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Soeara 'Aisjijah Magazine and the Preparation of Indonesian Muslim Women to Anticipate the Arrival of Japanese Occupation Forces (1941–1942)

Muhammad Yuanda Zara*


This study discusses how *Soeara 'Aisjijah* magazine, the official publication of the Indonesian Muslim women's organization 'Aisyiyah, prepared its readers to anticipate the arrival of Japanese occupation forces in 1941–42. From this study it is clear that *Soeara 'Aisjijah* did not only contain progressive religious advice for Muslim women, as has been thought so far. The magazine also displayed an awareness of the global political map that changed quickly between 1940 and 1942. This magazine gave its Indonesian Muslim women readers information about the latest events in the international world so that they were aware of what was happening outside Indonesia. In addition, the magazine's hatred of ruthless Japanese troops led it to prepare readers with various strategies for dealing with the possible arrival of Japanese forces, including calls such as the following: (1) women must be able to keep their safety and honor during wartime; (2) women must participate in defending the nation and the motherland; (3) women must teach their children how to protect themselves from the enemy; (4) men must protect their wives and sisters; and (5) Muslims must always have faith in Allah in the midst of war. This study shows that Indonesian Muslim women had an attitude of resistance against the Japanese even before the Japanese reached Java and that *Soeara 'Aisjijah* magazine was dedicated to calling upon Indonesian women to take part in efforts to defend themselves, their families, their nation, and their homeland from foreign enemies in the Southeast Asian theater of World War II.

Keywords: women, war, occupation, media use, 'Aisyiyah, gender role, nationalism, Islam

Introduction

Founded in 1917, 'Aisyiyah is the oldest women's organization in Indonesia that still exists today. With its slogan, "Progressive Muslim women's movement," 'Aisyiyah has

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participated in various ways to advance Muslim women over the last hundred years. It manages numerous charitable services, including in the health sector (hospitals, maternity clinics, pharmacies), education (educational institutions at various levels, from kindergarten to university), welfare (orphanages), the economic sector (for example, cooperatives), and law and human rights (for example, in the form of legal assistance) in various parts of Indonesia ('Aisyiyah 2019; Anonymous n.d.[a]).

Its influence has been widely recognized by researchers, as seen from various studies on 'Aisyiyah. A number of studies, both in their entirety and in passing, examine the organization's ideas and activities, for example, its views on education and social progress for women (It 2005), social services for the poor and displaced (Latief 2010; Sciortino *et al.* 2010), views on women's leadership in a male-dominated social and political space (van Doorn-Harder 2002; Blackburn 2008; Kurniawati 2008), and views on monogamy and polygamy in Islam (Locher-Scholten 2000). A few studies on *Soeara 'Aisjijah* are concentrated primarily on its role as 'Aisyiyah's internal medium and as a medium for spreading the ideas of Islamic reformism of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah among Indonesian Muslim women (Syukmawati 2010; Sely 2016), while several other studies use the magazine as a source to understand 'Aisyiyah's Islamic reformist thinking (Hatley and Blackburn 2000; Blackburn 2004; White 2004; van Doorn-Harder 2006; Krida 2016).

The above studies have helped us to better understand 'Aisyiyah and the rise of reformist Muslim women in Indonesia. However, to my knowledge, no serious studies have been conducted to understand 'Aisyiyah's participation in anticipating the arrival of Japanese occupation forces in 1942, one of the key events that changed Indonesia and Southeast Asia in the twentieth century. In Indonesian historiography, especially on the theme of women and the Japanese occupation, the topics generally discussed are sexual slaves (*jugun ianfu*) and the participation of Indonesian women in Japanese-formed organizations (Hicks 1997; Siti 2010; Horton 2010; Anna 2015). Indonesian women, therefore, are depicted more as passive victims of war, in contrast to Indonesian men, who in some studies are portrayed as brave individuals facing Japanese forces.

The Dutch historian J. M. Pluvier (1953) paid great attention to political changes in the Dutch East Indies during the late colonial period (1930–42), including the deteriorating relations between the colonial government and the leaders of the Indonesian nationalist movement—a situation that he believed made it easy for Japan to conquer the Indies. However, he did not discuss the role of women's organizations in responding to the arrival of the Japanese in Indonesia. In addition, studies of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia have generally focused on the period between March 8, 1942 (when the Dutch East Indies surrendered unconditionally to Japan) and August 17, 1945 (when Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesian independence) (see, for instance, Benda 1955;

1956; Notosusanto 1979; Kurasawa 1987; Post *et al.* 2010; Baird and Sangkot 2015; Mark 2018). There are hardly any studies on the views and position of Indonesian women, especially Muslim women, in the crucial months leading up to the Japanese arrival in Indonesia. This study aims to fill this gap in the existing literature. I argue that Indonesian Muslim women, especially in the form of 'Aisyiyah through its official publication, *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, showed their opposition to the cruel acts of Japanese forces in the Japanese-occupied territory and carried out various efforts to protect the dignity of Indonesian women even before the Japanese troops reached Java. This study shows that the news and views of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* between August 1941 and February 1942 provided an overview of the knowledge, opinions, and attitudes of Indonesian Muslim women on war, on the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, on the role and position of women in war, on family safety in war, and on the question of self-defense and defense of the homeland.

On the one hand, there have been many studies on women and war, especially in the context of World Wars I and II, but they have generally focused on women in the United States and Europe (for instance, Miller 1980; Greenwald 1990; Smith 1999; Diamond 2013; Grayzel 2013; Hallet 2016). On the other hand, studies on women and war in Indonesia are rare (for example, Manus 1985; Reni 2011; Muhammad 2018). The situation experienced by Indonesian women, especially Muslim women, in the crucial two years leading up to the arrival of the Japanese, 1941–42, has barely been revealed.

One way to understand the views of Indonesian Muslim women toward the Japanese occupation is to study *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, a magazine that has thus far been examined only for its Islamic reformist ideas. The lack of study on this magazine prevents us from fully understanding how 'Aisyiyah disseminated its ideas about women and war, an issue hardly addressed in studies on Indonesian women during the late colonial period. I am of the opinion that Indonesian Muslim women, especially those belonging to 'Aisyiyah, through *Soeara 'Aisjijah* had a strong geopolitical awareness about what was going on in the international world in the early 1940s. The magazine reminded its readers to keep calm when the war was approaching and avoid actions considered incorrect and risky, such as fleeing in a hurry or hoarding food. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* even warned about Japanese atrocities and a call for Indonesian women to take part in a war that might soon come. This study, therefore, will show that 'Aisyiyah and *Soeara 'Aisjijah* were not only concerned with matters of women's emancipation, as scholars have repeatedly stated, but also engaged in efforts to preserve women's safety when war seemed inevitable.

Study of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* is needed also to provide further insights on women's Islamic journalism in Indonesia, especially in the late colonial and immediate post-independence period, whose historical studies are dominated by studies of print media managed by male journalists and editors (Basilius 2009; Hill 2010; Mahayana 2013;

Muhammad 2019). To my knowledge, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* was the only Muslim women's magazine in the Dutch East Indies during the late colonial period and shortly before the arrival of the Japanese occupation forces, so research on this magazine is vital. I hope this study will contribute significantly to our understanding of the importance of Islamic print media as a crucial channel for spreading ideas to preserve the safety of Indonesian women in an atmosphere of war.

It would also be interesting to know how other women's magazines in Indonesia in 1941–42 responded to the deteriorating situation. Unfortunately, in Yogyakarta, the location of this research, there were no other women's magazines published in 1941–42, so a comparison of the views between women's magazines in Indonesia in these two crucial years could not be made. In addition, it should be remembered that print media for and for women were very limited in number compared to general print media. Several print media in Indonesia closed their operations shortly before the Japanese troops arrived, and once the Japanese troops finally arrived the rest of the print media in Indonesia were forcibly closed by Japanese troops, to be replaced with print media controlled by the Japanese.

Using the historical method, this study focuses on three important aspects: *Soeara 'Aisjijah*'s views on the development of global conflicts that occurred in Europe and Asia in the early 1940s, its views on calming people in the midst of war, and its advice to Indonesian women in anticipation of the arrival of the Japanese in Indonesia. The sources used are issues of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* published between 1941 and 1942, which were kept at the *Soeara 'Aisjijah* office in Yogyakarta. These were the editions of August 1941, November 1941, January 1942, and February 1942 (the English translations of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* articles, as well as the insertions in square brackets, in this study are mine unless otherwise stated). The decision to choose these four editions was based on the fact that for the two-year period analyzed in this study (1941–42), only these four editions were kept in the editorial office of the magazine in Yogyakarta. The remaining monthly issues of 1941–42 could not be found. There were no issues of this magazine during the Japanese occupation (from March 1942) until the end of the Indonesian war of independence in 1950 available in the library, which is understandable given that the magazine temporarily stopped publication during those eight years. It was only in the early 1950s that it restarted regular publication.

A Glimpse of *Soeara 'Aisjijah*

Soeara 'Aisjijah was first published in 1926 as the official organ of 'Aisiyah (Anonymous

n.d.[b]). In that first year the magazine was published nine times, with a circulation of 600–900, while in 1938 the circulation reached 2,500. In its early years, the magazine concentrated mainly on providing information about the development of the 'Aisyiyah movement, both in its hometown of Yogyakarta and in other cities in the Indies where the organization opened branches. It published, for instance, reports on public meetings held by 'Aisyiyah, with some of the contributors being members of the organization at the branch level. In addition to organizational issues, other themes included the Islamic view of women and ideas for advancing women, especially through education and health care, as well as the activities of 'Aisyiyah's parent organization, Muhammadiyah (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, Rajab 1927; August 25, 1941; January 30, 1942).

As of 1930, *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, which previously used only the Javanese language and the Latin alphabet, now combined both Javanese and Indonesian languages. The pages were still largely filled with developments and activities of 'Aisyiyah in Yogyakarta and throughout the Indies. The columns on religion had special space, for example, on the study of the *shahada* (testimony of faith) (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, October 1930) and the need for someone to count their deeds and sins before these were counted in the afterlife (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, October 1930).

In the 1930s the magazine focused on disseminating an idea of what its parent organization, 'Aisyiyah, saw as the ideal Indonesian Muslim woman. The magazine defined the concept of "ideal" as traits that an Indonesian Muslim woman must have, namely, being obedient to Islamic teachings; being educated; and participating in social activities, especially through 'Aisyiyah, for the development of the family and society. The theme of political changes in Europe and Asia began to be discussed only in 1941 and 1942, when Germany had invaded the Netherlands and Japan began moving south.

The magazine was published in the middle of each month, but in the early 1940s the regularity of its publication was threatened by a lack of financial support from its subscribers. There are no statistical data on where exactly the magazine was distributed in the late colonial era. However, by noting the origins of readers and contributors who sent articles and photographs to the magazine, it can be concluded that in the early 1940s readers were scattered based on the spread of 'Aisyiyah itself, which meant at least Yogyakarta, Central Java, East Java, West Sumatra, North Sumatra, South Sumatra, South Kalimantan, and Gorontalo. Women outside 'Aisyiyah also seemed to read the magazine, given that on one occasion the magazine's editor asked readers to distribute the magazine to their families and colleagues. The money for running the magazine came from subscriptions and donations (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, November 30, 1941). On the cover page of the magazine was brief information about its editorial staff. There were three names listed on the cover of the February 16, 1942 issue: Sitti Hajinah (*Hoofdredactrice*, chief

editor), Sitti Alfijah (*Redactrice*, editor), and Mevr. Pardjaman (*Pembantoe*, assistant).

An Awareness of Global Dynamics in Europe and Asia

The 1940s was a critical decade for almost all nations, including the Dutch East Indies. Conflict erupted in various places and in a matter of years would reach the Indies. In Europe, Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, while the Nazi ally in Asia, Japan, began to attack southward. The Indies was clearly targeted because of its natural resources, which were very important for the Japanese war effort, such as oil, rubber, bauxite, tin, and others (Ricklefs 2001, 243). Thus, the Japanese invasion of the Indies was just a matter of time (Sato 2006). On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, then continued with an attack on the Philippines on December 8, 1941. The Japanese occupation of Indonesia began with the occupation of Tarakan (East Kalimantan) in January 1942. Less than two months later, Java fell into Japanese hands.

Global awareness of the rapidly changing world was evident in *Soeara 'Aisjijah* from 1941. In its 1920s and 1930s editions, the magazine generally spoke only of social developments in the Indies, especially from the perspective of the progressive women's movement. However, the swift changes that took place in various other parts of the world from the early 1940s, and the possible hostile effects that would be felt in the Indies, encouraged the magazine to begin paying attention to global dynamics outside the Indies. Readers of *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, who might also read other newspapers that brought more up-to-date news or listen to foreign radio broadcasts, would of course also await 'Aisijah's and *Soeara 'Aisjijah*'s responses to events that appeared to be geographically distant from the Indies but might soon have a significant impact on their lives.

One such event was the rise of the ideology of National Socialism in Germany, marked by the rise of the Nazi Party in the country from 1933. Led by its *führer* (leader), Adolf Hitler, the Nazi Party controlled almost all aspects of German life (Childers 2017). Nazi ideas, such as anti-Semitism, German racial superiority, and the need to expand German territory to neighboring countries, also began to threaten Germany's neighbors. World War II finally broke out on September 1, 1939, marked by the German invasion of Poland. On September 27, 1940 Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, marking their formation of a coalition to establish a new world order. All three countries had an expansionist nature, which represented a threat not only to their neighbors but also to colonies in Asia and Africa that were then under European control.

In an edition published in mid-1941, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* discussed the importance of studying history, both world history and Islamic history. History, according to *Soeara*

'*Aisjijah*, was useful not only for knowing about events that occurred in the past but also to serve as lessons for the present. At that time, the Dutch colonial government planned to compile a history book for school students, especially related to world political change, with one focus of its attention directed at the emergence of the totalitarian ideology of National Socialism in Germany. The German military had just invaded the Dutch East Indies' mother country, the Netherlands, in May 1940. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* supported the preparation of this new history book because it realized the urgency for Indonesian students to understand the danger of the Nazis. For *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, history had not only a scientific function but also a moral dimension, to distinguish between good and bad, including in terms of ideology. One important aspect of this book was "objective and critical discussion of various things that could jeopardize the peace of the world that emerged from the National Socialism movement" (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, August 25, 1941).

Readers of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* were among the earliest groups of Indonesian Muslim women to get information about the movements of Japanese troops occupying East and Southeast Asia, especially between 1941 and 1942, although not as detailed as the daily newspapers. When Japanese troops began to move south to establish their Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and destroy Western imperialism, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* reported it, though not in detail; the purpose of this kind of reporting was to warn women in the Indies about Japanese cruelty. The Japanese occupied French Indochina in mid-1941, then entered British Malaya in December 1941; and in February 1942 they managed to conquer the entire Malay Peninsula, including Singapore (Kratoska 1997).

Readers of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* knew from mid-1941 that the world, including the Indies, was on the brink of war. The war did not just affect military men but also civilians, including 'Aisyiyah and its parent organization, Muhammadiyah. There was concern within 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah that the war could disrupt their activities and even stop them. The seriousness of the situation was seen in the August 1941 issue of *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, which contained an announcement by Muhammadiyah (which also applied to 'Aisyiyah) about public activities during wartime. This announcement was made based on a decree of the Yogyakarta police chief on December 9, 1941 regarding Staat van Oorlog (State of war), which banned all *openbare vergadering* (open meetings) and *besloten vergadering* (closed meetings, especially those with a political orientation) (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). Muhammadiyah then explained that it had temporarily stopped organizing any *openbare vergadering* (the Muhammadiyah congress fell within this category), but that activities such as *tabligh* (the act of preaching Islam), recitation of Al-Qur'an, and Islamic courses could continue. Closed meetings could still be held (because Muhammadiyah was not involved in politics), but each participant had to bring an invitation letter to avoid legal charges. Limiting such public activities was difficult for

Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyiyah considering that their popularity had been built through public meetings and public parades on a massive scale (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, November 30, 1941; January 30, 1942).

The Indonesian women's movement as a whole also felt the devastating effects of the war, as seen in a *Soeara 'Aisjijah* report on the Kongres Perempoean Indonesia ke-IV (The Fourth Congress of Indonesian Women) held in Semarang on July 25–28, 1941 (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, August 25, 1941). The congress, although attended by many participants, had a pall of gloom because the German occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940 caused public concern in the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch government, including Dutch Queen Wilhelmina, was forced to flee to London. The news that Queen Wilhelmina, as a woman, had to leave her homeland to go into exile caused sadness among the women attending the congress, as reported by *Soeara 'Aisjijah* (August 25, 1941).

In its January 1942 edition, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* referred to the situation in Southeast Asia as the *zaman perang* (war era), which had been going on for two months (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942). In its February 1942 issue, the magazine briefly reported about the fall of Kowloon (Hong Kong) into Japanese hands and the cruelty inflicted by the Japanese upon the local population (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942; Tarling 2001). News was also circulated in the same edition about the Japanese occupation of Malacca, British Malaya. Like in Kowloon, according to *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, in Malacca Japanese troops also committed various atrocities toward the civilian population, especially women (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). The information and news above, of course, immediately gave readers the impression that the world had fallen into war and that the Indies would soon be drawn into it.

Japanese Cruelty and the Need to Protect Oneself and the Indonesian Nation

Hong Kong fell into Japanese hands on December 25, 1942, after two weeks of air strikes. Japanese atrocities over the next three and a half years were directed mainly at the two groups that had previously been dominant in Hong Kong, the British and the Chinese. Some British people in Hong Kong were put into Japanese camps, while others died due to execution or illness and malnourishment. Some Chinese were repatriated to China, and others were tortured, raped, and killed (Carroll 2007, 119–123). A number of Chinese were even used by Japanese troops as targets for shooting and bayonet training.

Soeara 'Aisjijah's coverage of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong showed its abhorrence of Japanese actions. There was no praise for the movement of Japanese troops or for the ideals of Japan, which wanted to build the Greater East Asia

Co-prosperity Sphere and destroy Western imperialism in Asia. The magazine did not specifically mention the alliance of Japan and Germany as Axis powers, but it was clear that in 1941–42 *Soeara 'Aisjijah* saw that there were two enemies outside the Indies that were very dangerous for the Netherlands and the Indies, namely, Nazi Germany and fascist Japan.

In fact, at first Japan's Pan-Asian idea was appreciated by Indonesian Islamic leaders who longed for an Indonesia where the political expression of Islam had a more prominent place than it did in the Dutch colonial era. Although Japan was not a predominantly Muslim country, in the late 1930s it was friendly toward Muslims in the Western colonies of Southeast Asia. This can be seen from the visit of two Muhammadiyah leaders at the inauguration of a mosque in Kobe in 1939. However, Japanese Pan-Asianism began to be vehemently opposed by Indonesian Muslims in 1941–42, when it sacrificed non-Japanese civilians in Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore. The atrocities committed by the Japanese in these places caused horror in Java, which as of February 1942 had not yet been occupied by Japan. An antipathy toward the cruel actions of Japanese troops began to appear in mid-February 1942 in the Indonesian public sphere, one channel of which was *Soeara 'Aisjijah*.

Soeara 'Aisjijah helped spread the image that the Japanese occupation forces were brutal and ruthless, committing atrocities on the civilian population in the places they occupied. This idea could be seen in a column whose title illustrated what Japanese cruelty was like: “*Neraka doenia*” (Hell on earth) (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). At the beginning of the article was a quote from another Indies newspaper, *Tjaja Timur* (Batavia), which obtained information from the Singapore Free Press. The article discussed the situation in Kowloon (Hong Kong) when Japanese forces entered. Kowloon was described as having transformed into “a hell on earth.” To show how cruel the Japanese occupiers were in Kowloon and to endorse the opinion of the newspaper it was quoting, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* quoted a paragraph from the *Tjaja Timur* report:

Then, Kowloon turned into “a hell on earth” when the Japanese raped women and robbed shops and people's homes, while members of the fifth column [Japanese intelligence] and robbers asked for “protection money” from each family. Between December 12 and 15, what people heard every night was only the sound of people screaming and the sound of police whistles. (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942)

Responding to the news from *Tjaja Timur*, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* wrote that what happened in Kowloon was *soenggoeh mengerikan* (really terrible). Other news, obtained from Reuters news agency in Singapore, informed that robberies of houses and shops owned by local residents as well as rapes also took place in Malacca, a region very close to the Indies

(*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). This news made readers aware of the possibility that such horrible events could occur also in the Indies. Such concern was felt also by *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, which wrote that before the war, when the war broke out, and even when the foreign troops had won the war—or were defeated—they would *mentjemari* (pollute) women. Women were thus almost always victims of war.

Soeara 'Aisjijah expressed the hope that the incidents of Hong Kong would not occur in Indonesia. However, the magazine also provided important advice for Indonesian women on surviving war. The suggestions applied not only to women but even to men, who also had a great responsibility in protecting women. In wartime women were often helpless, while men were expected to be responsible for protecting them. The Japanese troops were described as a threat and a brutal enemy who used harassment, rape, robbery, and murder against civilians as methods of control:

So, we also hope that what happened in Kowloon will not reach our country or our villages, and we must strengthen our religious groups and organizations in order to defend the honor of women and protect our property rights. Oh men and young men, get ready to defend the honor of your mother and your gentle and weak sisters and daughters. Do not let us go to hell in this world and get punishment in the afterlife. We, including the women, must defend our honor and help all movements and organizations that will protect us. (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942)

The narratives of Japanese atrocities toward civilians in the countries they conquered did not only spur warnings to Indonesian women on how to protect themselves. The idea of resistance as a form of war to defend oneself from the enemy had increasingly gained a place in *Soeara 'Aisjijah* since February 1942, when the Japanese arrival in Yogyakarta seemed to be a matter of time. In the February 1942 edition, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* in its *Pedoman soetji* (Holy guide) column quoted Prophet Muhammad's *hadith* narrated by Bukhari and Muslim. Someone asked Prophet Muhammad about the definition of "those who fight in the way of Allah." Prophet Muhammad answered that a war in the way of Allah involved those who fought so that the religion of Allah was in a high place (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, which had earlier introduced the idea of Indonesian nationality, began to see war based on religious zeal as an option that might ultimately need to be undertaken in the face of the foreign occupation army, although it was not yet clear what form it would take. What was clear was that hatred against the Japanese and the urgency to defend the Indonesian people from foreign occupation were already evident in *Soeara 'Aisjijah* about a month before Java fell into Japanese hands.

The idea of defending the Indonesian nation and homeland appeared also in the form of a poem in *Soeara 'Aisjijah*. In the August 1941 edition, a poem by a writer with the

initials Ach. Bd. (it is not known who this author actually was) was placed in the *Bingkisan soeksma* (A gift of soul) column. Titled “*Ah keindahanmoe . . .*” (Ah, your beauty), the poem was a tribute to the natural beauty of Indonesia as well as a call to defend the country, an appeal that reflected the magazine’s response to the great war that might soon engulf Indonesia. It reads:

As high as a mountain
 My fantasy rose
 For the sake of my memory
 The beauty of Indonesia in nature.
 In the morning . . .
 fascinate
 Dawn radiates . . .
 shining
 Birds chirping, chasing each other . . .
 with noise
 The leaves are waving
 gracefully
 The wind blows gently
 soft and cool
 Oh, Indonesia . . .
 Your beauty is in fantasy,
 push my heart,
 For moving
 forward storming,
 in the arena of struggle (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, August 25, 1941)

Advice to Calm the Public

In the January 1942 edition, there was one crucial piece of advice from *Soeara 'Aisjijah* that was useful in dealing with the atmosphere of war that was already pervading Indonesia: a call to avoid public panic (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942). It stressed that Indonesia had been in the “war era” for several months and that such an era was not pleasant. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* underlined the importance of being alert and always ready and adaptive in such situations. It asked rhetorically: “Are we still surprised, shocked, confused, lost our minds, and hectic in facing the war era that has been two months and will enter its third month?” *Soeara 'Aisjijah* regretted that there were people who were not yet *insaf* (aware) of the situation, especially if the war was to go on for years—“which we did not expect”—and expressed pity for those who “could not calm down, could not appropriately place themselves, could not strengthen their mind and could not remember

and obey Allah more and more” (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942).

In addition to “war era,” there was another term that *Soeara 'Aisjijah* used to describe the situation: “modern war.” This term gave readers an idea of a new war that was different from traditional warfare. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* wrote that in modern warfare the fight was no longer between soldiers but also involved children and women. Modern warfare not only destroyed enemy bases but could also damage people’s homes, barns, and even religious schools and mosques (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942).

The magazine gave a number of suggestions for dealing with the worsening situation, in an article titled “*Ketenangan dan persediaan*” (Quietness and readiness) by an author with the initial “M” in the January 1942 edition. It is not known who exactly “M” was, but the article clearly represented the views of *Soeara 'Aisjijah*’s editorial team. First, there was an exhortation for readers to be calm, not panic, but at the same time be prepared for all possibilities. The author emphasized some attitudes that were useless, namely, “being confused, hectic, rowdy, and chaotic,” and advised that one must have “a clear and firm mind.” The people must also follow the authority’s instructions in dealing with the situation, especially regarding what should and should not be done (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942).

Second, the author asked the people not to rush and flee to distant places. The author wrote that some urban dwellers had already fled to the villages thinking those would be safer. However, apparently the villages were also severely affected by the war, so moving there had made people frantic; panicked fleeing like this was clearly not the right solution. The author suggested that people wait for instructions from those who had a better understanding of the situation before deciding to move, where to move, and in what way the movement should be carried out (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942).

Third, the author expected people not to hoard goods, especially food items such as rice, vegetables, and oil as well as clothing. The hoarding of goods was driven by fears that the stock of goods would run low in the market due to the war. But the author stressed that this was an unfounded concern. The thing to avoid was that if the stock of goods was actually sufficient, the hoarded goods would be damaged or even unused (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942). The author recommended that people eliminate feelings of worry about the scarcity of food, drinks, and clothing. The selfish attitude of hoarding food for oneself must be avoided because “it is an act that endangers the community and causes public shortages.”

The author called on readers to participate in efforts to protect public safety. In an atmosphere of war, the author’s view was that selfishness must be eliminated and mutual assistance intensified:

Do good to reduce others' misery, help the public interest, take care of displaced people, and treat the sick. Please provide energy and means to increase good deeds, because when the war occurs there will be so many people that will need to be given help. Such help seems to be given for other people, friends, neighbors, and distant relatives. In fact, it is actually for us too. Who knows, we ourselves may be affected by the calamity and misery. Thus, by doing that, we help ourselves too. (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942)

The author emphasized that physical efforts alone were not enough. The above efforts would, of course, be useful to protect the body. But as Muslims, there was one more thing that needed to be done so that hearts were assured, namely, to increase the act of remembrance of Allah both when the danger had not yet come and when the danger had arrived. In addition to remembering Allah, Muslims were urged to ask for forgiveness and salvation and for the protection of Allah from confusion and calamity. Muslims should not abandon praying five times a day, wrote the author. To further soothe readers' hearts, the author quoted a fragment of the Qur'anic verse stating that remembering Allah would calm the heart (Ar Ra'd: 28). The author sought to persuade readers of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* so that this advice would also be passed on to their families and neighbors. Thus, more and more people were expected to be calmer in dealing with the situation, and finally public panic would be eliminated. Some other acts suggested by the author were to conduct a variety of good deeds, hold Al-Qur'an recitations, and enliven mosques and *langgar* (small mosques) (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, January 30, 1942).

Soeara 'Aisjijah paid great attention to what it called *evacuatie* (evacuation). This can be seen from a special editorial column responding to current events in a critical but satirical manner, *Soekkoende* (literally meaning "hairpin"). Panic fleeing would only create another confusion in a new place. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* cautioned those who were willing to do everything to evacuate in order to be saved from the war but did not sacrifice enough "to survive hell and the torment of the afterlife." For *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, evacuation needed to be done not only to a safer place, but also to the afterlife, something it called "an evacuation that is bound to happen." Thus, efforts needed to be made to save oneself from war, but good deeds and worship also needed to be multiplied so that one day a Muslim could return to the afterlife in peace because he or she had done many good deeds during their life (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

Calling Upon Indonesian Women to Take Part in the War

Although in some of its writings *Soeara 'Aisjijah* showed that women were helpless in the midst of the modern war targeting civilians, on another occasion it underlined that

women should not be passive during wartime. There was always something women could do. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* noted that *negeri kita* (our country) had entered the war on December 8, 1941. This was the date on which the Netherlands, the United States, and Britain declared war against Japan, which the day before had bombed the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. This war, wrote *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, was a *sebenar-benarnya perang* (a real war) and no longer just an empty term or prediction. In the past, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* added, *negeri dan bangsa kita* (our country and nation) had only been spectators, but now they were taking part in the war (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

Soeara 'Aisjijah analyzed the differences between past wars and the current war, especially in relation to the position of women during conflict. In wars in ancient times, women experienced only the bad consequences, for example, the loss of a husband “whom they and their children depended on” (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). This may have referred to wars in traditional or pre-modern times in Indonesia, when wars were fought only by professional soldiers or mercenaries and broke out in places far from human settlements so that women were not directly involved. In this context, women were victims in the sense that they lost their husbands. But today, according to *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, what was happening was a “total war,” and in such a war women were also a part and were called upon to participate in defense (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

Interestingly, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* felt that instead of being merely passive victims as in past wars, women today were participants in war. War, which was already unavoidable in Indonesia, could be seen as a place for women to realize their ideals of being able to do more in society:

This [women's participation in the war] is a real test, where for a long time Indonesian women have always moaned and lamented to ask for a broader position and place for them to show their sacrifice as members of the community. Our women have long raised their fingers to convey their demands, that they are able to fight as they should . . . (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942)

The idea introduced by the magazine in this context was the defense of the motherland by Indonesian women. In *Soeara 'Aisjijah's* view, there were various examples in other parts of the world of women taking part in wars in order to defend their nation, state, and homeland. They could be role models for Indonesian women. For example, there were women in the United States and Britain who “dared to jump into the fires of war, to defend their country and kingdom” (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

From this, then, the question arose as to what was the right attitude for Indonesian women when they were finally caught in the midst of war. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* realized that every Indonesian woman would answer this question differently, according to their own understanding and conditions. However, there were several factors that needed to be

considered. One was that women in the United States and Britain had long received education and training to prepare them to defend their nation. In Indonesia the situation was much worse. Indonesian women had not been taught how to defend their nation; in fact, even Indonesian men had only recently had the opportunity to see and touch weapons to defend themselves from foreign enemies (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

However, that did not mean Indonesian women needed to remain silent when the war came. They did not need to be envious of their counterparts in the United States or Britain. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* then called upon Indonesian women to defend the nation and homeland from enemies:

We will fight. We will soon be prepared to help in building the safety of our nation and brothers, by not forgetting the order and position of the women and their womanness. We will show our ability to safeguard the safety of our nation and our homeland, and not others, because this is our duty to others who live. The things that now really need to be done are: (1) For the sake of mutual need and mutual aid, we must be able to make sacrifices, by way of courage to defeat and minimize the needs of ourselves for the common good; (2) Taking lessons from this event, and using it as a warning to those who neglected God's rules and guidelines, namely, religion. (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942)

In the end, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* hoped that Muslims would strengthen their commitment to Islam. Muslims must believe that Islam was a bridge to glory and a guide to life: "Indeed, life and death with Islam will lead to glory" (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

There was another wartime role for women that *Soeara 'Aisjijah* considered very important. Above, it was explained that women were expected to take part in defending the larger social community, in this case the nation and homeland. But that did not mean women should forget the smaller community in which their role was vital: the family. Therefore, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* advised women to also save their families, especially the most vulnerable group in war: children.

The magazine gave helpful advice to mothers about what children should do to stay safe from enemy air strikes (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). It reminded readers that children were undoubtedly happy when they saw a plane passing by. As the most modern transportation technology of the time, airplanes quickly attracted children's curiosity. That attitude would, of course, be very dangerous if it turned out that the passing plane was an enemy aircraft that dropped a bomb. According to *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, mothers must teach some important lessons to their children. First, children must be told not to be shocked at the sight of enemy planes preparing for an air strike. Curiosity to see enemy aircraft could have a bad consequence on the safety of children. So, children must be able to hold their interest (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

Second, children must be taught to immediately look for *loebang perlintoengan*

(shelter) when the enemy launched an air attack. That meant when they were on the move they must always be close to a shelter; if they went to school they must find a path that had such a shelter. If they were in a place with no such shelter, children must be taught to ask for protection in people's homes nearby. There could be a situation where there was neither a shelter nor a house nearby. What should children do then? *Soeara 'Aisjijah* explained that there was another way to stay safe: by hiding in a ditch by the side of the road (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

Third, children must be taught how to hide in a safe place. A strategy needed to be used so that children were truly safe and not victims of air attacks in a supposedly safe place. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* wrote that children must be taught to lie down in order to withstand strong wind pressure. Not only that, during the attack they must remain in the shelter and must not run or come out until the attack was over (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

"Your ears are not made of iron," wrote *Soeara 'Aisjijah* to emphasize the importance of protecting the ears from enemy air strikes (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942). Bombardment from the air causes very strong wind pressure. Therefore, the ears must be gagged with fingers, with cotton, or if necessary with a pillow: "Even though the ear may not be torn, the impact [of wind pressure] will be very troublesome."

Interestingly, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* delivered special advice for those who wore glasses, an instrument generally used by literate people in the Indies. Some people in the Indies used glasses every day, but there were others who used them only when reading print media or books. Glasses, in other words, were a symbol of modernity and literacy for indigenous people. Readers who wore glasses appeared to be one particular segment among *Soeara 'Aisjijah*'s readers as a whole, so special attention needed to be given to them. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* wrote that if there was an air strike, glasses had to be removed immediately: "There are many cases when people's eyes were damaged because their glasses were shattered by very strong wind pressure [caused by an air strike]" (*Soeara 'Aisjijah*, February 16, 1942).

Conclusion

Although *Soeara 'Aisjijah* was an internal magazine for 'Aisyiyah members, this study shows that the magazine, especially between 1941 and 1942, also paid great attention to major international events. World War II broke out in 1939, and its impact reached Indonesia. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* was a channel for its Indonesian readers to find out what was happening in Europe and Asia. The magazine built readers' awareness about the worsen-

ing world situation and the possibility that in the near future Indonesia could be badly affected. Another awareness developed by the magazine was that the imminent war was a modern war, or a total war, in which civilians could become victims; and that Indonesian society, especially women—who were vulnerable in such conflicts—must be prepared.

The Yogyakarta-based magazine opposed the presence of Nazi Germany in Europe and Japanese expansion in Asia even before Japanese forces arrived in Yogyakarta. The magazine noted how the ideology of National Socialism was a threat to the world, especially the Netherlands, which fell into Nazi hands in May 1940. In Asia, Japan was depicted by the magazine as a menace to Asian nations, as could be seen from the number of news articles circulating about Japanese atrocities in the countries they occupied. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* initially did not expect war to reach Indonesia, but it slowly realized that war was inevitable when one region after another in Asia became occupied by Japanese troops. In addition to showing its hatred for the Nazis and the Japanese, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* prepared its readers to anticipate the arrival of Japanese troops in Indonesia. Through reading *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, Indonesian Muslim women were one of the earliest groups of Indonesian people to get information about the movements of Japanese forces in East and Southeast Asia between 1941 and 1942, although not in detail.

Soeara 'Aisjijah conveyed various types of information about the atrocities of Japanese troops toward civilians in Hong Kong and Malaya. Such news certainly raised concerns among Indonesians. However, since it was a magazine by and for women, which for more than a decade had strived to serve and advance the cause of Indonesian Muslim women, *Soeara 'Aisjijah's* instinct was to protect the safety and honor of Indonesian women when the war broke out. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* immediately responded to Japan's rapid expansion toward the south. One of the magazine's striking attempts was to continually calm society by emphasizing the importance of a calm mind in the midst of the chaotic situation. The magazine also encouraged several other attitudes, namely, avoiding panic fleeing and not hoarding food and clothing. It believed that panic and selfishness would only create disorder and stressed that what was really needed was mutual assistance among community members.

As an Islamic-oriented magazine, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* called on Muslims to always remember Allah during the chaotic situation. Muslims must pray more, keep organizing Al-Qur'an recitations, enliven the mosque, and finally submit themselves to Allah. These acts were believed to calm the hearts of Muslims so that they could be more resilient and rational.

On the one hand, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* emphasized that in modern warfare women and children were usually victims. However, that did not mean women had to be passive. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* repeatedly called on women to participate in war, especially in order to

protect themselves, their family, their nation, and their homeland from foreign enemies. The magazine made an example of American and British women who participated in battle, even though Indonesian women did not have to fully emulate them. For *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, women's involvement in war was a manifestation of their aspiration over the last few decades to do more for society. *Soeara 'Aisjijah* underlined that one attitude Indonesian women must have was a spirit of sacrifice and fighting against cruel foreign enemies. In addition to fostering a spirit of struggle, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* conveyed various ways in which Indonesian women could protect themselves and their loved ones during war, including by focusing on the protection of women's honor and safety, eradicating selfishness, sacrificing for the common good, teaching children to save themselves from enemy air strikes, and remembering Allah. An appeal was also addressed to men, so that during this war they protected their women.

This study shows that *Soeara 'Aisjijah*'s dedication to the advancement of Indonesian women was not only in the form of the idea of *kemajuan* (progress)—for example, through news about the establishment of schools, courses for women, and public meetings to discuss women's emancipation. This study demonstrates that when the situation in the world and in Indonesia worsened, the magazine paid great attention to efforts to save Indonesian women from the horrors of war. The news and views of *Soeara 'Aisjijah* shortly before the arrival of Japanese troops in Indonesia showed efforts by an Islamic-oriented female magazine to calm the Indonesian people while at the same time wisely guiding them as to what should be done in the midst of a situation they had never experienced before. From this study it is also known that Indonesian Muslim women already opposed the Japanese occupation before the Japanese reached Java. Put simply, *Soeara 'Aisjijah* magazine participated in efforts to call upon Indonesian women to defend themselves, their families, their nation, and their homeland from cruel foreign troops in the Southeast Asian theater of World War II.

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