernization' aims of capitalistic, stateless development (Suryakusuma 1991: 54).

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Aims, structure and programs

The overall objective of the *Dharma Wanita* was to support the government in achieving its goals. To this end, it was necessary to ensure the support of wives to their husbands in their performance as civil servants. As an organisation covering all the civil servants in the country, it would also hold strong political support for the government.

When *Dharma Wanita* was first established in 1974, it took the form of a federation comprising 19 member organisations from all the ministries and departments, the state secretariat, state institutions, the office of the Attorney-General and state banks, each maintaining its own identity down to the subdistrict level. The structure of a federation allows the *Dharma Wanita* unit in each department or ministry to have its own program, which is implemented through the hierarchy down to provincial and *kabupaten* (regency) levels if the department has regional offices at those levels.

Furthermore, the President of the Republic of Indonesia became the chief counsellor of *Dharma Wanita*, while the wife of the President became the adviser, and the board of counsellors of KORPRI automatically became *Dharma Wanita*'s board of counsellors. As evident from the founding statutes of *Dharma Wanita*, its leaders are leaders by the 'grace' of their husbands' position in the bureaucratic structure:

1. At the central level there is a presidium, consisting of the wives of ministers, the Attorney-General, the Head of the Supreme Court and the Governor of the Central Bank.
2. In addition to the presidium, there is also a central executive board overseeing the following sections: organisation, welfare, education, information, business, and the following boards[2]:

2 Nowadays these boards do not exist, their functions are integrated into several sections. Changes have been made in sections, e.g., the business section has been changed into the economic section, and the information section is included in the secretariat section (Dharma Wanita 1993).

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a. Population and Family Planning Board;
b. Elementary Education Development Board;
c. Board for the Implementation and Safeguarding of *Pancasila* (Indonesian State Philosophy);
d. Elementary Education Guidance Board; and, after 1983;
e. the Consultative Board for the Implementation of Government Regulation No. 10/1983; and
f. the Board of Management of the *Dharma Wanita* Magazine.

The chairperson of the central executive board is also the chairperson of the presidium.

3. The general chairperson at the provincial or regional level is the wife of the governor; the position of general chairwoman of the *Dharma Wanita* branch is held by the wife of the mayor or the *bupati* (regent) (Dharma Wanita 1974).

On the grounds that the federation structure compartmentalised the organisation's members, the first national conference of *Dharma Wanita* in 1979 changed the organisation's federated structure into a union based on territory. Thus all the activities and their regulations were brought under the control of the central board led by one general chairperson. Clearly, the whole structure is set to support the government and is institutionalised according to the positions of the husbands. It is not surprising, then, that their activities persisted in the sphere traditionally granted to women: education, health and family planning. That is evident from the formulation of the new structure's mission and objectives, as described by Manihuruk:

1. to create and maintain unity among the wives of Indonesian civil servants, as part of the effort to create and maintain national unity;
2. to be a trustworthy partner to KORPRI, so that together they can create and maintain dynamic national stability, which is an unconditional prerequisite for the success of national development;

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3. to actively participate together with other organisations in government administration and in development;
4. to improve the knowledge of members so that it can be utilised to stimulate and guide progress within their respective surroundings (Manihuruk n.d.: 22).

The national conference of the organisation determines what programs the organisation will work on. As is evident from its organisational structure, little space is left for individual development.

Through their members' eyes

With all the institutional arrangements imposed on the wives of civil servants, how do members themselves perceive their suggested roles as supporters of their husbands' performance, as *pendamping* which means 'the one who stands beside'?

With the majority having had a traditional upbringing, most of the *Dharma Wanita* members may even enjoy their membership. After all, being a member adds to status, and is a chance to get out of the house. As a member they also have access to socialising with their peers, to more information, more skills and to a certain level of empowerment of the self. But for others, usually the more educated who are already involved in pursuing a career, *Dharma Wanita* is a burden, particularly when their husbands have high-level positions as this compels them to take the lead of the *Dharma Wanita* unit in their husbands' office.

Below are interviews with selected members of the organisation.

A touch of class?

Tuti, a member of the board of the *Dharma Wanita* unit in one of the departments, feels it is a *fait accompli,* which is not without positive aspects. 'To me, *Dharma Wanita* is a reality. It already exists, and it is most important how to make the best of the situation,' says Tuti.

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Socialising among members appears to be an important impetus. Tuti, who likes to make friends, says: 'I want to get to know the other wives, socialise with them. Our husbands work under the same roof, so if possible we should be like one family'.

Socialising with other women fulfils a need for many women who used to have an active life before they married. 'Before I was married, I used to be active in organisations,' said Yani and Yetty on different occasions. The two women are members of the board of *Dharma Wanita* units in a department and a state-owned company respectively. A similar view was expressed by Rani, a member of the board of a *Dharma Wanita* department sub-unit in West Java. According to Rani, the pride and pleasure in being members of *Dharma Wanita* stem from their perception of the organisation as a place where they 'belong', where they are acknowledged within the framework of the organisation. This is why Yetty always attends *Dharma Wanita* events. 'I attend every *Dharma Wanita* event, even though I don't have servants and my house is quite a long way from my husband's office. When my son was still small, I always brought him along to events which were not very formal, such as the routine monthly meetings, bazaars and so on. At very formal occasions, such as an inauguration or a meeting at the central office, I dropped him off at my parents' house.'

Membership of *Dharma Wanita* is often considered a boost to self-confidence by women. Many of the members feel that their self-image has been enhanced since they have taken part in *Dharma Wanita* activities. What is more, it improves the level of tolerance for each other. Yetty says:

> I now have more self-confidence; I am more patient, more tolerant towards other members, since it is imperative that we understand the many types of characters and backgrounds if we involve ourselves in an organisation.

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Many members share this view. Sri, for instance, reveals that her self-confidence has grown since she has joined the organisation. Thanks to the support of her peers in the organisation, she has managed to obtain a bachelor's degree in economics from the Open University, an institution of higher learning which provides long-distance lectures. This achievement is proof to her of how great an influence *Dharma Wanita* has had on her personal growth, considering she had only her high school diploma when she first became active in the organisation.

Closeness among members is also felt as a contributing factor to social awareness and to humanitarian urges, both towards members with problems and towards less fortunate people in the community. Tuti, Yani, Yetty and Rani say they all participate in visits to the homes of lower rank employees or members who are having problems. They arrange various courses, such as teaching the basics of performing as a compere, sewing and beauty care, and they carry out programs outlined by the Central Board, which include illiteracy eradication campaigns, implementing *Paket A* learning groups, a government program to eliminate illiteracy among rural women. In their visits, Tuti and Yetty bring along members of other sections of the organisation, such as the welfare section, to discuss with the local people the concept of a healthy home, health matters and household management.

The members as well as the management feel they are learning by doing. As a member of the board, Tuti had to design programs for the organisation's members. For example, she organised lectures which featured public figures such as Arif Rachman and the late Nani Yamin. Of course she was assisted by other board members, but they all learned on the job. Both Tuti and Rani said their members liked the lectures, particularly presentations on topics closely related to their lives, such as family planning, children, family, nutrition, health, religious matters and matters related to psychology and personality building. Talks by prominent

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people were also very much favoured, as they gave members from limited economic backgrounds a chance which they would not otherwise have, to listen to the views of prominent people, and meet these well-known public figures face to face. Of course, the learning element is the most valuable aspect of the talks which provide women with additional knowledge, free of charge.

Sri reveals she has gained a lot of benefit from joining *Dharma Wanita*. 'I was initially assigned the task of assisting with the literacy program.' This task required her to design programs, and this increased her management experience. Another member, Tina, says she is glad to be a member, because it not only enables her to broaden her circle of friends and widen her horizons, but also gives her the opportunity to exchange ideas; 'from being ignorant I became knowledgeable,' she said. This reflects the pattern drawn by the executive board which hopes that the women will become increasingly better informed, or as Yetty puts it, 'not too ignorant, and able to respond quickly in conversations on a variety of topics' and, more importantly, 'not merely resigned to their fate'. Tuti says, 'To me the most important thing is how to make the women skilful and self-confident'.

Helping their members acquire a variety of skills, particularly those related to household and femininity, proved to be a boost to their members' personal confidence, skill and income-generation. This was true for Sri, who became active in the organisation after her marriage. She began by taking courses, and later joined PKK and became a member of the executive board. This positive experience enabled Sri to overcome her hesitation and join the organisation. She even became a member of the organisation's executive board after her marriage and she was entrusted with running the business section. Here she organised sewing activities for the members, and the results — kimonos, stuffed dolls, simple dresses — were sold to a big department store. The profits went into the organisation treasury.

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Yetty enrolled in various courses such as cooking and cake baking, catering, flower arrangement, *janur* making, how to be a Master of Ceremonies, and other income-generating skills. Yani, who is a civil servant herself, was also given the opportunity of access to the facilities of *Dharma Wanita.* She reveals: 'In my department, we can take a course we are interested in and this will be financed by *Dharma Wanita* (either in full or in part, depending on the funds available). The skills acquired through the course will then be used to teach other members. In addition, as a member of the executive board I can acquire knowledge about organisational matters, report writing, secretarial and archival skills, all of which are useful and can be applied to activities outside *Dharma Wanita*'.

The organisation's routine gatherings also offer an opportunity for small business such as selling cookies, fabric or embroidered products. Members with special skills, such as make-up, sewing and catering, are happy to offer their services to others. No part of the proceeds from these sales is claimed for the *Dharma Wanita* treasury, since this type of 'business' activity is a spontaneous one. But snacks and food for office workshops, *buka puasa* (the breaking of the fast at sundown) or annual family outings are prepared by members of *Dharma Wanita*, benefiting both its members and the organisation.

This additional income does not include the sales made during *Dharma Wanita*'s formal activities, such as bazaars and fairs often organised around Christmas or *Lebaran.*

For those whose life previously consisted of only the household, organisation activities are like windows offering exciting things to lift boredom. While routine meetings are nothing more than ordinary *arisans*, they offer a chance to escape the household chores, a place to meet friends, lift the spirits.

Yati, a former chairperson of a *Dharma Wanita* unit, explains: 'Many women view *Dharma Wanita* as entertainment.

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The wives of lower-level employees like to mingle and associate with wives of higher-level employees. They are especially thrilled if the wife of a minister comes to a gathering'. Yani agrees, saying: 'The atmosphere is very pleasant, the relationship between members and the chairperson is very pleasant, the activities exciting and there are many new challenges. The staff in the office, the women civil servants, are very helpful to us: they settle administrative matters, such as salary deductions for *arisan* contributions, and they serve as liaisons between *Dharma Wanita* and the office'.

While critics wonder what positive significance *Dharma Wanita* could possibly have for women, Rani is of the view it means a lot to many of its members who do not have any activities other than being housewives, especially if their children have grown up. Therefore, it should be maintained, she argues.

Not for all ...

While it is true that many of the *Dharma Wanita* members have found joy and solace in the organisation, others do not share the same views. For some women who must take a certain position in the organisation because of their husbands' positions, it could be a painful experience. Yati confesses she was quite stressed when she was on the executive board, especially when she had to chair meetings.

In 1981, when her husband was promoted to a Level I official, Yetty was extremely worried about having to be fully involved in the *Dharma Wanita* organisation, particularly in view of her age. She was 60 years old at that time. The dilemma between her obligation as a wife of a high-level civil servant and her personal reluctance became too much for her, and she fell ill, to the extent that it needed a medical certificate to rule that poor health prevented her from being actively involved in the organisation.

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'I don't like organisational life that much and basically I don't have an interest in these types of activities. I was extremely nervous when I had to chair a meeting; but since I was one of the chairpersons, I had to lead those meetings.' Nevertheless, she had to put up with the situation for six long years.

In some cases, women gave up their jobs as they felt their active involvement in the government-sponsored women's organisation was a priority. Nia, the wife of the branch manager of a government bank in Lampung, says: 'I had to quit working because in addition to my activities in *Dharma Wanita*, I was also involved in the PKK and *Posyandu* (*Pos Pelayanan Terpadu* – Integrated Health Service Centre) programs. I could not avoid these activities. If I did, I would jeopardise my husband's career and influence public opinion of him. I was lucky I did not get sick'.

As Nia explained, the situation of the organisation in Lampung differed greatly from that in Jakarta, in that the activities of the organisation in Lampung were more or less a public affair, and its leaders and members therefore more open to public scrutiny. This view is shared by Nita, a member of the *Dharma Wanita* executive board of a department in West Java. 'I had to forget about my wishes to go on with my education, even though I had already reached my third year at a state university in West Java,' she said rather regretfully.

But there are also members who do not easily succumb to the general views. An example is Astiti, an employee of a state-owned company and a member of a *Dharma Wanita* executive board at a department. She has given priority to her professional work, reconciling her personal and her husband's career by attending important events. Astiti refers to the distance between her own and her husband's work place, when she explains that it is impossible to take up leadership in the *Dharma Wanita* unit in her husband's department. 'I come only for very important events, such as

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inaugurations and visits from central officials.' Commenting that she is only a 'decoration' to the board, she nevertheless thinks she is lucky, as none of the board members has ever reprimanded her for her frequent absence. 'I'm very grateful that other members of the board, in particular the chairperson, have never reprimanded me or insisted that I come to every *Dharma Wanita* event.' Many would agree with Astiti that, given certain priorities of some members and requirements to fill a leader's position, it would be much better to leave the daily management to members who are not tied to a job, who have enough free time, or to those who like being involved in organisational activities, even if their husbands' positions are in the lower levels. This would be in the common interest; *Dharma Wanita* can continue to progress supported by these 'able' women who have the time and interest, while those wives who do work or who are busy with other important activities would not harm their institutions by being forced to 'play hooky' and leave their work place to participate in *Dharma Wanita* activities; they could simply be members.

Of course, not all of the educational activities thought to benefit the women are really beneficial. Programs geared towards middle-class and upper-class women are not necessarily favourable to others. Non-cholesterol diets in food demonstrations, for instance, do not mean anything to women whose major interest is how to survive. 'What is the benefit of such cooking lessons for the wife of a security guard?' exclaims Yati. They are all thin people. Worse still is the fact that the cooking utensils in the demonstration are the finest and most costly imaginable. The same is true for beauty care and make-up courses which are followed by selling these products to women who can hardly make ends meet, or fashion shows promoting dresses at unaffordable prices.

From a financial point of view, attending *Dharma Wanita* activities is not as easy as is commonly assumed. Wives of lower-level civil servants particularly face a dilemma when

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they would like to join but are constrained by the cost of transport. According to Yati, routine meetings are generally attended by only 12 to 15 wives of Level I civil servants. Tuti, Sri and Yati recognise that the lack of 'tactical funds' to cover transport costs does disrupt the smooth progress of the organisation programs. Yati says the board has many obligations to meet, but funds are minimal. 'The average family income of our members is already low. How will they make ends meet if transport costs are deducted from that small amount?'

The scarcity of available funds also makes it difficult for the board to successfully implement programs. A speaker from outside the organisation, who should be paid a kind of honorarium, often does not even get transport costs. In theory, programs to be implemented by *Dharma Wanita* should be financed through membership fees; but somehow this is not always feasible. In several government offices, money for *Dharma Wanita* activities is automatically deducted from employees' salaries. Members, however, have requested that these deductions be adjusted to individual circumstances of every member. Tina said: 'As a member, I just hope that any deductions from our husbands' salaries for the funding of *Dharma Wanita* activities are based on consideration of the needs of each family, and will not involve a set amount but rather deduction by percentage'.

The wife of a *bupati* (regent) outside Java once complained about the very limited *Dharma Wanita* funds, while she herself often had to travel widely. She ultimately requested additional funds from her husband's office.

Nevertheless, not all *Dharma Wanita* units face such financial difficulties. The availability of funds depends on the executive board of a unit. If the board is able to use the business section of its unit, then it will not be difficult to obtain the additional funds needed for program implementation. The funds may even be sufficient to cover the costs, such as members' transport, hairdressing, outings, and uniforms

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for special occasions or for contests. In Rani's unit, money is never a problem for they have set up income-generating facilities such as a canteen, xeroxing and a co-operative, providing basic necessities such as sugar, tea, milk and coffee, the daily food supplies of the employees. Thus they need not ask for funds from their husbands' office. In Yani's unit, 'a substantial amount of funds comes from the sale of *Lebaran* and Christmas parcels and from the sale of household appliances,' she explains. Both Rani and Yani reveal that the board and the other members are even able to take recreational trips twice a year, funded entirely by the *Dharma Wanita* treasury. 'Without as much as a penny from KORPRI,' they proudly declare.

Reluctant husbands

While wives must support their husbands and there is no negotiating about this, husbands are often reluctant to support their wives' activities in the *Dharma Wanita*. *Dharma Wanita* invitations addressed to their members, and delivered through the members' husbands, evidently do not always reach them. Some say they often do not receive the invitations, simply because their husbands did not deliver these to them. Says Rani: 'I often meet members who claim they were unable to attend because they did not know or did not receive invitations; in fact, their husbands did not deliver the invitations or announcements to their wives to prevent their wives from coming to the office'.

In some cases, civil servants find it a trouble when their wives come to the office, particularly when they take the children along. The office then becomes a kind of kindergarten with the mothers attending the meeting and the fathers looking after the children instead of attending to their jobs. But more often, the real reason husbands do not want their wives to come in the office may lie somewhere else.

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A woman's place in *Dharma Wanita* parallels her husband's position in the office

A wife's position in this organisation depends on her husband's position in his office. As a result, little consideration is given to quality in the selection of candidates for executive board positions. As Yetty reveals, not every chairperson has the skills and personality to lead and manage an organisation, not to mention those whose leadership style is outdated. The impact is always evident on the organisation's or unit's performance. It is not surprising that a member with smarter and more creative impulses than the chairperson or the members of the executive board, will be reluctant to participate in the organisation's activities. Evidently, this is valid for other regions as well. Yanti, who is from a department in West Java where she was a member of the executive board, attests:

> as members of an organisation of women who stand by and support their husbands, our membership continues to be heavily dependent on the position of our husbands. If a husband misbehaves, the wife will automatically feel the effects. And no matter how impressive the performance of a *Dharma Wanita* member for the benefit of the organisation, it will not affect her husband's career in the slightest.

However, Nia asserts the contrary: 'it is impossible to ignore these activities, because they affect my husband's career as well as public opinion,' she says.

Whether a wife's involvement in the *Dharma Wanita* is closely related to advancement of her husband's career remains a controversial issue. While it may be the case in some units, it is not in fact found in all *Dharma Wanita* units. In reality, there is quite a large number of *Dharma Wanita* units whose members and executive boards are active participants in *Dharma Wanita*, yet their husbands' careers do not advance, and vice versa. 'My involvement in *Dharma Wanita* is solely intended to accommodate my liking for

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organisational life, and I benefit from its many activities without hoping in any way that my husband's career will advance because of my involvement,' says Yetty, and many other members share this view.

Conclusion

The basic principles and objectives of the *Dharma Wanita* make it clear that the organisation has been set up to ensure support of the wives of civil servants for their husbands' careers and responsibilities. Consequently, unlike other women's organisations in which women's rights are a basic principle, *Dharma Wanita*'s main objective is to support the male-oriented corps of civil servants.

Ironically, the majority of *Dharma Wanita* members interviewed do not have the feeling of being sidelined or imposed on by male-dominated dynamics. On the contrary, *Dharma Wanita* has given them a sense of belonging to a class, a sense of pride they did not have before.

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9

THE FAMILY WELFARE MOVEMENT
A Blessing or a Burden?

Carla Bianpoen

The PKK (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*) or Family Welfare Movement is probably the largest movement involving women in Indonesia. By the nature of its structure it should have the greatest potential for touching the lives of women*. Operating throughout the nation, the organisation is under the aegis of the Minister of Home Affairs and led by the wives of the chief executives at every level of government.[1] While its membership consists of volunteers who are not necessarily government-linked, the pattern of leadership makes it mandatory for the wife of every head of a province — *kabupaten, kotamadya, kecamatan, desa/kelurahan,* RW (*Rukun Warga*) and RT (*Rukun Tetangga*) — to head the movement in her region.

That a part of Indonesian women has indeed been affected by the PKK movement is beyond doubt, but whether the movement has effected a basic advancement of women themselves remains to be seen. For, although the movement sprouted from hopeful initiatives, and its close link to the government's institutional structure facilitates ready access to even the remotest corners of the country, its close relation

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* This article was written in 1994 and does not record recent changes.

1 *Kabupaten* – district; *kotamadya* – municipality; *kecamatan* – subdistrict; *kelurahan* – urban village; *desa* – rural; RW (*Rukun Warga*) citizen's association – comprising about five RT or neighbourhood associations; RT (*Rukun Tetangga*) – neighbourhood association comprising 30–70 households.

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to the government bureaucracy has ultimately subordinated the women's perspectives to the objectives of the government.

How women as wives of high-ranking government officials have reacted to such imposed responsibilities will be presented in the following description of leaders at various levels of the PKK movement. They are:

1. Emma Yogie S.M. who, as the wife of the current Minister of Home Affairs, sits at the apex of the movement and is now implementing necessary changes;
2. Kardinah Soepardjo Roestam, nationally and internationally renowned for her successful leadership of the PKK movement during her tenure as the wife of the Governor of Central Java and, later, as the wife of the Minister for Home Affairs.

Illustrating the activities of leaders at somewhat lower levels are descriptions of three women:

3. Sriati Mashudin (not her real name), who took up PKK leadership for the RT headed by her husband;
4. Titin (not her real name), wife of a village head; and
5. Endira Sulaksono (not her real name), who is a grassroots worker but also provides assistance at the national level.

History of the PKK

The PKK movement was an outgrowth of the home economics taught in training centres for family welfare in the second half of the 1950s. It flourished particularly in the years following the initiative of Isrijati Moenadi, the wife of the governor of Central Java, during the late 1960s. At that time, the Wonosobo and Demak areas were ravaged by famine. The population suffered from malnutrition and deteriorating health. The situation was aggravated by unemployment brought about by the barren and unproductive nature of the land. Apathy and resignation prevailed among the mostly illiterate population (Tim Penggerak PKK Pusat 1993: 13).

Applying the home economics program already running in other districts, and with the help of the government apparatus,

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Isrijati Moenadi managed to pull the population out of their lethargy. Her program focused primarily on women as the pivot of the family and included not only teachings about agricultural crops reinforced by technical advice, but also lessons on nutrition, health and sanitation. The PKK movement began to expand, proceeding with efforts to improve the quality of life of women and their families. Cadre formation and training for the wives of provincial officials were among the measures taken to pursue this goal. The PKK became a valuable mechanism of the Central Java Administration in the development of the area. Central to this were its ten comprehensive programs. The tripartite co-operation between the government, the wives of its chief executives at the various levels of the hierarchy, and the women volunteers at the grassroots was remarkably effective. Women, in particular, became highly motivated volunteer workers in the movement which gave them an identity of their own at a time when women generally were practically confined to their households. Uniforms and special pins became tokens of this identity.

Since its heyday in Central Java, PKK has grown into a nationwide movement. Its activities which support the Government's programs, including the *Posyandu* (*Pos Pelayanan Terpadu* – integrated health centre) and the Family Planning campaigns, have significantly contributed to the success of these programs.

Variation in local social conditions should encourage leaders in the field to translate the overall concepts formulated in the central office in Jakarta into models applicable at the local levels. This is not always successful, given the differing levels of education and personal commitment. Another major constraint may be the changing priorities which a few top leaders realise are needed to change the programs of the movement. Other inhibiting factors are the growing aspirations of young potential volunteers to find paid employment.

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PKK is gradually placing greater emphasis on gender-specific rights. This is particularly evident when the current national chair of the movement speaks of women as equal partners instead of the usual *pendamping suami* (spouse consort), the term still used in the *Panca Darma* PKK (The Five Tasks of Women – the precepts of the PKK).[2]

Through the use of simple language and pictures, men in the rural villages are gradually being induced to come along with women volunteers to PKK meetings, one senior field worker revealed.

Leaders of the movement are aware of the increasing need of women for paid employment. Obtaining volunteers is no longer as easy as it was at a time when participation in PKK was viewed as a privilege and when the uniforms gave women a certain standing. Today incentives must be adjusted to the changing values of a modernising society.

Emma Yogie S.M.

As the wife of the Minister of Home Affairs, Emma Yogie S.M. currently occupies the highest position in the PKK. She is not a novice in this organisation. Governor Yogie's development of West Java was accompanied by his wife's efforts to develop the PKK movement in that province. She reveals that she has been involved in organisations since the early days of her youth. Born into a Sundanese family, Emma spent her school years in Magelang in Central Java where she entered organisational life as a *kabouter* ('Brownie') scout in her preschool years. She continued to be active in her high school organisation, and later, as her husband advanced in his career, in wives' organisations such as *Persit* (*Persatuan*

2 *Panca Dharma* PKK – The Five Tasks of Women: *sebagai istri pendamping suami* – wives as husbands' escorts/attendants *sebagai pengelola rumah tangga* – as managers of the household *sebagai penerus keturunan dan pendidik* – as procreators and educators *sebagai pencari nafkah tambahan* – as supplementary wage earners *sebagai warga masyarakat* – as members of society.

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Isteri Tentara — Association of Army Wives), *Dharma Pertiwi* (Armed Forces Wives Association), and *Dharma Wanita* (Civil Servants' Wives Association).

Mrs Yogie does not speak much publicly, but she is a keen observer. In her concern for women she focuses particularly on training. When she presided over the PKK in West Java, she insisted that *latihan kepemimpinan wanita* (women's leadership training) for volunteers also include the wives of *bupatis* (regents), *sekwilda* (*sekretaris wilayah daerah* – secretaries of regional governments), and *dinas* (local government department) heads in West Java. She believed that all must be equally well informed. 'With the advance of the sciences, we must give more attention to educating our women,' she says.

Her academic background and her command of English as well as Dutch give her ample opportunity to keep informed about studies and experiences in other countries and to compare these with the situation at home. Participatory and equal partnership from the grassroots level upwards is the key concept which she tries to translate to the policy making of the movement.

Although Mrs Yogie does not talk much, she does not mind talking to the women of PKK, if she can further her purpose. Tireless, she reminds the women of the movement that times have changed. She likes to repeat that women are *mitra sejajar* (equal partners) and not just *istri pendamping* (companions). She also fights against the perception of wives as supplementary or additional breadwinners since many women are the sole breadwinners of their households.

Istri pendamping (wife companion) and *istri sebagai pencari nafkah tambahan* (wives as supplementary breadwinners) are two basic concepts of the PKK ideological foundation which may undergo changes in the near future. According to Mrs Yogie, they are no longer in line with modern perceptions of women's roles.

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Mrs Yogie tries to personally meet women in the villages of the 27 provinces and does not mind the prolonged travel necessary to reach remote villages. Essentially a modest person, she is, nevertheless, aware that, particularly in the rural villages, the personal visit of a dignitary brings lustre to any event.

She feels that her long experience in the PKK movement has enabled her to gain an understanding of women's need for their own involvement.

Kardinah Soepardjo Roestam

A name that cannot be separated from the PKK movement is that of Kardinah Soepardjo Roestam. Without an academic background, and initially totally ignorant of the significance of PKK, she managed to build up the movement to its high point during her 18 years of service.

She is a role model for those bearing the responsibilities of wife and companion (*isteri dan pendamping suami*) in a way that shows her innate potential and creativity (Sadli 1993).

Mrs Pardjo, as she is widely known, did not feel that responsibility for the movement which she shouldered restricted her personal freedom. On the contrary, it stimulated her sense of compassion and corresponded very closely with her personal aspirations. Certainly, her personal background was a significant factor in her response to these challenges.

Born into the nobility in Central Java, she suffered fewer of the hardships common to women of that time. Neither did she have to adhere to the usual restrictions of noble Javanese girls. She was allowed to join the Girl Scouts and she was free to take part in Red Cross activities. She lived in an atmosphere of strict discipline, with progressive gender equality. The only girl among seven brothers, she received no special treatment at home.

She reveals some significant incidents of her youth, with a nostalgic smile: 'One day, I came home with oil smears all

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over my face. I wanted to drive the car as my brothers did. This was alright with my father, on condition that I knew how to repair it'. Her mother was quite upset, protesting 'but she is a girl'. Typical of her father, the answer was, 'If she wants to drive like the boys, she should learn the same things they do'. The discipline and perfectionism for which she is noted today can be traced back to her father who insisted on punctual meals for all. His tools and everything else in the house, even the smallest screw, had a special place. Her mother was proof to her that to read means to know. 'My mother had completed only elementary school, but she loved to look into the books we had in the house, and she became very knowledgeable about the history of the world.'

Kardinah married young, and the seeds of equality, of firm compassion and of practical insights and stern discipline were to grow and bloom only in a later stage of her life, as is evident in her involvement in the PKK movement.

This involvement started when Soepardjo Roestam, her husband, replaced Moenadi as governor of Central Java in 1975, and Kardinah automatically replaced Mrs Moenadi as head of the PKK movement in that province. She 'landed' in the PKK without any preparation. 'I did not have a single clue of what PKK actually entailed,' she said (Bianpoen 1993). A stack of PKK documents was 'dumped' on her the moment she set foot on the ground at the Semarang airport. The women of the PKK leadership gave her a fitting welcome and then came along to the house to tell her all about the movement. With her luggage still unpacked, bewildered by a new environment and fatigued from the long trip, Mrs Pardjo managed to sit patiently and listen carefully to what the women had to tell her. Their enthusiasm and their confidence and trust in her, their new leader, made a deep impression on her. 'I knew then I could not disappoint them, and set myself to reading all of the documents and books they had brought me' (Bianpoen 1993). It was at that point

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that PKK not only sparked her interest, but, in fact, won an activist and leader of formidable dimensions.

She took up the work started by Mrs Moenadi, and brought the movement to its height, as it spread from Central Java in all directions throughout the country. Not only at home, but also internationally, Kardinah and her commitment to PKK received awards from organisations including WHO and UNICEF.

Working in partnership with her husband, Kardinah Soepardjo Roestam assisted him in his work as he, in turn, helped her. 'I get my inspiration from what I see in the field,' she once said. When she accompanied her husband on field trips, 'he met the men, and I took the opportunity to meet the women. He and I would then confer at lunchtime'. She felt best when she could talk to the women, visit them in their homes, and go to places where no other woman of rank would go. The warmth of her personality and her compassion for less-advantaged people made her a welcome guest in the homes of villagers. It was there that she observed for herself what women and their families needed and learned how best to help them. She and her husband frequently discussed what they had heard or seen, exchanging views and experiences and consulting each other.

After one such field trip they discussed the conditions in Gombong village. Gombong in Central Java was economically and environmentally impoverished. The land was barren and infertile, educational levels were desperately low, and poor sanitation had brought contagious diseases. Many of the men had left the village to seek employment elsewhere. The situation in the village called for immediate action, and Mrs Pardjo and her PKK women responded. Under her personal guidance, the motivating team visited every single home in Gombong, met the families, and explained how their unproductive land could be improved. They encouraged the construction of two-pit latrines, and taught the villagers a simple system for converting human

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waste into manure for fertilising crops and improving soil conditions. The result was a dramatic rise in agricultural production and an improved standard of living, including better health and sanitation. Families could reunite, the men returned home (Bianpoen 1993).

At times, Mrs Pardjo made use of the hierarchical system, and the authority of her husband the governor. Well aware of the male bias against women, she would tell her husband about a problem she had encountered and he would then mention it in a public meeting. For most of the community, whatever the governor says is an instruction. This was the case when, on one of her field trips, she discovered that people still stabled cattle under their houses. Houses were built on poles and the space under the living area was filled with cattle. This unhealthy condition had to be ended, but she was 'only' the *Ibu Gubernur* (governor's wife) and had no authority. However, when it was the Governor himself who spoke to the community, it was a different matter. His speech, which pointed out the unhealthy aspects of keeping cattle in or under the houses and the diseases that could result from such a situation, had an immediate impact.

During the 13 years of her leadership in Central Java, and during her national leadership of the PKK movement in the five years of her husband's tenure as Minister of Home Affairs, the movement was thoroughly integrated into the institutions of government. It also became known internationally for its involvement in immunisation and *Posyandu* (community health posts) activities. PKK was awarded the Maurice Pate Award from UNICEF and the Sasakawa Health Prize from WHO.

There was also criticism of course, especially about the stringent rules. Discipline and accuracy marked her way of working, and she also demanded these from other workers. She always tried to remain in close contact with all her co-workers. This is evident in the mechanism she invented to keep her informed even when she was unable to go to the

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office. She wrote instructions, advice and recommendations for the staff into her *wira-wiri* (back and forth) notebook, and sent it to the office every morning. In the evening, she received it back with comments and information from the staff (Gunawan 1993). She continues to use the *wira-wiri* notebook as a personal tool of communication, even after she had become the chair of the Participatory Development Forum, an NGO forum which changed its name into Partners in Development Forum after it worked in partnership with the state secretariat.[3] The development of the movement inspired her sense of detail and precision. Even more, she invented the PKK data chart, a kind of information system, which records details on the number of PKK volunteers, types of activities, and the successes and failures. This facility, found in every village PKK office, is particularly valuable for researchers and visitors in the village. Dignitaries planning to present a speech in the village will send their couriers to the village offices to find or check required data.

To this day Mrs Pardjo stands as a source of inspiration and a symbol of hard work and discipline in the history of PKK. The constraints she encountered in her struggle to make the movement effective never prevented her from acting in accordance with her commitment and her sense of compassion.

Sriati Mashudin[4]

Sriati is 53 years old. She has a university degree and works in an international agency. She headed the PKK in her RW (neighbourhood of 500 households) when her husband became head of the RW in 1990, and she served until 1994. She was born into a Solonese family with five sisters and four brothers. She herself has five children. Coming from such a large family, she found that organising comes easily to her.

3 Abdullah Syarwani, Executive Secretary of the Participatory Development Forum, personal communication, in 1993.

4 Not her real name.

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Sriati was a member of PKK before she became the PKK head in her *Rukun Warga* (RW). A *Rukun Warga* has about five *Rukun Tetangga* (RT) neighbourhood clusters of 30–70 households. She tried to implement the ten programs of the PKK. One of the activities in her RW is the monthly 'practice' of the *Posyandu*, the integrated health services post. Given the variety of ethnic groups in this area and the differing levels of wealth, considerable persuasion was required to persuade people to participate in these activities. Going to the *Posyandu* for advice, for example, was considered embarrassing. The poor did not want to be considered poor, and thus avoided the *Posyandu*. The wealthy usually did not have time for these activities, being either occupied in their offices all day or socially not interested. The most flourishing activity may have been the *arisan*, a regular monthly meeting which enabled women of the area to become acquainted with each other. It also provided the wife of the head of the RW, as Sriati was called, with an opportunity to pass on information and instructions from the higher levels of the PKK organisation. 'But we only received instructions, there were no examples or descriptions of how to implement the instructions in particular situations,' complains Sriati.

In the RW in which Sriati lives, the PKK program of *Dasa Wisma* (ten houses) was also implemented. According to this program a special team has the responsibility for monitoring ten households. If, for example, a mother does not show up at the *Posyandu* at the expected time, one of the women visits her to enquire whether there is a problem and whether help is needed.

Sriati herself was unable to spend much time daily on the PKK. She usually leaves her house at 6:30 a.m. and arrives home again at about 5 p.m. But she often did spend the weekends organising, monitoring and supervising PKK activities in the ten RTs, or attending workshops and other meetings.

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Now that her husband no longer heads the RW, Sriati has more time for herself and her family. She is quite relieved, for apart from the considerable amount of time involved, she also had to defray many expenses from her own pocket.

Titin[5]

The story of Titin shows the frustration of a woman who is supposed to lead PKK activities, but is held back by the lack of guidance from higher levels.

When her husband was appointed *lurah* (village head), Titin automatically became the head of the local PKK. A woman of about 37 years of age, she was quite familiar with women's organisations and experienced in organising events for workers' wives in the tea estate in which her husband was employed. She had attended – although not completed – junior high school and a *madrasah* (Islamic school) and should have had no major problems organising PKK activities. Yet Titin saw no way to organise the movement, let alone get volunteers. Women in the hills where she lived had no time for what they saw as leisure activities. After days spent in the struggle to survive, picking tea or farming the land, the only 'social' activity they could afford was the once-a-month *pengajian* where they recited Koranic verses.

Titin could have put up with this, were it not for the mandatory attendance at the weekly PKK meetings at the *kecamatan*. At these meetings, she felt foolish in her dress which did not conform to the fashion of the day. In addition, she was frustrated at not being able to converse about the issues the other women were discussing. Furthermore, regulations required her to bring along at least one volunteer member, for the volunteers, too, needed to have an opportunity to obtain the information usually given out at such gatherings. It was not easy for Titin to find someone to accompany her,

5 Relayed by Lies Marcoes-Natsir.

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because the women all held full-time jobs, and every day of work missed would mean one day's less income. Titin had to compensate them for this loss. If she did not attend the gathering, she would be rebuked, and this might have an adverse effect on her husband's career. She was under such stress that she begged her husband not to stand for election again. 'I'd rather be divorced,' she said.

Endira Sulaksono

Endira Sulaksono passed her 60th birthday some years ago, but she is still as active and fit as a woman in her forties. This is not accidental. She was a sports instructor at the age of 20 and that explains much. But it is her smile and her everlasting good humour that make her look much younger than her actual years.

Her involvement with the PKK movement was somehow a natural consequence of her earlier activities. As the deputy of the head of the Asian Games Training Centre in the 1960s, she reported to the Director General of Community Education and Sports. Her main responsibility was to see that the athletes were well prepared for their competitions, and to supervise their food intake and nutrition. Then in 1975, she was made responsible for the women's section of the non-formal education department. Her new post represented quite a difference. In the training centre there had been plenty of food, and she merely had to see that athletes had the correct intake. Now, she was faced with problems of how to get food. The real shock came, however, when she travelled to North Sumatra. 'I wanted to go to the ladies room, and had purposely waited till I got to the house of the village head, in hopes of finding a reasonably clean bathroom.' Imagine her shock when she was shown to a place over a pigsty! Back in her office, she rebuked her supervisor, a native of the area she had visited, telling him she could not understand how his wife (a Manadonese) had decided to marry him. 'He only smiled at me and said: "that is exactly

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what your job will be, to look after those people without bathrooms".'

Her job in the non-formal education section brought her to all corners of the country, and it was during these travels that her intense compassion for women developed. In some districts she saw women who lacked the most basic things, essential to contemporary women in general. For instance, one time in West Nusa Tenggara she happened to have a loose button, and sought a needle to sew it. 'I asked 13 women, not one had a needle in the house, only the 14th could find one,' she said. After this experience, she provided the women with sewing kits, teaching them how to use them and what colours to use.

Again, in Kendari in south-east Sulawesi she went into the kitchen of one of the participants in the non-formal education program. She found onions, peppers and salt all kept in one bowl. Any housewife should know that this is not advisable. She told the women that salt needed a separate container. When she returned at a later time, she was proudly shown the new salt containers, used tin cans in which the salt was mixed with rust!

Endira relates that in West Nusa Tenggara women believe that when children die, they can help their mothers 'up there'. So when the children die, the women do not really mind. It is all right for them, the more children they have up there, the more help they get.

In East Timor, she continues, children die because of the dirt. Their mothers are totally ignorant of hygiene and sanitation. Illiteracy has made them prone to abuse, continues Endira. Often a woman 'signs' documents without knowing what they contain, only to find out later that she has agreed to her husband taking a second wife or selling the land which was in her name.

Meanwhile, Endira was assigned to represent her sector of non-formal education in the PKK women's movement. From 1983 to 1992, she also assisted the Minister for the

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Role of Women with work that fell between departments or overlapped with the work of the PKK.

To the present day, Endira's life is dedicated to improving the status of women in Indonesia. Travelling, teaching, her heart full of compassion, she stays with the women in their houses. 'In East Timor, we are implementing field-based training,' she says. Training is more effective if it is not restricted to classes, but also carried out during a few days' stay in the house of a participant. For example, if you teach the women in class that opening the windows and letting in the sun is healthy, they will nod agreeably, but there is no assurance that they have really understood the significance of the lesson. 'However, when you stay with them, and you open the windows yourself, that's different,' she explains. In addition, it is also much cheaper, and the money that would have been spent on a hotel room is normally given to the trainer's host.

Endira is still with the PKK movement. She is one of the five assistants of Mrs Yogie who travels in the field, to monitor, supervise and personally educate. 'Whether it is through the non-formal education, the office of the Minister for the Role of Women, or the PKK, it is basically the same. We have to "teach", not train, them in an informal manner,' says Endira, whose intense compassion for women in the disadvantaged districts of the archipelago keeps her going. 'There is so terribly much to do. I can hardly bear to see how the majority of women of this country still live in situations of complete underdevelopment.'

Concluding remarks

Our examples show that the effect of PKK on the lives of women leaders is very much influenced by each person's commitment, her level of education and her personal compassion. For Kardinah Soepardjo Roestam, her responsibility for the movement revealed her 'hidden' potential and she was able to combine the needs of the movement with her

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own. In bringing the movement to its level of success, she has become the person she now is. However, a person like Titin, a leader at a lower level, could feel only regret. She may have had strong potential as well, but was in a less favourable situation.

There is a view that women in higher-level positions of the PKK movement under the New Order Government of President Soeharto should make a more effective effort to disentangle themselves from the dependency on male-dominated aspirations. The question then arises whether this is indeed feasible in their situation.

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10

WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR
A 'Forgotten' Workforce

Chamsiah Djamal

The PPSW (*Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita* – Women's Resources Development Centre) is an NGO involved in the development of women-managed, informal-sector activities in rural and urban areas. Established in May 1986, it started activities in 1987. PPSW encourages self-awareness of women and their families, provides entrepreneurial skills development, marketing and consultation, as well as training, capital development and business consultation. Today (1995) it facilitates 13 groups totalling 300 women in Jakarta. From these groups of workers in the informal sector in Jakarta, PPSW in 1987 interviewed 147 respondents to collect baseline data. Facilitation models are based on annual evaluations of program implementation. This chapter draws on such evaluations of program implementation, as well as on data collected through experience, observation and discussion with field staff and executives in the informal sector.

Women in the informal sector: between household and business

'Helping my husband, taking care of the household' is the answer given by 80 per cent of the 147 women interviewed by PPSW regarding their activities. But is taking care of the household really all they do? What actually does 'helping my husband' entail? A closer examination revealed that

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'helping my husband' in fact meant running small businesses, working as laundry women or in other home-based industries. Some women confirmed they had multiple activities: while taking care of the household, they also engaged in some kind of economic activities, such as making cookies to sell at neighbouring *warungs* or food stalls. Only 20 per cent of the respondents did only household chores and had no income.

Is it true that they only *help* their husbands, meaning that all their earnings are just additional income? Further investigation showed that 70 per cent of the women in the informal sector earned more than their husbands. Some even had significantly larger incomes. Making cookies, selling food or doing laundry gave them daily wages which they used to meet their families' major needs. The majority of their husbands worked as construction hands, or as *becak*[1], *bajaj* or *mikrolet*[2] drivers. Their income depended on the jobs they happened to get. Although some husbands had larger incomes than their wives, they usually spent most of their income to buy their own meals and cigarettes; only a small part remained to be taken home.

The women working in the informal sector have to manage their household budget wisely. To avoid exceeding their daily income, they have to adjust their main daily expenditures for meals and transport to school for the children. If a mother earns enough money, the family can have better food. If there is less money, there will be fewer dishes on the table. What she gets from her husband is usually spent on such expenses as school fees, house rent, clothes and snacks.

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1 *Becaks* were still allowed in Jakarta at that time.

2 *Becaks* or pedicabs are no longer allowed in the central areas of Jakarta. *Bajaj* are two-passenger motorised minicabs. Men who work as drivers of *microlet* (a type of minibus serving as public transport) are generally *sopir tembak* or irregular drivers since they often do not possess drivers' licences. They get their jobs from full-time drivers and have to give a part of their daily earnings to the latter.

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Why do women assume they do not work? Why are they ashamed to admit they are traders, sell cookies, work as laundry women, or do other work? Why do they regard their income as merely additional and their job as only helping their husbands?

In general, woman's place is supposed to be at home and it is for men to be the breadwinners. Women are not supposed to be breadwinners. Even if a woman earns a living and has an adequate income, she is merely considered her 'husband's aide'. When more women are employed in the modern sector, the issue becomes a problem. There is some concern that employment of women outside the home will lead them to neglect their children and households. Some people even fear that these women will be unable to behave properly and will thereby contribute to rumour and unrest in the community.

Is it true, however, that women simply stay home? Research all over the world shows that traditionally women do not merely run the household but also take part in earning a living. In fact, large numbers of families even depend on incomes of women. Let us take a closer look.

In rice farming, for example, women are involved from the very beginning in seed selection, making nursery beds, planting, weeding, harvesting and post-harvest handling. In some areas, women even take part in land tilling and crop transport. In the plantation sector, women are involved in establishing nurseries, planting, tending, harvesting and processing crops. In marine fisheries, frequently regarded as a man's world, women do not just watch and wait for the catch that men bring home, but take part in a variety of activities. They make and maintain fish nets, they sell, process and catch fish. In some areas, women go to sea and help drag the nets. Women also play a significant role in the commercial sector. They are more deeply involved in small-scale trade than are men. Handcrafts and home industries are regarded as the world of women, yet women are increasingly involved in the modern industrial sector, particularly as poorly paid

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blue-collar workers. Women thus participate in every economic sector.

The view that women are not the main but only supplementary breadwinners has led to invisibility and disregard of women's jobs. The public, including women themselves, view their work only as part-time occupations and their income as supplementary earnings for the family. Since women are not regarded as breadwinners, the education and medical services they obtain, both from their families and from the community, are more limited than those available to men. Consequently, women lag far behind men in education and skills. Meanwhile, socio-cultural values which define women as housewives impede their efforts to develop and obtain better conditions.

The weak support the strong

Women working in the informal sector in Jakarta can be distinguished according to two areas of origin. There are the natives of Jakarta (*Betawi*) and the immigrants. PPSW research conducted in 1987 shows that native *Betawi* women work in the informal sector for two main reasons. On the one hand, the land inherited from their parents has been sold; and, on the other hand, they are not prepared to enter the modern sector. The money obtained from their land sale has been spent on needs and wishes. These women are generally illiterate, have limited education and minimal business skills. Informal sector workers from Java, on the other hand, are generally better educated and literate. Those from outside Jakarta are more courageous, self-confident and more determined to face challenges. Their courage is apparently developed in the process of moving to Jakarta and seeking work there. Natives of Jakarta who are working in the informal sector tend to be resigned and satisfied with what they get.

Women in the informal sector say they initially had no intention of working in this sector, but circumstances forced

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them into it. A large number of women try to help meet their families' needs because their husbands earn small, irregular incomes. Some women were forced to look for jobs because their husbands were ill or incapacitated. Female heads of household have no choice. Some of the women who had graduated from secondary school worked at some time in the formal sector as shopkeepers, factory workers or beauty parlour assistants. Once they were married and had children, however, they had to leave the formal sector to take care of their families. If they continued working, they could not afford to hire household help. Some said their rented houses were too small, making it impossible to hire housemaids. Some women, who once worked in garment factories but had to leave their jobs to take care of a sick husband, child or parent, now take in work from their employers to be done at home on a contract basis. This enables them to make a living and take care of the sick at the same time. Of course, they lose many of their rights as workers, such as benefits and protection, as well as a formal work relationship with their employers.

There are several types and methods of work in the informal sector. Some people become door-to-door traders, some sell goods in the market, work as sidewalk vendors, or open a stall in their small rented house. Some offer services as masseuses, laundry women or daytime maids. Others develop home-based industries producing crackers or cookies, or making paper bags out of used paper sheets. Yet others take in sewing or embroidery jobs at home or sew for large garment industries through the putting-out system (bringing the work home).

The scale of their operations varies from those with a capital of Rp. 10,000 to those with millions of rupiah. PPSW partners generally start with a capital of less than Rp. 500,000. Their raw material purchasing system varies as well. Some pay cash for their goods or raw materials, others pick them up and then pay for them later. The system of receiving

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payment from consumers or clients also varies. Some receive cash payment and others allow buyers to pay on credit. Travelling vegetable and *jamu* (Javanese traditional medicine) vendors generally have to extend credit to their customers. The same is true for small shopkeepers who sell sundries, foodstuffs or cooked meals.

Observation by PPSW field personnel from 1987 to 1993 shows that consumers taking credit from women workers in the informal sector generally belong to higher social classes. Five sellers of sundries and food such as rice, vegetables, fish and oil say that 65 per cent of their customers take credit from them. *Jamu* vendors provide credit for 55 per cent of their customers. All the customers are housewives, whose husbands have regular employment in either the public or the private sector. The customers clearly live better than the vendors. Customers from the informal sector do not dare to buy on credit because they do not have a regular income. Sellers also do not trust them unless they provide some guarantee of payment.

Sixty per cent of the customers of PPSW-backed ready-food stalls at Penjaringan (in West Jakarta) are construction workers who buy on credit. They cannot pay for their meals until they receive their wages. They are usually paid weekly and pay their debts on the weekend. Food-stall keepers at Penjaringan say that they rarely encounter customers who deliberately leave their debts unpaid, unless they meet with a calamity such as accident, illness or a sudden call to return to their home villages. In such cases the stall keeper usually accommodates them willingly. Unlike the customers of food stalls, 5 to 10 per cent of the customers of travelling vegetable vendors have debt arrears. The vendors complain: 'They are allowed to pay on a monthly basis, and yet they don't pay up'. How do they cope with this situation? 'Of course we keep insisting on payment. Some of them pay, but others change to new vendors,' one of them said. The trouble with debt-owing customers is that they shop at the

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market on the first days of the month but buy on credit from their regular vendors during the latter part of the month.

In this situation, women in the informal sector have to manage their capital cleverly. They use cash returns as capital and for daily needs. Food-stall keepers use weekly cash payments, for instance, to buy durable staples such as rice, sugar and vegetable oil. They do not, however, take the goods home, because they have no storage space. In this way they establish good relations with the supplier of their staples. Should they at any time lack capital, they will be able to buy their staples on credit. Other stall keepers use the same strategy. If there is room, they keep their purchased durable staples in their stall; otherwise, they store them with the supplier. Vegetable and *jamu* vendors use different strategies. Nearly all their raw materials are purchased daily. Consequently, payment from their debtors is used for necessities such as paying house rent and electricity bills and to remit funds to their home towns.

How much money do customers owe? *Jamu* vendors do not allow a customer to owe more than Rp. 10,000. Sundries stall keepers limit the amount to Rp. 100,000 per person. Travelling vegetable vendors allow Rp. 15,000 to 30,000. One vegetable vendor recalls allowing a customer credit totalling Rp. 150,000, which is rather surprising. The customer bought vegetables, chicken and spices on credit for a celebration. Vendors frequently provide such credit for customers intending to throw a party. One vendor even supported a customer's wedding party in this way.

Traders in the informal sector, especially food sellers, are needed around skyscrapers. No matter how large and sophisticated an office may be, it has low-salaried employees such as drivers, cleaners and messengers, whose salaries do not allow them to buy their lunches in the building's cafeteria. The informal sector saves them. Even Level II and III (second and third top ranks in the hierarchy) civil servants still rely on the informal sector.

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Challenges for women workers in the informal sector

From the very beginning, women in the informal sector face challenges. Their courage in entering this sector is largely motivated by necessity. As women they have been trained and brought up in the stereotypical gender framework. In childhood they were forced to be shy and meek, not to show either bravery or anger, to be undemanding, patient and obedient. As they grew up, they were prepared to become obedient wives to their husbands, good housekeepers and mothers who take good care of their children. As women, they are not supposed to surpass their husbands in intelligence, income, or in social interaction.

This ideology still continues to affect women. When they are faced with the need to find employment, the majority of women think of 'motherly' or 'wifely' jobs. Thus it is not surprising that they prefer to become vegetable vendors, sundries stall keepers, dressmakers, food makers and sellers, or to provide services as laundry women or restaurant workers. None of the 300 informal-sector entrepreneurs who are PPSW working partners in Jakarta deal in stationery, electronics or home appliances because those are not regarded as women's areas.

The main challenge these women had to overcome in starting their businesses was the whispering of their own conscience. They felt incapable and without courage and thought it impossible that they could develop as others did. They felt stupid and shy, and thought that as women they were supposed to stay home. However, since they had to meet certain necessities, they had to suppress all those feelings. These feelings persisted, despite the progress they made. They hesitated in making decisions, they dared not expand their business, even when this had become appropriate unless their husbands supported them.

Although some family members gave their support, the women also faced a variety of constraints from others. Families realised they needed additional income, and yet it was difficult

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for them to accept the dual role of women. At the start of their business, women really bear a double burden. They have to learn to start a business, but they still have to meet their responsibilities as housewives. Some husbands are very supportive, others are not. Supportive husbands encourage their wives and do not complain if their wives begin to give less attention to them. They willingly begin to help themselves. Yet, feelings of anxiety prevail. Husbands fear that their wives might change or that the household and the children will be neglected. The women's burden grows still heavier when their husbands do not approve. In that case women must try to convince their husbands that their new responsibilities will not degrade the quality of their housekeeping and childcare. Women also must be able to convince their husbands that they will be able to carry out their new tasks and that their attitude toward their husbands and family will not change.

Unlike the husbands who differ in attitude, children generally have a common attitude. They support and sympathise with their mothers who have to work hard for the sake of the family. Older children try to be independent and lessen their demands on their mothers, for both goods and services. If they can, they even help their parents. It appears that women can obtain understanding primarily from their children, even though some teenage children are embarrassed and humiliated if their mothers work as labourers or vegetable vendors at the houses of teachers or friends. A PPSW field worker was visited by a junior high school girl. With forced bravery she introduced herself and begged PPSW for additional capital so her mother could open a stall at home. So far she had repressed her embarrassment at seeing her mother sell vegetables from one friend's house to another. She promised to help her mother with the business, especially with managing the borrowed capital until it had to be repaid. She insisted, however, that her mother not be told of her visit, because she feared that her mother, who was working

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hard to pay for her schooling, would be offended that her daughter was ashamed of her mother's job.

Relatives usually present the most difficult problem. The problem is not so disturbing if they live elsewhere; but when they come visiting, they will inconvenience the woman with many questions which she is expected to answer, and with anxieties which she is supposed to pacify. If relatives live nearby, however, the woman has to be prepared for a considerable amount of nagging. Often, the husband also has to strive to defend his self-esteem as a man.

A woman who starts a new profession should also be prepared for a variety of gossip as well as praise from the community. Her new activity evokes various opinions from her neighbours. Close and understanding friends will reassure her and praise her courage, but many will envy her and disapprove of her activities. Meanwhile, another woman who started earlier with a similar business will view her as a competitor. Success in business as well as family harmony are at stake in preserving a woman's reputation. The community expects women to play a greater role on social occasions, because they are not viewed as breadwinners. Women's presence at ceremonies – for celebrations or for tragedies – is all but compulsory. Men's absence from these events will be excused, because they are supposed to work and earn a living. Only a few people are sympathetic when women do not attend social events. This situation constitutes a new challenge to women and presents them with the choice between continuing their 'womanly' activities such as *arisan*, women's meetings, social gatherings and celebrations, or refraining from these activities for the sake of their newly started business. Either option carries risks. If they do not attend social activities they must be prepared for gossip and ridicule. If they do, they have to stop their business activity and will probably lose customers or deals.

Beginners in business also face other business problems, such as their ignorance of the business world, knowledge of

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raw materials and production techniques, lack of skills and financial knowledge and limited capital. Strange things which had never before occurred to them now fill their days. Fear of potential business losses and of capital losses undermines their self-confidence. This situation poses a test to the female novice in business. The switch from the traditional agricultural sector to a strange new business competition, or the transformation of a 'mere' housewife into a motivated, decision-making businesswoman presents challenging trials.

When a woman has passed through this situation, she will be more self-confident and feel comfortable in her new role. She will receive sympathy from her husband and family. Support from her children will become more real. Neighbours and the community will start to admire her. Many women, however, have failed to overcome this situation, thus causing ups and downs in business. Sometimes the business goes smoothly but occasionally it stops in midstream. A woman may also switch from one type of business to another. In such a situation a woman is faced with a dilemma; she feels unable to carry on, but she cannot meet her family's needs if she does not try another venture.

The stages of business growth in the informal sector

Starting with psychological experiences and the growth of business development in the informal sector, PPSW has attempted to distinguish five stages in the growth of businesses run by urban women in the informal sector. This division is based on the results of an evaluation undertaken in 1991, amended in 1992, and first applied in 1993. It is useful in the search for appropriate supplementary alternatives.

The first stage is the trial and error stage of the beginner. At this stage a woman, her family and her neighbours do not believe she will be able to manage her business and make it a success. At this stage she struggles by herself. Support from her family, if any, is still very limited, while she is in a state of confusion trying to understand totally unfamiliar

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business norms. What she needs most at this stage is a friend, someone who understands, encourages and convinces her that she is capable of running a business, and that she is not a weak or stupid person. A woman should also be convinced that she is capable not only of taking care of her husband and her family but also of learning and developing, assuming she has the will and the determination.

Along with this, an understanding of business should be gradually encouraged. At this stage a woman is very busy. She will not have time for training. She acquires her understanding of business from discussions with the visiting trainer. Since her choice of a business is usually based on a stereotype, following current trends, without a feasibility study, the facilitator should be willing and able to review the feasibility of her business venture. Sometimes a woman at this stage must be advised to switch to another business. She needs support and assistance.

The second stage is the self-employment stage. At this stage, a woman has found herself. She begins to believe that her venture can help save her family. She has not yet, however, managed to convince her husband and her family, because the business has made but a very small and not too apparent profit. The woman still appears uncertain since she has not received support from her family and is continuing to struggle by herself. Psychologically she is beginning to feel stable in her venture, but she still feels it is only an additional venture which has no value in the eyes of her husband and family. At this stage, she needs help in improving her business skills and obtaining additional capital. The woman and her family should be convinced that her business will contribute to her family, that she should not abandon it, and that the failure of her business will harm the family's economy.

The third stage is the micro-enterprise stage. The woman's business begins to show clear results and to receive recognition from family members who are beginning to rely on it. All

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family members feel that they are living from the proceeds of the woman's hard work, so they will begin to assist her. At this stage the family must be made aware of their dependence on the woman. Gender awareness should be awakened in the husband and the children so they will no longer be a burden to her. It is thus expected that the husband will be willing and able to lighten his wife's household workload. He and the children must be able to take care of themselves at least, thereby reducing the woman's workload. At this stage, the woman should be convinced that her business can grow. For this she needs additional skills and self-confidence.

The fourth stage is the small-business stage, in which the business is beginning to stabilise. The woman already has regular customers, as well as raw material suppliers and marketing channels. She has identified the resources she needs. Her family and neighbours have come to recognise her success. Generally at this stage a new doubt arises. The woman still considers herself incompetent. Her inadequate education and limited range of social interaction frequently leave her unable to use available opportunities, even though her business shows promising development. Frequently, at this stage, interference from the husband increases. Some husbands even give up their irregular jobs as labourers or drivers, and become involved in their wives' business. Unless women take a firm stand at this stage, their businesses are very likely to fall into their husbands' hands, and the woman will take second place in the business. She will gradually return to her original position of taking care of the household and the children. Now the business is developed and under the husband's management it will be able to meet family needs.

At this stage, additional personnel will be needed to run the business. A food seller, for example, will need someone to cook or to wait on customers. A shop owner requires a shop assistant, and the household needs maids. At this stage

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women and their families must be made to realise they need to treat fairly the women in their employment. This awareness must be developed because newly successful women tend to exploit women in weaker positions.

The fifth stage is the business development stage. If a woman fails at the fourth stage, her husband will take over the leadership of the business. If she successfully passes the small-business stage, she will take on the role of a business manager. At the fifth stage, the business she started has developed. Problems do not end at this stage. She has to face the problems of a woman as manager, that is, problems of leadership, the courage to make decisions, business sensitivity, administration and various other management problems require her attention. In the meantime, she has to maintain a balanced personality. A woman who is too proud of her career, for example, may look down on her husband. A husband may not be ready to accept the achievement of his wife, whom he had deemed stupid or weak. At this stage, spiritual and personal counselling are very much needed for the newly prospering family. Advertisements and the influence of the modern world begin to touch the woman and her family, as they now have the money to gratify their wishes.

What do they need?

Women engaged in the informal sector become their families' main support. Although they provide economic support for the poor and the middle class, both in the community and in their work place, their existence has not yet been recognised or officially taken into account. Generally speaking, the businesses of the informal sector are not taken seriously, especially if their managers are women. The informal sector is often referred to as a safety valve in coping with unemployment. In reality, however, overlapping and confusing rules apply to it. Uncertainty regarding locations which may or may not be used leads to financial extortion. Confusion over business licences creates opportunities for extorting protection

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money. In 1990, interviews with women vendors at Cililitan and Pasar Minggu bus terminals in Jakarta revealed that the women were forced to pay 14 different kinds of informal payments for a range of demands, including business licences, rent of their one-square-metre sidewalk stall, security, cleanliness, fees to the bus terminal and development fees.

To obtain security in running their businesses, women vendors urgently need public and state recognition of their existence. They need clear regulations on what they may and may not do. Although their main problem is acquiring capital, they would be hesitant to accept it, if it were offered, because they do not have a sense of security in the pursuit of their business. Sidewalk vendors are afraid of being displaced, those who open stalls fear being evicted, and sellers in rented houses fear non-renewal of their rental contract.

Home industrialists need protection for their products. Some home industry products are already able to meet local as well as national demands. These products need protection against large companies manufacturing the same products; otherwise they will not be able to compete, in pricing, performance or market share. If the products of major companies can obtain protection through monopolies, why is it that small industrial products cannot acquire the same protection? If big businessmen with their huge capital and sophisticated technology have numerous options to lead this country toward progress, let small businessmen take care of small-scale enterprises.

For women determined to participate in earning their families' livelihood the realisation of their identity as human beings capable of achievement and growth is essential. They should be awakened to the fact that they are working and earning a living, and that their earnings are the hope of the family and not simply an addition to their husbands' income.

The experience of the PPSW shows that women who have taken part in this awakening process will proudly acknowledge

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their occupation as tradeswomen, dressmakers, laundry women, and so on. The women and also their families and neighbourhoods must be made aware of the work and the achievements of women. The awareness that the division of labour in the family is no longer based on stereotypes must also be promoted. Husbands, children and other family members should be persuaded to do chores which so far have been regarded as women's work. Particularly men should recognise that cooking and washing are not for women only, and it is not humiliating for men to cook or wash the dishes.

Women need to obtain skills and knowledge and to develop business concepts. Such training and education, however, should be truly designed to fit a woman's condition and situation. Matters that must be taken into consideration are time, place, and training methods and materials.

Women cannot take part in many types of training because they are held during the busiest part of a woman's day. Another disadvantage is the training site, which may be unfamiliar to the woman. Materials and methods that are too academic in nature cannot be followed by those who generally have not even completed elementary school.

Markets and sources of raw material must be introduced to women, since many workers in the informal sector do not know of any markets other than those near their homes. They find Jakarta too large and daunting to explore. Technology should be introduced to them, because women frequently assume that technology is complicated, confusing and not appropriate for them. Many women, for example, do not know how to and dare not use a public telephone. When their business starts to grow, they need outside financial aid. Beginners in business need not only working capital but also loans for emergencies, such as sick children, school fees and house rent. Funds to rent a place of business are urgently needed to guarantee a secure, enduring business activity. A permanent place of residence is also important so women can join in various facilitating groups, because by

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renting on a monthly basis these women are often unable to generate the trust necessary for credit and training facilities.

Conclusion

Women struggling in the informal sector bear multiple burdens. As women, they are still not regarded as the main breadwinners so they frequently escape the attention of development planners and managers. If they do receive attention, the programs offered frequently do not suit their needs and conditions, or are not in operation and consequently are inaccessible to them. Development programs do not reach them.

The informal sector in Indonesia and possibly throughout the world is not yet considered as one of the economic sectors supporting state revenues. Consequently, development planners and executives do not pay attention to this sector. This means that programs for the informal sector are uncertain, without direction and unintegrated.

A small-business development program has recently been promoted. But what decision-makers define as small is not, in fact, small. Businessmen with Rp. 15 million as starting capital are considered too small to be supported. This means that a businesswoman in the informal sector with capital of Rp. 50,000 will be disregarded.

It is possible that only women can understand and sympathise with these women. Women in a more advantaged position can thus extend a hand and assist them. Appreciating them as women and human beings, and developing their enterprises, will mean saving their children, the next generation.

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11

QUEEN OF THE HOUSEHOLD
An Empty Title

Henny Supolo Sitepu

The term 'housewives' covers a wide range of individuals who are distinguished from one another by such factors as social background, culture, economy, education, age, and a lot more. This article will not endeavour to portray all Indonesian housewives. It will depict only three women of different cultural backgrounds who had the good fortune of having educational and economic advantages.[1] Perhaps this article may be likened to a literary endeavour, understanding that is very much dependent on the reader's physical and psychological experience. While such a precondition is often neglected, it is essential for understanding the role of the housewife.[2]

I have limited my description to these 'fortunate' housewives who had educational and economic advantages, in order to explore the extent to which their good fortune helped develop their image as housewives able to determine their own roles. How these three women consciously chose the housewife role and the degree to which they were directed by their environment are also issues to be dealt with.

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1 The names used in this article are pseudonyms. Detailed information which according to the informants can be traced has also been avoided. In any case, their willingness to share their history has been a valuable experience for me.

2 Before this article was published, a seminar was held to discuss the draft. I received much input that strengthens my concepts of the housewife's role, which is complicated.

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Furthermore, it will be interesting to see how they were raised and prepared by their environment to enter marital life, and how they ultimately view their work and themselves as housewives. I explored these topics through several meetings with the women.

Introduction

Many people like to talk about the role of women as housewives. Women are always expected to play *peran yang mulia* (the noble role). Whether the role is noble is questionable, because the decision to adopt this role is not necessarily based on personal preference, as it is a step towards which women have been conditioned since birth. It is true that the role of housewife is praised in many ways. In appreciation, the housewife is often called 'Queen of the Household'. But the title is in fact totally meaningless.

A housewife, who as queen of the household should have power, often has no choice but to accept the role already adopted (Sitepu 1994).

Textbooks and the environment appear to have a lifetime influence on women. A gender-oriented analysis of PMP (*Pendidikan Moral Pancasila* – Pancasila Moral Studies) textbooks used in Indonesian elementary schools reveals the limits set to the role of women, in both contents and illustrations (Diarsi 1991). In these books, women's domain is the home only, while men are directed towards being the head of the family and earning a living. Research in the USA, conducted in 1992 by the American Association of University Women, reveals that after 12 years of school education female pupils' self-image had declined notably. Female pupils also thought that women's roles were confined to domestic functions.

The three women selected for this article, however, believe their choice of becoming a housewife was not influenced by their formal education. All three women said their environment had had a greater influence on their decision to become a housewife. This environment included members

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of their families, such as parents, spouses, parents-in-law, uncles and aunts.

All three are of the view that to serve and to sacrifice for the family are intrinsic to accepting the status of a wife. In line with their ideas of sacrifice, the three women are happy to see that their children have grown up well. They feel that it was they that made this possible. This raises the question to what extent women-specified values had since childhood imprinted on them such satisfaction in sacrifice, influencing their choice, despite their education and their comfortable economic backgrounds.[3]

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Language Dictionary) (1990), a housewife is a woman who is in charge of a variety of work in the household. This chapter is about women who manage their own households.

I must admit that this writing is biased, since it is influenced by my own views on housewives. But I will try to present the images and the work of the three women in this writing according to their own views.

Three profiles

Yanti

'Since I was a little girl I have been given examples of how a woman should behave,' said Yanti (47). From the moment

3 I began by interviewing about 20 housewives who did not work, who had a high level of education and middle-class economic status. After learning the background of all these women I decided to pursue in greater detail the lives of the three women whom I found particularly interesting. The definition of middle class is based on the simple measure of having opportunity and experience in higher education, having a private house and a car, and being able to send their children to a private school with an entrance fee of more than Rp. 2 million. The three women admit that they have never had any financial difficulties since they were young girls, except for one woman who views her financial problem as a reflection of her husband's domination oppressing her in their household.

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she woke up, all her mother's activities revolved around meeting her father's needs, from preparing breakfast to splashing perfume on his handkerchief which she had already matched to the colour of his shirt. Yanti often heard her father's compliments on his wife's appearance as she met all his personal needs, as well as the praises from her paternal grandmother who seemed to love her daughter-in-law.

'The minute father left, mother got busy getting us ready. Before father returned from the office, mother had already prepared a hot drink on his table along with the newspaper and some snacks.'

Her mother's entire routine made Yanti feel that a woman was born to dedicate her life to her husband and children. Ever since she was a little girl, Yanti was shown how to walk properly, gently, not straight like men; how to speak well, not shouting; how to laugh politely, not loudly; as well as the politeness of a woman who will become a good mother. It is easy to surmise that the toys she had as a girl were dolls and their accessories. 'I was once given a big doll house ... at that time its size was much talked about by my friends ... now I realise that the big and luxurious toy was given to me intentionally so I could practise my skills for my future as a housewife. As far as I recall, I've never been directed towards becoming anything other than a good wife and mother.'

In Yanti's family, the women were only housewives and working outside the house was evidently considered improper. Yanti felt that the way her family were discussing the mother of one of her friends who worked in an office was insulting. 'Perhaps my family felt that working women are unfortunate women whose households suffer from economic problems.'

After Yanti entered senior high school her mother often gave her tips on how to deal with a husband, even though at the time Yanti did not yet have a boyfriend. 'You cannot argue with your husband,' Yanti recalled when I asked her which lessons she remembered best. She remembered this

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lesson because her mother at the same time taught her how to strike back without arguing, just by being patient. She immediately noticed my surprise and gave me an example of the strength of that patience, 'My husband always gets confused if I don't criticise him or ask anything whenever he comes home late'.

Yanti grew up not only with constant explanations about the husband's superior position, standing far above that of the wife, but also with the idea that a woman's place is in the home with her children. 'I think I grew up feeling that a good woman is a woman who always stays home raising her children and waiting for her husband to come home.'

Yanti admitted that her mother often quoted *Hadist* (stories of the life and deeds of Muhammad) in explaining the proper position of women. Yet, when she had a chance to reflect on herself, she realised that the limited role reserved for her made her dream of being a diplomat. With great enthusiasm she told me about her aspiration to become a diplomat, an aspiration which foundered after she got married: 'Free ... to see other countries, to learn about other customs ... everything surely is different from what we have been taught ... Then we can decide which one to adopt ... to have a choice!'

Yanti started to have a boyfriend when she was in her third year of senior high school. Four years later after she graduated from a state university she married the only man she had ever been close to. Before her marriage, her mother's advice blossomed into 'how to deal with a husband's anger and affairs'. How? With patience, patience, and more patience! As far as Yanti recalls, patience was the ultimate weapon of every good wife.

In addition to talking on the telephone, Yanti and I met several times. In every conversation she became very enthusiastic on anything related to her choice between her aspirations and the limited role proposed by her family. 'I learned what my mother's mistakes were and I don't want to do the same with my children.'

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After she was married, Yanti lived with her parents, in an elite area of Medan, North Sumatra. Her grandparents, as well as her uncle and aunt, also lived in the same area.

Yanti feels that her social life was very limited and that she grew as a sweet child, according to her family's standards. 'I was never involved in dancing parties which were getting popular at that time ... it never even occurred to me to have a secret love affair or skip school ... Although he never restrained me, my husband indirectly approved my decision to forget all my dreams and concentrate on housekeeping.' Since their courting days, her husband had already backed the idea of women's limited role prevailing in Yanti's family. 'If both of us go out, who will take care of our children?' her husband answered when Yanti once talked about going to work.

Although Yanti is satisfied with her success in playing her role, she confesses that she can never forget her dreams. At the closing of one of our meetings she said: 'I am serious, I feel lucky having such a good husband and such nice children ... and I do enjoy my role as a wife and a mother ... but I can't deny that I often feel there's something left undeveloped in myself. The one thing which I truly own ... and sometimes I feel guilty for having such feelings ... I feel guilty for I seem to be ungrateful for God's blessings. I do enjoy my image ... and it seems that I have attained the image of a good wife and mother but I can't lie and say that as a human being I am satisfied with my role.'

Kunti

Kunti (40) feels that 'she is not Javanese' although both of her parents came from Java. Even though she has never worked outside the home, her mother is not the kind of woman who always serves her husband. Since she was a little girl, Kunti moved frequently, following her father who was a diplomat. Kunti's background differs from Yanti's. As Kunti remembers, her parents always showed her examples

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of the equality between men and women through the tasks assigned to her and her two younger brothers. Although Kunti's mother was a housewife, Kunti saw her mother's position as equal to that of her father. Final decisions in the family were taken by either her mother or her father no matter what kind of a problem was involved. In several cases, her parents did not hide their disagreement.

Raised with a strong motivation to achieve, which she called 'seeking for achievement', Kunti as a child dreamed of becoming the leader of this country. Since Kunti and her brothers were small children, their parents emphasised a high achievement motivation. According to Kunti, her parents always stressed the importance of intelligence and its applications in daily life. 'Our house was filled with books and marked by discussions ... ever since we were kids we were accustomed to sitting and joining in the discussions with either father's or mother's guests.'

Kunti was courted by a fellow graduate in the mass communication field. Her parents actually did not approve of Kunti's choice, but they were caught in the sentiment of 'respecting the choice of their adult child'. That is Kunti's description of the situation. After several months of courting, Kunti married at the age of 29.

The theory of communication and equality which had characterised her family environment vanished as soon as she was married. When Kunti declared her intention to continue her studies to a higher level, her husband laughed at her. 'I still remember how he ridiculed my intention as excessive ambition ... "So you want to be a brain surgeon?" my husband asked sarcastically!'

As someone who always makes plans, Kunti also had a program in her marriage. 'I had a time frame when I got married; that is, in the first ten years I would follow my husband and whatever he had planned. After that, I would start to include my own interests in the next time frame.' When they were planning their marriage, Kunti discussed

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this time frame with her fiancee. Later, however, her husband never looked upon this plan as an agreement. Kunti left her job, in line with her husband's request and the conditions he had set. She approached housekeeping matters as she had formerly approached the studies she had pursued before her marriage. Kunti studied how to breastfeed and how to plan and prepare a healthy menu efficiently. She had many references for this, and she had access to several neighbouring countries which made it easier for her to get books. 'At that time, being a housewife was a new profession and I took it seriously,' she continued her story. For the first five years Kunti adhered to her plan. She completely ignored the fact that her husband was never consistent in anything.

The trials of Kunti's determination arose out of the limitations on and the selection of her friends, who had to be approved by her husband to the point of changing their life plans. The problem was exacerbated by his restriction of her household money. Kunti was given a certain budget which, in view of her husband's income, was extremely insignificant. 'I could swallow the pain of being given a limited budget ... being made to feel ineffective and dependent ... because I had the time frame that I had set before!'

As if that was not enough, her husband often changed jobs. Sometimes a change meant a move to another country, which involved numerous complications. Kunti who has three children said: 'He does have charm, intelligence and also brilliant ideas which impress quickly ... so he'll never run out of work offers'.

The most severe trial came for Kunti just before the tenth year of her marriage. By that time her husband no longer trusted her with the household money. Every weekend both of them went to the supermarket to shop for the coming week. If some additional items were needed, Kunti telephoned her husband at the office, to ask him to buy those articles, from sugar to a new light bulb. 'To put it crudely, I even had to ask him to buy me sanitary napkins ...

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since my husband considered me incapable of managing expenses.'

Feeling that she had to persevere in her intentions, Kunti tried to maintain some of her self-respect which had been shattered by her husband. Swallowing her bitterness without doing anything, she suddenly again became the old Kunti full of plans and thoughts for the future. Exactly on the tenth anniversary of their marriage, Kunti revealed her plans without asking her husband's agreement. Obviously her husband was shocked, although, as Kunti emphasised repeatedly in our conversations, she had discussed her time frame with her husband before they got married.

According to Rikki Robbin Jones (1990), women do not enjoy their relationships with men, as do men. Women let themselves be dominated by men in an effort to control the relationship. As a result, their energy is focused on other people and not on themselves. Jones's writing came to mind after several meetings with Yanti and Kunti, especially since both of their husbands were playing a very dominant role in their families.

An unequal relationship will create dissatisfaction and ultimately unhappiness. The problem then is, do they dare to reveal their unhappiness? Yanti said one day: 'I felt that I had failed, really failed, because I was angry with my husband when I declared that I wanted to have another world in addition to my home'. Her feeling of failure was obviously related to the standards of wifely success instilled in her by her mother. 'I felt more and more unappreciated, needed only to fulfil his needs but not as a partner to share feelings.'

Kunti, on the other hand, looked at her problem as a challenge to be overcome soon. 'I considered that all this time we had different problems ... My problem was how to convince myself of the need for my children to get the best education, while his problem was to conquer his empty conceit. It would have been different if we had the same problems which we would solve together.'

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By separating the problems, Kunti felt more certain that she could solve her own problems. She did not want to be involved in her husband's private problems which she thought would weaken her resolve. She gathered her own strength and soon entered the working world which could at least help her solve her own problems.

Kunti's husband was shocked when the time limit passed and felt betrayed when Kunti left him. Kunti, on the other hand, felt the time in which her husband led the family was past. She feels that she now had to pilot her own ship. Moreover, she felt that her children were also in her ship, not in her husband's. When I asked her about her image of herself, Kunti answered: 'Suddenly I felt that my self-image had also improved ... at the very least I had become more honest with myself'.

Nowadays, Kunti is working in a company in a job that is closely related to her educational background. She is giving her husband time to adjust. When I asked her about the time limit, she laughed. 'I wouldn't be so harsh about that ... to me that's his own problem ... I'm already happy that I could escape the state of dependency and was able to make better plans ... I don't know if I will eventually find another man interesting enough to be a potential husband ... perhaps that's when I would need a time limit.'

Ina

'When speaking about marriage, an individual has agreed to be publicly owned,' Ina (40), a law graduate who has obtained an S2 or Master's degree, begins her story. Ina said this because only her courting process was without interference from her extended family. That was possible only because her family did not yet know of her serious intention to enter the marital state.

Ever since she was a small girl, Ina had felt she could get whatever she wanted if she tried hard enough. This was the reason that as soon as she received her Bachelor's degree

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she continued towards her Master's degree, while also working as a lecturer in the faculty where she studied.

After her marriage to a businessman who owned an expanding family company, Ina stopped working. She saw how busy her husband was and she did not want her home left empty with both of them going to work. Her decision shocked her family who had always known Ina as an active and clever person. They could not do anything, however, because of her strong determination. 'For me, being at home is a luxury, for which I am properly grateful,' said Ina. She talked at great length about her life which she considers full of interesting surprises. These come not only from her only son's development, but also from the fact that Ina suddenly found a new hobby in arranging her house.

The interior of her home became the object of her experiments. Her husband is often surprised when he comes home to find that their bedroom furniture has changed colour to co-ordinate with the colour of the walls. Her husband has never objected to Ina's very expensive hobby. That is one reason she feels very grateful.

Ina's childhood was a happy one. All her brothers and sisters were free to pursue whatever fields they preferred. Her elder sisters all pursued their own activities in line with their interests. One of them, for instance, is a computer expert who is also successful in food services.

Unlike Yanti who was directed by others or Kunti who directed herself, Ina was not troubled about who directed her. Ina told me easily about her mother-in-law who asked her to give up her job. A reasonable idea, she thought, considering the traffic situation in Jakarta which is becoming steadily heavier and the fact that her home is located about one and a half hours from her faculty. 'I didn't feel under pressure from my mother-in-law ... I thought everything was quite logical.'

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When I asked if she did not feel guilty since her graduate studies were funded by the state[4] and she was not giving anything in return to the society, she laughed. 'That depends on how you want to see it ... if it's just a matter of giving something in return to the society, I'm sure I will raise my children to be useful and not burden the state, and they will even be a good national investment! That will be my contribution to cover the funds the state has spent [on me].'

Ina was sure that her image as a housewife was very strong and would not be 'contaminated' by her other desires. When talking about this 'contamination', Ina laughed, 'Yes ... it is called "contaminated" ... because consciously I enjoy this world!'

Work ... measure of success

Observing their children's development, all three women, Ina, Kunti and Yanti, feel that they have been successful. All three are proud to see their children absorb the education they and the schools have provided. None of the three related her work to the position or the career success of her husband.

Asked about her children's future, Kunti quickly expressed hopes that her daughter would be able to avoid any form of dependence on her husband. She doesn't want her own unfortunate experience to befall her daughter, because she has suffered from being dependent, even though only financially. On the other hand, Kunti wants her sons to grow into responsible adults who are able to respect every person according to their achievements.

Yanti dreams of children who will be able to achieve their own goals, not those of their parents. For her it is not important in what field they are involved as long as they are happy with their choice. Learning from her experience, Yanti consciously provides ample opportunities for her children,

4 She obtained her Master's degree from a state university.

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providing books, choosing vacation sites and including them in discussions with interesting guests.

Ina, however, surrenders to fate. As in her own case, she believes that human steps are predetermined by God. Yet, she is sure that she would not be happy if she did not believe that staying at home was best for her. She also believes that parents should give their children as many chances as possible and let the children choose what is best for them. She said firmly: 'I have experienced working, I have obtained my Master's degree, and have seen the world ... but I chose to stay at home ... and I am happy and I enjoy it!'

Conclusion

These three housewives have different reasons for staying home. They have different images of themselves as housewives, even though they share certain features as well, especially in relation to their children.

The social environment is important in opening opportunities and in determining independence in making choices. Efforts to romanticise the role of housewife are questionable, to say the least.

Without looking further, we all know that housewives do not receive the appreciation of other professions. Yet, everybody feels entitled to direct women towards becoming housewives. It is unfair to impose, in whatever manner, a life's choice which is not accompanied by equal and fair appreciation.

In this article we saw the description of a woman who had no other choice, the development of a woman who achieved another choice and a woman who freely chose to stay at home and believed in her own choice. The three women are similar in that they are educating their children in accordance with the high level of education they themselves have attained. Their own experience, in fact, influences the manner in which they are raising their children.

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We may hope, at least, that because of their experiences, they will not restrict their children's choices; and that they will instil in them the capacity to choose and unwaveringly accept the responsibilities that come with those choices.

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12

WOMEN WORKERS IN THE PUTTING-OUT SYSTEM An Undemanding and Unrecognised Labour Force

Maria M. Hartiningsih

Concern for the living conditions of workers was an integral part of the commitment underlying my sentiments and convictions when I chose the profession of a journalist as a way of serving my country.

It is not without cause that I have come to champion the people at the lowest level of Indonesian society. When I was a child, people like these were a part of my everyday life. In *Kampung* Karangsari in Semarang, not far from where my family used to live, rows of women engaged in *nglong-song* (making packaging for *jamu* or traditional medicines) were a daily afternoon spectacle. They used to line up on their verandahs or in the front rooms of their wooden houses which had bamboo partitions. When floods struck, the women had to work on wooden benches. Their work could be done at any time of the day, but normally it was carried out in the afternoon and continued until late at night while they listened to the *wayang kulit* (shadow play) broadcast on the radio. They were paid according to every hundred cartons completed.

At that time, nearly 30 years ago, the *jamu* with the *Jago* (rooster) trademark was a large industry stretching across this coastal town. It employed thousands of workers. I used to look at them when they stopped to take a break, unconsciously

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recording every detail deep in my mind. These were scenes that have remained with me until this day. Unfortunately, their conditions have not altered much, for wherever I go today, I see the same misery.

The food the women used to buy every day from a small food stall consisted of rice, vegetables and fermented bean cake and bean curd, occasionally adding half a fried egg. For their children, they bought food in the market, consisting of *teri* (small dried fish) and *blenyik* or *teri* which have been kneaded into fish balls, in addition to fermented bean cake and bean curd. The two types of fish were the cheapest and were usually bought as cat food. A large part of the wages they received every Saturday was spent on paying debts they owed for purchases at the food stall and in the market.

If they borrowed from money lenders, their Saturday pay would be entirely spent, and their life for the following week would again be at the mercy of Kar, the owner of the food stall, Mbok Kromo, Mbok Sri and Yu Sam, shopkeepers in the small market of Yusuf *Kampong* near the Jamu Jago factory on Mataram Street.

In my elementary school days, I had a very close friend whose name was Harni. Although she was only eight years old, she rarely played with the rest of us. If she happened to be among us, her mother would shout in her special way to call her home to look after her younger sisters and brothers, to help with cooking or the laundry, or, more often than not, to glue *jamu* packaging.

I never knew exactly what kind of work Harni's father did. Once in a while I saw him working as a coolie at the market. At other times he helped neighbours repair a house or he was involved with some middlemen selling bicycles in the Langgar market. Most often, however, I saw him driving a *becak*. His wife stayed at home to raise their five children.

Every day Harni collected her *nglongsong* share from a neighbour. She could do 5,000 cartons a week, sometimes

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more. Although it was said to be a side job and done during spare time, all members of her family did this work non-stop, all day long.

Harni and her family lived at the very end of the village. Their house measured five metres by seven metres. The floor was dirty, the partition walls torn and in many places the roof tiles were broken. When it rained, the floor inside the house was like a mud puddle.

We stopped seeing each other when I moved to Bogor to continue my schooling, and I only met Harni again 30 years later in Semarang. She is now a widow with four children and two grandchildren, but her main job is still the same as her mother's, *nglongsong*.

With the above illustration I want to point out that the subsistence-level economic conditions of these piece-workers continue with the same misery or under even worse conditions than during the preceding generation.

Initially, this type of work was not a main source of income, but it often ended in being the main livelihood for a family whose income depended on the informal sector. Although I have seen these situations occurring, I do not wish to generalise because it involves many other factors, such as the number of family members and the strength of their determination to get out of this cycle of poverty.

It is not known exactly when the 'putting-out system' became the pattern for the relationship between a factory owner and his workers. But in fact, the putting-out system, or home-based contracting, has been practised in rural Java for a long time, especially in the ready-to-wear garment industry. The garment industry in the village of Mojotengan is estimated to have existed since the 1940s. Garment workers enjoyed a prosperous period between 1954 and 1969. Garment workers were scarce then, and, as a result of boom in the garment industry, they were paid well. Besides, raw materials were easily obtained, and imports were still limited. In the domestic market, ready-to-wear garment

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factories did not yet reach into the villages nor even to the middle class.[1]

The putting-out system has two types of working methods: one by which the employer takes care of raw materials (also called the horizontal system); and the other by which the workers must buy the raw materials themselves (called the vertical system). The horizontal system is found in the batik and other handcraft industries, and is often confused with the unfavourable system of *bapak angkat* or patron–client relationship.

Both systems involve an employer, home-based workers, payment by output, and an intermediary. Because of rising transport costs, workers try to increase their income by ignoring the intermediary. For certain industries, however, they cannot avoid using the services of an intermediary who controls the workers' access to the factory.

The putting-out system is not limited to the traditional, labour-intensive industries because many of the workers use machines. Their orientation does not stop at the domestic market, but includes international markets as well. The products and the activities of industries using the system are industrial products and are not necessarily related to art.

While home-based workers in the putting-out system do not necessarily come from the lower economic class only, my discussion in this article is confined to home-based *women* workers who are poor and unskilled and have limited education. They enter the labour market outside the formal structure through their home-based, mass-produced goods. The system in effect here is the vertical system.

In many cases home-based workers are also engaged in other income-generating activities. Some operate small shops, offer laundry services, or work as masseuses. But their income is not stable, as it depends on the goodwill of their clients.

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1 In the Pekalongan area the home-based work system in the batik industry is referred to as *mocok-mocok*.

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A glance behind the bamboo curtain

The rice is cooked. Yuli (22) has removed the rice cooker which has formed a thick crust of soot on the outside. The aroma of the rice pervades the downstairs room of the small house measuring two metres by three metres in the block of RT (*Rukun Tetangga* – neighbourhood association) 9/10 of Jelambar Baru in the western part of Jakarta. Alas, the aroma lasts only a little while as the heavy smell of kerosene takes its place when the stove is turned off.

After that, there is little left to do for this mother of an only child. This terrace house with its wooden walls, which she has rented for Rp. 250,000 a year, does not require much maintenance. The room with its concrete floor contains only a thin mattress measuring 0.6 metre by 1.5 metres, an iron stove and a few cooking and eating utensils. A heap of embroidery appliqués from the garment factory is piled up in another corner, waiting to be worked.

'Not bad as an extra,' murmurs the woman who comes from Demak in the Semarang district and who has lived in Jakarta for seven years. Before marrying her colleague Subandi from Tegal nearly five years ago, Yuli, who has not even finished primary school, was asked by her sister to join her. The sister had arrived there earlier to work in the garment factory.

'My husband Bandi left his job after last *Lebaran*[2].' There had been a big cut in his pay after *Lebaran*. Previously, Subandi was able to take home Rp. 60,000 a week, but lately it had been only Rp. 30,000. So he decided to sell meatballs which, according to Yuli, 'surprisingly, sell quite well'.

Yuli uses her spare time to cut embroidery appliqués which she gets from the garment factory. Her income is uncertain, depending on the amount of work she can finish. She normally completes 30 to 40 dozen a week and is paid at the rate of 100 rupiah per dozen.

2 Day of celebration at the end of the fasting month.

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The part-time work that Yuli is doing is commonly undertaken by women of the lower socio-economic class in their spare time to help feed their families. This type of home-based work is quite flexible because it can be carried out at any time of the day during household chores or other work, like selling cigarettes or tending a small shop.

In Semarang, Temu (in her forties) has been packaging or *nglongsong* for a *jamu* factory for decades. She does this work while selling cigarettes in her small shop. 'So that I can afford to send the children to school. The income is not bad,' she says. With this extra income she has been able to send one of her children to a state university. Two others are still in high school.

In the village of Gondosari, in the Gebong district of Kudus regency in Central Java, Basmirah (in her sixties) has been doing *ngeslop* (gluing cigarette packaging) for several decades. 'It's just a side job,' this mother of four children says shyly. Because she has no direct access to the factory, like the others, she receives the *selongsong* job from Dasinah whose husband has a fairly high position in the cigarette factory. 'If I could get the work straight from the factory, I could make Rp. 350 per 1,000 cartons. Through Dasinah, however, I never get more than Rp. 250,' she explained. Every week Basmirah can finish 4,000 cartons. '*Wis tuwo, ngapa ngaya* (I am old, why exert myself),' she argues.

For Inayah (20 years old), however, *ngeslop* is the main job at this time. When she decided to join her sister in Gondosari, Inayah only intended to work in a factory. She said it was more pleasant than farm work which had been paying only Rp. 1,250 per day, and on top of that, one could get the work for only two days a week. Working in a factory was much nicer, she said, it pays more and is not too exhausting. She has many friends and she can go to the movies whenever she likes.

The situation is different from that in other areas of West and Central Java. In the villages around Kudus, Pati, Rembang

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and Jepara, farmlands are not yet too fragmented. There still are large holdings which require many workers during the planting and harvesting seasons. The rapid industrial development in the urban areas has attracted villagers of productive ages to the city even though they lack experience.

The city, however, is not always able to fulfil their hopes. Although cigarette making in Kudus is still the dominant industry, the golden years seem to belong to the past, as disagreement among family members is undermining the family-run industry.

Keen competition with *kasribu* (cigarettes produced in units of less than a thousand) is another problem facing this industry, as these cigarettes are home-made and sold door-to-door at half the price of the product manufactured by the large industries.

So jobs were not as easy to get as Inayah had thought. Inayah who had only primary school education had been waiting for months to get a job: 'So I started doing *ngeslop* to get money,' she explained. If she works hard, she can pocket Rp. 6,000 a week.

A system of wages that is not clear is one of the features of the home-based work system. Yet the system is considered advantageous to both the worker and the employer because the work can be done at home by all family members at any time.

Companies like to use this kind of work system as it allows them to keep production costs low, with no obligation to pay the workers a daily wage. As employers, they also need not bother about workers' rights, like insurance, health care and other social benefits, as the work is carried out in the home of the workers and at a time that suits the workers themselves. So they can keep their industries running even in times of declining demand. This gives them a special advantage, particularly with a fluctuating domestic market. From the workers' perspective, however, there is an element of unfairness for, although the home-based work in the cigarette industry is more flexible than in other industries,

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they remain accountable for the quality of the products they deliver.

The availability of large numbers of home-based workers and their readiness to accept the conditions have kept low wages from becoming a problem. In spite of a rather fluid relationship between workers and employers, there seems to exist a certain moral bond between them and workers will therefore get work whenever they are in need of money. This is a small form of social security which they are lucky enough to have, for they are virtually excluded from labour legislation. Unlike the workers in the formal sector, they can lay no claim to minimum wages, nor any other benefits, for they are considered to be self-employed and independent.

Perhaps such lack of attention to home-based workers comes from the fact that a large portion of these workers are women and their economic activities are seen as an extension of their domestic role. Many home-based workers, in fact, are women who nearly always are portrayed as wives and mothers trapped at home because they have to look after their young children. Working at home, therefore, becomes the most plausible choice since they still have to perform their household duties at home. This is the reason that they are not recognised as workers who are compensated in the form of money.

In fact, the notion that home-based workers are women who work to fill their free time is a myth which originates from the biases of the middle class. The truth is that these workers, whether men or women, do such work because the conditions of life leave them with no alternative. Such conditions have also caused shifts in the sexually based division of labour.

Research carried out in the Klaten area by Susilastuti and Partini in 1990 illustrates the difficulties of finding work outside the agricultural sector which force male workers to become home-based tailors. Of the 300 respondents involved in this research, 143 were men.

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Other shifts are also occurring. The so-called side jobs, in fact, are becoming principal jobs, with women becoming the primary means of support for the family. For the last 14 years, Harsini (54) from Kudus, for example, has taken over her husband's responsibility to provide for the family as his health has steadily declined.

The side job she has depended on to feed and educate her five children is *ngeslop*, in addition to her work as a masseuse. This clearly contradicts the accepted norms of a sexually based division of labour.

The number of women living in the same way as Harsini may run into the millions. They are scattered throughout the villages, small towns and the slums of any large city. The particularly Javanese attitude of *nrima ing pandum dan pasrah* (patient acceptance of, and resignation to, one's fate) makes the burden of a hard life easier to bear without complaint.

Although it contradicts all theories regarding the study of women, this very attitude enables them to face the realities of life. Perhaps it also provides the means for understanding how Javanese of the lower social strata attempt to fortify themselves. Harsini says lightly: 'If we were to complain (*ngresula*) our good fortune would vanish'.

Middle-class women, who are intellectually and materially better off, are occupied with the struggle for their own existence and their own rights. They generally measure a woman's quality by a high and glamorous position outside the domestic circle. The fate of the home-based women workers, in the meantime, continues to remain the irony of our time.

The general picture

Home-based putting-out work, which can be done at home as well as anywhere else, and does not require any special skill or education and has no age limits, has become very popular owing to a workforce of increasing numbers of people with little education, not possessing any particular skill, whom the formal sector is unable to accommodate.

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This part of the work sector is dominated by women, which is by no means due to a gender perspective on the part of business and employers. Rather it is because women can be easily trained, are more conscientious, and do not make many demands. Because of ever growing numbers of unemployed, however, the number of male workers in this sector is also increasing.

Meanwhile conditions are not improving and the numbers of these workers continue to grow, mostly through an overflow of poorly educated and unskilled workers moving from the village into the city on which they have pinned their hopes of employment.

This is not an independent phenomenon but a consequence of the system prevailing in the country. The system of inheritance has resulted in a fragmentation of farmlands and a decrease in productivity. Roughly ten years ago, every family still owned between 0.5 and 2 ha of farmland. Today the average holding has shrunk to 0.25–0.5 ha. Mechanisation in agriculture has deprived many farmhands of their jobs. This is true especially for women workers because their manual labour has been replaced by machines.

Another reason is the conversion of farmlands to other uses, such as industry and housing projects in rural areas bordering on large towns or the construction of tourist facilities in certain areas.

Above all these looms an economic policy that is biased towards urban areas and has led to sharp differences in economic development of the villages vis-à-vis the towns and even between regions.

In the end, nobody is attracted to the villages. The influx of low-quality workers has caused a surplus of workers, especially women workers. The number of female workers aged ten years and over increased from 16.9 million in 1980 to 25.5 million in 1990 (BPS 1982, 1992).

This trend, which can be seen in almost all developing countries, introduces especially poor women into that category

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of workers which the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines as socially unprotected by either labour legislation or contracts; workers who receive neither social benefits nor a share of company profits.

They tend to be poorer than other workers because they earn much less. A woman worker in the formal sector has a secondary status, because she can be paid less, she can be easily laid off if production drops and easily recalled if production rises again. For home-based women workers it is even worse.

Very often their income is irregular because their occupation is seasonal. According to ILO (1986) estimates, 60 per cent of the world's population are workers without any social security protection. In Asia their numbers reach 77 per cent and in Africa 84 per cent. The continuing swelling of the numbers of this type of worker, in both urban and rural areas, has attracted the close attention of ILO and researchers.

Access to income has become a matter of greater priority than ever before. Many women have given up trying to find a job, and have in the end accepted home-based putting-out work as their main occupation or even as the only work available to them. Although the increase in the number of such workers is a general phenomenon, very little information about these workers is available. Like other informal members of the workforce, they do not show up officially. They do not appear in the statistics because they are not employed in factories but perform their work in their own homes.

In Indonesia as in other countries, data on home-based workers are very limited. But the products they make, like the woven *Sengkang* cloth, batik, *lurik* (cotton cloth) and *troso* (brassieres), garments, cigarettes and *jamu*, are well known. The majority of industries employing home-based putting-out workers are small-scale and medium-sized industries, often with an orientation towards foreign markets.

The system of home-based putting-out work is also very popular with many multinational companies who see this as

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a way to keep their production costs low. The putting-out system can be applied in an even more sophisticated way across national borders. Take, as an example, trousers which are cut in Germany, flown to Tunisia to be sewn and packed for resale to Germany. The same method can be used for leather and textile goods.

Working with this system makes it easier for employers to control product quality without having to anticipate eventual losses. In the ready-to-wear garment industry, for example, the home-based worker can be forced to undo his or her work if it is considered below standard.

The home-based worker arrangement also keeps workers away from demonstrations and other actions demanding a higher standard of living, because they do not belong to any labour unions and do not have direct access to organisations. Generally, they live in remote areas and do not care about their rights. What is important to them is their income, no matter how small.

The government is said to be preparing a complete set of regulations for businesses using such home-based workers, but it seems that a betterment of their fate is still remote as the labour-surplus economy continues to weaken their bargaining position, which is further undermined by the value system and the prevailing psychological relations between businessmen and home-based workers. As yet, a strong industrial structure, backed by a highly educated and socially conscious public as we see in Taiwan and Korea, remains remote.

Portraits of women in the putting-out system

Harsini

At the age of 54, Harsini no longer has any dreams. Her life as a mother with five children is in the present, which must be faced with her eyes open, barefooted, patiently and with resignation. Fortune has not been very kind to her for at

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least the last 40 years. Harsini's story is not an extraordinary one. She is a woman worker doing her job outside the formal structure because she works at home. Even though her work is connected to a sizeable cigarette factory, her pay is limited and she lives at subsistence level.

When she consented to marry the man who later became her husband, Harsini, who was on a *ngenger* arrangement, was learning the trade while living with her aunt and doing odd jobs for the family. She was a girl of only 15, fresh from the village. She had never attended school and what little knowledge she possessed had to do with farming and running a household.

As we talked, someone was coughing in the next room. The cough grew louder and the groans of pain accompanying it were more and more audible. 'The children's father,' she explained as if she knew what I was wondering. 'He has already seen the paramedic at the hospital but still he is not better. Maybe it's old age,' she continued almost without emotion.

'Hoooeeekkk...,' the sound of his rasping cough and of spitting came from the next room. One of three cats near a bucket with five kittens jumped into the bucket to care for the kittens. Harsini remained motionless. 'He became ill seven years ago, but he was not aware of it,' she continued, still without emotion. Carrying a small bucket, one of her daughters rushed from the inner room that has no partitions into the next room. The house occupied by the family resembles a box divided by bamboo partitions. In several places the bamboo holding up the ceiling was rotting, some already had holes. The floor was tamped earth, a part is covered with concrete. The area that served as the family's home was one of four box-like spaces occupied by four families in a long building that had been subdivided into eight living areas. This long building in Langgar Dalam village in Kudus belonged to the Nitisemito family who, in their heyday, were known as the *Kretek* (clove cigarettes)

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kings of Kudus. The box-like rooms were originally used as lodgings for the workers in the cigarette factory. When the big company began to crumble, the rooms were offered for rent. Until five years ago, the rent was only Rp. 500 per month.

'It was cheap and we did not feel the burden,' said Harsini who feels helped by living in that house. For the last five years, however, Harsini and her family had not paid rent. 'We were told we could live in the house until we could afford to buy a house ourselves. But when will we be able to have a house of our own?' she mumbled, casting a hollow look outward with misted eyes.

For 14 years Harsini has been the pillar supporting her family. She had accepted part-time jobs which could be carried out at home. Because Kudus is a cigarette-producing area, the easiest work to do is to glue cigarette cartons or *ngeslop*. The only capital needed is starch and manpower. Work time is flexible.

'The children's father is getting old and it is difficult for him to keep selling cigarettes at the bus station,' she said. Since their marriage her husband had done no work other than sell cigarettes at the intercity bus terminal. When the terminal was moved to the edge of the town three kilometres away, her husband was already becoming weaker and weaker, exhausted by various illnesses. 'It is such a long walk to get there, and the sales don't amount to much.'

So she concentrates on the *ngeslop* work. She can do an average of 15,000 cartons per week. 'I go every Monday to get my money from the factory.' Her weekly wages are Rp. 8,400 if she completes a *jangkep* or 15,000 cartoons. If she finishes only 10,000, she will receive only Rp. 5,600.

But she does not want to exert herself. '*Kange punapa ta kok ngoyo*? (What's the use of working oneself to the bone?)'. With luck, you will get an opportunity. So, she retires when it is bedtime. When she plans to *tirakat* (do something ascetic in order to fulfil a wish or commemorate an event), she stays up until dawn but does not use the time to work.

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Her income of roughly Rp. 35,000 per month with an additional Rp. 5,000 towards *Lebaran* she describes as adequate, even though prices for food and other essential items in the town, which is some 60 kilometres north of Semarang, are the same as in the provincial capital of Central Java. 'It's enough for having *tahu* and *tempe*. As it happens, the children do not like meat.'

At that level of income it is impossible to try to give them animal protein, even though one of her daughters who has graduated from the SMEA (*Sekolah Menengah Ekonomi Atas* – commercial upper secondary school) is now employed as a shop assistant and contributes to the economy of the household.

'That money should be used to help her two younger siblings who are still in the SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama* – junior high school),' says Harsini who cannot pin many hopes on her two other children. Her eldest child is already married and has a couple of children. The second works as a construction labourer only if someone happens to need his services.

It has never occurred to this woman to ask for a wage increase. She also does not care how much time she spends on the job since she can do it while looking after her household and her sick husband.

She even thinks that her earnings are adequate, because she gets her work directly from the factory and not through an intermediary. The wages she receives are higher than those paid by other cigarette factories for the same work.

To those who always view their rights and duties rationally, Harsini's behaviour seems puzzling. Her unique view of figures and of the value of money coupled with her resigned acceptance of her powerlessness in many ways seem to give her the strength to be tough in facing an extremely uncertain situation.

In between doing her housework and *ngeslop* this woman also works as a masseuse in her neighbourhood. She has

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never set a price for her labour. 'It depends on how much money someone has. If the person has no money, there's no need to pay. I just want to help, if I can,' she says. Asked how she manages to maintain the family on such a meagre income, she answered lightly: 'Good fortune is up to the Lord. If He gives little, then we manage with that little'.[3]

Salmah

In that room the hands of the clock seem to have stopped. Nothing is left there of the sunrays burning up the Jakarta air outside. The light of the solitary lantern on the wall has no strength. Not even the most watchful eyes can penetrate the darkness or escape its overwhelming oppressive atmosphere.

'Do come in, child, please,' I hear a friendly voice. But where shall I enter? I am already standing with my feet in the room, but I cannot move anywhere for fear of brushing against something or knocking down something else. Then I have the feeling of someone moving in my direction, but still the shape remains invisible. It seems to move towards the lantern because its light soon after, although only vaguely, gives a clearer view.

The room measures about two by three metres and has a partition part-wood, part-bamboo and no ventilation. A wooden bench becomes visible; it leaves a passage only about half a metre wide which leads to the wooden staircase. Then there is a thin mattress. On the bench I see something moving gently, a rocking device made of cloth with a child in it. 'Sorry, child.' Before I can reply, I have the feeling that somebody is flinging herself out the door. A woman of about 65 years, with only a worn top and a long wrapped cloth. 'My mother,' Salmah (37) explains.

Touching the arm of her guest she heads for the staircase. 'That is Cahyono; he is ten,' she says pointing to the child

3 Only seven days after the interview on 10 December 1993, Harsini's husband died.

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in the rocking cloth. 'The second of my children to live, but well ... he only started to walk when he was seven. He still has difficulties talking.' According to Salmah, Cahyono used to scream as if in great fear when he was put to sleep on the mattress. So this woman, who has given birth to six children of whom only three survive, improvised the special rocking device for him.

'We'd better go upstairs, okay? It's lighter there,' she continues. She has left her work upstairs so that it does not get stained. 'You see, the place is so narrow and there is the stove and all that.' She climbs nimbly up the staircase reaching the top in no time, although the wooden stairs are already decaying and the railing is rotting and unsteady. The angle is almost 70 degrees.

This tenement in the Jelambar Baru area of West Jakarta seems as if it has slipped in among thousands of others like it in an appalling environment. In the rainy season the area which has a population density of 24,492.5 people per square kilometre (twice the average of Jakarta) is flooded. During the dry season it is subject to fires because of its overpopulation. Some 74.4 per cent of the inhabitants, from various ethnic groups throughout Indonesia, have been living here for over ten years.

The upstairs room of the house, which stands wall to wall with the neighbouring houses of RT 9/10, is approximately the same size as the room below. It has a wooden floor and the height of its roof does not exceed one metre. The contents of the room can be summed up in an instant: a thin mattress wrapped in a worn sheet. The ceiling is covered with colourful plastic sheets to prevent leaks when it rains. Clothes are piled up in one corner.

This is the bedroom of Darto (45) and his wife Salmah, who were married in 1972. This is also the room where Salmah glues and cuts the patterns she receives from the garment factory because it is brighter here. There is a window that has been left open but the view outside is blocked by

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the clothes hanging outside and by the neighbouring roofs. 'I have been working like this a long time. How can I make enough without this? Snack vendors are always passing by and the children keep on asking for sweets,' Salmah goes on.

When I entered the area, Salmah was buying porridge for Cahyono for Rp. 150, because the boy was crying and the rice was not cooked yet. Her two other children were enjoying their treats at the food stall in front. 'My expenses are very large. Sometimes they come to more than Rp. 5,000 a day,' she continues as she rearranges the material which is to be appliquéd. Apart from buying snacks for her children, she prepares rice with other dishes, replenishes the kerosene and other daily necessities. Salmah has to buy drinking water. Two loads last for three days at Rp. 200 per load. Sometimes the water is used also for bathing the children at the public bath because the house she has rented for Rp. 550,000 for two years does not have a bathroom. Houses with a bathroom now cost Rp. 350,000 a year. 'When they cost only Rp. 300,000 we could still afford it. Now it seems too much,' she declares. Apart from her living expenses she also has to contribute Rp. 2,000 a month for garbage removal, security and other things, while her husband, who works in an ironmonger's shop, is paid at most Rp. 5,000 a day. 'That is for everything. Even on official holidays I receive nothing at all,' continues Salmah, an only child who came to Jakarta with her parents 30 years ago. She can barely read although she attended primary school until the third grade and once even participated in a campaign to fight illiteracy, and she declares that she has never demanded much of her husband. She has never even asked him about the amount of his wages, although he often does overtime and frequently does not come home. She also does not want to bother him with other irritating questions. 'Thank God, we have never had a serious fight since we have been married.'

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The only occasion for receiving a large sum of money is just before *Lebaran*. 'For four years in succession he has given me Rp. 200,000 to buy clothes for the children. Previously, it was only Rp. 40,000. I do not want to ask about it either because it is useless. Perhaps that is just my luck.' In fact, Salmah knows that her husband receives twice or three times what he gives her as a *Lebaran* bonus.

For the sake of harmony, Salmah tries to make up the shortage in her household budget herself. For this reason she works as a home-based worker for a garment factory in the Jelambar area of West Jakarta. Her earnings are quite adequate for living. 'For cutting easier patterns they pay Rp. 100 per dozen and for the more complicated ones they pay 120 a dozen. For pasting I get Rp. 20 per item. If one piece of material has 5 appliqués, I get Rp. 100. It's not bad; I don't have to leave the house,' she says.

Salmah tries to increase her income further by doing the laundry for some neighbourhood families who need her services. The pay is not fixed and she does not insist on a fixed tariff for her help. 'If they are kind they give Rp. 5,000 for a big basket. Sometimes only Rp. 2,000. I just leave it to them to evaluate my work.'

Yet the income is still not enough to cover the expenses for sending her children to school. Sri (15), the eldest, who was in the first year of SMP, had to leave school because Salmah was unable to pay her fees for three successive months. 'Now she is idling. We'll think later what to do about it. I don't care what she decides to do as long as it is respectable,' says Salmah. Her youngest is already six but still does not go to school.

Human endurance has limits, however. When we met, Salmah admitted she had a headache. 'If I lie down, it gets worse so I just continue to work.' She and her children go to the Community Health Centre only if the ordinary remedies from the small shop do not help. 'It's too expensive and we cannot afford so much.'

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For the same reason even Cahyono's condition is not made too much of, even though he still walks with difficulty, because his legs are too tiny to carry his frail-looking body. His squeaky voice sounds as if it is blocked in the throat. The boy, however, acts as if he has no problem and his friends treat him like one of the other normal children. 'Twice a doctor who used to come here gave me a letter to have Cahyono taken to the Harapan Kita Hospital. Free of charge, he said, but I lost the letter. So that's it.'

Salmah no longer dreams. 'An unhappy person only dreams about misery. If I were to dream about happy circumstances, it would seem worse,' she says lightly. She does not have high hopes, asking only for enough food for the morrow. In Jelambar Baru, and in other areas of Jakarta and in other towns, it is not only one or two people who share Salmah's fate. Their numbers may reach thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions.

Salmah is a typical woman of what is generally described as the 'vulnerable group'. Salmah not only illustrates the fate of the home-based worker, but she is also a clear example of the traditional gender subordination firmly fixed in the minds of men as well as women. In the case of poor women it manifests itself as an obligation to work longer and harder.

Traditional chains, traditional values and cultural practices are supported by systematic religious convictions that stipulate a lower status and less authority for women. This conviction has created the dominance of the husband within the family and over his wife's life, even when in reality he does not seem to care very much about his family.

Salmah is chained to her desperate situation. She cannot even summon up enough courage to reveal the true state of her own feelings, let alone offer resistance. The culture of *jaga praja* (face-saving) is so firmly implanted that it becomes taboo to talk about it even though she feels that her husband's behaviour towards her and their children is definitely unjustified. In fact it is an open secret that her husband has another wife.

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Conclusion

The examples presented above suggest the harshness of the lives of home-based workers in the urban areas of Java. It may be an exaggeration to say that this is the way of life of home-based workers, but in general they have to struggle hard to survive from day to day. Their lives from generation to generation seem to be suffering from stagnation, and even further impoverishment.

In many ways these difficult lives are lived with a perseverance that makes their endurance truly moving. They face their hard lives with humility and do not think that the benefits of their worker–employer relationships are too one-sided.

Although the government is reportedly preparing a set of regulations for businessmen who employ these home-based workers, it seems that any improvement in their fate is still far in the future. The conditions of a labour-surplus economy weaken their position, which is further undermined by the value system and the psychological relations between businessmen and home-based workers prevailing until now.

In the meantime, a strong industrial structure accompanied by high levels of education and public awareness, as developed in Taiwan and Korea, is still far from realisation. For this reason, it will not be simple to improve their position. Or is this in fact a common condition in developing countries with per capita income of less than US$700 per year?

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13

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDONESIA

Sukanti Suryochondro

Throughout the world, the women's movement developed in a social environment which was regarded as unjust and damaging for various groups. It was characterised by a strong spiritual commitment to a more equitable society. The desire for change can surface as a great upheaval or as an almost invisible current. It is felt and supported by many members of society who hold strong convictions and are ready to fight for a more equitable situation.

Efforts to bring about change in such a society are known as social movements. An example is the movement which erupted in the French Revolution (1789–1793) when various social groups demanded a change of government from a monarchy to a republic with the motto *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*: freedom, equality, brotherhood. Women took part in that struggle, but the treatment they received from prominent men did not accord with their goals. Apparently, such conditions encouraged the emergence of the women's movement, although they were still weak. After passing through a difficult stage, the women's movement in France became strong in 1870 (Evans 1971: 24).

In the nineteenth century, after liberating themselves from the English, the people of the United States were also caught up in an atmosphere of change in education, as well as moral and social change. Human rights, including the abolition of slavery, were at issue. Many women made significant contributions to this, but they received little recognition from men.

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This unfair treatment gave rise to the American women's movement which was formally established in an historic meeting at Seneca Falls in 1848 (Banks 1981: 33–34).

In South America, the women's movement rose with the struggle against authoritarian governments and discrimination against women (Siregar 1992).

British society also experienced dramatic social, political and economic changes in the nineteenth century. Industrialisation was advancing and, although still limited, the right to vote already extended to the middle and lower classes. But, while the right to vote is considered the key to influencing social policies, it did not apply to women (Mies and Jayawardena 1981: 86). The women's movement, which then emerged in protest, was strongly resisted by the government. Women eventually got their vote after the end of World War I (Pitt *et al.* 1973: 141). Similar events were taking place in many countries of Europe.

In Asia, the women's movement also began in the nineteenth century. In Japan, it began as part of a people's movement aimed at bringing about better social conditions. The women's movement at that time demanded equal rights with men, both in the family and in society, better education for women, the elimination of concubinage and the elimination of prostitution licences (Hoshii 1986).

Women's movements in the then colonised countries of Asia and Africa had a marked difference from the previously described organisations, in that they emerged together with the national movement for independence. The people rejected economic and cultural oppression by a foreign nation. Women took part in this struggle and were even pressed to participate in order to reinforce the national independence movement (Davies 1983).

While women's movements were closely related to the national independence movements, they also battled against traditional habits of oppressing women.

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In India, where the women's movement began near the end of the nineteenth century, women who took part in the political struggle for national independence also fought to free themselves from social oppression. This included the practice of wife-murder, which frequently occurred when women's families did not pay large dowries to the husband's family, and other types of harassment against women (Davies 1983: 201–213).

Called 'feminist', women's movements in ex-colonised countries aimed at a more just and prosperous society, equally enjoyed by both men and women. Better treatment, to improve the status and role of women, was sought towards that end.

Women's movements in Indonesia

The history of the women's movement in Indonesia is similar to that of other countries which were colonised by Western powers. The letters of Raden Adjeng Kartini (1878–1904), published after her death at the beginning of this century, and translated in various languages, not only describe the deplorable situation of her people, but also set out her thinking on the ways to overcome these hardships. Kartini was a young woman from the Javanese nobility who corresponded regularly with Dutch women. Proficient in the Dutch language, but hampered because of customary limitations for Javanese women, she wrote down her ideas in these letters. Kartini saw education as the most important tool to advance and overcome all types of deprivation, particularly for women. This included the negative sides of *adat istiadat* (traditions and customs), such as polygamy, and *pingitan*, the custom for girls of the Javanese elite to be kept secluded after their twelfth birthday. Kartini also criticised the colonial system.

Her views on the importance of unity eventually reached young Indonesian students in the Netherlands, inspiring them to establish the *Indische Vereeniging*. The Indonesian poet Noto Soeroto explained many of Kartini's ideals in his

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speech *De Gedachten van R.A. Kartini als Richtsnoer van de Indische Vereeniging* (The Thoughts of Kartini as a Guide for the Indische Vereeniging). The association was subsequently renamed *Perhimpoenan Indonesia*, the Indonesian Association (Ingelson 1993: 36–58).

Although Kartini was preceded in the fight against the Dutch colonisers by other women such as Nyi Ageng Serang (1752–1828), Tjoet Nyak Dien (1850–1908) and Tjoet Meutia (1870–1910), Kartini is officially recognised as a heroine of national independence and a champion of the women's movement.

In 1912, *Poetri Mardika*, the first women's organisation, was founded with the assistance of men from the *Boedi Oetomo* association, for whom the women were useful to spread the aims of progress and freedom.

Women were considered important as the educators of the younger generation. Thus it was necessary to establish and promote women's organisations capable of supporting the national struggle. For the women themselves, this struggle not only challenged colonialism, but also opposed traditional *adat,* which discriminated against women. Their first program was to advance women in education and to abolish injustice, especially in the institution of marriage. Against a background of growing nationalism, which had developed as a result of the long period of colonisation, the women's movement focused on improvements in cultural and social fields.

The founding of *Poetri Mardika* was followed by the establishment of many other women's organisations the following year. Some of these organisations were part of a larger group such as the *Jong Java Meisjeskring*, Young Javanese Girls' Circle, founded in 1915, and the *Aisyiyah* (1917) as part of the *Muhammadiyah*, one of the largest Moslem groups with innovative orientations. Initially, their efforts were directed towards increasing awareness of nationalism while also encouraging women to act in public. Some women's organisations published magazines to disseminate their ideals.

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Special attention was given to the institution of marriage, which still contained elements of injustice towards women.

There was an increasing sense of unity vis-à-vis the increasingly reactionary Dutch government. This was intensified when, in the 1920s and 1930s, the government of the Dutch Indies demonstrated even greater violence, thereby inflaming the political situation.

Nationalist groups began to join hands. The Youth Pledge, *Soempah Pemuda*, in 1928 reflected the commitment of a number of young people to national independence. Youth from various areas who had initially joined regional organisations such as *Jong Java*, *Jong Sumatra*, *Jong Celebes*, *Jong Ambon*, *Peladjar Minahasa*, *Jong Batak* and *Sekar Roekoen* (in West Java) merged under the name of *Jong Indonesia* on 1 January 1931. Reflecting their growing nationalistic orientation, they later changed the Dutch name into the Indonesian-language *Indonesia Moeda* (Young Indonesia) or *Perhimpoenan Peladjar-Peladjar Indonesia* (Association of Indonesian Students). In 1939, the *Madjelis Islam A'la Indonesia* (MIAI) Islamic Council was formed, also the *Persatoean Partai-Partai Politik Indonesia* (PPPKI) Federation of the Indonesian Political Parties (Kartodirdjo 1992).

Similarly, 20 women's organisations including *Wanita Tomo*, *Wanita Katolik*, *Wanita Taman Siswa*, *Aisyiyah Poetri Indonesia* and *Roekoen Wonodijo*, formed on 22 December 1928, the federation called *Perserikatan Perkoempoelan Perempoean Indonesia* (PPPI), Association of Women's Organisations (KOWANI 1958: 21). The new association decided that the women's movement was an integral part of the nationalist movement. Since its inception, this federation emphasised unity among all nationalist women's organisations, both religious and secular, and it strongly endorsed human rights.

In 1929 the PPPI became *Perserikatan Perkoempoelan Istri Indonesia* (Federation of Indonesian Wives' Organisations) and in 1935 it changed again to *Kongres Perempoean Indonesia* (Indonesian Women's Congress); in 1946 it finally became

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Kongres Wanita Indonesia (KOWANI).[1] This federation included all kinds of women's groups regardless of religious, political or ethnic background. Unity was of primary importance because it was necessary in the struggle for more equitable women's rights as well as for national independence. In 1938 *Kongres Perempoean Indonesia* declared that the 'Indonesian women's movement is an integral part of the national movement' (KOWANI 1958).

All of these organisations had the same basic goal, to eliminate injustice within the colonial situation, especially the social stratification based on racial differences which was particularly evident in relations between the foreign colonisers and the colonised. As well as in employment, where the coloniser was regarded as the top group, discrimination also occurred in housing, seating in trains and in recreational areas (Kartodirdjo 1992: 108). Social contacts between coloniser and colonised were always in the nature of domination and subordination. Meanwhile the people suffered under the yoke of capitalist economic exploitation.

The movements' national orientation continued during the Japanese occupation (1942–1945). There was no involvement in the war. Meanwhile, the Japanese occupying power only allowed activities of those organisations that provided help for the formation of Greater East Asia. The nationalist women's federation, therefore, had to halt its activities. Yet they managed to evade the Japanese Government's request to participate in the Japanese *Fujinkai* organisation. They thought the principles of the *Fujinkai* ran counter to the advancement of Indonesian women. At that time, women maintained frequent informal contacts to obtain information as they were set on preserving their own ideals.

1 While '*wanita*' and '*perempoean*' have the same English translation, i.e. women, they have slightly different connotations in the Indonesian language.

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After the Proclamation of Independence on 17 August 1945, nationalist women's organisations moved again to defend national independence against Dutch attacks. In the guerrilla war against the Dutch, women's troops appeared spontaneously in various regions, assisting other organisations behind the frontline. There were also troops of young men and women who came together in the student army and the student corps. In that time, many women, individually or in a group, and independent of any organisation, conducted such activities as public kitchens, and Red Cross aid. They also prepared food and sent it to the frontline (KOWANI 1986: 106).

After women had demonstrated their ability to do their duty as citizens defending the nation during the guerrilla war, or the Physical Revolution as it is also called, the government in 1948 created *Korps Polisi Wanita (*POLWAN), the Women's Police Corps. It was followed by the establishment of the *Korps Wanita Angkatan Darat* (KOWAD), Women's Army Corps; the *Korps Wanita Angkatan Laut* (KOWAL), Corps of Navy Women, in 1962; and *Korps Wanita Angkatan Udara (*WARA), Women's Air Force Corps, in 1963 (KOWANI 1986: 171).

In the tense atmosphere of the war for independence many organisations reappeared and undertook numerous activities to lighten the burden of those behind the frontline, which contributed to strengthening the patriotic spirit.

After the war, KOWANI began its activities to develop society in all aspects of economic, social and political life, and continued its relations with international women's organisations and other institutions. In fact, there was no aspect of life in which KOWANI was not involved in attempting to improve the position of women and to enhance social welfare. In 1994 KOWANI had a membership of 70 women's organisations.

Since its inception KOWANI was seen as a way to unify various kinds of women's organisations and backgrounds, as long as they were nationalistic. Since 1928, KOWANI has not differentiated its members by their characteristics. It has member organisations active in the social field; those

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which are more feminist; organisations of wives of public and private officials, and wives of members of the armed forces; groups based on religion, profession, ethnicity or origins. Some are independent and others are affiliated with political parties other than the Communist Party, which was disbanded after the coup attempt of 1965. Because it contains so many organisations, KOWANI is often regarded as representative of the Indonesian women's movement.

In the effort to promote unity, KOWANI has played an important role in accordance with the organisation's aims since 1928. As a federation, it has acted primarily as a motivating and co-ordinating body, while allowing its member organisations maximum autonomy.

KOWANI has experienced conflicts (KOWANI 1986: 162–163) not because of internal problems, but rather due to political conflicts such as that between the communists and the non-communists. The communists wanted to control the KOWANI leadership. This conflict culminated in the middle of the 1960s and ended with the failed *coup d'état* of the leftists. As a result, women's organisations that sided with the communists were expelled from the federation. This event demonstrates how closely women's movements are related to the state of the society at large, and the political situation in particular.

Besides KOWANI, the Indonesian women's movement in fact consisted of other numerous, albeit smaller, organisations, reaching even local organisations at the regency (*kabupaten*) level which are joined in the *Badan Koordinasi Organisasi Wanita* (BKOW), Coordinating Body of Women's Organisations. There are also groups in the form of *yayasan* (foundation) which consist of a group of managers who are active only in one particular field. Some of them work to increase the capacity of women small traders, to defend women workers, or to provide education and training. There are also organisations which carry out and publish social research on the women's movement and women's issues.

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One effort to improve women's life, particularly of the lower strata, which was initiated by women from the upper classes, is *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK), the Family Welfare Movement, a nationwide effort subsidised by the government. This movement is active throughout Indonesia, especially among lower-class and middle-class women in rural areas. Aiming at increasing family welfare and prosperity, their activities focus on providing guidance for good health, nutrition and hygiene, increasing awareness of the importance of children's education, and improving skills in generating income.

What is the result of the women's movement in Indonesia and what other issue needs to be overcome? One of the important achievements was the passing of the Marriage Law No. 1 1974, an achievement almost 50 years after the women's movement's early lobbying in 1928. While not yet completely perfect, this law is expected to help ensure family prosperity.

Before the law, Indonesian women have the same status as men. The State Constitution of 1945 does not differentiate between men and women. However, de facto inequalities and discrimination against women continue to prevail. In education, the higher the level the lower the proportion of women's participation. In the economy, women workers' wages are lower than men's in comparable employment. In politics, only about ten per cent of the members of Parliament are women, and women ministers are found only in ministries dealing with women's and social affairs. Meanwhile, the greatest humiliation of women actually occurs within the family environment. Because of this, women must continue fighting to be accepted as partners in all aspects of life.

Diversity in women's organisations

Near the end of the twentieth century, the number of women's organisations appears to have increased in a diversity of forms and goals. Their activities today not only pursue

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improvement of women's legal status, they also include placing women in decision-making positions, while improving the welfare of women who still suffer from a low standard of living remains a priority. Fighting illiteracy, providing small-business loans, establishing co-operatives and skills training to improve income, all continue to be their main working methods.

There is a distinct difference in the backgrounds and reasons of the various women's movements. Some women's organisations working to improve the position of women were formed on the basis of religion, profession, community or ethnic group. Others mobilised the wives of civil servants or women workers in the government or private sectors, and some even organised wives of professionals such as doctors or engineers.

There are independent organisations as well as organisations affiliated with a major public organisation or political party. Some take the form of a federation. Of these, the largest so far has been KOWANI with at least 14 branches, but there is also the *Badan Musyawarah Organisasi Islam Wanita Indonesia* (BMOIWI), Consultative Body of Indonesian Islamic Women's Organisations, which was founded in 1967, and the *Badan Kerjasama Wanita Kristen Indonesia*, Co-operative Body of Indonesian Christian Women, which was established in 1973.

There are women's organisations formed by the government, such as the *Dharma Pertiwi* (1964), which is a federation of the organisations of wives of the members of the Armed Forces, and the *Dharma Wanita* (1974), the organisation for the wives of civil servants, which has a unit in each government department and non-departmental government institution.

Other kinds of women's organisations include the *Gabungan Organisasi Penyelenggara Taman Kanak-Kanak* (GOPTKI), Union of Indonesian Pre-school Organisations, founded in 1957; *Departemen Wanita Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia* (Women's Department of the Federation of Indonesian

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Workers), founded in 1973; *Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia* (Union of Indonesian Farmers), founded in 1973; and *Ikatan Ahli Kecantikan Indonesia* (Association of Indonesian Beauticians) founded in 1958.

In general, these organisations are active in economic fields (co-operatives), education (organisers of courses), cultural and spiritual guidance (religion, state ideology, morality), health (family planning education) and social welfare (orphanages).

Some of the larger organisations are represented in the People's Representative Council at the regional and national levels and some have international affiliations. For example, the *Komite Nasional Kedudukan Wanita Indonesia* (the National Committee on the Status of Indonesian Women), which was founded in 1968 and consists of representatives of women's movements, government bodies and expert members, was established on the advice of the United Nations in order to improve the position of women (KOWANI 1986). In addition to the federations at the central level, there is also inter-organisation co-operation at the *kabupaten* (regency) level through the BKOW (*Badan Koordinasi Organisasi Wanita*, Women's Organisations Co-ordinating Board).

Organisations of a similar type have tended to combine in a federation or in co-operation since colonial times, continuing throughout the war (1945–1949), the Old Order (1950–1966) and into the New Order (1966–1998). In 1928, for example, the PPPI (*Perkoempoelan Perempoean Indonesia*, Indonesian Women Association) was formed and it became the forerunner of KOWANI, the *Kongres Wanita Indonesia*, or Indonesian Women's Congress.

The *Organisasi Istri Indonesia* (the Organisation of Indonesian Wives), was formed in 1935 as a group of several organisations with common ideals. In 1945 WANI and PERWANI joined to become *Perhimpoenan Wanita Repoeblik Indonesia* (PERWARI), the Organisation of Women of the Republic of Indonesia. The association of military wives was founded in 1946 on the women's own initiative, and

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spread, creating the fusion of *PERSIT Kartika Chandra Kirana*.

Various other fusions between organisations of wives included *Bhayangkari*, an organisation of policemen's wives formed in 1952. *Jalasenastri*, founded in 1952, is an organisation of navy wives. The organisation of air force wives, *Ardhya Garini*, was established in 1956. In 1966 these four organisations of armed forces wives, with the *Ikatan Kesejahteraan Keluarga Hankam* (IKKH), the Family Welfare Association of the Department of Defence, established in 1966, combined in a larger organisation which was called *Dharma Pertiwi*.

Merges also occurred among civilian women's groups. In 1954 the *Badan Musyawarah Organisasi Islam Wanita Indonesia* (BMOIWI) was formed. In 1961 *Ikatan Wanita Antar Departemen* (the Inter-Ministry Women's Association), was formed, joining associations of employees' wives and women employees which had been established on the women's own initiative in various ministries since 1951. This merging process continued in the New Order regime, either on the initiative of the women themselves, or after consultation with the wives of superiors. Some used democratic patterns of organisation.

Of note is the initiative of the government which merged various women's organisations into one, namely the *Dharma Wanita* organisation, on 5 August 1974. The President became the Highest Counsellor, the President's wife the Principal Advisor. The organisation's executive council consisted of several ministers. The structure of leadership in each unit in the Ministries follows the structural hierarchy of the members' husbands. Thus the chairperson is usually the wife of the minister.

Dharma Wanita is referred to as a functional organisation. The statutes of the organisation state that it is meant to 'integrate the organisational activities of the wives of civil servants in such a way that they comply with the implementation of

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responsibilities of the Republic of Indonesia's civil servants as the apparatus and the servants of the society'. Some people regard *Dharma Wanita* as a step backward for women because it was created not because of their own personal aspirations, but to serve the interests of their husbands, while the tenure of board members is related to the tenure of their husbands in a certain position of the civil service.

In the 1970s and 1980s various new types of organisation emerged. Different from the above organisations, which have a large membership, statutes and rules of association, are *lembaga swadaya masyarakat* (LSM), autonomous community organisations, also referred to as *organisasi non-pemerintah*, non-governmental organisations (NGO), taking the form of *yayasan* or foundation, which consist only of a board of directors, with a focus on specific activities.[2] Thousands of these LSMs have emerged in Indonesia. Some focus on women's needs and are regarded as a reaction to excessive centralisation in development. They demand democracy so that national development will benefit a large group of citizens (Siregar 1991).

Some of these LSMs which focus on women's needs specialise as centres of communication and information (*Kalyanamitra*, founded in 1985), some focus on improving women's capacity in small business, others specialise in the protection of women workers to enable them to increase their capacities in various areas, and some concentrate on research on the lives of women to identify their various problems.

The Indonesian women's movement also includes *pusat studi wanita* (women's studies centres) in universities which

2 Non-governmental organisations (LSMs) are community groups created with particular aims. They are organised in forms such as (a) groups, clubs, associations, with their own members; (b) *yayasan* or foundation, with some members of the organisation running them and with a few members with similar interests. KOWANI, *Kalyanamitra*, *Solidaritas Perempuan* and *Yayasan Melati* are examples of Indonesian LSMs. LSMs distinguish themselves from organisations receiving support from the government.

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have concentrated on women's issues for scientific study. They conduct social research, discussion and teaching to improve understanding of the causes underlying women's problems such as discrimination and sexual slurs, and of the methods needed to overcome them.

One of the pioneers in the establishment of women's studies centres was KSW FISIP-UI, *Kelompok Studi Wanita Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Indonesia* (the Women's Study Group of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Indonesia). This group was founded in 1979 on the initiative of some lecturers at FISIP-UI. In 1997 there were about 70 women's studies centres over 27 provinces. Through their social research these centres provide information on the situation of women in the various regions of Indonesia. The information is needed to develop strategies for improving the status of women and thus benefit overall national development. It is thought that every province needs at least one women's studies centre.

To achieve this goal, the Minister for the Role of Women has co-operated with the rectors of all public universities and with the Ministry of Education and Culture, particularly the Directorate of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Home Affairs to support the activities of the women's study centres (PSW). As a result, many PSW have been able to obtain the much needed facilities and research funds from local governments.

The position of PSW is becoming stronger as not only social science students, but also specialists from other disciplines such as medicine and agriculture are taking an interest in their activities. Another sign of their strategic position is the increasing involvement of officials from different departments in advancing the status of women.

Another institution which has contributed to the solution of women's problems is LBH (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*, Legal Aid Institute for women and families) located in several large cities. Between the women's organisations and the

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institutions which are concerned with the goals of the women's movement there is a network for exchanging information and shaping mutual understanding. Co-operation can take the form of seminars, workshops, discussions and personal contacts. This is not to say, however, that all the groups have common visions. On the issue of polygamy, for example, there are differences in vision between religious groups and secular groups; also between the younger and older generations. Yet there is agreement that the various orientations of the women's movement ultimately share a basic goal: the interest of women. Antagonism would harm the women's movement itself.

The relation of the women's movement with the government of Indonesia

As a result of historical developments, the relationship between the women's movement and the government is very close. As discussed above, the Indonesian women's movement was born in the early twentieth century when the society was still under the Dutch colonial rule.

Every colonial situation abounds with conflicts of interests between the colonised and the coloniser so that disparities become evident. In Indonesia, feelings of injustice had erupted into rebellions and wars throughout the preceding centuries. These feelings of injustice were also experienced by individuals. However, they realised that more successful change could be brought about by joint efforts, by organising themselves, as in the West. Various organisations then emerged with the aim of advancing their backward people: during the colonial period, less than ten per cent were literate. Thus the first phase in Indonesia's national movement was a cultural movement with a program to improve education.

Tied to the fight for national independence since colonial times, the ensuing attitudes and policies of the women's movement were bound to be affected by historical experiences. After the cessation of the physical struggle, it was only

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natural that women also assisted the government in development. The women's movement is strongly related to issues of population, family planning, transmigration, labour, social welfare, drug abuse, education, as well as government programs in general. Women are also involved in making recommendations for improvement to relevant institutions. The government, on the other hand, needs the assistance of women for carrying out certain tasks. Government subsidies have been made available for some institutions or activities run by women's organisations. It may therefore be said that there is co-operation between the government and the women's movement.

There is an attitude of mutual trust between the government and some women's organisations, such as KOWANI. This organisation can voice its disagreement with any government policy, but it has to channel this through the Minister for the Role of Women, and the last word is still with the government.

It is arguable that such close connection with the government reduces the autonomy of women's movements. Does the subsidy given by the government to certain institutions not induce dependency and thereby weaken their determination to demand improvement for changes? How strong are functional organisations consisting of wives of officials and employees in pursuing their goals of attaining a partnership in decision-making?

Certainly some dependence results from the support of finance and facilities provided by the government. For some women's groups, which strive to help the government in national development, this is not an obstacle because historically these women's groups were comrades-in-arms of the government in the fight against the coloniser. There is a belief that autonomy for women can also be attained in this co-operation.

LSMs, on the other hand, have encountered problems in their relationships with the government, especially with regard

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to funding. According to a research report by Amir Effendi Siregar (1988: 26):

> LSMs/LPSMs generally are dependent upon foreign aid agencies for funds. Theoretically, these self-help public organizations formulate and develop their own programs and then contact donor agencies for funding support to implement these programs. Frequently, however, these programs must be adjusted to the policies of the donor agencies. As a result their level of dependence upon these agencies becomes high.

Thus, to implement their programs, the older women's organisations are more dependent on government policies, whereas the newer LSMs tend to depend upon the policies of foreign donors' institutions. This will continue as long as women's organisations are unable to generate activities that will make them financially independent. If women's organisations can become financially independent, their relationships with the government will continue through matters of permits and legalisation, which are relevant for both old and new women's organisations.

If women's organisations receive help from outside, they usually arrange internal activities in a way that maintains the spirit of the women's movement. Evidently, this also happened with women's movements elsewhere, such as in the USA.

Perhaps having close relations with the government is not so important for those who have not experienced the struggle against colonialism or who established the NGOs in the 1970s and the 1980s. But Judith Tendler, as quoted by Amir Effendi Siregar (1988: 26), indicates that LSMs nevertheless do have a relationship with the government:

> LSMs complement and support government programs by working in areas not yet reached by the government. LSMs often serve as pioneers and initiators of new programs, which are later taken over or absorbed by the government. Because of misunderstandings of their respective roles and functions, competition and overlap between the programs of the

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government and the LSMs often occur. In fact, LSMs play an important role as mediators between the government and the people.

Why then do we often hear about conflicts between LSMs and the government? Perhaps the answer to this question may be found in Donald Krill's *Existential Social Work* quoted by Kartono Muhammad (1994). Krill observed that among numerous LSMs which in fact have the same goal, that is, to help those people who are in need but receive little attention, some behave like rebels. While they have sincere concerns, their actions often take a radical turn. These LSMs tend to take a different stand just for the sake of being different. If the government says A, these LSMs must say B. Such groups are also found in intellectual circles in Indonesia. The government tends to view LSMs with suspicion, and there is an effort to take more control. Such efforts are opposed by various parties, as there are already enough regulations on mass organisations.

It should be noted that the phenomenon of LSMs (NGOs) is found in many developing and developed countries, and that international meetings to exchange information and experiences certainly have had a reciprocal influence.

It can be concluded that in the present era of globalisation there is an increasing view that social welfare can only be increased through more just and humane treatment of women. An important international decision was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, formulated by the United Nations. In Indonesia, the Convention was formalised by the enactment of Law Number 7 of 1984.

Conclusion

Early this century, a number of social groups demanded political, economic and social changes. This gave rise to social movements, including the women's movement.

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In the West, the women's movement began with the onset of the French Revolution in the eighteenth century and continued to develop in the nineteenth century. On the African and Asian continents which generally experienced colonialism, the women's movements appeared together with the movement for independence in the struggle against the colonial powers, and against traditions that obstructed progress and human rights.

In several Latin American countries, the women's movement emerged when opposing authoritarian government policies and discrimination against women.

Today the women's movement is found throughout the world and is aimed at creating just, prosperous and peaceful societies. This goal was also expressed in the motto of the 1975 International Conference in Mexico: Equality between men and women, Development and Peace.

In the course of its history, the women's movement has gradually been accepted by various governments and the United Nations, which has established certain conventions for advancing the role of women and eliminating discrimination. Although many of the member nations of the United Nations, including Indonesia, have enacted these UN Conventions into laws, many forms of discrimination against women continue. This reality demands that all parties support the women's movement.

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14

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS
The Way Ahead

E. Kristi Poerwandari

Among the many Indonesian women's organisations, those affiliated with religion have their own place. Not only are they more firmly rooted in society, but they also have substantial followings, for they reach even remote areas where there are places of worship and educational institutions of their religious denomination. What is more, they are usually among the most developed. The Islamic women's organisations include *Aisyiyah, Wanita Islam* (Islamic Women), *Muslimat NU*, and *Wanita Tarbiyah*, while the Protestants and the Catholics each have a women's organisation: the Indonesian Christian Women's Association *Persatuan Wanita Kristen Indonesia* (PWKI), and the Catholic Women of the Republic of Indonesia *Wanita Katolik Republik Indonesia* (WKRI).

This article focuses on the Protestant and the Catholic organisations, their organisational characteristics and their future aspirations.

History of Christian women's organisations

The Christian women's organisations in Indonesia were founded alongside many of the large women's organisations before, during or soon after the proclamation of independence in 1945. While Aisyiyah was founded in 1917, *Wanita Tarbiyah* in 1928, and *Muslimat NU* in 1946, the Catholic Women's Organisation was established in 1924 and the Protestant Women's Organisation in 1946.

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The Catholic Women's Organisation developed from a group of Catholic women, called *Poesara Wanita Katolik,* who were concerned about poor factory women working under deplorable conditions in the cigar industry of Negresco, Baciro, Yogyakarta. They also fought the practices of polygamy and concubinage.

Programs to eliminate illiteracy were, therefore, high on their agenda, while typical women's skills were enhanced in sewing, weaving and infant care courses. Of course, religious service activities were not forgotten.

Meanwhile, the seeds of nationalism were spreading among the indigenous population, including the Catholics. Many indigenous Catholic women's groups declined the suggestion to establish an association to be named *De Javaanse Katolieke Vrouwen Bond* (Javanese Catholic Women's Association) which would have been under the auspices of a Catholic women's group in the Netherlands. They chose instead to remain independent. In time, the *Poesara Wanita Katolik* changed its name to *Pangreh Ageng Wanita Katolik*, but had to refrain from activities during the Japanese occupation as the Japanese recognised only one women's organisation at that time, the *Fujinkai.* In 1950, the *Poesara Wanita Katolik* was reactivated as a national Catholic women's organisation under a new name, *Wanita Katolik Republik Indonesia* (DPP WKRI 1993).

The Catholic and the Protestant women's organisations have different origins. While the Catholic women's organisation grew out of concern for working women long before independence, the Protestant women's organisation emerged as a response to national independence. It was founded after the historic independence proclamation on 17 August 1945, when many Christian mass organisations emerged and became vehicles for active participation of Christians in the defence and preservation of independence. These included the Indonesian Christian Party *Partai Kristen Indonesia* (*Parkindo*), the Union of Christian Indonesian Youth *Persatuan Pemuda*

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Kristen Indonesia (PPKI), the Indonesian Christian Student Movement or *Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia* (GMKI)), and the Indonesian Christian Women's Association, *Persatoean Wanita Kristen Indonesia* (PWKI).

The national loyalty of both the PWKI and WKRI was doubted, as their affiliation with the Christian religion often made them suspect of being associated with the colonial power. But both the Catholic women's group, which since its early beginnings has shown a firm independent stand, and the Protestant women who have actively joined the defence of national independence, have demonstrated their nationalism beyond any doubt (Simorangkir 1993).

In their early years, PWKI and WKRI were strong women's organisations which played a large role in the national women's movement. WKRI, for instance, was one of seven women's organisations that organised the First Congress for Women (*Kongres Perempoean*) on 22 December 1928, in Yogyakarta. The WKRI and the PWKI were also among the women's organisations that initiated the founding of one umbrella organisation for all women's organisations, later named *Kongres Wanita Indonesia* – KOWANI (Indonesian Women's Congress) (DPP WKRI 1993).

WKRI and PWKI before and during the New Order

Besides co-operation with other women's organisations, the two Christian organisations implemented joint programs. However, the formal co-operative body created in 1960 at the national level did not function as expected. After 13 years, it was decided that closer co-operation was needed, and the co-operative body was revived. In addition to PWKI and WKRI, this body also comprised organisations of churchwomen not automatically included in these two organisations, as well as nuns. The body functioned well in several regions. However, for reasons that are unclear, it was not active at the central level (PWKI 1987–1991).

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The year 1965 was an unforgettable year for Indonesia as it marked the peak and the fall of the Communist Party and its abortive coup. For the WKRI, it meant going beyond their usual social involvement: they took a firm stand against the communists. After the abortive coup of 30 September 1965, when no one dared to declare the Communist Party illegal, WKRI took the initiative to form the Indonesian Women's Action Group, *Kesatuan Aksi Wanita Indonesia* (KAWI). Together with students, youth workers, teachers, and university graduates, the Women's Action Group called for the dissolution of the Communist Party, and declared it illegal. Included were the Indonesian Students' Action Group, *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia* (KAMI), the Indonesian Youth Action Group, *Kesatuan Aksi Pemuda Pelajar Indonesia* (KAPPI), the Indonesian Pupils' Action Group, *Kesatuan Aksi Pelajar Indonesia* (KAPI), the Indonesian Workers' Action Group, *Kesatuan Aksi Buruh Indonesia* (KABI), the Indonesian Teachers' Action Group, *Kesatuan Aksi Guru Indonesia* (KAGI), and the Indonesian University Graduates' Action Group or *Kesatuan Aksi Sarjana Indonesia* (KASI) (DPP WKRI 1993: 51–52).

WKRI and PWKI continued to be organisations with a social perspective, though they were widely seen as having affiliations with the two political parties which merged in the Indonesian Democratic Party, *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, (PDI). Denying such allegations, WKRI and PWKI leaders have repeatedly stated that the two organisations are not socio-political parties, that they were independent of any political party. PWKI's Logbook for 1987–91 notes: 'PWKI has never been an *onderbouw* or an affiliate of a political power, nor is it affiliated with *Partai Kristen Indonesia* or *Parkindo* which was founded November 10, 1945' (PWKI 1987–1991: 1). Another note in the same Logbook reads: 'Since the XIII National Congress in Ujung Pandang, the DPP-PWKI has asked the management, especially the Chairman and the DPD heads, to refrain from membership in any political power, in

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order to maintain PWKI's independent status' (PWKI 1987–1991: 5).

Under the so-called New Order, it became compulsory for the wives of civil servants to join *Dharma Wanita*, and for women civil servants to join *Korpri*, the Indonesian Civil Servants' Corps. Membership of the two Christian women's organisations declined dramatically at both central and regional levels, as the wives of civil servants were busy in the *Dharma Wanita*. There also seemed to be a certain fear of becoming involved in WKRI, PWKI or any other Christian organisation (Rotinsulu 1993: 3).

Since the issuance of Law no. 8/1985 on social organisations, the WKRI and PWKI like all other organisations accepted *Pancasila* as the only principle of organisation. As a result, religiously affiliated women's organisations, like other organisations, asked for guidance and support from government officials for meetings, conferences or congresses. Often, their work programs were adjusted to the demands of the prevailing situation and development policies. Both the PWKI and the WKRI showed a ready willingness to align themselves with the actual social conditions by promoting and implementing various government programs. Co-operation between WKRI, PWKI, other women's organisations and the government was proceeding smoothly. To expedite their programs, the PWKI and WKRI decided in 1987 to improve co-operation between the WKRI, PWKI, the Women's Bureau of the Indonesian Council of Churches, *Biro Wanita Persekutuan Gereja-gereja* (BW-PGI), and the nuns (PWKI 1987–1991).

The organisations today: their existence and organisational problems

What is the current condition of the two organisations? What problems are their activities facing in society? Throughout their history WKRI and PWKI have had similar challenges, and they still do, though evidently each has specific traits

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and problems. This is particularly obvious in the problem of unifying women from different parishes.

The WKRI has never experienced significant problems in unifying women from different Catholic churches (parishes) because all Catholics are unified in one church, with a distinct hierarchical structure headed by the Pope in the Vatican. Almost all Catholic women in Indonesia, no matter who or where they are, know about the existence of WKRI as a social organisation for Catholic women.

For PWKI, it is not so easy to become the only organisation for Protestant women. They face quite a problem uniting women from different churches and different synods, both those that are under the Indonesian Council of Churches, *Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia* (PGI), as well as those that are not affiliated with the PGI.[1] Such a problem is reflected in the ignorance among Protestant women of the existence of PWKI. A number of educated Protestant women admitted they had not known about PWKI until their interview with me.

Meanwhile, WKRI's easy acceptance as the only organisation for Catholic women did not mean the organisation was without its internal problems, for not all parishes accepted or recognised the need for the WKRI as an organising body. According to a well-known Catholic woman, some parish priests declined to support the organisation because they feared the WKRI was involved in political activities. In their view it was sufficient for Catholic women to join the women of their own parish. It seems that the WKRI still has to deal with ambivalent attitudes of some parish members and from church leaders. A nun reports that WKRI activities in her parish have not been very noticeable: '... at most they would hold a bazaar. Nevertheless, this was

1 According to *Kompas*, 14 October 1994, the PGI channels the aspirations of 256 Protestant churches throughout Indonesia, including among them 68 member churches from the HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*, Batak Protestant Church).

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regarded as good because it prevented the formation of competing groups within the church who would try to outshine each other' (Hidup 1993: 8).

For the PWKI management, the greatest problem is that Protestant women do not fully appreciate PWKI as a venue for all Protestant women, so they continue to be separated in different churches. Protestant women mentioned several reasons during my interview with them. When asked what Protestant women's organisations they knew about, they usually thought of their own church groups. This is understandable, since each church develops its own religious and social activities, including activities for women. Several women said their active involvement in church activities absorbed almost all of their time. One woman leader said the PWKI was not making enough effort to become known, and as a result has remained largely unknown. She also questioned the management of the PWKI which has changed little from one period to the next, thereby indicating a lack of success in organisational development.

The problem for the PWKI management is exacerbated, for although it is a social organisation officially recognised by the government, it cannot do much without the support of the entire community of Protestant women who are dispersed in different churches.[2]

> So far, the program priorities of the PWKI have been limited to social and health issues. In some areas in Indonesia, the PWKI does not seem to be too well known. Lack of information, communication, and potential leaders have had an unfortunate impact on the PWKI nowadays. But in some specific areas a close co-operation among the members of the PWKI who are in the leadership of Christian women's organisations is observable and has resulted in good program co-ordination (Rotinsulu 1993: 3).

2 The other Protestant organisations are not mass organisations but church organisations.

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A discussion of Protestant women's organisations in Indonesia is not complete without discussing the Women's Desk of the Indonesian Council of Churches, BW-PGI, set up by the Council in 1980. Since then it has actively developed various programs to promote the partnership of men and women in church service. Although the BW-PGI is a church organisation, not only has it played a significant part in developing a more positive orientation toward women in church life, it has also promoted this orientation in social life in general. Through the BW-PGI, programs can be passed on to Protestant congregations of churches under the PGI. Since the Church and Society Meeting in September 1985 held in Bali, the PWKI believes that better co-operation has begun between the PWKI, the BW-PGI, and Catholic women's groups (Simorangkir 1993).

In addition to their specific characteristics and problems described above, the WKRI and the PWKI are at present also experiencing various internal organisational problems, particularly affecting women's organisations founded before and around the time of the proclamation of independence in 1945. Some of these internal problems are due to ignorance on the part of members about the nature of socially active mass organisations, lack of professional skills in the organisations' boards and members, and the difficulties of raising funds. Funding problems seriously complicate the activities of the organisations, as stressed repeatedly by the head of PWKI, B. Simorangkir. Whereas they are independent organisations, they still depend on private contributions to finance their activities. It is a serious problem in rural areas, where women's dedication is high but contributions remain low, often amounting only to Rp. 1,500.

Besides the problem of funding, there is also a problem in cadre formation, as it is not easy for Christian women's organisations to instil a sense of belonging, particularly among young women. Being minority organisations is another issue, discussed in more detail below.

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WKRI and PWKI in political life

Catholic and Protestant communities have expressed a variety of criticisms of the WKRI and the PWKI. Both are regarded as unable to formulate clear programs, giving the impression of lacking the courage to make their voices heard. The Catholic magazine *Hidup* (1993) has criticised the WKRI for inadequate promotion of its activities in the parishes, for inadequate understanding of its own members, for lack of leadership regarding the identity of the WKRI as a socially active organisation, for the persistent charitable nature of its activities, and for lack of co-operation with non-Catholic organisations. The criticisms levelled at the organisations are somewhat unfair because the PWKI and the WKRI with their various limitations can only be fully understood in the context of the wider Indonesian socio-political situation.

Discussing WKRI and PWKI in the national political context is relevant because they are organisations with Christian religious affiliations. In the past, Christianity has been tied to the religion of the colonial power and at present it is adhered to by a minority of Indonesians. Ever since their founding, the political position of the two organisations has always been questioned. As a result the boards of both organisations have repeatedly felt it necessary to reiterate their organisations' independence from any political party. The leadership of both PWKI and WKRI never seem to tire of explaining that their organisations are religiously based social organisations and have never been political organisations. According to the notes in DPP WKRI (1993: 49–50):

> One of the proofs that the WKRI is not part of the Indonesian Catholic Party can be found in the debate during the 1954 Congress in which its political stance was discussed prior to the 1955 General Election. It was concluded at the time, that Catholic women were also responsible for the success of the election and for casting their votes. However, they were free to vote for the contestant of their own choice.

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Both organisations admit that some of their members were close to the Indonesian Catholic Party, PKRI, and the Indonesian Christian Party, *Parkindo*, but they both deny that these supposed links of personal closeness resulted in organisational involvement in practical politics. Nevertheless, in the post-independence period, the WKRI has been described as the women's part of the PKRI. It is this description which has led to the charge that WKRI is a supporter of the PKRI (DPP WKRI 1993: 55).

Today, both the WKRI and PWKI are often identified with the PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*). Any event they organise is linked to PDI. 'PDI event, isn't it?' people say. Since the PDI is a party provoking many controversies, such identification has had direct and indirect impact on the two organisations with regard to conduct, vision, and program planning and implementation. In short, Christian associations and certain persisting political positions have forced WKRI and PWKI to be more circumspect in their activities and extra-sensitive to the issues of social, racial and religious discrimination. This awkward situation seems to have led both WKRI and PWKI to choose relatively 'safe' programs which outside the organisation are usually regarded as insignificant, charitable or unable to demonstrate the special character of the organisations.

With the implementation of Law no. 8/1985, both WKRI and PWKI have on the one hand shown greater co-operation with the government and other women's organisations, and on the other hand exhibited greater similarity in visions and programs with other women's organisations, since all come under government guidance in any case.

Replying to the charge that their social organisations are political bodies, the heads of the central boards of both WKRI and PWKI declared that as social organisations neither WKRI nor PWKI has to be politically blind, though this does not imply they should be involved in practical politics. Of course, the distinction between social and political activities

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is vague and depends largely upon the context in which actions are carried out and on the individuals involved as well as on the perceptions of the general public.

WKRI and PWKI activities in the early national movement can in fact be seen as taking a political stand, but no one has challenged this, because the situation at the time demanded unity in the defence of the country. WKRI's courage in demanding the dissolution of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI, in the early New Order period also showed a firm political stand. In adopting a political position, its involvement in politics since the early days has demonstrated its sympathy with the interests of the people rather than merely a concern for its own interests (DPP WKRI 1993: 25).

Programs

The WKRI divides its programs generally into faith development activities such as retreats and recollections, routine social service activities such as visits to orphanages, aid for the poor on special occasions, and activities that are incidental such as blood donations and natural disaster relief. Large social service activities are implemented in the form of projects which follow government policies and programs. One example is the Child Survival Project (*Proyek Kelangsungan Hidup Anak*) which is also carried out by other women's organisations. Other projects include the Family Welfare Improvement Project, the Organisational Quality Improvement Project, the Home Economics Project, the Co-operative Savings and Loans Project, and Education Projects (WKRI 1990)

The WKRI's 15th Congress in June 1993, on the theme 'Improving the Quality of Indonesians: Real Contributions of the WKRI for the Second Long Term Development', produced several programs focusing on human resource development. The programs include the development of Training and Education Centres for Women and Child Survival projects and are funded by UNICEF and implemented in co-operation with

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the departments of Religion and of Health, and *Bappenas* (National Development Planning Board), as well as the Home Economics Project.

The PWKI, in the meantime, has established the *Yayasan Tabitha*, which has founded kindergartens in several provinces. Funds were raised from various agencies and businesses, obtained without strings attached. PWKI's social activities also include the eradication of illiteracy, skills training courses for women, provision of aid for schools in isolated areas, as well as child foster care programs. Like other religiously affiliated women's organisations, the PWKI is involved in the *Proyek Kelangsungan Hidup Anak* (the Child Survival Project).

One major project now being activated is an educational facility for promoting women's knowledge and skills, called *Pondok Cinta Kasih*. At the time of writing, the building was not yet completed pending further funding.

PWKI and WKRI programs share certain characteristics:

1. Although they are open to non-Christians, their programs are based on the teachings of their religions and their churches. For programs of the government like the Maternal and Child Survival Project, which they join, justification is sought in the Bible or in the social teachings of the Church.
2. Because they represent minority groups, the leadership of the organisations consistently emphasises their inclusive character. Another reason for this emphasis is the fact that Christian teaching was never intended to benefit the Christian community only, but was meant to serve all humankind.
3. Although they are open to men as well, most of their programs are based on the belief that women have a special role in the nurturing of life, and have a special responsibility as mothers and wives. Many of their social and religious service programs, therefore, include sewing courses, cooking and beauty courses as well as home

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economics training. These should benefit women in their roles as mothers and wives. Indirectly, the programs also benefit their households as women can use such skills to earn an extra income.

At present, the PWKI and the WKRI are developing more basic programs such as development of women's managerial and leadership skills.

In the implementation of their programs, the central boards of both the WKRI and the PWKI can do nothing without the support of their membership, the Christian women in the rural areas and the churches. The difficulties of the PWKI, in particular, are felt to be more serious because the Protestant groups are fragmented in different churches and synods which do not necessarily feel close to the PWKI and have their own separate social activities. For this reason, it is understandable that the programs developed at the centre often cannot be implemented effectively.

Anticipating the future

In the past, the WKRI and PWKI were important in the national movement for independence, because the situation at that time demanded this unity of purpose. Nowadays, after 50 years of independence, many changes have taken place in social, political and economic life. To survive with clearly defined activities, both the WKRI and the PWKI must adjust to deal with new demands and transformations.

The positive aspects of both the WKRI and the PWKI cannot simply be forgotten. They include the large membership spread throughout Indonesia; the inclusive character of their organisations which are not limited to women or groups of the affiliated religion only, thereby indicating their concern for the problems of the public at large; their co-operation with the government and other women's organisations; and the substantial financial potential of their communities if the members realise the advantages of the continuing existence of the organisations.

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Spirituality and professionalism

Indarwahyanti Graito, head of the Central Board of the WKRI, explained that the WKRI, as a Christian social organisation, must demonstrate its special attributes like its spiritual strength. In its early period, this spirituality was quite solid as all members were moved to work in accordance with church teachings. Over time, this spirituality has faded. The younger generation emphasise the importance of professionalism in the management of the WKRI which is based on efficient management rules and clear job descriptions. Such demand for professionalism can create problems if the leaders do not understand the real situation of their members consisting mostly of women, and the social context of a society with a Moslem majority. Problems can arise when the leaders initiate programs which are too far-reaching or too ambitious and cannot be carried out because of the limitations imposed by the conditions of the organisations. For this reason, the head of the central board of the WKRI concluded that spiritual strength and professional management were priorities. The motto *Nyambut gawe kagem gusti* (Doing God's work), which in the past motivated the organisation, is no longer considered adequate. Professional work without spiritual roots, however, will also fail because the WKRI is not a professional organisation based on individuals or groups.

Serving the people without losing touch with the roots

Since their early days, both WKRI and PWKI have always endeavoured to put into effect their resolution to provide social services, the essence of Christian teachings, by doing something for many people. They aimed at becoming inclusive without losing their specific identities as Christian organisations. The board of WKRI decided on a low profile and concentrated on programs which were sensitive to the needs of the people. The PWKI board repeatedly stressed

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the need to do something for many people and called for greater intermingling of their organisation and its members with the general public. Though pursued from the beginning, these ideals have remained difficult to realise mainly because, according to the WKRI and PWKI, they are minority organisations in the flowing current of the majority.

In the preceding sections the problems of both the WKRI and the PWKI in political life have been discussed. These problems have directly or indirectly affected the organisations' ability to realise their aspirations to do something for society without losing their own roots. Responding to this challenge, the WKRI and the PWKI leaders have stressed the need for the boards of their organisations to develop sensitivity towards politics, as it was the only way for the organisation to understand and be involved in a continuously changing society. To demonstrate the good will of their organisations, the WKRI and the PWKI maintain a close working relationship with the government and with other women's religious organisations, as well as with professional women's organisations such as the ISWI (*Ikatan Sarjana Wanita Indonesia*).

Women's perspectives

In developing the organisations, it must be remembered that, despite their inclusive character, both WKRI and PWKI are women's organisations and they both must benefit women. This means, in addition to enabling women to take an active role in their devotion to family and society, the WKRI and the PWKI must be aware of women's special problems and must fight for women's interests and concerns. Women's organisations which regard women as tied to the home and men as the heads of households and responsible in the non-domestic sphere, are bound to encounter difficulties in understanding the emerging women's issues, such as the problems of women who for various reasons are the de facto heads of households, and the question of domestic violence.

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The women's perspective cannot be separated from the church's position regarding women. On one hand, the Catholic Church regards highly the nature and status of women, but on the other hand, many of the Church's decisions do not take sufficient account of problems specific to women. While the Church's refusal to accept contraception and its isolation of those who have had abortions are, in fact, based on the morality of love focusing on human nature and dignity, such moral considerations collide with daily realities in which many women do not have an equally strong bargaining position with men.

Admittedly, efforts to give greater attention to basic women's issues are not easy to implement. In addition to support from the Church itself, courage on the part of the organisation is also necessary. The WKRI, particularly, needs a spiritual moderator who is sensitive to gender issues. This is not an unrealistic hope, because there are already several priests with a profound understanding of women-specific problems.

Unlike the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches have responded more positively and progressively to women's issues. This is related to the active role played by the PGI Women's Desk, the BW-PGI. Understanding of the special problems of women has developed quickly in the wake of feminist theological discussions which did not ignore social, cultural and political aspects in the formation of one-sided gender relations. The positive attitude of Jesus toward women, even those marked as sinners by society, is always given as an example. Views that marginalise women are considered regressive, a fall-back from the positive attitudes shown by Jesus Christ.

A variety of programs has been undertaken to develop understanding about partnership between men and women, through dialogue between men and women, publication of books, and through the periodical *Berita dari Wanita* (News from Women). The BW-PGI has realised the importance of

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preparing and educating women to enter the ranks of decision-makers and leaders, and has developed several programs toward that end. These programs include leadership training and education for women as well as international women's exchange programs. The Church Leaders' Meeting, for example, agreed that women must constitute at least 30 per cent of all participants.

Concern for poor women

Understanding women's perspectives and the imbalance in gender relationships must be developed steadily. The WKRI and the PWKI should pay attention to poor or lower-class women, who, while most in need of a helping hand, are most often forgotten. A member of the PWKI board criticised NGOs which have been cropping up everywhere recently:

> We are in fact social workers. We do more concrete things, we go straight to the field. We talk to workers, teach them how to sew and other things. Today, conditions are different. This is our problem. Many NGOs are boasting and politicking for their own sake. Always money, money, money ... They are disgusted when they have to work with poor women. On the role of women, they pay attention to executive women, managers ... Why not look at those women selling in the markets, those who ride crowded trucks together ... Now, those seminars, do those poor women understand? They get more confused when given such programs.

Perhaps WKRI and PWKI, because of their spirituality, have been more sensitive towards poor women than other recently founded organisations. Nevertheless, both organisations confess that they are facing big problems in implementing their programs for poor and lower-class women, the main problem being a lack of funds. It seems that the WKRI and the PWKI both need extensive discussions within their organisations and with outside parties to enable them to anticipate and react to a variety of problems in the future. Their characteristic spirituality combined with the development

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of professionalism and sufficient understanding of the national socio-political context provide potential for the WKRI and PWKI to be mass organisations with more substantial roles in Indonesia.

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15

MOSLEM WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS
Their Role in Attaining the Benefits of Development

Anita Rahman

Essentially, the goal of Indonesian development is the development of all Indonesians and of Indonesian society as a whole, to attain a just and prosperous society which includes men and women as equal partners. Islam teaches that

> in terms of humanity, there is no difference between one person and another, whether they are women or men, so that both sexes are allowed to work in various fields in or outside the household, individually or with other people, in public or private institutions, as long as they need the employment or they are needed by it (Shihab 1992: 280).

Women's activities in development tend to be designed to respond to the work programs of their organisations in line with the commitments of these organisations at national, regional and international levels.

Every Indonesian social organisation has the obligation to participate in development. This is decreed by Law No. 8/1985 on mass organisations, which states that social organisations are formed voluntarily on the basis of common activities, professions, functions, religion and belief in God, and have the objective of participating in national development within the framework of the Indonesian Unitary State which is based on *Pancasila.*[1]

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1 The five basic principles of the Republic of Indonesia: Belief in one God Almighty; Humanity that is just and civilised; Unity of

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'Development' can be defined as man's endeavour to jointly plan and bring about physical and spiritual improvements, in order to achieve progress and prosperity in life (Ismanto *et al.* 1982: 12). Progress and prosperity as indicators of successful development will not be elaborated on, as I will concentrate on development activities of several Moslem women's organisations, and evaluate these activities from a gender perspective.

For Moslem women to be active in development is perfectly all right. It does not conflict with Islamic teachings, which include the statement that 'Whoever works in good faith and with dedication, whether male or female, will certainly be given good quality life (in this world)' (Taqui-Ud-Din Al-Hilali and Khan 1978). Moslem women are motivated to be involved in social life by teachings of the holy scriptures, such as 'the believers, men and women, are protectors of one another, they solicit what is good and avoid what is evil' (Taqui-Ud-Din Al-Hilali and Khan 1978).

The GBHN (Broad Outlines of State Policy) states that comprehensive development requires maximum participation of men and women in all fields. Women have the same rights, duties and opportunities to participate in all development activities as men. According to the 1990 Census, the Indonesian population consists of 179 million people, of whom 90 million or 50.1 per cent are women. Of these women, 87 per cent are Moslems (BPS 1992). Such large numbers surely constitute a reliable potential for development.

The 1985 World Women's Conference held in Nairobi with the theme 'Equality, Development and Peace' reached agreement on strategies for the advancement of women up to the year 2000, as expressed in 'The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women'. This strategy has provided direction for women's programs in the participating countries, including Indonesia.

Indonesia; Democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation; and Social Justice for all Indonesians.

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Moslem women's organisations like *Aisyiyah, Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama* (*Muslimat NU*), *Wanita Islam* and *Persatuan Wanita Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, also known as *Wanita Tarbiyah* or *Perwati* – formerly *Wanita Perti*), founded before and after independence, were initially established for religious reasons and out of a desire to support their parent organisations in matters relating to women. Today these organisations have begun to play a role in national development and, as they expanded, their activities have adjusted to national development programs, guided by the GBHN which requires that women take part in all fields and at all levels of development.

Background of the organisations' origins

Aisyiyah evolved out of *Sapa Tresna* (Those Who Care) which was founded in 1917. One of the oldest Moslem women's organisations, it is also part of *Muhammadiyah* (a reformist Moslem movement). In 1920, its name was changed to *Aisyiyah* (KOWANI *et al.* 1985: 20), after Siti Aisyah, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad who never left the side of her husband. *Aisyiyah*'s objective is 'to honour and revere Islam, as well as to profess pure Islam as a way to worldly and eternal happiness'. At the time of the organisation's founding, it was common to consider women as not being able to do anything else but be dependent on a husband, in good times or in bad times. *Suwargo nunut neroko katut*, meaning in both good and bad times a wife is dependent on her husband, was a popular saying, implying that a woman was unable to work or pursue a career without his help (Suratmin 1982: 67). With this in mind, *Aisyiyah* is striving to advance the education and teaching of women, to enable them to join men in the moral and material development of society, to attain 'a just and prosperous society blessed by God's grace' or *baldatun toyyibatun warobbun ghofur* (KOWANI 1986: 47).

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Like its founder Njai Ahmad Dahlan, *Aisyiyah* believes in the Koranic verse which says 'Whosoever does good works, that is good works aimed at peace, whether man or woman, as long as he/she is a believer, will be blessed with a worthy life ...' (Suratmin 1990: 72). The Association of Tarbiyah Women, *Persatuan Wanita Tarbiyah* (*Perwati*), was founded on 5 May 1928, together with Tarbiyah Islamiyah Association, *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (*Perti*). The objective of this organisation was to 'assist men in all fields of activity', especially in social activities, religious proselytising and Islamic teachings, adhering to the concept of *Ahlussunah waljamaah*.[2] During the struggle for independence, *Wanita Perti* established women's troops called *Laskar Muslimat Bukittinggi*. Like the Moslem men's troops, they were taught in drill and a disciplined military life. They were trained in the use of rifles and bamboo spears, to enable them to support the men's troops (KOWANI 1986: 104).

After independence, the government recognised this movement as a political party. Within the organisation, this caused tension between those oriented toward politics and those oriented toward education. This culminated with the organisation splitting in 1969, leaving one division oriented toward politics under the name of *Perti*, while the other returned to the original objectives of education, religious proselytising and social activities under the full name of *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, abbreviated to *Tarbiyah*. The women's association of *Tarbiyah* adopted the new name of *Wanita Tarbiyah* instead of *Wanita Perti* (Tanpahlawan 1984: 16).

The *Muslimat NU* was initially a part of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) and was known as *NU Muslimat*. Motivated by a desire to 'raise the status of women', prominent women within the NU decided to have women involved in the NU organisation and founded it in 1946, 12 years after the

2 A view within Islam which adheres to the teachings of the Prophet and His followers.

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establishment of NU. At that time women had an alarming lack of education. After NU became a political party, the status of its women's branch became independent and separate from the NU Party, indicated by switching the emphasis in the name: *NU Muslimat* became *Muslimat NU*. With this new autonomous status *Muslimat NU* could arrange and carry out any activities supporting its objectives of guiding its members and serving the nation (KOWANI 1986: 351). *Muslimat NU* strives to carry out and familiarise women with NU programs, to promote women's religious and national awareness, and educate them about their legal rights and responsibilities.

Wanita Islam was established in Yogyakarta in 1962. In contrast to the three Moslem women's organisations mentioned above, *Wanita Islam* is not tied to any parent organisation. It was founded on the initiative of several prominent Islamic women in Yogyakarta and Jakarta after a meeting held from 27 to 29 April 1962, and it received the blessing of the Regional Commander of the Diponegoro Military Command (KOWANI *et al.* 1985: 91). In 1975, the organisation's headquarters were moved to Jakarta. The founding of *Wanita Islam* was motivated by a desire to develop and solidify Moslem women's dynamics through positive social activities.

The objective of *Wanita Islam* is 'to pursue a just and prosperous society blessed by God Almighty', with the help of faithful and devout Islamic women. *Wanita Islam* also manages several autonomous bodies like the Foundation for Women's Welfare, *Yayasan Wanita Sejahtera*; The Foundation for Service Education, *Yayasan Pendidikan Bakti*; Co-operative for Women's Craft, *Koperasi Karya Wanita*; and the Institute of Women's Koranic Schools, *Lembaga Pesantren Wanita Darunnisa*. In carrying out its activities, *Wanita Islam* is guided by the Five Tasks of the organisation *Panca Dharma Wanita Islam*: Serving God as a goal of life; creating harmony between this world and the hereafter; improving women's personal qualities to enable their participation in various

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activities, in accordance with status and dignity; performing a woman's household duties as a wife, and as educator of her sons and daughters; taking an active part in society as a member.

The difference between these four Islamic women's organisations lies primarily in their orientation. *Muslimat NU* and *Wanita Tarbiyah* have a traditional orientation toward religious practice, *Aisyiyah* following the views of its parent organisation tends to innovation, while *Wanita Islam* gives priority to the goal of its founder, to spread the concept of charity, *amal saleh*,[3] among women. The chairperson of the *Wanita Islam* Council, *Majelis Hikmah Wanita Islam*, elaborates:

> Wanita Islam does not submit to old or new views because Wanita Islam does not follow a particular school of thought, but it is an independent organisation based on the desire of a group of Moslem women to help and encourage each other to create a just and prosperous society, so that anyone who shares this view can join Wanita Islam.

Development of the organisations

When the above Moslem women's organisations were founded, whether as part of a parent organisation or otherwise, they were directed by the needs of the time of their establishment. Initially, their organisational objectives and activities were aimed at religious education, as well as the educational, economic and socio-cultural needs of women at that time. Consequently, during the struggle for independence, women fought side by side with men. Their activities and programs nowadays have shifted their focus to the needs of their organisation's members. Hence the prime focus is education, religious proselytising and social activities conforming to Islamic doctrine.

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3 Dedication in the performance of religious practice or religious duties.

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Clusters of *majelis taklim*,[4] which are characteristic of Islamic groups, have been the most effective in implementing the organisation's activities. In Jakarta in 1990, for example, there were 2,200 women's *majelis taklim* and 1,000 majelis taklim for adolescents.[5] The four Moslem women's organisations under discussion manage many of the larger *majelis taklim*.

In line with developments of the time, especially during the New Order, all social organisations follow the principles of *Pancasila* and of the 1945 Constitution. But Islamic religious organisations continue to incorporate the principles of their religion. Activities integrating women in development are guided by policies shaped by the GBHN.

All Moslem women's organisations have statutes and rules of association, and working programs, which are reaffirmed at every congress. The working programs are normally adjusted to the changing situation. It has become customary for an official of the Development Cabinet to attend every congress and provide direction and guidance for future development of the organisation, in accordance with Law No. 8/1985. The rank of the Cabinet official attending depends very much on the level of importance of the organisation, the more important, the higher the rank of this official. All directions offered by the official are 'taken into consideration' when formulating new working programs. However, whether they are all implemented is another question, though the organisations' existence according to Law No. 8/1985 is based on their participation and role in achieving successful national development. Implementation of government directives depends on their applicability by the organisation involved. One of *Muslimat NU*'s directors explains as follows:

4 Co-ordinating institutions for *Koran* recitation or the pursuit of *Koranic* knowledge.

5 The numbers are based on an interview with an official at the Municipal Department of Religion in Jakarta.

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> Nowadays we have to follow government direction but we also have to maintain our own distinctive characteristics. For example, at the moment environmental preservation has become an issue. *Muslimat NU* also recognises this problem, but our first priority is the interest of our members. If we do not inform our members about a problem, they will not recognise its importance. This is exactly what the government expects from us: that any program we draw up will be synchronised with government programs, in order to create an atmosphere of unity and union with both parties taking the same type of action.

In the last two decades most Indonesian women's organisations have had almost the same working programs, since they are based on the same policies aiming at enhancing the role of women. They differ only in the way they elaborate their programs, depending on the nature and size of the individual organisations. The role of Moslem women's organisations in development depends on the extent to which they participate in certain fields of development. The importance of regional branches also differs according to the potential of the particular regions. In *Aisyiyah* which has several regional branches, for example, one branch will have developed a greater variety of activities than others. One of the organisation's leaders explained:

> The activities and programs which are implemented in the regions are adjusted to the potential and the conditions of the regions. Some regions are advanced in the field of education, or in the field of preaching *tabligh*, others are economically advanced, or advanced in the field of promoting the religious community's prosperity *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Umat*, and still others have birth clinics. The proceeds of these activities are used to support other programs.

Role in development

The role of women in development is marked by women's participation in all fields of development, as stipulated by

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the GBHN (1993: 101). Moslem women's organisations like *Aisyiyah*, *Muslimat NU*, *Wanita Tarbiyah* and *Wanita Islam* have been successful in implementing government programs, specifically those directly related to the lives of women and their families.

The definition of the role of women in development has been formulated, planned and co-ordinated by the State Ministry for the Role of Women in line with Presidential Decree No. 25, 1983. According to the Ministry's *Analysis of the Situation of Indonesian Women*, women's integration in development covers the following sectors:

1. The economic sector, including labour, agriculture, services (trade, transport and communication, finance and services), natural resources and the environment, co-operatives and transmigration.
2. The socio-cultural sector, including education, health, nutrition and family planning.
3. Other sectors, including politics, government institutions, law, information, mass media and international relations.

Not all these fields of development have been covered by Islamic women's organisations, because priority is given to those programs which are considered urgent and of direct benefit to the organisations' members, and are in accord with the organisations' moral and material capability as well as their innovative capacity.

The four Islamic women's organisations have members in almost all provinces. In each of these provinces guidance for members reaches down to the village level. At this point, guidance is delegated to the leadership of the organisation's village branch, which constitutes the fifth membership level. The largest membership can be found in the region where respective organisations have their headquarters: For *Aisyiyah* it is Yogyakarta, for *Muslimat NU* it is East Java, and for *Wanita Tarbiyah* it is West Sumatra.

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Sectors of development which are already included in the working programs of Islamic women's organisations are discussed below.

The economic sector

To strengthen the role of women in the economic field *Aisyiyah* has organised a program through the BUEKA, *Badan Usaha Ekonomi dan Koperasi Aisyiyah*, *Aisyiyah*'s Executive Branch for Economics and Co-operatives. The program gives priority to enterprises involving co-operatives, industrial skills, 'window shops',[6] and marketing. Three of these activities are already operational down to the branch level. The enhancement of industrial skills covers handicrafts, sewing and embroidery. Products are sold at the monthly *majelis taklim* meetings.

The activities of the co-operatives generally include saving and loans, renting out party equipment, and efforts to increase managerial skills. According to one of *Aisyiyah*'s directors, co-operatives in Ujungpandang and West Java have developed rapidly and are able to meet almost all the daily needs of their members. In order to improve employment for women, *Aisyiyah* encourages the businesswomen among its members to increase their entrepreneurial efforts through co-operation with the government and the private sector. *Aisyiyah* also encourages the establishment of skills training centres to prepare its members for becoming businesswomen or skilled workers.

Wanita Tarbiyah has established tailoring and embroidering enterprises. Marketing of their products is channelled locally or through the organisation's central office. For this purpose, that office has created an agency to collect and sell handicrafts from West Sumatra. According to the General Chairperson of *Wanita Tarbiyah*, this type of marketing is

6 'Window shops' are small shops in the homes of members where they can sell their products at any time.

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very effective. Selling through the central office ensures a smooth product turnover and efficient running of the area's handicraft enterprises.

Wanita Tarbiyah co-operatives are already operating in several regions. They are involved in consumers' co-operatives, saving and lending, as well as in training in co-operative management skills. The government supports the efforts to enhance co-operative management skills, and KOWANI (*Kongres Wanita Indonesia* – Indonesian Women's Congress) has given material support and training. In several regions of West Sumatra livestock co-operatives have been established. In Sijunjung regency, for example, there are livestock co-operatives to raise ducks, chicken, goats and cows. Feed for the animals is obtained from grass planted on dry fields. This also contributes to the preservation of the environment for which the members of *Wanita Tarbiyah* in Sijunjung have received the Kalpataru award[7] from the President of the Republic of Indonesia.[8]

Muslimat NU has established skills training centres and saving and loans co-operatives. According to a director of *Muslimat NU*, skills which are being developed include embroidery, handicrafts and weaving, depending on the regional potential. The products are marketed locally and at bazaars held during all national meetings.

The organisation's co-operatives include saving and lending co-operatives as well as consumer co-operatives. They obtain their capital from membership fees and through loans from businesspeople associated with *Muslimat NU*. These loans are interest-free and involve no expenses, except for a small charge for administrative costs. The co-operatives have been developed with help from government co-operatives.

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7 Annual award given to people who have made an outstanding contribution to the preservation of the environment.

8 Based on an interview with the chairperson of *Wanita Tarbiyah* in Sijunjung, recipient of the 1993 Kalpataru Award in Sijunjung, West Sumatra.

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KOWANI has provided training in co-operative management as well as financial support. *Muslimat NU* is also promoting savings by establishing financial institutions and encouraging women to use credit facilities.

At present, the co-operatives of *Muslimat NU* are handling the sale of coffee in order to meet the needs of all NU members. A portion of the profits is used for organisational development. In addition, *Muslimat NU* is also attempting to improve entrepreneurial skills to increase employment and encourage women and young people to become alert and selective consumers to promote the use of domestic products.

Wanita Islam's activities to increase the prosperity of the religious community include the development of co-operatives called Co-operatives for Women's Crafts (*Koperasi Karya Wanita*), household industries, livestock raising, fisheries and managerial cadres. The development of economic resources extends from the immediate environment of the organisation's members to the society at large. The greatest number of *Karya Wanita* co-operatives are located in Sumatra, Java and Bali. Guidance for and improvement of co-operative activities are also obtained through co-operation with the government and KOWANI.

Socio-cultural sector

Guidance in education, health, nutrition and family planning is given priority by all four organisations. To promote education, *Aisyiyah* has established a large number of formal as well as non-formal schools, such as kindergartens and *diniyah* (religious schools) throughout Indonesia; institutions to promote the development of Islamic culture; and paramedical schools in almost all provinces. Furthermore, *Aisyiyah* is offering training for midwives to become qualified nurses at the *D-III* level (three-year diploma program) of the Nursing Academy; and preparing continuing education to broaden the perspective of teachers while providing them with additional skills relevant to their profession up to *Strata Satu* (Bachelor's degree) level.

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Muslimat NU also manages kindergartens, particularly in Java. In some regions, they have set up special centres to improve women's skills. The same facilities have been established in several provinces by *Wanita Tarbiyah* and *Wanita Islam*. Through its *Yayasan Pendidikan Bakti*, *Wanita Islam* has organised training courses for Islamic kindergarten teachers in Jakarta and Bali. All four of these Islamic women's organisations are running programs to prevent the three 'points of illiteracy' (in the Latin alphabet, Indonesian language and Koranic reading) through study groups of the so-called A and B study packages. They use the *Iqra'* (oral repetition) system to learn *Koran* reading quickly. *Wanita Islam* already manages five special schools in Central Java. In addition to managing schools, the four organisations have also established *pesantren*[9] for women in order to train female *santri*.[10]

In the field of spiritual education the four organisations provide Islamic training ranging from comprehension of Koranic verses to reinterpretation and updating of religious thought to conform with changing times. This education is provided through *majelis taklim* from the province down to the village level. *Majelis taklim* also provides instruction on *Pancasila*, environmental preservation, the advantages of breast feeding, prevention of drug abuse and BKB (*Bina Keluarga Balita* – Guidance for Families with Children under Five Years of Age). *Aisyiyah* and *Muslimat NU* currently organise *hadj* groups to Mecca.

In the field of health care, *Aisyiyah* and *Muslimat NU* have established PKM (*Pelayanan Kesehatan Masyarakat* – Public Health Care Services) and BKIA (*Balai Kesehatan Ibu dan Anak* – Mother and Child Health Care Centres), as

9 School of Koranic studies for children and young people, most of whom are boarders.

10 Someone who has attained a deep understanding of Islam, someone who is pious.

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well as health care programs aimed at family planning and nutritional education. BKIA *Aisyiyah* are found in almost all areas of the country, while most of the branches of BKIA *Muslimat NU* are located in East and Central Java. Each BKIA branch not only implements family planning programs, but also provides health and nutritional education. Earnings from BKIA go to support the organisations. *Wanita Tarbiyah* and *Wanita Islam* provide education on health, nutrition and family planning in co-operation with the Department of Health and BKKBN (*Badan Koordinasi Keluarga Berencana Nasional*, the National Family Planning Co-ordinating Board). Wanita Islam, through its *Yayasan Wanita Sejahtera* (Foundation for Women's Welfare), manages *Pondok KB Terpadu* (Centres for Integrated Family Planning). The *Pondok KB Terpadu* program includes education on, and assistance with, family planning and is integrated into other programs such as skills training, co-operatives, tailoring and gymnastics. *Pondok KB Terpadu* are spread throughout Jakarta, Kalimantan and Sulawesi.

The four organisations also participate in government health care programs like PKHA (*Proyek Kelangsungan Hidup Anak*, Project for Child Survival). This project is the product of co-operation between the Department of Religious Affairs and UNICEF and aims at lowering infant and child mortality. PKHA also provides health and family planning education, and mass medical treatment. The PKHA project, which has been established by several Islamic women's organisations, is supported by tens of thousands of motivators and thousands of supervisors who implement this program effectively.

Other sectors

Political sector. Since the struggle for independence many members of the four Islamic women's organisations have also been members of the Legislative Assembly or the People's Consultative Council. Those women's organisations which are part of larger organisations follow the political policies

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of their parent organisations. According to the organisations' leaders, the political aspirations of the four Islamic women's organisations are channelled through those parties in Parliament that pursue the interests of the Moslem community. But recommendations to the government on matters relating the responsibility of women are formulated by the organisations themselves. As an independent organisation *Wanita Islam*, for example, always makes its own suggestions to the government, whether it is about current problems such as improvement of government regulations, licensing, supervision of the implementation of government regulations, or other issues.

Parent organisations do not object to nor hamper the involvement of members of the four organisations in political organisations or government institutions, as long as this does not involve the organisation's name. But if a leader occupies a position in a political party or in a government institution like the Legislative Assembly, she must give up her position in the organisation.

Legal Sector. The four organisations provide legal advice through the programs conducted by the Legal Awareness Cadre, *Kader Sadar Hukum* (*Kadarkum*) focusing on laws relating to marriage, family welfare and labour conditions and on all regulations affecting women. In this, they work together with KOWANI, the Department of Justice, the Department of Labour and the Department of Religious Affairs.

Information and Mass Media. Each of these Islamic Women's Organisations has a printing office for disseminating the organisation's messages, religious proselytising, legal information and news on family life in publications which are disseminated to all local branches. *Aisyiyah* manages *Suara Aisyiyah* (The Voice of Aisyiyah), which has been in existence for some time and will soon have its own building. *Muslimat NU* manages a bulletin which is published occasionally. *Wanita Tarbiyah* also publishes an occasional magazine called *Warta Wanita Tarbiyah* (News of Wanita

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Tarbiyah), while *Wanita Islam* publishes *Buletin Wanita Islam* (Bulletin of Wanita Islam) as a forum of communication for its members.

Foreign Relations. The four organisations are members of KOWANI, and through KOWANI, which is as a member of ASEAN Council of Women's Organisations and the International Council of Women, they take part in international NGO conferences. In order to relate to other Islamic organisations in the Asia–Pacific region, the four organisations are members of the Regional Islamic Council for Asia and the Pacific, RICSEAP.

The four organisations have also established a federation called the Conference of Indonesian Islamic Women's Organisations, *Badan Musyawarah Organisasi-organisasi Islam Wanita Indonesia* (BMOIWI). The federation has widened both its national and its international scope. One example is their achievement in 1977 in obtaining government attention to women-specific issues when on pilgrimage, which had been a long-standing concern of BMOIWI. Delay of menstruation, the selection of suitable male relatives to accompany female pilgrims, the rules for pregnant women, the preparation for the pilgrimage's ceremonies are issues specific to women pilgrims. A number of seminars were held on these topics and the outcome handed to the Department of Religious Affairs, and not long afterwards the Department published a manual for pilgrims called *Buku Pedoman Haji* (The Pilgrim's Guidebook).

The Islamic women's organisations have all been involved in the government's IDT poverty alleviation program. While the Presidential Instruction on Assistance to Less-Developed Villages, *Instruksi Presiden Desa Tertinggal* known by its acronym IDT, focuses on increasing the income of villagers through skills training and the development of small-scale enterprises, the women's organisations have concentrated on including women in these programs. *Wanita Islam*, for example, has implemented a program called *Stimulan Berantai*

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(Chain Support). This project collects funds through *zakat, infak* and *sadaqah*[11] to provide capital to small entrepreneurs or livestock breeders. After two years these loans must be repaid to be redistributed to other entrepreneurs.

Aisyiyah has implemented a program called *Qoryah Toyyibah*, which aims at developing a village until it meets the criteria of a prosperous village, as measured by achievements in education, health, economy and religious practice. Educational success is measured by the percentage of school-age children actually attending school. Concerning health care, all women are given access to medical check-ups by the *Muhammadiyah* Health Care Group, *Pembinaan Kesehatan Muhammadiyah*. Economically, every woman should have income-generating skills, while with regard to religion, every member should be able to meet her religious obligations. These are the activities of *Aisyiyah* in its effort to implement development. Similarly, other Islamic women's organisations also engage in a variety of activities to do their part for the development of the nation. The village of Bantul in Central Java, which has received support from the National Family Planning Board supported by the World Bank, has already attained the criteria of a prosperous village. One example is the women of *Aisyiyah*'s *emping*[12] export to the Netherlands. The *Qoryah Toyyibah* program is currently being extended to all provinces, so that by 1995 every province should have at least one such program.

Assessment of developmental success: a gender analysis

The activities of women in development are focused exclusively on women's welfare concerns, and the fields that are developed by Islamic women's organisations are limited to

11 Obligatory (for Moslems) and voluntary donations given to people who are economically less well-off.

12 Fried chips made of *gnetum gnemon* fruit.

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the improvement of women's welfare and their access to resources and benefits. The programs do not yet cover all aspects of women's development or 'women's empowerment', a concept currently in use by experts on women's development.

According to Longwe (Tjokrowinoto *et al.* 1993: 21), the process of women's empowerment follows five stages: prosperity, access, consciousness, active participation and power. Measured against Longwe's stages, the efforts of the four Islamic women's organisations discussed here have reached only the access stage. The later stages have not been attained because there is still much that remains to be improved.

According to leaders of the four organisations, most of the programs implemented reach only 75 to 80 per cent of their targets. One constraint is the fact that the leaders are working women with little free time. Another constraint is the lack of funds. Funds are derived from membership fees of between 200 and 500 Rupiah, donations and business profits. The members are also expected to contribute to specific projects. An *Aisyiyah* conference in 1990, for example, decided to construct a building to house *Suara Aisyiyah*, the organisation's publication. The building costs were to be the responsibility of all members and leaders of the organisation. All participants spontaneously donated at least 2,000 Rupiah each. According to one of *Aisyiyah*'s directors, the building is currently under construction.

If we assess the independence of women in the management of their organisations, we must conclude that some organisations can be called independent while others are less autonomous, depending from which angle we wish to view them. Since *Wanita Islam* was established on the initiative of women, this organisation can be said to be independent in all its activities. All decisions made by *Aisyiyah*, on the other hand, especially those made at conferences, have to be formally approved by *Muhammadiyah*, since *Aisyiyah* operates

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under the auspices of *Muhammadiyah*. It is, however, independent in the formulation of its statutes, rules of association, and working programs. The parent organisation (*Muhammadiyah*) itself no longer has any women's programs, since these are managed by *Aisyiyah*. Does *Aisyiyah* have any plans to split off from *Muhammadiyah*? One of its managers says that this is not likely to happen, because *Aisyiyah* believes that women and men should co-operate in the pursuit of certain goals. As the name *Aisyiyah* derives from the name of Prophet Muhammad's wife, and *Muhammadiyah* from the name of the Prophet Himself, they are not likely to be separated.

In contrast with *Aisyiyah*, *Muslimat NU* and *Wanita Tarbiyah* are still closely tied to their parent organisations, because the statutes of those parent organisations still contain a chapter on 'Women's Concerns', even though *Muslimat NU* and *Wanita Tarbiyah* have their own statutes, rules of association, and working programs. Both women's organisations hope that in the future the chapter on women's concerns will be removed from the statutes of their parent organisations.

To what extent are the four organisations able to cover all fields of development at all levels? The answer depends on whether the four Islamic organisations are sufficiently sensitive to gender issues to initiate innovations and changes in thinking, especially in analysing Islamic teachings from a gender perspective. Efforts to re-interpret Islamic teachings regarding women have been noted recently.

Particularly in the current era of economic take-off, Moslem women's organisations in development are bound to focus on women's independence, leadership, technological development and empowerment in all fields of life. To what extent these goals can be attained will depend on the organisations' vigilance, capability and concern regarding the needs of their members, as well as the capability of their leaders in working for innovations useful to their members.

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Conclusion

The activities of the four Islamic women's organisations discussed above are also illustrative of the efforts of numerous other women's organisation working for the development of Indonesia. The four organisations discussed have implemented development activities in accordance with their respective conditions and potentials. Some stand out in certain fields and are less conspicuous than others. Scrutinising their activities from a gender perspective, it becomes clear that the organisations have increased women's access but not women's power. However, some positive effects cannot be denied, especially with regard to increasing their role in development and improving their access to benefits complying with government's policy on the integration of women into development.

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16

WOMEN'S POLITICAL CALL

Carla Bianpoen

The past two years have seen a dramatic development in women's progress in relation to the political agenda. This paper is an endeavour to present women's struggle against the background of economic, social and political tensions.

The year 1998 in Indonesia was a year of devastation marked by shattering economies, escalating political tensions, social unrest, and heightened repressive practices. Fear, mutual suspicion and augmented apprehension was the tenor of the time, exacerbated by racial riots. But what affected the whole nation with surprise, shock and anger, was the massive rapes on women of Chinese descent, known as the May rapes, reported by the Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes, but denied by the highest authorities in the country.

It was also a year of emerging women's prominence in the public arena, a turning point in establishing crucial roles for women in political agendas. For over three decades, women in the larger organisations had accommodated the political, including development, agendas of the ruling order, subjecting women's aspirations to the male-determined 'higher' goals of the state. As the situation in the country deteriorated, it became clear that what was once known and treated as 'the separate concerns of women', was in fact closely linked to the intricate game of politics, and a world from which women were usually excluded.

As one crisis followed another, and the oppression intensified, the country saw the emergence of women's determination to have a say in the political strategies of the country.

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Some used the very traditional notions of a woman's 'proper role' as the pivot for their actions; others effectively engaged in bringing women's concerns into current policies, and again others gathered strength from the formation of a coalition among women, both individuals and organisations, in order to effect greater co-ordination in putting their demands to the ruling order.

In fact, each one's specific objectives and strategies were often blended into an overriding effort to bring about change. Women activists from various groupings or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worked together in both actions and concepts that demanded formulation and presentation. Whether their march towards the political arena was coloured by their role as concerned mothers or as supporters of the political opposition, or as defenders of human rights, they all demanded a new, clean, and de-militarised government.

Their actions, carried out despite escalating oppression throughout 1998, placed them at the forefront of significant breakthroughs. But the 48 political parties emerging under Soeharto's successor, President Habibie, hardly had any thought for gender on their political agenda. Only the National Awakening Party (PKB) had prepared a comprehensive gender concept. Even Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), whose leader was a woman, Megawati Soekarnoputri, appeared to have no concept for the gender perspective. Gender perspectives then were a non-issue in the mainstream of politics.

This changed drastically when PDI-P[1] won 34 per cent, the largest share of the vote in June's parliamentary elections, with the most seats in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), and its leader Megawati Soekarnoputri, daughter of the country's first President Sukarno, was on her way to become the next president. A number of religious and political leaders expressed disapproval, sentiments against a woman filling the

1 *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle).

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position of the nation's presidency became louder. Had Megawati, or any woman, any right to lead Indonesia? All of a sudden, 'gender' was a hot issue and a topic of discussion among all layers of society.

Evidently, for all the attention that the gender issue gained, political and religious considerations still reigned supreme. Even Abdurrahman Wahid, a close friend and staunch supporter of Megawati, whose National Awakening Party had only 13 per cent in the June polls, ultimately became her contender and beat her by 373 votes to 313 in what is called the most democratic election since 32 years. The process of political manoeuvring was a virtual blow to women's rights and democracy in general. Says noted lawyer, legislator and women's activist Nursyahbani Katjasungkana: 'I am truly disappointed.'

The unfolding

An early sign of the change in women's domains could be detected early in 1998 when women demanded at least 20 per cent female participation in the government's World Bank supported labour-intensive projects which were to accommodate laid-off workers as a result of the economic and monetary crisis. The demand was made to the World Bank President and the National Development Planning Board, by members of the Lotus Foundation, in co-ordination with other NGOs. The Lotus Foundation is essentially a lobby group, pursuing women's rights as human rights. World Bank President James Wolfensohn, who happened to be visiting in Jakarta on 4 February, immediately took up the issue when visiting a labour-intensive project, and the National Development Planning Board, *Bappenas*, showed some goodwill. However both the World Bank and *Bappenas* were slow in putting their initial agreement into effect. Only after a year-long campaign has the 20 per cent quorum been incorporated in criteria used for project participation.

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Indeed, the economic and monetary crisis set its mark on women's activities, which soon shifted into the public sphere. But it was the dark fear of popular explosions, an apprehension of bloodshed that made women realise they needed to do something to prevent an outburst of pent-up emotions.

Acting under cover of the traditional concept of the role of women, young women intellectuals started the sale of affordable milk for infants and toddlers under the age of five. Their activity met with much appreciation from the general public, and donations poured in, along with moral and physical support. *Suara Ibu Peduli* (SIP) or the Voice of Concerned Mothers, as they called themselves, was set up by young women intellectuals together with long-time feminist, Toeti Heraty Roosseno, a professor of philosophy. Pushed by increasing financial problems resulting from the economic tumble, and the sombre mood of apprehension, the SIP women together with women from other NGOs decided on a peaceful demonstration on 23 February, presuming the military would not shoot at mothers.

At the roundabout in front of Hotel Indonesia in the heart of the city, they smiled, chanted, prayed and distributed flowers to passers-by and the police. Holding banners with statements like 'Mothers Struggle for the Children of the Nation', 'Peaceful Demonstration of Love', the women reflected the traditional image of mothers.

The police were suspicious and took Karlina Leksono and Gadis Arivia from SIP, and Wilarsih Noviana, who just happened to pass by, to the police station where the three were interrogated for 23 hours. No warrant was produced until one hour before their release the next day, which was not a surprise as repression still reigned supreme.

Their case drew massive local and international attention, introducing a new wave of young women to prominence, with pictures of Karlina Leksono and Gadis Arivia appearing in almost all news media.

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SIP persisted in the role of mothers, providing affordable milk for children under five years of age and the elderly. Their effort received much support with donations flowing in, and housewives from other parts of Jakarta started grouping, requesting permission from SIP to allow them to use its logo to support distributing the milk in their specific area.

While SIP persisted in the mother's role, they also continued to support political aspirations, playing a key role in the supply of survival food for the students who persisted at the Parliament building, pursuing the fall of Soeharto.

Women again used their traditional image, when they came together in a spontaneous grouping to celebrate International Women's Day, 8 March, which officialdom had never acknowledged because of its alleged leftist associations.

Seruni stands for *Seruan Perempuan Indonesia* (Indonesian Women's Call). It was a spontaneous gathering of women from all walks of life, including housewives, professionals, Moslem devotees, Catholic nuns, Buddhist women, as well as Ibu Gedong Oka[2], who came all the way from Bali. '*Seruni*' is the name of a flower of many traditional uses. Breaking traditional barriers of ethnicity, religious and class backgrounds, they came together at a time of overall oppression when gatherings were looked at with great suspicion.

Not surprisingly, the location was kept secret up to the last possible moment. Another unique and important feature was that there was only one prayer, encompassing virtues of bold and courageous women from the history of all religions. It expressed a united and impassioned critique of prevailing injustice and unlawfulness.

Today, *Seruni* continues to group women in peace-making efforts.

If economic and monetary problems had been a catalyst for women's awareness of their political roles and rights,

2 The leader of the Balinese Hindu, who profess the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

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the massive rapes occurring during the anti-Chinese riots in Jakarta and the authorities' persistent denials were a shattering experience, from which women rose in unprecedented and refreshing solidarity.

The Women's Division was established by those already involved in the Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes, led by Catholic priest Sandyawan Sumardi. Ita F. Nadia, director of the NGO 'Kalyanamitra' Women's Communications and Information Centre, became known as the head of the Volunteer Team's Women's Division, further known as *Tim Relawan*, or Volunteers Team, while the image of Karlina Leksono could be likened to that of a Florence Nightingale.

When the atrocities occurred around 13 May, the extent of the chaos and havoc remained concealed. However the open call for action published in the *Jakarta Post* by Rita Kolibonso, the director of *Mitra Perempuan* Crisis Centre, spurred statements from many, even from such women's organisations as the *Dharma Wanita* and KOWANI. However it was the interview given by Ita F. Nadia with the foreign press that provided a powerful statement, provoking a national and international outcry for justice.

The report which the Team handed to the National Commission on Human Rights on 8 July stated that, during the three days of riots in the capital city, a massive number of rapes of women had taken place, mostly Chinese Indonesian women. The report stated that 168 women and girls were identified and verified as either gang raped or sexually abused. Twenty women died.

Officials of the government, including the Minister for the Role of Women, as well as the military and some civilians, slammed the report as a fabrication of non-governmental organisations, arguing that it was not based on solid evidence. The President, however, remained silent.

Meanwhile, death threats, anonymous letters and phone calls continued to intensify the fear faced by victims, doctors, witnesses and human rights defenders. The members of the

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Team revealed that threats included their family members, and children in particular. 'They know the details of the names of our children, what time they leave the house, where they go, what school they attend, and their other activities.' The Team remained undaunted and continued helping the victims in whatever form possible, while untiringly speaking out against violence on women.

Their revealing reports of the violence and the wide media coverage were instrumental in actions taken to put pressure on the government. Although the most published names were Ita F. Nadia and Karlina Leksono, they represent numerous others who often risked their lives or livelihood because of their co-operation with and involvement in the Team. They, and their team, opened the eyes of the people, and the world.

The government's persistent silence in the face of human rights violations and crimes that persisted against women, and the continuing terror haunting the lives of volunteers, counsellors and doctors, only intensified the sense of solidarity among women of all groups and backgrounds and saw an overwhelming flow of volunteers ready to join the Team of Volunteers, and other volunteer groups.

The gang rapes that accompanied the anti-Chinese riots in mid-May 1998 sent heavy shockwaves through the entire people. Shattered that such a thing could happen at all, the reaction was one of simultaneous rage and denial. Remarkably, the longer the denial persisted, the more women found their strength in a united front.

In less than one month, the 'Statement' drafted on 16 June by about 16 women of interdisciplinary academic and professional backgrounds, found support from 4000 people, subsequently known by the name of Civil Society on Violence against Women. But President Jusuf Bacharuddin Habibie's persistent silence on the issue fanned the anger of the popular mood. It was then decided that the President should

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be provided with an understanding of the situation, from the perspective of women.

Led by senior human rights activist Professor Dr Saparinah Sadli, a delegation of 22 women was received on 15 July. It needed a lot of wit to obtain an appointment from reluctant staff handling the President's agenda. The visit itself can be recorded as the first of its kind during the past few decades.

After going through an hour of seeming reservation from the President's side, he started to show an interest following the revelations of young women of the Team of Volunteers and the *Mitra Perempuan* Women's Crisis Centre. The President at once realised that his own niece had told him about the same issue. Then and there, he issued a public condemnation, promising to follow up on the demands of the Statement. The President asked to jointly draft a formulation of the statement, and the atmosphere changed completely into one of cordiality.

To the delegation's delight, the President did not follow the recommendation by his staff to bring the matter to the Cabinet before issuing a statement. 'May I have an opinion of my own?' he asked. 'I think this is the right moment.' He explained that he was in agreement with the wishes of the delegation of women.

One week after the meeting, the President responded to the women's demand for a National Commission on Violence against Women. In the presence of virtually a complete Cabinet at Bina Graha, the President asked Professor Saparinah to form the Commission. But it took until October before the formation of the Commission was ratified by Presidential Decree No. 181/1998, October 1998.

Different from the above-mentioned groups were the activities of those who proceeded directly into the political arena. The women of *Gema Madani* (Echo of Civil Society), for one, had started their efforts in early February, when the mood of controversy over the upcoming presidential elections

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was intensifying. Opposition voices were heard everywhere, and friends of Emil Salim, a one-time Minister for the Environment, tried to get him to be willing to be nominated a presidential or vice-presidential candidate. But for some time nothing happened.

Turning the tide of lingering deliberations, three women launched the movement which was to give courage to thousands of people to subscribe to the goals of *Gema Madani*, thereby generating the dynamics of a civil society to enable a candidate to emerge whose political vision emphasised equality in a pluralist society.

Professor Dr Saparinah Sadli, a staunch activist for women's rights, Mayling Oey, a gender specialist and founding member of the Lotus Foundation, Tini Hadad, the director of the Indonesian Consumers Foundation (YLKI), together with Agus Purnomo, the director of the Foundation of Worldwide Wildlife in Indonesia, launched Emil Salim as an alternative candidate for the Vice-Presidency in their first meeting on 11 February. They invited about 40 people for a brainstorming session.

Gema Madani's one-month action and statement constituted a breakthrough in usual political practices. Emil Salim's candidacy, at a time when opposition was a bad word, provoked a commotion in the nation's political discourse. On record is the crucial role of women in this breakthrough, and in all of the actions and statements of their candidate, though the co-ordination and co-operation of their male peers must not be underestimated. The emergence of *Gema Madani* can be seen as a firm step in the formation of the civil society. Although Emil Salim did not make it to the Vice-Presidency, the actions aroused the spirit of the wider society, and the ripple in the sea has now become an overwhelming wave in the ocean.

Gema Madani was formed in the critical days when students started protesting. Vis-à-vis the critical situation in the country, *Gema Madani*, as a movement, had fulfilled its task.

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The women launched the name and their candidate on 11 February, and withdrew it on 22 September 1999.

Another group that broke away from the traditional image of women was the *Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi*, the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy.

In the fast-deteriorating situation of the country, a small group of women activists in Jakarta realised the need to be involved in politics, and decided to join forces with like-minded activists. About 62 women's groups and individuals from various educational, ethnic, religious and professional backgrounds joined the newly set-up Coalition to discuss strategies for bringing women's voices to the fore. In the weeks that followed, the membership increased to over 90 groups and individuals from throughout the country.

Formed on 18 May, the Coalition joined the growing force of students and the general population who demanded that Soeharto step down. Their contribution to the President's resignation is a memorable one. They did not stop at this point, however, and have continued the struggle for justice and democracy. One of their main efforts has been to seek a wider unity among women throughout the country. The rally on violence against women, held on 25 November in several cities throughout the country, was an impressive achievement. However, what stands out in their political engagements is the Women's Congress they organised in December 1998.

As pointed out in their statement, the objective was to unite women from all walks of life, irrespective of their education, religious, ethnic or professional backgrounds. They would be a force strong enough to become a pressure group for mainstreaming gender concerns through the political arena, and to prepare a joint platform to pursue justice and democracy, and to effect a joint intent from the women's coalition.

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An overwhelming number, almost 600 participants, attended the Congress, which was prepared by a small executive team in the brief period of just two months. But the three-day event, which was held in conjunction with the 70th anniversary of the first Women's Congress, was dominated by euphoric sentiments from women who had been caught in a 32-year period of repression, and who could not avoid mutual suspicion and some clumsiness in handling and understanding the democratic principles of participation in such a Congress.

It was a first step in the learning process, which many have valued as an empowering experience for the Congress, and was the first of its kind in 70 years. The young women who attended made many breakthroughs, just as their predecessors had done 70 years earlier. One of these was the setting of a quota of 30 per cent for women's participation. This quota system has been taken up by other women's organisations.

Another bold decision was the inclusion of representatives of controversial minority groups like lesbians and sex workers in the Coalition's Presidium. This caused some uproar after the Congress, particularly among members of the KOWANI, the Indonesian Women's Congress. Another issue arose from having a surviving member of the *Gerwani* as a guest speaker at the seminar preceding the conference. *Gerwani*, one of the largest women's movements in the late 1950s –early 1960s, had been banned due to their affiliation with the outlawed Communist Party. The Congress organisers were, however, of the vision that they were women and, as such, had the right to have a voice and be heard.

The Presidium elected as its head, noted lawyer, women's activist and executive director of the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice (APIK), Nursyahbani Katjasungkana S.H.

Today the Coalition has branches in several parts of the country, and is on its way to becoming an alternative of the KOWANI as an umbrella for women's organisations. Their

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Secretary General Nursyahbani is a member of the MPR, the People's Consultative Assembly, while their demand for a quorum of 30 per cent women's participation has become an all-women's call.

As women's advent on the political arena was increasingly viewed as a necessity, it was also realised that the upcoming general elections could provide a timely momentum.

Herawati Diah, a senior figure of repute, in co-ordination with Debra Yatim of the Women's Coalition, set up the *Gerakan Perempuan Sadar Pemilu* (GPSP) or the Movement for the Education of Women Voters. The issue of voter education had been previously brought up by Herawati Diah during the final days of *Gema Madani* (Herawati Diah was herself a member of the *Gema Madani* movement). Incidentally, the Coalition for Justice and Democracy had the same intent, but for some technical reasons had not yet worked out their plan of action.

Since the establishment of GPSP in October 1998, Herawati Diah, the first Indonesian woman journalist to graduate abroad and the founder of the first English newspaper in Indonesia, managed to drum up a legion of women who are now actively providing empowerment and gender-sensitive short courses. In April 1999 they had already covered over 80 locations in the Jakarta area and, as this is written, GPSP is also responding to invitations from Bandung (West Java), Surabaya (East Java) and Palembang (Sumatra). Active members of the GPSP included senior journalists Annie Bertha Simamora, Toeti Kakijailatu, Moeke Mashud, while communications specialist Debra Yatim, political scientist Chusnul Mar'iyah and gender specialist Myra Diarsi were regularly involved.

Certainly, GPSP is not the only movement involved in the education of prospective women voters. Other women's organisations and movements are undertaking similar activities. Prospective women voters are sensitised towards the notion that politics has everything to do with what used to be called 'feminine' concerns.

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After the May campaigns, as they were having internal discussions about whether or not to continue its format, GPSP could boast to have included in its movement a number of housewives and women who had previously stood outside the activists movement. With the support of UNDP, GPSP in April 1999 had covered over 80 locations in the Jakarta area. In August 1999 their activities went as far as Sumatra and Kalimantan, while their news bulletin *Suara Perempuan* reached 8250 people in seven provinces.

When UNDP assistance came to an end, the movement transformed into a self-sustaining foundation. A change in the board members reflects a wider political focus. Since November 1999, the re-formed foundation still led by Herawati Diah, has operated under the name of *Gerakan Pemberdayaan Swara Perempuan* (the Movement for the Empowerment of Women).

The upsurge in women's dynamics is certainly not limited to Jakarta. Throughout the country women have grouped and acted against prevailing violence and taken a political stance.

In Makasar, South Sulawesi, in a strongly feudal male-dominated system of society and a basic stronghold of support for then President Habibie, women have taken the courage to act against public opinion. *Forum Pemerhati Masalah Perempuan*, the Forum of Observers of Women's Concerns, which has been active for several years, gained prominence in the past year by holding anti-Habibie demonstrations when he visited the region. Led by Zohra Andi Baso, a journalist by profession and an activist of *Yayasan Lembaga Konsumen Indonesia*, Makassar Chapter, ten members of the Forum also attended the presidential elections and called on political factions of the People's Consultative Assembly to speak out against re-election of Habibie.

In the troubled region of Aceh, *Flower Aceh*, an NGO for the empowerment of women, gained strength in mid-1998. Suraya Kamaruzzaman and her peers, who had initially grouped

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women in discussion groups in an effort to strengthen them vis-à-vis continued violence, have taken to more direct strategies relating to women's access to decision-making and counselling of victims of violence. Their outspoken critique of religious-based practices which in their opinion violate the human rights of women has met with hostility on the part of fundamentalists.

In fact, *Jaringan Solidaritas Perempuan*, a women's NGO formed with the initial objective of the fulfilment of rights of women migrant workers, started negotiating their concerns with the Ministry of Manpower before 1998. And, responding to the increasing incidence of violence against women, they have articulated the importance of human rights, the fight against violence toward women, and the empowerment of women at the grassroots of rural areas.

A striking phenomenon has been the emergence of young women leaders in gender-neutral movements/organisations. INFID, the International Forum on Indonesian Development, for instance, is headed by Binny Buchori as Executive Secretary, while the Indonesian Consumers Foundation, which continues to make a significant impact, is led by Tini Hadad. The outspoken Consortium of Urban Poor which has focused its attention on leaks in funds destined for the Social Safety Net is co-ordinated by Wardah Hafidz. These three women represented over 500 NGOs, when they petitioned the World Bank to stop the Social Safety Net Adjustment Loan (JPS).

There are more young women taking the lead in movements or organisations that used to be headed by a male. Included is Amanda Suharnoko, one of three women in a total of 26 persons, who chairs the Society for Inter-Religious Dialogue. Sita Aripurnami as manager of a scenario-building program called *Indonesia Masa Depan*, or Indonesia's Tomorrow, is another example of women's leadership. Sita, a member of the Women's Network *Kalyanamitra*, has taken a year off from her position in the NGO to 'manage' 30 individuals of various backgrounds

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and visions to work towards a joint vision for development of Indonesia.

Women in the arts

At first, the May rapes seemed to have left artists too stupefied to provide a visible reaction. In fact, it is the finer senses of these people which are best equipped to grasp the implications of the horror. This was indeed evident a few months later in the works of 16 Indonesian women artists displayed under the title 'Women in the Realm of Spirituality' which was presented in Jakarta and Rome. Some, like Wiranti Tedjasukmana and Ratmini Soedjatmoko, completely changed their style and orientation, while others took women's issues as the theme of their resistance. The exhibit of 18 artists (men and women) held in early December at the Cemara-6 Gallery in Jakarta also differed from the usual, taking women's human rights and violence against women as a central theme in a week-long seminar highlighting several aspects of women in the arts, theatre and literature. Another significant reaction came one year later, when Arahmaiani held her solo exhibition *Rape 'n Rob* at Galeri Milennium. Here, the unbalanced distribution of power was viewed as a basic cause of the May rapes.

Noted playwright Ratna Sarumpaet, the only woman playwright in Indonesia, has taken an early political stance. Ratna's play about 'Marsinah', the murdered woman labourer, written a few years ago, has drawn much interest abroad, but has been banned numerous times in this country. Ratna has proceeded boldly, and not only in the field of the arts. In an even stronger effort to counter the political power holders, she and her troupe *Satu Merah Panggung* advocated the opposition alliance of Amien Rais and Megawati Soekarnoputri. Later, she formed the National Forum for Democracy, a coalition of 167 groups and non-government organisations and gained the support of many prominent opposition figures. She organised a People's Congress coinciding with the National

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Consultative Assembly which was to re-elect President Soeharto. She was promptly detained, thus becoming Soeharto's last prisoner, and the first to be released after he stepped down. Since then, Sarumpaet has been involved in *Jejak*, an independent institution to foster reconciliation through opening up selected human rights cases, and through bringing justice to victims under the past regime. The first case for which *Jejak* has organised a 'theatre of the real', a kind of tribunal to provoke testimonial evidence from the common public, was on Marsinah. New evidence in the case has led *Jejak* to demand that the case, closed some years ago, be re-opened.

Setbacks

Indeed, the heightening awareness amongst women of the interplay between what used to be typical women's concerns and the 'higher politics' has brought new life to politics, and is creating a new understanding of the term.

However, in spite of the promising upsurge of energies in 1998, and the raising of women's issues, there were disappointing setbacks. The worst among these was rejection of Megawati as the possible President expressed by a number of religious and political leaders. The ensuing debate then reached a point where a group of women deemed it urgent to issue a statement refuting the use of religious dogma to discredit a woman's political right to become a president. The statement was released on 22 June 1999, and in less than 48 hours received support from over 300 individuals, women and men, and organisations, who agreed that women's political rights should be honoured in line with the 1945 Constitution and the law. The group, named the Civil Society for the Political Rights of Women, stressed the significance of upholding justice and democracy and rebuilding the political rights of Indonesian women, regardless of age, class, education, religion, ethnic background and political beliefs.

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Specifically, the statement says there is no explicit stipulation in the Al-Qur'an that a woman cannot become a leader.

Signatories included well-known people in society, such as human rights activists Saparinah Sadli and Marzuki Darusman, *Dharma Wanita* Presidium head Hartini Hartarto, gender specialist Mayling Oey, lawyers Rita Kolibonso and Todung Mulya Lubis, the National Mandate Party (PAN) Deputy Chair Toeti Heraty Roosseno, respected economist Mohammad Sadli, playwright Ratna Sarumpaet, NGO activist Erna Witoelar, political scientists Chusnul Mar'iyah and Smita Notosusanto, to name a few.

But more than anyone else in the long list of signatories the names of Siti Nuriyah Wahid, Omi Komaria Madjid and Khofifah Indar Parawangsa aroused attention. Siti Nuriyah is a Moslem activist, the head of over 200 *pesantren putri* (religious boarding schools for girls) and is also the wife of Moslem leader Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of *Nahdatul Ulama*, the 30 million strong Moslem mass movement. Omi Komaria is a lecturer of English; she is well versed in the teachings of her religion and she is also the wife of Moslem scholar Nurcholis Majid, while Khofifah Indar Parawansa, a former legislator, was then a proponent of the National Awakening Party.

Khofifah in a subsequent television commentary said that nowhere in the constitution, nor in any laws or regulations was gender specifically mentioned as a requirement for the presidency, and neither had there been any objections to these legal provisions.

The Statement, which was given media coverage, triggered a continuous flow of supporters. Yet, this did not help much in the final manoeuvres of political players.

Even Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of over 30 million members of the *Nahdatul Ulama*, who had initially said he had no problem with a woman becoming president and had staunchly supported Megawati, became her opponent in the eleventh hour. Political manoeuvring further led the way to

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his election as President in what has been called the most democratic elections in 32 years. From a gender perspective, this was a blow to the cause of gender, and democracy.

Noted women's activist and legislator Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, for one, expressed her profound disappointment though she was not a fervent supporter of Megawati. 'I do feel very sad,' she conveyed to reporters immediately after the vote count. Her disappointment particularly referred to the political manoeuvring to prevent Megawati from becoming the President. In fact, many women who had initially been critical of Megawati, came to back the defeated presidential frontrunner. That she has won the Vice-Presidency gives reason to rejoice, yet from a gender perspective, the whole process was disappointing and telling for the position of women.

Concluding remarks

Dramatic as the unfolding of the gender issue has been, the new Cabinet has demonstrated a stronger-than-ever political will towards feminising policies. The placement of three strong women in the current Cabinet significantly deviates from the past and is an encouraging step. What is more, as Vice-President, Megawati, though prevented from getting to the top, is second in command and holds the second highest position of power. As well, she is the first Indonesian woman to be in that position.

Under the new government, women ministers hold real positions. Erna Witoelar as Minister for Human Settlement and Regional Development holds the key to integrating the gender perspective into the usual, one-sided male perspective in these issues. A former NGO activist and founding member the environmental NGO *Walhi* and the influential consumers' NGO *Yayasan Lembaga Konsumen Indonesia*, with long-time national and international experience, Erna has also been an active supporter of the Statement on Women's Political Rights. 'It is very important that I introduce gender-sensitive

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development in the whole set up of this department,' she said in a recent interview after meeting with the media at her Ministry. She envisions that 'this will result in a more human, more environmentally sound, more pro-poor, and children-friendly as well as elderly and disabled-friendly development'.

Khofifah Indar Parawansa has long questioned the *raison d'etre* of the Ministry for Women's Affairs. To everyone's surprise, she was recruited for the job and what was even more astonishing was that she accepted. But Khofifah did not accept without conditions. She demanded that the post holds more authority. Her first move was to change the official title of her office to *Menteri Negara Pemberdayaan Perempuan*, the State Ministry for the Empowerment of Women. She has moved fast, introducing what she calls the one-door policy, meaning that every regulation and law concerning women in all the ministries must come from her office and be legally binding. As well, implementation monitoring will also be in her office. She has also demanded that the National Family Planning Co-ordinating Board (BKKBN) be brought under her office, a demand that has met with great objections form the BKKBN, but has been supported by a statement sent to the President by over a hundred women, including leading activists. The decision is set to change the vision that stressed population control at the expense of the reproductive rights of women, they stated.

Minister Khofifah also wants at least one of three judges on a panel on rape to be a woman.

And last but certainly not least, she has proposed an 18 per cent hike of the Ministry's current budget.

At 34, she is the youngest in the Cabinet but has a proven track record as a bold politician with clear visions. Before she became Minister, she was a proponent of the People's Awakening Party, and a Deputy Chair in the House of Representatives.

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Sinta Nuriyah, the current First Lady, will be an important ally. With an activist's background, whose paralysed underbody never prevented her from taking part in street rallies, she is likely to continue pursuing the objectives that women stand for. The First Lady holds a postgraduate degree from the University of Indonesia's postgraduate program on women's studies, and is a board member of the National Commission on Violence against Women. She is also involved in re-interpreting the *Kitab Kuning*, compulsory reading in *pesantren*, boarding schools for Moslem children. The book, among others, deals with relations between men and women which the First Lady finds degrading for women. As well, she was also a supporter of the Statement calling for Women's Political Rights. In an interview five days after she had entered her new 'position' she declared that she won't limit her role to being her husband's *pendamping* (escort) only. The First Lady has said she will focus on violence against women.

The future will tell how Indonesian women will fare. For now, they have laid down the path to tread, and while going onward, it seems there is no going back.

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17

INDONESIAN WOMEN BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

Mildred L.E. Wagemann

Tidak ada pembantu yang murah di negara yang maju. Tenaga murah merupakan pencerminan dari keterbelakangan[1]

The chapters of this book were written primarily during 1994–1995, and thus they reflect the situation of women during the *Orde Baru* (New Order) which came to an unexpected end in May 1998. During the New Order period, fundamental economic, political and social changes occurred throughout Indonesian society. As the chapters show, women, like other sectors of society, benefited from, fell victim to or took advantage of the development pursued by the New Order.

A brief look at the place of women in the New Order development scheme, as reflected in state planning documents, will provide a background. It will also provide a context for the rapid changes which have contributed to the fall of the New Order government and have taken place in its wake.

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1 'There is no cheap [household] help in a modern country. Cheap labour is a sign of backwardness' (Singarimbun 1992: 92).

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The historical context

The struggle for independence

Modern Indonesia views itself as a post-colonial country, which won its independence through a long and difficult struggle. Women, individually and organisationally, took an early and active part in the fight against the colonial power and thus in the establishment of the modern Indonesian state (Hitipeuw 1970; Kartowijono 1983: 5; Suryochondro 1984: 78–88). Participation in this struggle gave women's organisations early, legitimate roots in the sovereign Indonesian state.

After independence was achieved, political unity eroded progressively in an intensifying competition of specific interests. Women's organisations were not exempt from this political fragmentation (Wieringa 1995: 138; Suryochondro 1984: 169–172).

The events of 1965

The New Order came into being through the coup attempt of 1965. Whereas many observers view this coup attempt as resulting from the intensifying economic and political turmoil under Sukarno, Indonesian political figures and veterans of the independence struggle see it as another in a series of Communist 'betrayals of the values and goals' of their struggle.[2]

This characterisation of the events of 1965 had definite consequences for the ensuing government. Treason and betrayal come from inside and are difficult to guard against, except through tight controls and unceasing vigilance. Fears of further betrayal or treason were kept alive by frequent

2 *Kompas* 1995a; the Lubang Buaya Museum, which details the history of Indonesia leading to the 1965 coup attempt, also conveys this view. It reinforces the ideological foundations of the New Order by underlining the horrors of this betrayal.

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recurring reference to their devastating consequences.[3] The resulting pervasive suspicion[4] shaped responses to criticism and protest, all but equating any public expression of disagreement with communism or betrayal.[5]

Social organisations (ORMAS)

Depoliticisation and control

The events of 1965 and their dreadful aftermath wrought profound changes in Indonesian society. Many of the chapters of this book hint at their importance by frequent, if fleeting, reference to those changes as a 'simplification of political life' (Poerwandari),[6] as a 'continuing tendency to merge' (Suryochondro). These references echo the 1973 GBHN (*Garis-garis Besar Haluan Negara* – Broad Outlines of State Policies)[7] which means 'the organisational simplification of social–political forces' and Law No. 3 of 1975 on Political Organisations which says 'political parties and the Functional Group are established in line with and within the context of the simplification of political parties and functional groups' (Direktori 1994: 405).

This 'simplification' of the once numerous socio-political organisations resulted in an 'intentional depoliticisation'

3 Films, museums and school lessons among others combined to create even in young children a clear awareness of the horrors of the slaying of the generals in the nights of 30 September – 1 October 1965, and of the viciousness of the PKI in betraying the revolution.

4 The military's obsession with such threats is illustrated by a list of alleged frequently used PKI agitation methods. See *Forum* 1995a, 1995b.

5 See the debate on so-called formless organisations and the communist danger in *Forum* 1995b, c; *Suara Pembaruan* 1995; *Kompas* 1995b; *Kleden* 1995; *Jakarta Post* 1995b.

6 Reference in the text to chapters in this book are by author's name, undated.

7 Aziz 1994: 434; references to the various GBHN cite Aziz 1994 which contains all five GBHN up to and including that of 1993.

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(Kleden 1995) which kept the public politically uninvolved in politics through the concept of the *massa mengambang* (floating mass).

An overall national purpose was re-established in the form of National Development. It was to be pursued and supported by all organisations for the welfare of the entire nation and founded on the Constitution of 1945 and the *Pancasila* state ideology (Aziz 1994: 403, 404).

The significance of 1965 for women's organisations

In these fears – real or feigned – of further betrayal lies the importance of the upheavals of 1965 not only for women's organisations but, indeed, for all organisational and public life under the New Order. Like other organisations, women's organisations had reacted to the coup by condemning the PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, and by severing connections with suspect individuals and organisations (Wieringa 1995: 313; Suryochondro 1984: 95) including PKI women and organisations, since they were accused of having participated savagely in this betrayal.[8] These condemnations put women's organisations firmly on the side of the New Order.

Fears of betrayal (*Jakarta Post* 1995a) justified various oppressive controls: censorship, surveillance, assembly permits. As the confidence of the New Order grew, the tight, direct controls were gradually transformed into 'legislative' and 'internalised' forms based on 'full understanding' of the values of the state ideology.[9] Underlying all of these as a

8 See Wieringa (1995) for a detailed discussion of the circumstances.

9 See the emphasis on *penghayatan dan pengamalan kehidupan kenegaraan yang demokratis-konstitusional berlandaskan Pancasila dan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945* (full understanding and implementation of a democratic-constitutional state life based on *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution) (*Ketetapan Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Republik Indonesia, Nomor IV/MPR/1973 Tentang GBHN* paragraph d). Hence the stress on the teaching of the state ideology at all educational levels beginning with the earliest.

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last resort instrument of control, however, was the rather arbitrarily used law on subversion retained from the Old Order.

The law on Social Organisations *Undang Undang* No. 8 of 1985[10] represents the legal formulation of this 'legislative' control on the exercise of the constitutionally guaranteed right to organise. It specifies requirements of registration, membership, financing, organisational structure and the adoption of the state ideology as the only principle of organisation for all social organisations, including women's organisations.[11] Organisations were subjected to government guidance, and must support development. This law and its Explanations and Implementation Guidelines laid out with discouraging simplicity the measures for *membekukan* (freezing) the activities of any organisation viewed as a threat to security and order as well as the eventual measures to disband any organisation that proved recalcitrant (*Direktori* 1994: 452–467).

These requirements and controls together with every citizen's obligation to support the government,[12] combined with the potential consequences of actions that could be construed as violating public security and order, put a premium on demonstrable compliance with policies and programs to protect an organisation's legitimate status.

Organisations demonstrated their acceptance of government guidance by accepting *pengarahan, bimbingan dan pembinaan* (direction, supervision and guidance) (Rahman), as well as technical assistance from ministries and by placing officials on organisational boards.[13] Women's organisations

10 Reference to the Law No. 8, includes its Explanations and Implementation Guidelines, see *Direktori* 1994: 452–459 (law); 460–486 (Explanations and Guideline).

11 *Undang Undang* No. 8, 1985, Chapter 2.

12 The Constitution of 1945, Chapter 10, paragraph 26, states every citizen's obligation to 'uphold/respect the law and the government, without exception'.

13 See the descriptions of organisations in *Direktori* 1994.

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indicated their support for development and government programs by incorporating literacy, health, and other programs into their own plans, and formulating the latter in official development terms. This resulted in a remarkable level of uniformity in diverse women's organisations throughout the New Order.

Views of women

Official view: women and development

The Constitution of 1945 is cited by many women as the bulwark protecting their basic rights. Yet it does not refer to women specifically, but only to the political roles of representatives, citizens, delegates and others drawing no distinctions between male and female citizens.

'National Development', *tujuan nasional*, was not only the national goal but also the justification for social, political and economic measures taken to realise it. All citizens were expected to accept it and participate in its pursuit. General Soeharto had reminded a mass meeting of women in 1965 not to forget themselves like the communist women but to maintain their identity as Indonesian women, as mothers (Wieringa 1995: 313), thus laying out the role women would be expected to play in the future.

The first GBHN, issued in 1973, discussed women's role in development under the larger rubric of 'Religion, Belief in God and Social Cultural Matters'. It focused on the family context as follows (Aziz 1994: 432):

> Guidance of the prosperous family is an instrument for guidance of the young generation. For the guidance of that [prosperous] family, women's rights are guaranteed and their position in society is protected.

That is to say, women's contribution to the national purpose was to be made in the family context and their rights were protected in that context.

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Uncontrolled population growth was a recognised danger to development and the GBHN emphasised the need for the KB (*Keluarga Berencana*, family planning) program. It made the connection between KB and the 'prosperous' family,[14] yet did not specifically mention women, the focus of the program. It stressed the need for education, training and research to facilitate acceptance of birth control in order to promote family welfare and welfare of the people through the small, prosperous and happy family (Aziz 1994: 429). Almost inevitably the number of women birth control acceptors became a measure of progress. In 1980 when visiting the Sintiong transmigration site, I was proudly shown a graph of the steadily rising number of KB acceptors as a sign of advances in health.

The 1978 GBHN recognised the need for women's participation in *segala bidang* (all fields), but cautioned that this participation does 'not reduce their role in promoting the prosperous family' (Aziz 1994: 388-389).

In 1983 GBHN suggested that women work at 'improving family welfare through, among others, the *PKK*', Family Welfare Movement (Aziz 1994: 330). Subsequent GBHNs maintained this emphasis on the PKK,[15] as an organisation with a basic role in development. By 1983, women's rights, obligations and opportunities had steadily expanded, and the GBHN recognised women as 'equal to men in all development activities' (Aziz 1994: 329–330). The next GBHN (1988) again broadened the scope of women's participation in development, but still anchored their position firmly in the family environment (Aziz 1994: 256).

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14 Under the heading *Kesehatan dan Keluarga Berencana* (Health and Family Planning) but under the larger topic of *Bidang Agama dan Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, Sosial Budaya* (Religion and Belief in God, Social Cultural Matters), Aziz 1994: 428–430.

15 For 1993 GBHN, see Aziz 1994: 134; for 1988 GBHN, see Aziz 1994: 156).

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In recognition of changing reality, the 1993 GBHN suggests the creation of 'a social cultural climate which is more supportive to the effort of raising the *harkat* (dignity) and *martabat* (status) of women to enable them to play a greater role in society and in the family' while taking into account their 'nature, dignity and status' (Aziz 1994: 134).

A more recent, elaborated formulation of the Family Planning program paid greater attention to social, religious and health indicators. It still saw women as playing the pivotal role in improving family welfare through four progressive levels of prosperity (from *pra-sejahtera* ['pre-prosperous'] to *sejahtera* ['prosperous'] III plus) (Prisma 1994: 67). As the network of families constituting the nation progressed economically, the nation too would finally prosper (Suyono 1994).

From adjunct to partner

As a wife and mother, a woman was '*pendamping suami*',[16] an adjunct to her husband. Wives of government employees were required to join the wives' organisations paralleling the bureaucratic structures in which their husbands worked (Buchori and Soenarto). The educational level of women is often considerably lower than that of their husbands. Through membership in these organisations women became conversant with the world of their husbands' professional environment and were drawn into the wider sphere of official life.

The official ideological preference for women's place in the family and the home has not been able to ignore the reality of working women. As the chapters in this book illustrate, women are active in many environments outside the home. They are a significant and growing proportion of the workforce.[17]

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16 'She who stands by the side of her husband'. Before 1988, the terms used to describe women in their participation in development are *kaum wanita, wanita*, etc. (i.e. women). See Aziz 1994.

17 Four out of every ten workers are female.

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The emphasis in the GBHN on the *harkat*, *kodrat* and *martabat* of women (Aziz 1994: 135) paralleled the gradual shift to reliance on 'internalised' ideological values. These values also characterise the conservative education and socialisation relating to women, already mentioned above.

Criticism of the definition of women in terms of their husbands (*pendamping suami*), the growing economic need for the labour of women, educational advances and international promotion of equality for women have contributed to a new definition in the 1993 GBHN of women as *mitra sejajar* (equal partners of men) in the pursuit of development. The 'partnership', which now recognises both a public and a domestic role, *keluarga dan masyaraka*, for women (Aziz 1994: 134, 135), however, still stipulates attention to the *kodrat*, *harkat* and *martabat* of women.

No provisions were made for 'all opportunities' for women, regarding institutional changes, such as the creation of child-care centres and other professional means of lightening household burdens.[18] Women's roles and responsibilities were simply redefined by adding functions and responsibilities and burdening them with contradictory and incompatible expectations.[19]

In practice, these contradictions are usually resolved by shifting the household burden of women working outside the home to other women hired as servants at low wages.

Images of women in film and literature

The ideologically preferred image of women as wives and mothers is reflected in the treatment of women in popular films (Aripurnami) and in literature (Sumardjo). The perceived 'natural' place of women in society reflects a traditional

18 These facilities are beginning to appear in various environments, see *Kompas* 1994, 1995c.

19 See Loekman Soetrisno's view of this as a dilemma in Ridjal *et al.* 1993: 108.

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stereotype in a changing social environment. Its strength is shown by the cruel, harsh and criminal treatment which women encounter when they go outside this 'natural' sphere and which contrasts sharply with the kindly tolerance they meet within their natural, familial surroundings. For example, rape answers a woman's plans to study abroad, a wayward husband is the consequence of a woman's dedication to her profession, premarital sex is punished by rape (Aripurnami).

Dangers perceived as inherent in female sexuality and irrationality in the face of problems combine to underline the need for women to remain within their 'natural' world as good wives and mothers, under the direction, supervision and guidance of their husbands, otherwise they may again 'forget themselves'. Even women directors, pioneers in a film world dominated by men, succumb to these stereotypes (Aripurnami).

Portrayals of women by women writers tend to echo the concerns and struggles of women's organisations, such as polygamy, barrenness, desire for education, family ties, and choice of marriage partner (Sumardjo). Burdened by traditional norms and family demands, women are seen as helpless victims of their environment. Powerless and trapped in situations they cannot change, they, at times, take daring steps to escape their bonds, only to suffer the bitter consequences of their initiative.

Economic emphasis in development

Because of its heavy economic emphasis, Indonesian National Development has defined human, social and cultural phenomena as either obstacles to development or as means and tools useful for solving the problems of development. Thus, the 1973 GBHN contains references to 'spiritual and mental capital' (Aziz 1994: 406). The 1988 and 1993 GBHN refer to women as *sumber (daya) insani* (living resources) who will contribute to development in line with their essential nature.

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This economic pragmatism of the development perspective reinforced the tendency towards control resulting from fears of betrayal mentioned above (*Forum* 1995a). Together they contributed to the excesses in the pursuit of development reported by newspapers from all areas of Indonesia, in which human beings, too, became capital, resources, tools, bargaining chips, problems or hindrances to development and are no longer seen as human beings with ideas, goals and needs. This dehumanising language facilitated the indifferent treatment of people as impersonal factors or objects.

It depersonalised the forcible eviction of people from their homes or land to make way for golf courses, plantations, apartment buildings, or forest concessions, which make larger contributions to development revenues – and the pockets of developers – than traditional economic or cultural activities. An alliance of economic and political power in the pursuit of development treated people with blatant disregard for their rights and their hardships. Entire communities, men, women and children, were frequently relegated to an impoverished existence: their traditional lives disrupted and a satisfactory modern life impossible.

Social values, too, have become extensions of economic needs, which view and treat human beings – women and men – as 'living resources' to be used or misused, like forest resources, mineral resources, natural resources and financial resources.[20] Human beings become commodities which must be *siap pakai* (ready for use – students) or be improved in quality (mothers – see above); goods which are traded in return for revenue (TKI, *Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* – Indonesian Overseas Workers; and specifically TKW, *Tenaga Kerja Wanita* – or Women Workers); or articles to be made use of until their usefulness for development has ended (foreign workers). At times they are disparagingly viewed as economic

20 See the comments of Fuad Hasan, former Minister of Education, on the 'Dehumanisation of Education', *Media Indonesia* 1995.

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loss factors in development – as through pregnancy and maternity leave (*Kompas* 18 December 1995: 3).

Education

Education has long been seen as an essential factor in development and *wajib belajar*, compulsory education, has been extended to nine years. Although girls increasingly go on to higher levels of education, the general educational level of Indonesian women is still low. Reportedly, 82.1 per cent of Indonesian women have not received more than an elementary school education (*Jayakarta* 1 May 1995: 9). In a workforce of approximately 80 million, 57.8 million have an educational level of elementary school or less (BPS 1994a: 65). Only 1.5 per cent of Indonesian women have had a university education, according to Soekanto (1999). Through books, activities and the attitudes and behaviour of teachers and officials, this limited early education continues to underline sexual stereotypes and to reinforce among girls as well as among boys the traditional, domestic role of girls.[21]

Law

Women who took part in the fight for independence observe that many of the rights for which they fought have been legally realised but remain to be implemented (Rambe). They point to laws on labour, education, marriage and maternity. Undoubtedly, there has been progress in law, yet

21 The pictures in a series of PMP (*Pendidikan Moral Pancasila*) school books show boys in active roles, receiving scholarships, working with their fathers, and girls with mothers, frequently sweeping, at home, while boys are more actively involved in away-from-home activities (Kansil *et al.* 1990, 1992). A fourth-grade book on *Pendidikan Jasmani* (physical education) shows exercises to be done by elementary school children. Although it is filled with drawings, not a single one shows a girl exercising (Sidik 1989).

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implementation remains flawed (see Dellyana 1988). The socio-economic structure has been shaped largely by a reliance on cheap labour and facilities to encourage development,[22] and this has led to perversions and violations of the law.

Despite advanced laws protecting women's rights, few women have been able to reach decision-making positions. For example, by August 1994, only one woman was found among the 17 members on the Central Board of the PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*), one of the two then recognised political parties. At the same date, only two out of 20 members on the board of PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, the second political party) were women. The laws providing for equal access to education or jobs are not yet effective in dealing with the discrimination women meet in the course of their lives or careers. In fact, laws once passed to protect women against exploitation are now used to keep them from employment.[23]

In some factories, protective labour laws have given Indonesian women workers social benefits, health insurance and other support (Suara Pembaruan 1993a). In others the laws are ignored and women suffer severe discrimination in wages and treatment as well as routine personal humiliations (Suara Pembaruan 1993a). Despite minimum wage laws, workers in some industries are paid less than the legal wage and women often are paid still less than male workers (Arya Putra 1994).

Threats of humiliation or job loss prevent women from demanding their legal rights and perpetuate ill-treatment and discrimination. The arbitrary application of the laws results from an enforcement failure allied with economic exploitation.

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22 Although the labour force is becoming more skilled, and thus more expensive, the low cost of labour and facilities is still used as an inducement to attract foreign investment to Indonesia.

23 This applies to laws once preventing women from working at night. Today they are used to give preferential treatment to male workers.

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None of this is legal, yet it continues and the victims have little recourse. Development priorities predominate and so the law can affect these situations only in an ad hoc manner if they, by chance, become public knowledge.

Legal experts predict that a variety of factors will work to control such rights abuses in the future. At present, however, the personal cost to poorly paid women workers is still high. When they demand just treatment, they may lose not only their jobs but their very lives (see *Tempo* 1993; Kusumah 1993; *Forum* 1995d).

Economic differentiation and women's concerns

The chapters in this book illustrate Sadli's observation that it is not easy to determine 'who the Indonesian woman is'. The women described include wives of high-ranking officials, with leading positions in government-associated women's organisations, as well as independent women who work alone or, at most, with the support of their families; home-based workers living in urban slums as well as poor village women fighting, seemingly alone, for their livelihood. Their occupations include professional managers and artists. Some of the women were active participants in the struggle for independence while others are wealthy urban housewives, preoccupied with family matters. Many of them are married and/or have families, others are unmarried.

From necessity to preference

The women encountered in this book can be viewed along a continuum reaching from dire necessity to wilful preference. At one extreme are those with little choice in their home life or their work (*Jakarta Post* 1994a). Driven by necessity, they are engaged in a daily struggle for subsistence. All aspects of their lives are coloured by the immediacy of this struggle. At the other extreme are women who can not only take subsistence for granted but can exercise almost unlimited

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choice even in frivolous aspects of their lives. Most, however, fall somewhere between the two extremes.

Shared concerns, different meanings

Even though this book illustrated great diversity among women, their backgrounds, activities and goals, it does define a variety of concerns that have driven women and women's organisations since the beginning of the women's movement (Rambe, Suryochondro). Loosely summarised as profession or work, self and family, religion, education, health and community, they reach across the social, religious and economic spectrum. They do, however, have a different significance for women at different points of the continuum.

Necessity

In all these areas, women who are struggling daily for subsistence are limited by their own economic position.[24] Their work is critical for their families on a daily basis. Family members will suffer; education, health services, religious activities, will be negatively affected immediately if the women do not work every day. While they are essential to the support of their families, they have few of the formal skills required in the 'job world'. Often their families are broken, they are without husbands.[25] They have no choice in what work to do, but must take whatever is available and are at the mercy of clients who may not pay appropriately, or of factories and agents who may not deliver work regularly (Hartiningsih, Djamal). In all spheres these women depend

24 These women fall into the category now described as *prasejahtera*. See Achir 1994; *Suara Pembaruan* 3 October 1995: 8; and compare with the stories in Ihromi *et al.* 1991.

25 In 1990, nearly 3.5 million women household heads (out of a total of 5.267 million) had an educational level of elementary school or less (BPS 1994b: 13). In 2.2 million of these families, only one person worked (BPS 1994b: 28).

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on others. As several chapters show, those with a precarious subsistence are at the receiving end of improvement programs, KB programs, educational programs, health initiatives, religious undertakings and social programs which are planned for them.

Informal workers have no welfare guarantees, protection or social benefits (Djamal); these women have developed a passive, resigned acceptance that enables them to cope with the uncertainties of their lives. Expressions such as 'Maybe this is all I am meant to have', 'It it fate!' or 'I leave it in God's hands' reflect their resignation to enduring vicissitudes such as poor or uncertain pay, a husband's new wife, a sick child or husband, and irregular work. Pressure and uncertainty have rendered them vulnerable and fearful: 'Maybe I will even lose this, if I complain' (Hartiningsih).

Women caught in the daily struggle for survival live in a circumscribed world. The women are not even aware of their rights; concepts of equality or equal opportunity have little immediate relevance. It is these women for whom the battle for women's rights is most pertinent.

Personal preference

Education has prepared some women to work, not out of necessity but rather for their own personal interest and development in almost any sphere of life. For these women work, education, family, religion are all matters of choice and preference (Sitepu). Their responses to health and family problems, too, are full of choices and alternatives, depending on preference. These women are active, run businesses, make decisions involving not only themselves and their families, but also outsiders (Simamora, Rahman, Djamal). They see themselves as liberated from traditional ties, and they are aware of their rights. Yet they do not always demand them. Family and children are given as reasons for acquiescence to polygamy, giving up jobs, enduring harassment (Sitepu). In business, they give preference

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to sons despite a daughter's demonstrated abilities; they give up jobs or careers at marriage; and they do not insist on their inheritance rights (Sitepu, Simamora).

Even though they may be successful career women, some women in this group still act according to, or have returned to, the traditional values which define men as heads of families and breadwinners.

The world of these women is larger and more open. They are conscious of rights of personal freedom, of development and of equal rights in work, profession, and social and family life. At times, exercising their freedom to choose, they opt for traditional norms of dependence.

Organisational involvement of women

Women's involvement in non-government-associated organisations is largely a matter of personal choice and requires at least a certain level of education and economic ease. Their involvement tends to differ not only by type of organisation, by reasons for joining organisations, but also in their position vis-à-vis the organisation.

Some women join the wives' organisations (including *Dharma Wanita*, or *Dharma Pertiwi*) attached to their husbands' workplaces. In these organisations they undertake activities and programs deemed supportive of development. Others join professional or social organisations in line with their own interests, religion or occupations, where they may also devise activities to bolster government programs. Depending on their socio-economic level, women either are beneficiaries or targets of organisations or they are organisational leaders or patrons who develop projects aimed at clients.

Social organisations – ORMAS

Organisational involvement ties women into a larger social sphere. Through ideological and organisational requirements

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the ORMAS law attempted to ensure that this involvement conformed to stipulated patterns.

The PKK (Family Welfare Association), a channel for advancing the wellbeing of families, no longer appears to be 'a movement for development that grew from the bottom up' (Aziz 1994: 134). Instead, its activities seem to be organised from the top down, not unlike the organisations associated with civil and military service (*Jakarta Post* 1999b), and women attend if they are able to spare time or energy (see Ihromi *et al.* 1991).

Regular involvement in organisational activities is not possible for women with a precarious subsistence. Their time and energy are dedicated to their own and their families' day-to-day survival. As subsistence grows more secure, women begin to participate in non-economic out-of-home activities, which at times acquire something of a recreational character (see Rustam 1993: 15). Other spare time organisational activities are relatively 'traditional' in form, such as prayer meetings, and religious study or service (Poerwandari, Marcoes-Natsir).

On occasion the organisational involvement becomes all-encompassing, as it did for the women (Marcoes-Natsir) in the somewhat undefined but pervasive environment of *Aisyiyah*. While it has grown out of their effort to be useful in their community, their participation in *Aisyiyah* has extended to embrace their social (private, family and organisational), economic and religious lives. Other women do not feel a need for organisational participation, but rely on family and personal support for their volunteer efforts to be of use to the larger community. These enterprises, too, may become all-encompassing (Simamora).

Non-governmental organisations – NGOs

NGOs represent a special type of organisational involvement. They have grown out of criticism of prevailing conditions and a desire to improve these rather than out of common

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goals with the state. Client- or problem-focused, they search for other-than-prescribed solutions, they view themselves as sources of information and alternative approaches to problem issues. They act where the government cannot or does not reach (*Jakarta Post* 1994c), either because of its uniform, rigid top-down approach, or because of simple failure to notice certain problems, or for other reasons.[26] Women's NGOs, in particular, try to find solutions for issues affecting women, such as labour, violence against women, overseas workers, women's health, and career and employment.

The NGOs' 'alternative' organisational form, however, does not fit the ORMAS model. As foundations (or *yayasan*), NGOs tend to have very few members who work together to solve specific and often pressing problems. For financing they depend on outside, often foreign, sources. Because of their high level of education, their members tend to be observant and critical, confident and vocal. They are not necessarily opposed to government programs and goals, but tend to analyse these programs critically, with an eye to the consequences for their clients.

Their critical stance and independence present an ideological and practical problem for a government preoccupied with conformity, consensus and control. Regarded with profound suspicion, not lightened by their international ties and dependencies, they are vulnerable to political charges. Recent efforts to exert control over NGOs, and new tax rules for *yayasan*, may have been partly motivated by wariness of their dubious independence and suspect criticism.

This book presents an overall picture of change filled with contradictions. The goals of development are not viewed identically by all Indonesians, nor are they within equal reach of all.

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26 NGOs seem to increase in number and activity as social problems intensify. This has been noticed in China where foreign investment has had a negative effect on the position of women. See *Jakarta Post* 1994d.

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Progress has been achieved not only in education,[27] but also in health, in legal matters, social services, and economic and financial fields. Women at all economic levels have benefited. Yet large numbers of women – and men – have been left out. Others have been victimised, their interests subordinated to economic interests justified by development.

New professions, new ideas, demands and values have been drawing and pushing women into the public sector and into new roles and new forms of organisations. These organisations and their calls for change, equality, justice and democracy are products of the New Order's social, economic and educational policies. They should be viewed as products of government policies, and be accommodated as such. Instead, they have become problematic for a government preoccupied with consensus and compliance, which has tended to dismiss and disregard differences of all types. It has found disagreement and protest difficult to handle politically and ideologically and often has met them with harsh responses.

27 Educational statistics report a 30 per cent decline in the percentage of women who neither attended school nor graduated from elementary school in the period from 1971 to 1990. This is accompanied by increases in the number of women in all other educational categories. See Priyono 1994: Table 1.

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EPILOGUE

Economic crisis of 1997

Even before the economic crisis struck Indonesia in mid-1997, social cohesion and control had been breaking down.[28]

The very creation of problem-specific institutions such as *Komnas Ham* (National Human Rights Commission), alternative labour organisations, women's NGOs and indigenous people's organisations indicate that certain groups were bypassed or victimised by development. The declining cohesion also was manifest in pervasive feelings of insecurity and fear (Soekarnoputri 1995), and powerlessness; in conflicts of many types — religious, ethnic, economic. Growing demands for justice, equality and clean government reflected the erosion of solidarity, and the failure of the paradigm. The government reaction to these always underlined the economic factors involved. Development must not be endangered, to do so is tantamount to subversion.

Protest and control

Growing dissent (or threats, from the government's perspective) and demands were answered with increasing violence by the security apparatus.[29] Yet, defiantly, protests proliferated, steadily growing in number. Even the passage of a new law (UU No. 9 of 1998 on *Unjuk Rasa* or demonstrations) stressing the public's right to demonstrate had little effect in regulating public protest: 69.5 per cent of demonstrations ignored the new rules (Sianipar 1999). Calls for more

28 See *Newsweek* 1997, which lists anti-Chinese riots from 1994. Schwarz (1999) mentions Christian sources reporting more than 500 churches burnt in 1998. These incidents reflect the growing tensions within Indonesian society as a whole; they should not be seen as random or isolated happenings.

29 Murder, kidnappings, tortures and brutal response to demonstrations.

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democracy, freedom of the press, an end to corruption and adherence to human rights proliferated.

Through the crisis, economic and socio-political divisions and inequalities were becoming more glaringly obvious. As a result, collapse in nearly all economic sectors precipitated an open political crisis. The *tujuan nasional*, the national goal of development, hitherto the compelling justification both for denying differences and for suppressing demands for change, became ultimately untenable.

Ineffectiveness of response

Authoritarian and manipulative policies, for example interference with the Batak Church and the PDI, institutional violence, coercion and intimidation, the New Order's time-honoured means for handling dissent, were no longer effective.

Education, globalisation, and economic and technological advances had provided the public with resources not available in the 1960s at the beginning of the New Order. Now, government statements were easily challenged and alternatives disseminated through modern communications.

Protests and demonstrations intensified in 1998, after Soeharto was 're-elected' to yet another term of President. In May 1998, widespread protests answered his elimination of fuel subsidies. The shooting of student protesters by unknown forces at Trisakti University led to rioting and many people died in what are widely believed to have been orchestrated riots (see Schwartz 1999: 356). Businesses, many of them Chinese-owned, were burnt and large numbers of Chinese girls and women were raped in what was apparently an organised and targeted action.

After Soeharto's fall in the wake of these riots, the breakdown of cohesion and control continued. The military, increasingly discredited and internally divided, no longer had the discipline or the authority to act effectively to counteract the threatening chaos.

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Women in the crisis

Increasingly, hardships generated by the crisis touched the lives of women directly and harshly in those spheres into which New Order ideology had so determinedly placed them: the family and the home. Prices were rising: staple foods, clothing, essential services such as health were slowly getting beyond the reach of many. Women joined protests in open contradiction to the stereotype of the woman lovingly labouring at home for her family. Mothers and wives joined professionals, labourers, academics and politicians in declaring their concern for human rights abuses, rising prices, unemployment, corruption and many other issues (Bianpoen).

Many women were enraged by the rapes reported during the May riots and by the government's callous response. Their anger fuelled further protests. New organisations and alliances sprang up to deal with the effects of economic adversity and the consequences of violence.

Fear and vulnerability

Since early colonial times, the Chinese had often served as a lightning rod for discontent and anger. Yet the systematic targeting of Chinese women in the rapes in May spread shock and outrage. It also crystallised a new consciousness of vulnerability among many, not only Chinese, women and Christians, who suddenly perceived their own powerlessness. This awareness precipitated resort to the last-ditch primordial defences indicated in the declarations scribbled on shops and houses: *Milik Pribumi* (Native-owned), *Milik Muslim Jawa Asli* (Native Javanese Moslem-owned), *Milik Muslim Pribumi* (Native Moslem-owned) and so forth.

The economy continued in shambles. Riots cost many lives: Semanggi in November of 1998, Ketapang about ten days later, Sambas (West Kalimantan), East Java, Aceh, Ambon, Timor. In these riots, long-harboured resentment born of coercion broke into the open either spontaneously,

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sparked by chance occurrence, or through purposeful provocation. In all instances the suffering was intense and did not bypass women and children.

Women and the election

The growing awareness of vulnerability played an important role in the general public's enthusiasm for the election with its promise of reform and recovery.

The parliamentary election in June 1999 was won by the PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), a party born out of the New Order government's interference in the internal affairs of the PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*) when that party showed signs of developing into an effective opposition in mid-1998. The party, which is headed by a woman, obtained the largest number of seats in the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly) and this gave its chairperson, Megawati Soekarnoputri, a chance at the presidency.

When the prospect of a woman president became suddenly real (see *D&R* 1999), resistance to her presidency grew. Debate on interpretation of religious principles on leadership flourished. Rumours regarding her intellectual capacity, leadership capabilities, understanding of problems, curiously reflected the stereotypes of women seen in movies and in literature as well as in the New Order ideology regarding women.

Yet, in light of her enduring leadership of her party throughout its confrontation with the Soeharto government in 1996, her abilities appear to have survived some rigorous challenges. She did, however, incur the hostility of women by her failure to stand up against mistreatment of women by her own supporters during the election campaign (Soekanto 1999).

Women participated in large numbers in the election campaigns, and not only women students and activists. They voted in larger numbers than did men, making up, by some reports, 57 per cent of about 100 million voters in the June election (Soekanto 1999; *Kompas* 1999a).

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After the June election women continued to join protests and demonstrations in their fight for a variety of causes, including political demands for democracy, an end to military dominance and violence, and economic issues such as poverty, employment and corruption.

Women and political power

Women's increased participation in politics did not bring them greater formal power. Having lost her bid for the presidency, Megawati became instead Vice-President. A coalition of reformists, conservatives, Moslems and New Order politicians defeated her, even in an MPR (People's Consultative Assembly) elected amidst slogans of *kedaulatan rakyat, demokrasi* (people's sovereignty, democracy).

The greater participation of women in the election did not translate into formal institutional power. With only 45 women or about 9 per cent of members, the new 500-member DPR (House of People's Representatives) for the 1999–2004 period contains fewer women than did the DPR for 1992–1997 with 62 women, or the DPR elected in 1997 which counted 58 women members (*Kompas* 1999a). It was noted, however, that their quality had improved, and they were no longer *titipan*, placed there as agents of special interests. Indonesia now has its first female Vice-President. In light of the President's reportedly fragile health, this has more than symbolic significance. Yet the new Cabinet contains only two women ministers.

Conclusion

The ideological constraints of the New Order are gone and with them the official image of women as mothers and wives. In her acceptance speech, Megawati did say to her followers: '*Ibumu berdiri disini* ...' (Your mother is standing here [watching you?]), projecting once again the image of

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the nation as a family, something that may again have conservative implications for women.

Numerous women have entered the public arena during the crisis as advocates, critics and reformers on legal, economic, social or political matters and on issues relating specifically to women. Their voices have been amplified through the mass media with their new-found freedoms to inform, criticise and to offer alternatives. Yet women have been denied a substantial presence in the formal political structure, even though that body now includes people from a greater variety of backgrounds (see *Kompas* 1999a: Table 2).

A relatively small number of women, some already active before the crisis, are seen again and again: note the duplication in the membership of the various organisations and actions described in Bianpoen's chapter. Generally urban, educated professionals, they are expected to carry on the fight for the advancement of women (see *Kompas* 1999b). They will be supported in this fight by others who have gained political and organisational experience during the social, political and economic crisis.

Whether women will soon be able to take their place as informed citizens free of the guardianship of others, government or NGO, acting in their name, remains to be seen (*Kompas* 1999c, d).

International attention to women's issues, a more open and responsive government, less coercion, less corruption, more creative education, and an improving economy all have roles to play. Yet the coalition which defeated a woman's bid for the presidency remains powerful because it unites deeply rooted beliefs and interests.

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Annie Bertha Simamora, now retired, was for many years a journalist with the *Suara Pembaruan* newspaper, specialising in foreign affairs. A graduate of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Department of Communications, University of Indonesia, she is currently active in social work.

Binny Buchori is the Executive Secretary of INFID, the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development. She has been active in a range of non-government organisations, and holds a Master's degree in Library Sciences from the University College of Wales.

Carla Bianpoen is a freelance journalist/writer, with a special interest in art and culture, women and development. She studied social science at the Wilhelms Universitaet in Muenster/ Westfalen, Germany.

Chamsiah Djamal, an active campaigner for the economic empowerment of women, has built a career in the women's movement. She graduated from the Law Faculty of the Sunan Kalijaga IAIN in Yogyakarta, and is now Executive Director of Paluma Foundation, where her work focuses on micro-enterprise development, and its impact on women.

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Elizabeth Kristi Poerwandari is a lecturer in the Women's Studies postgraduate program and in the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Indonesia. The author of a number of short stories, she is involved in research into women's issues and the psychology of women. She is a member of the Women's Convention Watch at the University of Indonesia.

Hanna Rambe is a long-time author. Her short stories have appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers, and a number have been published in Australia as part of an anthology of Indonesian women writers.

Henny Supolo Sitepu graduated from the Faculty of Letters, University of Indonesia. She is a writer of short stories, and is involved in a number of social and educational organisations, including *Yayasan Anakku* (My Child Foundation) and the *Yayasan Mitra Netra* (Friends of the Blind Foundation). She is also a member of *Kelompok Kajian Perempuan dan Islam* (Women and Islam Discussion Group).

Jacob Sumardjo is a critic of art, culture and literature, as well as a teacher of theatre at the Indonesian Dance Academy in Bandung (ASTI Bandung). He studied history at IKIP Bandung (*Institut Keguruan Ilmu Pendidikan* — Teachers Training College).

Lies Marcoes-Natsir is active in an organisation conducting research on *pesantren* and the community. A social and gender analysis trainer, she has recently obtained her Master's degree in medical anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. She is a graduate of the IAIN (State Islamic Institute) in Jakarta, where she majored in comparative religion.

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Maria M. Hartiningsih is a senior reporter at the *Kompas* daily newspaper, and a student in the Women's Studies postgraduate program at the University of Indonesia. She has won several awards, including the UN Habitat award for best writer on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987). She received a similar award from the Leadership Program for the Environment and Development of the *Yayasan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan* (Foundation for Sustainable Development) in Jakarta, which is funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, New York.

Mayling Oey-Gardiner is a social science researcher with a keen interest in gender concerns from a human resource perspective. Most of her research activities are conducted through *Insan Hitawasana Sejahtera*, a social science research and consulting firm where she is Executive Director. She holds Master's degrees in sociology and population studies from the College of William and Mary and from Harvard University, as well as a PhD in demography from the Australian National University. An active women's rights campaigner, she is also a lecturer in the Economics Faculty of the University of Indonesia.

Mildred L.E. Wagemann has a PhD in Development Sociology from Cornell University. She is a freelance writer and translator who lives in Jakarta.

Sita Aripurnami obtained her undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Indonesia, and a Master's degree in gender studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science. A founding member of *Kalyanamitra*, a non-government women's organisation, she is currently the co-ordinator of *Indonesia Masa Depan* (Indonesia of the Future), a project of the National Human Rights Commission.

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Sukanti Suryochondro (b.1915) pioneered women's studies in Indonesia. She graduated from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia, where she subsequently became a lecturer and researcher on women's studies. She is the author of *Potret Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Portrait of the Indonesian Women's Movement), published in 1984. She continues to take a keen interest in women's issues.

Toeti Heraty Roosseno is a noted figure in the Indonesian community. She graduated from the Medical School at the University of Indonesia (UI) and followed that up with studies in the Netherlands in psychology and philosophy. She obtained her Doctorate from the Faculty of Letters at UI in 1979. She is currently Professor of Philosophy there and was head of the Department of Philosophy for 9 years. As a noted poet and writer she has continually articulated her empathy with women in her many publications — the latest being *Calon Arang, Victim of Patriarchy*, published in 2000. Besides the arts and letters, Toeti Heraty is also active in various other domains of social life. Sharply criticising male dominance in every phase of life and culture, she is forever spurring feminist thought but never once forgetting her feminine features.

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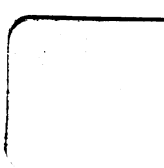
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INDONESIAN WOMEN The Journey Continues

Editors Mayling Oey-Gardiner & Carla Bianpoen

Indonesian Women: The Journey Continues is a book about Indonesian women written (with one exception) by Indonesian women. Through a series of provocative and unflinching essays it provides a perspective on the concerns and aspirations of Indonesian women in a wide variety of social, cultural, religious, economic and organizational contexts. It carries their struggle through the repressive years of the Suharto regime and into the recent period of crisis and rapid political adjustment.

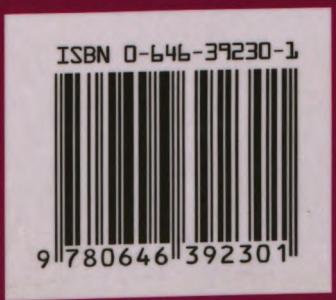
Above all, it is a book about continuity and change in the roles women play in society, and how women have and continue to fare in what remains essentially a man's world. It deals with both success and failure. While seeking to accurately reflect continuing issues and concerns through the voice of women, it also seeks to express their aspirations and hopes for the future. It is an Indonesian story, but it evokes themes of much more universal relevance and importance. It is for this reason that it is being brought out now, through this English translation, to a wider audience.

Indonesian Women: The Journey Continues is an English version of a work, titled *Perempuan Indonesia: Dulu dan Kini* edited by Mayling Oey-Gardiner, Mildred Wageman, Evelyn Suleeman and Sulastri. It was originally published in Indonesian in 1996 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama/Jakarta to mark the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing.

Cover: *Irreversible Passage* by Astari Rasjid



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