Networks of Women's Movements and Educational Institutions Aisyiyah and the Catholic Women's Association, 1917–1945

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Abstract. How did two women's organizations rooted in opposing theologies—modernist Islam and Roman Catholicism— develop structurally convergent educational strategies in colonial Indonesia? This paper takes Aisyiyah (est. 1917) and the Perhimpunan Wanita Katholik (est. 1924) as comparative cases, arguing that both constructed educational networks in response to shared constraints: the exclusivity of colonial schooling, subordination within maledominated parent organizations, and community demand for educated female agents of social change. Through organizational history and their social network analysis, the study examines three dimensions: the institutional models each developed, the network mechanisms enabling reach beyond urban centers, and their ambivalent relationship with colonial subsidy and surveillance. A central finding is that both organizations strategically deployed domestic discourse—"educating women to become good mothers"—as a socially acceptable entry point, while covertly building women's capacity as community leaders and institutional managers. Educational institutions thus functioned not merely as spaces of learning, but as durable infrastructure for women's agency extending beyond the colonial era. These findings suggest that cross-theological convergence in institution-building offers a broader model for understanding how religiously grounded women's movements negotiate patriarchal and colonial constraints to secure lasting institutional power.

Keywords: Aisyiyah, Poesara Wanita Katolik, Colonial Education, Women's Organizations.

1 Introduction

Indigenous women's access to formal education in the Dutch East Indies in late 19th to early 20th centuries was very limited. The existing colonial schooling system was structurally designed with unequal priorities: it was more open to men from the indigenous and Peranakan elites, and almost closed to women not only from the common people but women in general [1], [2].

Outside the colonial system, women, especially Javanese women, were generally raised in a social order that limited their role in the domestic sphere, with social doctrines such as "masak, manak, macak" that culturally legitimized these

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restrictions [3]. This condition puts indigenous women in a mutually weakened dual position, both marginalized by the colonial system and at the same time limited by the social norms that prevail within their own communities. In such conditions, religious communities become one of the alternative spaces that allow the women's education movement to take a more systematic institutional form [4].

In the early 20th century, Dutch government implemented a policy named Ethical Politics (Politik Etis) in response to moral pressure on the condition of indigenous peoples in Dutch East Indies. This policy focuses on three main pillars: education, irrigation, and transmigration, with the aim of opening up wider opportunities for local communities [5]. Although in practice this policy was inseparable from colonial interests, its impact on the social and institutional landscape in the Dutch East Indies was quite significant.

One of the most obvious impacts is the emergence of organizations that promote education and collective awareness, among them Boedi Oetomo which is often cited as an early marker of the rise of modern organizations among indigenous people [6]. In the same context, Ethical Politics also creates space for the emergence of religion-based women's organizations. Two of them, although departing from different theological foundations, both place education as the main focus of the struggle. Aisyiyah was founded on May 19, 1917 in Yogyakarta as part of the Islamic modernism movement carried out by Muhammadiyah [7], and the Catholic Women's Association (PWK), established in 1924 from the initiative of the Javanese-Catholic women's elite in the midst of the consolidation of the Catholic community after Ethical Politics [8].

This research addresses the question of why two different religious organizations develop structurally convergent educational strategies.

Studies of Aisyiyah have developed in Indonesian historiography, including the roots of the movement in Islamic reform [9, p. 2], gender equality [10, pp. 306–313], and its institutional expansion [11, p. 73], but generally place Aisyiyah as a single subject. Academic studies on PWK are relatively more limited.

Using the organizational history approach and social network analysis, this study considers the three institutional models developed by each organization, the mechanism of network expansion through the recruitment of women teachers as mobilization agents outside city centers, and the relationship between the two organizations and the colonial state in the context of subsidies and institutional supervision.

This study argues that Aisyiyah and PWK built an educational network in response to parallel institutional limitations, namely the exclusivity of the colonial school system, subordinate positions within male-dominated parent organizations, and community encouragement of the presence of educated women as agents of social change. In this context, both organizations utilize domestic discourse, women's education as the formation of 'good mothers', as acceptable social legitimacy. The educational institutions established by the two thus do not simply function as learning spaces, but as organizational network infrastructure that survives beyond the colonial period.

2 Literature Review

Scholarship on colonial-era education in the Dutch East Indies has established that Western-style schooling served dual imperial purposes. During the colonial period in Indonesia (1799-1942), education played a pivotal role in the Dutch colonial government's strategy of establishing and maintaining its rule, with the Dutch applying a Western-style education system alongside existing traditional Islamic education, aiming both to train personnel for the colonial administration and to promote cultural assimilation [2]. Kamphuis [1] extends this critique to philanthropic education specifically, showing through a comparison of two Protestant schools for elite indigenous girls that such philanthropic initiatives are best understood as integral parts of a larger colonial civilizing mission not limited to the colonial state, in which discourses about "civilized" gender roles within indigenous families first emerged among philanthropists before influencing state-driven educational policy. This literature frames girls' education less as neutral uplift than as a site where colonial and religious actors contested control over indigenous domestic life.

Within this landscape, Aisyiyah has received substantially more scholarly attention than its Catholic counterpart, though the resulting body of work remains topically narrow. Several studies treat Aisyiyah's contribution to Islamic education directly: Munawaroh et al. [9] trace the organization's origins to the Sopo Tresno recitation association founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and Siti Walidah, and identify the Frobelschool as the first educational institution in Indonesia founded by indigenous people. Kholisatun et al. [10] situate Aisyiyah within a gender-equality framework, arguing that under the guidance of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and Nyai Walidah, the organization was founded specifically to elevate the status and dignity of Muslim women. Rahman and Abdurakhman [6] add a political dimension, showing that at the 1928 Indonesian Women's Congress Aisyiyah was the only organization to take a distinct position on women's status in marriage, pointing out that both women and men lacked awareness of their marital rights, a finding that complicates any reading of Aisyiyah as purely domestically oriented.

Taken together, this literature substantiates two things your paper already argues: first, that colonial girls' education cannot be read as ideologically neutral regardless of which religious tradition sponsored it [1][2]; and second, that Aisyiyah studies have accumulated steadily around gender equality, education, and political voice ([9], [10], [6]), but almost always as a single-subject case rather than in comparison with Catholic organizations like PWK, which is the gap your study is positioned to fill.

3 Method

This study uses a comparative historical method with two units of analysis: Aisyiyah and the Catholic Women's Association. Referring to Skocpol and Somers, the approach used is a contrast of contexts, in which this paper compares two cases to understand the peculiarities of each while observing patterns that prevail beyond their particular contexts, without claiming strict causal generalizations [12]. These two organizations were chosen because they operate within different religious traditions

but in the same period and region, allowing a comparison between them to yield a greater understanding of institutional aspects that go beyond the limits of each context.

The primary source for Aisyiyah is Suara Aisyiyah, the organization's own magazine, published from 1926 to 1970, which provides direct information on the schools it ran: the type of institution, how it was organized and staffed, and how it fit into Aisyiyah's broader instructional network. As an organization-produced source, it offers a first-hand record but is not a neutral outside account. For PWK, no comparable internal periodical was available; the study relies mainly on secondary sources and existing scholarship on the organization (e.g., [13], [14]). This imbalance in access to primary sources is a limitation of the study.

Data analysis involved extracting from each source concrete institutional details, namely the type of school or program, its management and staffing, and its connection to the organization's wider network, then organizing these details according to the study's three dimensions of comparison: institutional models, network mechanisms enabling reach beyond city centers, and each organization's relationship to colonial subsidy and surveillance. The study focused on Java, the region with the most available documentation for both organizations. Limited resources, especially primary-source materials on PWK, are a limitation of this study.

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Double Roots: The Context of the Establishment of Aisyiyah and the Catholic Women's Assembly

The landscape of women's emancipation movements and public articulation in the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century was marked by the emergence of religious-based organizations that brought a paradigm of renewal. This renewal did not emerge from a single theological or organizational source; rather, it grew out of two distinct and, in doctrinal terms, opposing traditions, Islamic modernism and Roman Catholic mission, a pattern this study terms "double roots." The dual roots of this movement are finally clearly reflected in a historical comparison between Aisyiyah, founded in 1917, and Poesara Wanita Katolik (PWK), founded in 1924. Such divergence in theological origin unfolded, however, within a shared colonial structure: education in the Dutch East Indies simultaneously served as an instrument of colonial administration and cultural assimilation [2, p. 413], and even ostensibly philanthropic girls' schooling functioned as part of a broader civilizing mission through which colonial and religious actors sought to reshape indigenous domestic life [1, pp. 217–234]. It was within this constrained space that both Aisyiyah and PWK independently built parallel educational strategies. The birth of Aisyiyah was triggered on May 19, 1917 (27 Rajab 1335 H) which coincided with the moment of Isra' Miraj of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in Yogyakarta [7, p. 57]. This is an integral part of the current of Islamic modernism carried out by its parent organization, Muhammadiyah [10, p. 309]. This movement has its roots in a group of educated girls in Kauman Village with Sapa Tresna which was initiated in 1914 by KH. Ahmad Dahlan with his wife, Siti Walidah or often referred to as Nyai Ahmad Dahlan [9, p. 2], [11, p. 31].

The context of modernist Islamic reform encourages the rationalization of religious education, where Islamic teachings are diverted from traditional memorization patterns in Islamic boarding schools to classical systems that are responsive to the demands of the times [9, p. 2]. The name Aisyiyah was inspired by Aisyah, who is the wife of the Prophet Muhammad who is known to be intelligent, meaning a follower of Aisha. Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah are seen as a compatible couple in da'wah where Aisyiyah will fight side by side with Muhammadiyah. Nyai Dahlan chose nine women as novice leaders with Siti Bariyah as the First Chairperson of Aisyiyah and eight other members as other administrators [7, pp. 57–58].

The initial vision of the establishment of Aisyiyah focused on the deconstruction of feudal culture and Javanese sociocultural patriarchy, namely the repression of women in the domestic space through the slogan "cook, manak, macak". This makes women always seen as second class who are placed as wives who are responsible for cooking, giving birth to children and dressing up for their husbands, as well as several other domestic functions [3, p. 46]. The existence of subordinate doctrines that are present in society, namely "swarga nunut, neraka katut" and women who are enough at home make Aisyiyah continue to be active in the community space to bring the role of women more actively [7, p. 59]. To reposition women in Islamic reform, Aisyiyah proposes a theological foundation such as the interpretation of the Qur'an surah At-Taubat verse 71 which emphasizes the obligation of amr ma'rauf nahi mungkar, the enactment of equality for men and women without gender discrimination which eventually becomes the character of the Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah movement [9, p. 2].

For Aisyiyah, gender equality is measured not only by physical or gender appearance but also by competence, capability, intellectuality, and real contributions in the public space [10, pp. 306–313]. This change was seen directly, tactically, through the habit of dressing in accordance with Islamic law, the use of a white veil made from turban cloth for study participants, and the completion of Arabic and Latin literacy (1923). Then there was the publication of thoughts through the magazine Suara Aisyiyah in 1926 and the expansion of an independent worship room through the first Women's Mosque in Kauman in 1922. On the other hand, the dynamics of emancipation also grew across different religious spectrums, with the establishment of the Catholic Women's Association (PWK) in 1924 in Yogyakarta, formerly known as Poesara Wanita Katolik.

Poesara Wanita Katolik, or PWK, now known as the Catholic Women of the Republic of Indonesia (WKRI), was officially established on June 26, 1924, in Yogyakarta. The Catholic Women's Poesara Organization was first founded by R. A. Maria Soelastri Soeyadi Darmosaputro Sastraningrat. She is the daughter of Prince Sasraningrat, who is known as a nationalist and respected by the Dutch Colonial [14]. One of the factors that prompted its establishment was concern about the condition of female workers at the Negresco cigar factory, Yogyakarta, who faced injustice in the form of lower wages than men and harassment from foremen [13].

Maria Soelastrari's sense of nationality grew when she entered the Dutch school. There was dissatisfaction with the insults hurled by both the Dutch and the Natives themselves, but she used this curse as motivation to seek knowledge. Maria has been implementing Tut Wuri Handayani since marrying her husband, RM. Jacobus Soejadi Darmosapoetro in various regions, namely West Java, East Java,

Madura, Bali, Lombok and finally returned to Central Java in 1922. At that time there were many independence movements that made Maria aware of the many problems for women and women workers. In 1924, Maria established the Catholic Women's Organization, accompanied by Father H.v. Driesse, SJ [14]. This organization was renamed Poesara Wanita Katholiek after holding the First Congress in Yogyakarta. The initial step of empowerment carried out by PWK focuses on the uplifting of women's dignity through non-formal education pathways, including teaching basic literacy to the women's community as well as the establishment of a girls' intelligence school, with the support of the mothers of former female teacher school students in Mendut [13], [14].

The birth of this organization has strong roots in the selection of Catholic missions and the growth of the Javanese-Catholic community which began to be consolidated after the implementation of Colonial Ethical Politics [8, p. 145]. Although the European missionary congregation played an important role in the formation of educational institutions in the early phases, it was not reduced to a mere passive instrument or an extension of foreign missions. On the contrary, the organization was born purely as an independent initiative of the elite of Javanese Catholic women such as R. A. Maria Soelastri Soeyadi Darmosaputro Sastraningra who wanted a space of local articulation [15, p. 76]. This is done to construct a harmonious dual identity, namely to be a devout Catholic believer as well as to be an empowered, independent and responsive Javanese woman to social and humanitarian issues without eliminating the roots of the original culture.

There is a strong similarity in relevance between the Aisyiyah movement and the Poesara Wanita Catholic, especially since both were born from the parent organization that was structurally dominated by men (male-dominated organizations). This hierarchical position requires both to be skilled at negotiating the movement's autonomy to avoid internal resistance from the masculine elite [16, p. 115]. Moreover, both organizations chose the path of structured education rather than just short-term charitable programs [10,]. For Aisyiyah, this transformative strategy was realized through the establishment of the Mu'allimat teacher's school in 1918 and the Frobel School in 1919 as the forerunner of ABA kindergarten [9, p. 2]. These strategic choices have proven to be effective in freeing women from limited access to education while building a strong cadre base in the public space.

4.2 Two Visions of Educated Women: Institutional Model and Curriculum

The implementation of education as a top priority shows awareness of social transformation which is considered to have to start from the ideological upstream. However, once the urgency of education is understood, the next challenge shifts to the question of praxis: how education can be formulated for the media and what content it will contain. In the setting of the women's movement in Indonesia, Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Catholics (PWK) translate the emancipatory vision of women through an adequate institutional structure and curriculum design.

Aisyiyah views education as an instrument of modernization and efforts to eradicate illiteracy, especially among women. To accommodate their goals, Aisyiyah organizes many special programs such as Islamic religious science courses, fiqh science courses, Quranic interpretation courses, and others [17, p. 146], as cited in

[18]. Aisyiyah's institutional vision can be seen in its ability to manage early childhood and women's educational institutions, which was realized in the establishment of the Froebel School, which was later transformed into the Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, which was established in 1924.

The forerunner of Bustanul Athfal actually appeared in 1919, when young women under the guidance of Nyai Walidah who were members of the Praja Wanita Students established the Froebel School, a kindergarten that aimed to combat the ignorance that plagued indigenous peoples and responded to the popularity of early childhood education institutions that were only oriented to the European education system that was too focused on material and scientific aspects [18, p. 54]. In the period 1924-1931, Aisyiyah propaganda to the outside of Java experienced a significant increase, so the naming of the organization was felt to be easily understood by people outside the Javanese ethnicity. The name of Froebel School was changed to Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten and the kindergarten which was originally under Nasyiatul Aisyiyah or Siswa Praja Wanita was handed over to Aisyiyah Oeroesan Madrasah.

Based on data from the Aisyiyah PP Dikdasmen Council in 2017-2018, the number of Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten reached 10,271 spread throughout Indonesia [18]. Curricularically, the characteristics of the Aisyiyah curriculum can be seen through the integration of Islamic and Muhammadiyah content, science, and domestic-modern skills. At the basic education level, the content of Islam is then developed through deeper integration. Islamic modernization is designed to remain in harmony with the internal principles of Muhammadiyah. The designed modernization offers a concept of Islamization that does not blindly adopt the West, but rather views modern science as a manifestation of the verses of the Quran.

Poesara Wanita Catholics views education as a means of social change in the bumiputera society, rooted in the tradition of caritas or Catholic love which is strengthened through the social teachings of the church. Graduates are expected to be able to become modern bumiputera women who uphold local culture as well as the Christian faith [20], as cited in [19, p. 2]. In contrast to Aisyiyah which is oriented towards the formation of women activists in da'wah, the education organized by Poesara Wanita Katolik is more oriented towards charitable actions that are useful for families and communities.

Institutionally, Poesara Wanita Catholics operate through two complementary paths: synergizing with the existing network of Catholic formal schools, and establishing an independent institution in the form of the Women's Intelligence School that targets indigenous women from ordinary people who are not accommodated by the colonial school system. In contrast to government schools that discriminate on the basis of social status, these institutions apply the principle of equality in student admissions, while simultaneously serving as a center for social advocacy — the school's educators actively mentor female workers and negotiate with factory leaders to demand fair treatment [21], [13]. One of the concrete forms is the opening of the Women's Intelligence School in Cilacap in 1933 [22].

The Catholic Women's Poesara curriculum is designed in a practical and contextual way, covering basic literacy—reading, writing, and arithmetic—for women who have not yet reached formal education, equipped with household skills so that women can manage their family well-being independently. The dimension of

character education based on the church's social teachings is meant to foster the confidence of indigenous women to be able to take part in the public sphere. The curriculum also integrates local cultural values, in line with Father Van Lith's approach that emphasizes appreciation for Javanese customs and language [21]. At the non-formal program level, Poesara Wanita Catholic provides sewing and knitting courses, nursing courses, and organizational activities through Congregational Mary classes and the organization of Fancy Fair with other women's organizations [23, p. 28].

At least most of the organizations founded in the period 1913 to 1915 were still social and each fought for women's emancipation at large [24, pp. 81–87]. Women's empowerment does not only end in the eradication of illiteracy and learning. Both Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Catholics carry out a strategy of mass organizing through the recruitment of educators who not only function as conventional teachers, but also as agents of ideological mobilization in various regions.

Aisyiyah integrated the role of teachers with organizational cadres which then gave birth to the pattern of spreading modernist Islam in various new branches of the organization. The moral and intellectual authority possessed by the members is then used to embrace housewives and organize recitations. A similar conversion pattern occurred in the movement of the Catholic Women's Poesara. Teachers act to connect the church, the school bureaucracy, as well as the women's community as a whole. Both Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Catholics were then able to show how the success of institutional expansion was greatly influenced by the agency of women teachers who not only became teachers, but also actively tied the branch cities into a solid axis of mobilization.

4.3 Mapping the Network: Branch Expansion, Recruitment, and the 1928 Women's Congress

The geographical expansion of educational institutions associated with the Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Catholics in the early 20th century shows the existence of a pattern centered on urban-social and networks of their respective religions. Aisyiyah was inaugurated in 1917 in Yogyakarta where the organization systematically increased its reach by following the trade and migration routes of the Muslim community. This progress can be seen along the island of Java to the Sumatra Region [11, p. 73]. The growth of the Aisyiyah branch is inseparable from Muhammadiyah's efforts in administrative city centers that are responsive to Islamic reform [23, p. 12].

On the other hand, Poesara Wanita Catholic, which was founded in 1924 in Yogyakarta by R. A. Maria Soelastri Soeyadi Darmosaputro Sasraningrat on the basis of spiritual awareness to devote oneself to the Church and the Homeland [14]. This expansion shows a close spatial pattern with the parish structure and Colonial Catholic mission centers in administrative areas such as Semarang, Magelang and Batavia. PWK thrived through the consolidation of the women's community in the church environment driven by the educated bumiputera elite. They realize that the national women's movement is very important [14]. These two organizations show the characteristics of mass base differentiation where Aisyiyah dominates the space and

education of Urban Islam and PWK which is based in the cultural epicenter of the modern Catholic community in the middle of the city.

These two women's organizations place the recruitment of female teachers as an important actor within the sphere of structural drivers. Aisyiyah created educational institutions such as the Women's Teacher School and the Autonomous Organization of Praja Wanita Students which are not only educational spaces, but also a forum for measurable ideological regeneration [11, p. 75]. Graduates of the Teacher School are equipped with dual competencies as educators as well as missionaries (spreading Islam through da'wah or deeds) who are sent to various regions to initiate the formation of new branches of Aisyiyah [24, p. 112].

This pattern can also be seen from the education adopted by Poesara Wanita Katolik (PWK) through the optimization of alumni of Catholic girls' schools (meisjesschools). Educated Catholic Women Teachers under the care of the Religious Order are encouraged to be able to mobilize the women's community at the local parish level, organize domestic skills courses and be able to build an independent branch structural base. The use of strategies in the placement of teachers as field agents provides the transformation of educational institutions that are just pedagogical institutions into effective sociological expansion instruments to evenly distribute vertical organizational integration.

The existence of the coordination network of Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Katolik (PWK) is evidenced by the institutionalization of an internal solidarity mechanism that goes beyond the quantitative administrative claims of the number of branches. This organic solidarity can be seen through the existence of periodical print media such as the magazine Suara Aisyiyah which has been run since 1926. This print media serves to equalize the rhythm of the movement and disseminate religious thought about emancipation throughout regions [25, p. 104]. The central management of Aisyiyah in Yogyakarta consistently allocates financial subsidies and sends senior missionaries to strengthen the stability of new branches that are still vulnerable in areas outside Yogyakarta [23, p. 16].

Meanwhile, Poesara Wanita Katolik (PWK) strengthens its internal solidarity through hierarchical organizational governance under the coordination of inter-branch conferences such as regional meetings involving delegates from various cities in Java. It is used to harmonize the curriculum of women's courses and can distribute humanitarian aid. The existence of active communication and redistribution of resources between branches confirms that the two organizations operate as a solid and well-consolidated collective network, not only a collection of isolated local entities.

The First Indonesian Women's Congress took place on December 22-25, 1928 in Yogyakarta, which became the stage of sociological culmination to test the maturity of the national network. The Congress showed how women could break the patriarchal skepticism of the Colonial society which at that time underestimated women's intellect with the sentence "Orang perempoean sadja kok mengadakan Congres, jang hendak diremboeg disitoe itoe apa!" [26, p. xiii]. Based on the documentation of the periodic report, the First Indonesian Women's Congress succeeded in gathering a massive network of about 600 delegates from 30 religious-based and non-religious women's organizations [26]. If you look at the structure of the Congress committee, representatives from Aisyiyah and PWK occupy

strategic positions where Siti Munjiah from Aisyiyah became Vice Chairperson and R. A. Harjodiningrat from PWK became Treasurer I [27].

The presence of Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Catholics (PWK) in the First Women's Congress was not only as participants, but also as a conceptualizer of thought through a formal speech podium. In Blackburn's book The First Women's Congress: A Review, Blackburn [26] notes that the congress facilitated 15 keynote speakers to dissect the structural issues that hindered the progress of bumiputera women. Aisyiyah featured Siti Munjiah to deliver a speech on the status of women in the field of Islamic Law, while the PWK and nationalist networks focused on the immediate need of improving access to education for children and women [26]. This cross-factional discussion finally managed to reach a solid collective consensus, resulting in several decisions. One of them was a formal demand to the colonial government to establish a studiefonds (study fund) for underprivileged children. In addition, there is an addition of girls' schools and a joint commitment to reject the practice of Early Marriage for minors because it can be detrimental both psychologically, physically, and also reproductive health [27].

The meeting of various ideologies in one congress turned out to have triggered some quite fierce debates. One of them is about the discussion of marriage rules. We can see that there are two sharply different views where the Catholic Women's Movement (PWK) together with the secular nationalist factions strongly reject the existence of all forms of polygamy to defend the idea of one husband and wife (monogamy). But on the other hand, Aisyiyah applies the opposite of PWK where they still maintain the rules of polygamy because this is part of Islamic Law. However, Aisyiyah still demands strict rules and sanctions so that these rights are not arbitrarily abused by men [26], [24].

The existence of these two differences does not make the congress dissolve. The network between Aisyiyah and PWK shows the maturity side applied in organization. The two organizations agreed to postpone the debate on the marriage law in order to focus on the agenda of the struggle that is of mutual interest and urgency. In the end, women's organizations united in the congress and established an umbrella federation organization called Perikatan Perempoean Indonesia or PPI [26, p. 71]. This success proves that in 1928, the network of Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Catholics had developed from a local movement to an important force in the historical landscape of the nation's struggle.

4.4 Under the Colonial State: Subsidies, Regulations, and Limits of Autonomy (1928–1945)

The education carried out by the Dutch government was initially only applied to meet the needs of Dutch employees who needed education and training [28], as cited in [29]. Women at that time were still quite difficult to get an education, especially women from the middle and lower classes. However, the application of ethical politics in the period 1900 to 1940 had an impact on indigenous life in the aspects of irrigation, transmigration, and education. Education then became more populist and allowed the bumiputera community, especially the middle and lower communities, to get an education. The educational procedural system is strictly implemented and differentiated based on existing social stratification [29].

Education reform then has an impact on the increase in educational institutions, both government and privately managed. The increasing number of educational institutions then also has an impact on the addition of female students. The curriculum taught includes reading and writing skills, handicrafts, history, geography, and other skills [23, p. 20].

Although the women's education reform policy provided development for the education of the bumiputera community, the fiscal regulations implemented by the colonial government were still operated as bureaucratic control to maintain the colonial stability agenda. The Onderwijs Inspector or supervision of the Dutch education inspectorate issued article 23 paragraph 3 of the Dutch Constitution which provides a legal basis for freedom of education, thus allowing religious schools to operate with public funding provided they meet certain requirements [30]. A subsidy system was also provided for private schools that were willing to adopt a Western teaching structure and were considered not to endanger public safety [31, p. 95]. The requirements for schools that will receive subsidies include the existence of formal qualifications for teachers in the form of ownership of a government-certified diploma, the use of standard language during the educational process, standardization of school architecture, and full compliance with the Onderwijs Inspectie or the supervision of the Dutch education inspectorate.

Both Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Katolik viewed the subsidy application process as triggering an existential dilemma that led to their curricular compromise with the colonial government. Subsidies will certainly erode institutional autonomy massively, considering that schools that receive subsidies must comply with the rules implemented by the Onderwijs Inspectie. School bureaucratization will affect the loss of flexibility in teacher recruitment who can no longer be selected through ideological loyalty alone.

Although looking at the subsidy policy in the same realm, the interaction created shows that there is a fairly complex socio-religious asymmetry between the two organizations. Although the Dutch colonial government was rooted in Protestant political traditions, its relationship with the Catholic mission network took place within the framework of a wider colonial arrangement. Poesara Catholic Women leverages connections with European Catholic communities through ecclesiastical networks and cross-colonial solidarity. Poesara Wanita Katolik , founded by an alumnus of the Mendut Catholic Dormitory, certainly has a fairly close relationship, given that the Mendut Dormitory has a harmonious relationship with the Colonial government [32]. The Dutch colonial government tended to adopt an accommodating, conditional attitude, which made Poesara Wanita Katolik s a reliable ally in stemming secular political currents, even though they were still suspected in the competitive arena among Christian denominations.

In addition, Aisyiyah still faced higher administrative suspicions than Poesara Wanita Katolik, even though Muhammadiyah as a whole had, tactically, a formal non-political relationship with the Dutch colonial government. Asymmetry affects the bureaucratic process, making it easier for schools affiliated with Catholic networks to access legal support and facilities. Meanwhile, Aisyiyah had to undergo an ideological verification process to demonstrate the absence of seeds of anti-colonial resistance in its curriculum. Even so, both Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah as a whole still maintain their independence which upholds Islamic philosophy [33, p. 28].

Tensions between the Dutch colonial government and private education reached a peak in October 1932, when the Wilde Scholen Ordonnantie or Wild School Ordinance was issued. Based on Staatsblad number 494 of 1932, the Dutch government is considered to be neglecting non-subsidized private educational institutions by requiring written operating permits against the Dutch colonial government [34]. The policy of repression triggered a wave of rejection from various elements of the community movement, where there was a quite different response from Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Katolik .

The Muhammadiyah community, a small part of whose schools received funds from the Dutch colonial government, was initially reluctant. However, after the emergency conference was held on November 18 to 19, 1932, Muhammadiyah, which of course included Aisyiyah in it, firmly rejected the regulation [34]. The ordinance is perceived by Aisyiyah as a threat to the existence of Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Putri,, which have been independently pioneered for a long time. In addition, Poesara Wanita Catholics view the ordinance with a diplomatic approach. Affiliates of Catholic educational institutions, the majority of which are granted operating permits and subsidies, are not directly affected by the policy. Even so, Poesara Wanita Katolik s still view the ordinance as a bad example of religious freedom and education. Poesaka Catholic Women provides a statement of stance through the church using a behind-the-scenes negotiation strategy. Collective pressure that was then supported by the decision of the general meeting of the Dutch East Indies Teachers' Union (PGHB) affiliated with a number of movement organizations such as the Djawi Catholic Political Association, Boedi Oetomo, and Muhammadiyah, resulted in the forced abolition of the implementation of the Wilde School Ordonnantie on January 20, 1933 [35].

The collapse of Dutch colonial authority in 1942 and the transfer of power during the Japanese military occupation had a significant impact on the socio-political order. Foreign missionaries were interned in various concentration camps. The administrative-fiscal instruments implemented by the Japanese military government forced all movement organizations to dissolve themselves in the interests of the Pacific War. Although the establishment of women's associations such as Fujinkai and the Women's Workers' Front of Putera was facilitated, the Japanese authorities continued to indirectly forcibly push back the previously developed women's emancipation struggle [36, p. 58].

The Catholic Women's Poetry, which had previously had historical-cultural ties to Europe, then experienced significant pressure. Most of the buildings that included schools, hospitals, and monasteries were completely taken over by the Japanese authorities [8, p. 705]. The merger of various women's organizations also caused a deep setback for the Catholic Women's Poesara movement until 1945. Meanwhile, the Japanese authorities implemented a tactical co-optation strategy against Islamic organizations, including Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah. The goal of empowering the masses as a force supporting the war resulted in the survival of the existence of Islamic organizations. Even so, Islamic women's organizations such as Aisyiyah still lost opportunities in pursuing their agenda during the Japanese occupation [36, p. 62]. Formally, the absolute autonomy of the Aisyiyah was lost due to the coercion of the Japanese authorities which required all women's organizations to merge and join the Fujinkai or semi-military women's organizations under Japanese military rule [36, p.

62]. In order to maintain the mission that had been carried for a long time, Aisyiyah used underground tactics that kept the organizational network alive through the defense of the basic religious curriculum to prepare for the momentum of the revival in 1945.

5 Conclusion

This study indicates that structurally convergent educational strategies can emerge from theologically divergent foundations when organizations face parallel institutional constraints. Aisyiyah and Poesara Wanita Katolik arrived at similar institutional choices not through ideological alignment, but through common structural pressures: the exclusivity of colonial schooling, subordination within male-dominated parent organizations, and community demand for educated women as agents of social change.

Both organizations converted educational expansion into network expansion by recruiting teachers from their own membership base, though through different mechanisms. Aisyiyah built a diffuse, ideologically cohesive network sustained by print media and centralized cadre deployment; Poesara Wanita Katolik built a more hierarchical network reliant on inter-branch conferences and Catholic institutional infrastructure. The First Indonesian Women's Congress of 1928 provides the strongest empirical evidence of both networks' maturity: their deliberate positions in the congress committee, their capacity to defer theological disagreement over polygamy in favor of shared structural interests, and their joint participation in establishing Perikatan Perempoean Indonesia all indicate organizational sophistication that went beyond religious boundaries.

Their divergent responses to the Wilde Scholen Ordonnantie of 1932—open resistance by Aisyiyah, behind-the-scenes negotiation by Poesara Wanita Katolik—and their contrasting fates under Japanese occupation further confirm that convergence was structural rather than permanent, contingent on shared external pressures specific to the Dutch colonial period.

This study argues that the women's education movement in colonial Indonesia cannot be adequately understood through single-organization studies or policy-centered analyses alone. Future research is likely to examine how the networks constructed in this period shaped post-independence women's organizing in Indonesia.

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