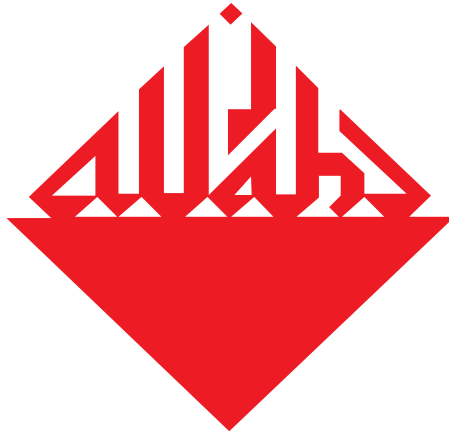


# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 29, Number 3, 2022



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TOK TAKIA'S LEGACY IN AYUTTHAYA, THAILAND:  
TRACING QADRIYYAH CIRCULATIONS  
THROUGH THE BAY OF BENGAL

Christopher Mark Joll & Srawut Aree

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POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MUHAMMADIYAH:  
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Ridho Al-Hamdi

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FOSTERING A KNOWLEDGE CULTURE FOR PEACE,  
DEVELOPMENT, AND INTEGRATION:  
MUSLIM EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Alizaman D. Gamon & Mariam Saidona Tagoranao

# **STUDIA ISLAMIKA**



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## Redefining Manhood and Womanhood: Insights from the Oldest Indonesian Muslim Women Organization, 'Aisyiyah

**Abstract:** *This paper asks the question: why is it mostly men who define good manhood and womanhood? Where are women's voices on these contested concepts? To elucidate women's conceptualization of manhood and womanhood, this study draws on the oldest Indonesian Muslim women organization in Indonesia, 'Aisyiyah, by examining its published treatises. Interviews with 'Aisyiyah activists were also taken in June and August 2021 to enrich and clarify data from these documents. Amongst the most significant findings are that 'Aisyiyah has argued for a very different kind of manhood and womanhood from those promoted by conservative groups, religiously and culturally. 'Aisyiyah does jihad for a mutual and reciprocal idea of good manhood and womanhood; that means good men must behave well to women, and good women must respect men. Their arguments are based on contextual interpretations of Qur'anic texts and Prophetic traditions as well as local and cultural notions of proper manhood and womanhood.*

**Keywords:** Manhood, Womanhood, 'Aisyiyah, *Jihād*, Indonesia.



**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mempersoalkan: mengapa laki-laki yang selalu harus mendefinisikan kelelakian dan keperempuanan yang baik? Di mana suara perempuan dalam konsep yang diperebutkan ini? Untuk menggali pendapat kaum perempuan tentang hal yang diperdebatkan ini, kajian ini menggali data dari organisasi perempuan Muslim tertua dan terbesar di Indonesia, 'Aisyiyah, dengan mengkaji risalah-risalah yang sudah diterbitkan. Wawancara dengan para aktivis 'Aisyiyah pada bulan Juni-Agustus 2021 juga dilakukan untuk memperkaya dan memvalidasi data dari dokumen-dokumen tersebut. Di antara temuan yang paling signifikan adalah bahwa 'Aisyiyah memiliki pandangan tentang kelelakian dan keperempuanan yang sangat berbeda dari yang dipromosikan oleh kelompok Muslim konservatif dan tekstualis. 'Aisyiyah mengembangkan gagasan kebaikan yang timbal balik, bahwa kelelakian yang baik berhubungan dengan kebaikannya dalam memperlakukan perempuan, demikian juga keperempuanan yang baik ditentukan juga oleh penghormatannya kepada laki-laki. Argumentasi tersebut didasarkan pada interpretasi kontekstual mereka terhadap teks-teks Al-Qur'an dan hadis Nabi serta imajinasi lokal dan budaya tentang kelelakian dan keperempuanan yang baik.

**Kata kunci:** Kelelakian, Keperempuanan, 'Aisyiyah, Jihad, Indonesia.

**ملخص:** تطرح هذه الورقة السؤال التالي: لماذا الرجال في الغالب هم من يحددون الرجولة والأنوثة الصالحة؟ أين أصوات النساء في هذه المفاهيم المتنازع عليها؟ لتوضيح مفهوم المرأة للرجولة والأنوثة، تعتمد هذه الدراسة على أقدم منظمة إندونيسية للمرأة المسلمة «العائشية»، من خلال فحص أطروحاتها المنشورة. وأجريت مقابلات مع نشطاء العائشية شهري يونيو وأغسطس ٢٠٢١ لإثراء وتوضيح البيانات من هذه الوثائق. من بين أهم النتائج التي توصلت إليها أن آراء عائشية في نوع الرجال والنساء مختلفة تماماً عن تلك التي روجت لها الجماعات المحافظة دينياً وثقافياً. تجاهد العائشية من أجل فكرة متعددة المنفعة ومتبادلة للرجولة والأنوثة الصالحة. هذا يعني أن الرجال الطيبين يجب أن يتصرفوا بشكل جيد مع النساء، ويجب على المرأة الطيبة أن تحترم الرجل. وتستند حججهم إلى تفسيرات النصوص القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية بالإضافة إلى المفاهيم المحلية والثقافية للرجولة والأنوثة المناسبة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الرجولة، الأنوثة، العائشية، الجهاد، إندونيسية.

**B**ecoming a good man or a good woman is not a guaranteed state of being, rather it is a social construction, imagined by different communities situated in a constantly changing geographical and social landscape. Among the most influential bodies to promote the application of such imagined manhood and womanhood are religious institutions, communal culture, and State policy. Research by feminist scholars from different generations, such as by Katy Gardner (1995), Fatima Mernissi (2012), Valentine M. Moghadam (2019) and more recently by Juyong Song (2019), show how religion has been utilized by conservative male scholars to imagine and construct a standard for manhood and womanhood that reinforces their status and role expectations in society. The authors found that masculinity in Islamic communities such as in North Africa, Arab countries, Pakistan and India, has been portrayed as highly rational and authoritative in religious, social and political affairs (Wignall 2016). Women are expected to be submissive to their male relatives, and are considered religiously incompetent and politically inactive. Masculinities have been constructed to be dominant in public and domestic spheres (Berggren 2018; Eisen and Yamashita 2019). In this paper I will argue that Muslim women organizers from 'Aisyiyah do *jihad* by imagining and constructing their idea of manhood and womanhood using theological arguments that challenge the views of conservative Muslims and Indonesian governments.

Attempts to refute conservatives' views on female inactivity in the gender discourse on manhood and womanhood have been made by scholars in recent decades, such as Brook Ackerly and Jaqui True (2020), Mutiah Amini (2018, 2021), Linda Rae Bennet (2012) and Umma Farida and Abdurrohman Kasbi (Farida and Kasbi 2018). They argue that in most communities' men tend to control the discourse, however, as suggested by previous research, there are women who do not easily submit to patriarchal command. Some of these women have strategized within their spheres to propose different kinds of womanhood that are not passive and submissive (Mahmood 2005; Qibtiyah 2009). Women are active in constructing a counter-discourse of femininity in local fields and in the international arena. Some Muslim women in Indonesia consistently engage in the construction of active womanhood as demonstrated by the research conducted by Ro'fah (2003), Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin (2015), Minako Sakai and Samina

Yasmeen (2016). However, these works are still part of a minority. Consequently, their influence in challenging male bias in the social construction of manhood and womanhood is limited. Another gap in the scholarship that most research focuses on women's own ideals of good womanhood, but they do not adequately address ideal manhood. This paper contributes to our understanding of Indonesian women's conceptualizations of both womanhood and manhood.

I pose two main questions in this paper: 1) what are the social imaginaries of Muslim women on proper manhood and womanhood that inspire them to do *jihād*? 2) What are the arguments they develop to promote such ideals? To investigate these questions, I employ qualitative research in the form of a case study of 'Aisyiyah, a women's organization that has survived different political trials within the history of our nation, from the Dutch colonial era to present day Indonesia. The key term *jihād* has been interpreted to mean various things by Muslim scholars. *Jihād* can manifest in struggles in controlling oneself to be in line with God's ways, in seeking knowledge, to struggles in improving the quality of life of the people in all aspects. *Jihād* might also mean efforts for giving admonition to tyrannic government to waging battles with those who prosecute Muslims and forbid them from practicing their religion (Azra 2000; Hasan 2006; Rahmah 2020; Wadud 2006). In this research I use *jihād* to reflect these arrays of meaning.

Due to limitations in time and resources, my investigation on 'Aisyiyah's imaginaries of good manhood and womanhood is focused on its *jihād* in the form of producing, publishing and promoting the treatise *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah* (Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah 2016), which challenges the views of conservative Muslims. The book has been decreed as an official document of the organization. It contains explicit constructions of good gender roles as imagined by 'Aisyiyah women, and is widely promoted by the organization through various forms of media, from specifically designed training to open *pengajian* (communal learning on religion/Islam). In addition to analysing the documents, I also collected data through interviews with ten (10) 'Aisyiyah women, four (4) who are currently sitting on the Central Board of 'Aisyiyah and six (6) who are members of the organization at the grassroots level (*ranting*). All interviews were conducted in Indonesian and Javanese (the local dialect). All quoted interviews were translated to English by the researcher. Apart from documentation and interview, I also did

observations of events where gender relations of 'Aisiyah women with their husbands take place, such as in public learning (*pengajian*) and in their households. Interviews and observation were carried out from June to August 2021 in Yogyakarta. I present the main conceptual theories used in this paper, followed by my discussion on 'Aisiyah's *jihād* in contesting conservatives' imaginaries and constructions of manhood and womanhood, and in the final section I provide concluding remarks.

## **On Imaginaries of Manhood and Womanhood**

Charles Taylor (2003) argued that communities consciously and unconsciously share common imaginative views on things that are important to them to guide their lives together as a communal entity. This might include imaginings about the cosmic order, as well as social and moral imperatives. While these conceptions are subtle in nature, they are powerful in shaping the expectations of community members and how they relate to one another. Taylor calls these shared conceptions social imaginaries (Taylor 2003). Taylor outlined changes in the West's understanding of reality, which was shaped by Judeo-Christian beliefs for more than a millennium, then became increasingly secular due to social and cultural change. Religion or belief in God were once widely seen as axiomatic and unchallenged. Following the Renaissance, belief in God was challenged and problematized, and disengagement with religion was promoted. Independent reasoning gave rise to new norms. Jose Casanova (2008) and Bernard Adeney-Risakotta (2018) challenge Taylor's notion of social imaginaries, arguing that his reasoning is situated within a certain type of secularized Western modernity. They noted that in some Western countries and most countries in the East, particularly Indonesia, religion continues to flourish.

The difference between secular Western and Indonesian social imaginaries can be explained by the latter's attachment to religion, which shapes notions of ideal manhood and womanhood. As Casanova and Adeney-Risakotta's research indicates, Indonesians, particularly Muslims, primarily refer to religious sources to develop their social imaginaries of manhood and womanhood. In addition, Indonesian Muslims defer to cultural values, state policies and other more practical considerations to imagine gender roles attached to manhood and womanhood. This is confirmed by research on womanhood and feminism in Indonesia by scholars such as Pieterella van Doorn-

Harder (2006), Susan Blackburn (2008), Lies Marcoes-Natsir (2018) Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin (2013) and Claire-Marie Hefner (2019). These scholars have conducted research on conceptualisations of womanhood in education, politics, gender ideology and courtship. They found that elements of religious ideology are strong, which accords with Adeney-Risakotta's findings.

Even though certain social imaginaries have been internalized by communities, scholars have found that social imaginaries can be challenged and changed by new imaginaries propagated by new agencies, or by new interpretations of old teachings (Baderin 2006; Goehring 2019; Qodariah 2016). Recent research found that Pakistani men tend to show their masculinity by posting travel and political content on social media (Salam 2021), while in Iran manhood has been associated with wearing a moustache, and having a revolutionary spirit (Saeidzadeh 2020). For centuries, Nusantara people and Muslims in Indonesia believed that political leadership only suited men and that women should assume reproductive roles in the domestic sphere. Such imaginaries are reflected in the national law on marriage, for instance. The Indonesian Marriage Law No. 1 Year 1974 stated that a man (husband) is the head of the family and a woman (wife) is the housewife.

Many organizations that emerged from social and religious reform movements have challenged the dichotomized roles of men and women, and have advocated for the equitable treatment of women across all aspects of social life, such as education, employment, security, economy and health. As women acquire higher education, enter the job market, and participate in the economy, their self-esteem and confidence increases. Accordingly, women began assertively promoting different conceptions of womanhood and manhood (Syamsiyatun 2016). Women involved in community-based organizations began to both consciously and unconsciously contribute to new social imaginaries about manhood and womanhood. For many female activists such new imaginaries had to be discerned and promoted systematically to change conservative social imaginaries and practices. This is in accordance with the theory conceptualized by Max O. Stephenson. For many centuries, most communities in the world, regardless of their religious traditions, cultures and racial origins, could not imagine women leading communal and religious lives. Legends and stories told by

these communities created and strengthened such social imaginaries of the inability of women to assume leadership roles. Thus, stories of prophets, of great conquerors, great philosophers, great tribe leaders and many other 'great legends' celebrate men's achievements, and these stories have been told and retold for generations (Stephenson 2011). From these enduring cultural processes, most world communities have constructed and sustained social imaginaries that celebrate manhood and deride womanhood.

Conservative leaders of world religions deny the relationship between prophethood and womanhood; only men can assume Prophethood because they have special and superior qualities that do not exist in women (Ilyas et al. 2005). Such narratives have been handed down and disseminated by families, in religious schools, in houses of worship, and in laws and regulations. Communities educate their young children to accept and to live in accordance with such social imaginaries. These imaginaries are considered to be objective realities and accepted as divine fate. As Mernissi (2012) notes, women's capacity and contributions in the development of culture were not properly recognized, let alone appreciated and celebrated, but instead were forgotten.

### **Conservative Manhood and Womanhood of Indonesian Muslims**

Indonesians, like their counterparts around the world, have actively appropriated ideal manhood and womanhood. Different Indonesian organisations contested ideas about manhood and womanhood for the purpose of cultural cultivation, national political stability and pride as well as religious piety. Common social imaginaries of manhood and womanhood are often maintained during certain periods of time before they are challenged by new ideals promoted by other segments of society. For instance the Kingdoms of Java succeeded in constructing new ideals of manhood and womanhood and institutionalizing them for a few centuries through the writing and dissemination of social codes about Javanese gender roles. Among the most popular reference books on Javanese manhood and womanhood are *Serat Piwulang Isteri (Treatises for Giving Lessons to Women)* written by KGPAA Pakualam I, the son of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I (first) and *Serat Centhini* (Maharsi 2010). In both books, manhood is associated with intellectual, political, spiritual and physical power, whereas a good woman was one who showed modesty and obedience to her

male relatives. Such imaginaries were encapsulated in a popular idiom, ‘*swarga nunut neraka katut*’ (brought to heaven [and] dragged to hell [by her husband]). For centuries, Javanese kings and rulers of Islamic Mataram kingdom succeeded in constructing idealized manhood and womanhood that combined Islamic and local cultural references, such as those found in the *Serat Piwulang Estri*. The *Serat* consists of many teachings and guidance on becoming good religious Javanese women. It depicts characters that Javanese women should internalize and contains examples of how to behave in different events. Rulers of the Kingdom also had the power and necessary modalities to discipline their subjects to adhere to those norms.

Amongst Islamic community circles, reference books about manhood and womanhood based on Islamic teachings were circulated in *madrasahs*, *pengajian* and community circles. Most popular books on *tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis or interpretations), *hadiths* (prophetic traditions), *fiqh* (practical law), and Islamic philosophy and mysticism were produced and reproduced by circles of mostly male scholars (Barlas 2002; Qibtiyah 2009; Wadud 1999).

Indonesian Islamic literature in *Fiqh* (Islamic practical laws) that depict the status, rights and role expectations of men and women were written mostly by male preachers and scholars (Abdurrahman 2003; Muttaqin 2020). They dictate the construction of the behaviours of Muslim men and women through their writings, which are based on their interpretation of relevant Qur’anic verses and prophetic traditions. These texts are distributed through various mediums, such as books, learning circles, schools, and social media in the contemporary era. For example, the celebrated Indonesian ulama’ Shaykh Nawawi ibn Umar al-Bantani (w. 1316/1898 M) wrote a book entitled *‘Uqūd al-lujayn fi bayan huqūq al-zawjayn*. The book contains lists of the obligations and rights of men and women as husbands and wives. He stressed that women who do not fulfil their obligatory tasks should face severe punishment, while men who failed to fulfil their responsibilities faced lesser or no punishment at all. The book has been widely distributed in Indonesian *pesantrens* (Muslim boarding schools). The book has played a significant role in shaping and promoting conservative manhood and womanhood among Indonesian Muslims. The book received significant criticism from younger scholars aligned with Nahdlatul Ulama, and who later revised to certain sections about womanhood (Forum Kajian

Kitab Kuning 2003). Another 'ulama, the teacher of the founder of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, Kiai Saleh Darat also wrote on the necessity of domestic roles for women (Suhandjati and Kusuma 2018).

Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah, as the oldest and largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, have also developed their vision of womanhood, which explicate what women could achieve in the social and political realm, as formulated in the books *Isteri Islam yang Berarti* (Tim 1956) and *Adāb al-Mar'ah fi al-Islām* (1982). These conceptualizations are found in numerous organisational documents, including decrees, speeches, and training manuals. Women are encouraged to engage in practical activities, such as managing the organization, attaining a better education, and engaging in health promotion, economic empowerment, and political and media literacy (Anwar 2005; Qibtiyah and Witriani 2016).

### **'Aisyiyah as Collective Women's Agency**

There are numerous women's organizations in Indonesia that take various forms and have different focuses, as well as different organizational cultures. I focused on 'Aisyiyah for this paper because it is the oldest and largest active women's organization in Indonesia. In the 1970s an American anthropologist, James Peacock, recognized that 'Aisyiyah was the largest and most active Muslim women's organization in the world. In 2021, more than forty years from Peacock's assessment, 'Aisyiyah is not only existing but thriving with new social ventures and strategies. Another American anthropologist, Mark Woodward, stated in 2020 that 'Aisyiyah is the largest active Muslim women organization in the world (Woodward 2021). While for most part of its history 'Aisyiyah has heavily focused on social praxis with direct services to communities (Qodariah 2016; Ro'fah 2003), in recent years it has made serious efforts to strengthen its scholarship and academic capacity, and to reinforce its vision that women are equal to men. 'Aisyiyah engaged in systematic *jihād* to improve the status of its academic institutions and develop them into full-fledged universities. Other efforts can be seen in the establishment of 'Aisyiyah Center at the Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta. In October 2020, the 'Aisyiyah Center and the Lembaga Pengkajian dan Pengembangan 'Aisyiyah (Research and Development Institute) held a series of international digital seminars on 'Aisyiyah



Studies through the International Conference on 'Aisyiyah Studies (ICAS), during which 39 speakers addressed several issues experienced by 'Aisyiyah based on their research (Aisyiyah Sukses Helat ICAS 2020 Secara Daring 2020; Lewat ICAS 2020, 'Aisyiyah Bangun Sistem Pengetahuan Umat n.d.). In 'Aisyiyah's view, its various struggles and efforts to create better opportunities for women to engage in spiritual and everyday life are a form of *jihād* because they challenge conservatives ideas that deny women's rights.

While it is undeniable that the existence of 'Aisyiyah, historically and culturally speaking, cannot be separated from Muhammadiyah, it can also be argued that the existence of Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from 'Aisyiyah, at least at the grassroots level. 'Aisyiyah women have participated in almost all Muhammadiyah activities. Based on my observations, during significant events women were at the forefront of activities such as public *pengajian* (communal learning), festivals, and bazaars. The organizational relationship between 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah itself is so complex that it warrants separate research. For the purposes of this paper, I would like to highlight only the most relevant relational issues of male-based Muhammadiyah and female-based Muslim organizations, which are important in understanding 'Aisyiyah's social imaginaries of ideal manhood and womanhood and its *jihad* as expressed in the book *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*.

The early history of 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah ideology was based on familial relationships in terms of biological and social facts. The establishment of 'Aisyiyah was supported by the founder of Muhammadiyah, Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan. The leaders of 'Aisyiyah in the first years of its establishment were the wife and close relatives of Kiai Dahlan, and daughters of his close friends in Muhammadiyah (Mulkhan 2010; Nakamura 2012). The Muhammadiyah men and 'Aisyiyah women both held each other in high esteem, trusted and supported one another; otherwise, their mutual support would not have existed.

Not long after Kiai Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah on 18 November 1912; he created space for Muslim women to participate in learning activities just like the men. It was not easy to convince Muslim families in his neighbourhood to allow their female family members to attend the learning sessions created by Kiai Dahlan. He began teaching his own wife, daughters and nieces how to read the Qur'an and how to

write, among other skills. After some time, people realized that there was no harm in allowing women to attend learning circles, more and more families sent their daughters to join the learning club, which by 1914 was named Sapa Tresna (Syamsiyatun 2007). Sapa Tresna expanded its focus to not only learning religion, but also other areas of study and life skills. The popularity of Sapa Tresna grew alongside the spread of Muhammadiyah in other regions. Muhammadiyah men gave female family members access to learning, and even encouraged them to pursue education.

By 1917 Sapa Tresna reached regions outside the principality of Yogyakarta. There was growing sensitivity about making the club less Java-centric because of the name. To cater to the needs of non-Javanese members, there was proposal to change the name. New names were proposed and presented at a meeting in Yogyakarta, attended by members of Muhammadiyah and Sapa Tresna from various parts of Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies. The name 'Aisyiyah was chosen following a long and deep discussion. 'Aisyiyah, literally and conceptually means the one with 'Aisyah's traits, followers of 'Aisyah. The selection of the name itself was not an easy decision; there were many debates and negotiations involved (Syamsiyatun 2020).

The personality of 'Aisyah, the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad is well known among Muslims. Muslims have imagined 'Aisyah to have sharp intelligence, to be knowledgeable on religious matters, diligent, youthful, kind and generous. The historical and social portrayal of 'Aisyah aligns with how Muhammadiyah men and women at that time perceived ideal Muslim womanhood. The decision to rename the women's group was taken on 19 May 1917; and ever since then the date has been commemorated as the official birthdate of 'Aisyiyah.

Muhammadiyah men believe that under Qur'anic teachings, women have equal status, obligations and rights to men, and that men facilitate access for their female counterparts to enjoy that status and rights, just as the Prophet did during his lifetime. In return, Muslim women trust their male counterparts and participate in those initiatives, and develop the independence of 'Aisyiyah to reflect a mutual, collegial partnership that is not just a *Bagian* (a section) of Muhammadiyah. With their newly acquired status, 'Aisyiyah women acquired greater autonomy to develop, revise, refine their views on womanhood and manhood. Being an autonomous partner organization, the chairwoman of 'Aisyiyah has

been made an ex-officio member the Central Board of Muhammadiyah (Qibtiyah 2021, 179). 'Aisyiyah women also become committee members in most Muhammadiyah Majelis (councils).

The women of 'Aisyiyah make two references to the image of 'Aisyah, the wife of the Prophet (Abbott 2000). First, by constructing new social imaginaries of ideal womanhood that is not only about being knowledgeable, loving women, but also exercising agency in line with Islamic beliefs. This challenged commonly held conservative beliefs, which favoured submissive womanhood, as depicted in the treatises of various *Serat*. Second, the 'Aisyiyah organization has disseminated and propagated *jihad* to share new social constructions of womanhood and manhood with the wider community, and at the same time to contend existing and contradictory imaginaries of womanhood.

Women who joined the organization in the early Twentieth Century were courageous. Joining organisations, pursuing higher education, speaking in public meetings, and engaging in arguments, was not common amongst women at this time. Young and older women who chose to join 'Aisyiyah exercised their agency by engaging in activities that met their aspirations but that were not considered appropriate by their contemporaries. These women believed that women, like men, are obliged to learn religion, to engage in social activities, and to be able to support themselves in life. These are examples of contemporary women's *jihad*.

During the course of its history, 'Aisyiyah have cultivated and reproduced different concepts of womanhood and manhood that draw upon progressive interpretations of Qur'anic texts and prophetic traditions, as well as arguments from women's studies. The imaginaries of womanhood and manhood in 'Aisyiyah are not static but change in accordance with new knowledge. New ideas about womanhood and manhood were integrated into organizational structures and became normative.

The vision, status, and characteristics of 'Aisyiyah women, as well as their social roles were stipulated not only in the organization's Constitution, but also in fatwas and written treatises. The organization's documents provide the basis for the social construction of ideal womanhood and manhood for a new generation of women. As previously stated, in this paper I shall focus on one treatise, the *Tuntunan Keluarga Sakinah*, because it extensively discusses womanhood and manhood.

In the following sections, I analyse constructions of manhood and womanhood in *Tuntunan Keluarga Sakinah*.

### ***Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah: A Treatise of 'Aisyiyah's Jihād***

The *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah* (TMKS) has undergone revisions since its publication in 1980. The revisions undertaken in 1989, 1994 and 2015 by 'Aisyiyah women show how their imaginaries of manhood and womanhood have shifted over time in response to new social contexts, including an increase in the number of educated women in Indonesia. The treatise was reviewed and discussed nationally in 1989 during the National Assembly of Majelis Tarjih XXII in Malang, East Java. The most recent revision was in 2015, after which it was officially *ditanfidz* (decreed and executed) by the Central Board of Muhammadiyah No. 101/KEP/I.0/B/2015 concerning Tanfidz Keputusan Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih XXVIII. The decree executed several other matters, namely *Fikih Air* (Islamic law and views on Water); and *Manasik Haji* (Rites of Hajj) (PP Muhammadiyah 2015). These reviews and revisions were done collectively within the organization to cater to the emergence of new consciousness and understandings of crucial issues, and to accommodate social and cultural change over more than 30 years.

The development of the *Keluarga Sakinah* in the mid-1980s was a collective form of women's *jihad* that came about as a response to new challenges that did not conform to the views of 'Aisyiyah, in particular, its perspective on manhood, womanhood, and family relationships. Based on my interviews with 'Aisyiyah informants, Mrs. SKW, Mrs. MS and Mrs. CHS, there were at least five issues that incentivized the writing of *Keluarga Sakinah*.<sup>1</sup> All the informants provided similar viewpoints; only one stressed certain issues while others focused on other matters. The conformity of the data collected from different sources validates its veracity.

From the interviews conducted, we know that 'Aisyiyah needed to respond to new issues by conceptualizing the idea of *Keluarga Sakinah*. 'Aisyiyah women encountered five pressing issues. First, 'Aisyiyah emphasises the importance of the institution of marriage; for that reason, agencies that underestimate the importance of marriage and family will be addressed accordingly. Second, the increasing number of divorces led 'Aisyiyah to evaluate the reasons behind this increase. Third,

'Aisyiyah was concerned about the State's policy on *Keluarga Berencana* (Family Planning), which focuses heavily on the reduction in pregnancy and birth numbers without adequate consideration of women's health, informed consent, and family welfare. 'Aisyiyah approved the use of different contraceptive devices. It sees the family planning program as a way to increase the quality life of women and their families. Fourth, the increased influences of secular, radical feminism that undercuts the importance of the family as a social institution. 'Aisyiyah respects the institution of marriage and family and sought to promote *Keluarga Sakinah* more intensively. Fifth, the increasing practice of polygamy among conservatives, and other moral issues caused by ignorance on sexual ethics. 'Aisyiyah sought to remedy these issues by promoting the concept of *Keluarga Sakinah*.

Although 'Aisyiyah and the State both value the institution of marriage and family, 'Aisyiyah's concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* challenges the Indonesian Marriage Law 1974, as well as conservatives' viewpoints promulgated in the aforementioned book, *'Uqūd al-lujayn*. The Marriage Law only recognizes one type of family structure in which husband is the head of the family. It provides for the practice of polygamy, the permissibility of which 'Aisyiyah takes issue with because it caters only to the interests of men and also implies their superiority over women. TMKS explicitly states that marriage is monogamous. This view is supported by theological and cultural arguments, and it has become social praxis of 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah members and their families. Another motif is 'Aisyiyah's deep apprehension with the increased number of divorces among Muslim communities in Indonesia, and the emergence of diverse types of marriage propagated by Western Feminists since the 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

Since the late 1980s 'Aisyiyah has worked to promote the concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* by organizing seminars with expert speakers from different fields, including Islamic law, sexuality and reproductive health, psychology, childhood education and sociology. Such activities could be regarded as *jihad* because they sought to improve the quality of family life and reduce gender-based discrimination. Mrs. SKW, one of the writers of the first edition of the book stated:

We did organize a number of seminars, discussions with experts in reproductive health. Dr. Hardjodjojodarmo and Prof. Dr. Dawiesah also participated in the events. There were also experts in psychology such as Prof. Badawi from UNY, and experts in education Ibu Barirotun, experts in

family counselling Ibu Alfiah Muhadi and others shared their knowledge. Then we wrote a draft, which was presented in meetings. Last time the revised version was approved by Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

'Aisyiyah women have been systematically constructing a concept of family that aligns with their imaginaries and expectations. The term used to promote these concepts is *Keluarga Sakinah*. It comes from the Qur'an and denotes happy, prosperous, and peaceful family. The term *Keluarga Sakinah*, which was first coined by 'Aisyiyah, became very popular after it was adopted by the Indonesian government (Marcoe-Natsir and Meuleman 1993).

The book that I use in this research is titled *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*. The book was published by Penerbit Suara Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta in 2016. The book is comprised of five chapters. Chapter One provides general views on the wisdom of God's creation, including the creation of women and men, their union in marriage and building family, as well as the challenges of globalization on family values. Chapter Two describes 'Aisyiyah's constructions of *Keluarga Sakinah*, what it means and how to achieve it. Chapter Three discusses the rights and obligations of husband and wife and other family members. Chapter Four addresses the cultivation of the virtues and values of *Keluarga Sakinah*, especially from the perspectives of spirituality, education, health and environment, economic, social, legal and politics. TMKS ends with a Concluding Chapter that summarises its arguments and provides further suggestions. In each of the five chapters there are explicit and implicit conceptions of ideal womanhood and manhood (Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah 2016).

## **Reciprocal Manhood and Womanhood before God and Humankind**

In Chapter One of TMKS, 'Aisyiyah explicitly states its theological views about manhood and womanhood. The book explains that both man and woman are equal in front of God and in society, and neither is superior nor subordinate over the other, despite their biological differences. The natural biological differences between men and women enhance their collaboration for fulfilling various functions, social roles and expectations, and to sustain the survival of humankind as well as fulfilling their communal life in accordance with *sunnatullāh* (the Law of God – which also fits the Law of Nature). The organization's interpretations of Qur'an surah *al-Dhāriyāt* (51): 56, Q.S. *al-Ḥujurāt*

(49): 13, Q.S. *al-Nahl* (16): 97, Q.S. *al-Nisā'* (4): 124 are documented in TMKS (Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah 2016, 4–5).

Furthermore, men and women are believed to hold vicegerency from Allah, so that both have responsibility and authority to ensure Earth continues to prosper for all living creatures, a belief that is based on Q.S. *al-Baqarah* (2): 30. Men and women might be leaders or guides for one another in matters of wisdom, enjoining good deed and forbidding unlawful actions Q.S. *al-Tawbah* (9): 71. The interpretation upheld by 'Aisyiyah can be categorized as moderate-progressive, based on the classifications developed by Alimatul Qibtiyah (Qibtiyah 2019).

'Aisyiyah women do not only preach what they believe in, but they have become the living characters of what they preach. 'Aisyiyah women have active agency in various areas of life, private and public, reproductive and productive. All my informants attest to this; in addition to becoming 'Aisyiyah activists, they are also wives, mothers to several children, and working women with many responsibilities. For instance, Mrs. SKW is a lecturer and was Dean of a faculty at a leading Islamic university; Mrs. CHS is a teacher at a respected Islamic high school; and Mrs. MS is an entrepreneur. They said that their social and professional activism are expressions of their belief about being Muslim women with social responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> What they do are manifestations of their belief that women are also vicegerents of God who have responsibility to maintain the prosperity of Earth and its inhabitants. I myself have observed several of their activities as 'Aisyiyah activists, as mothers, as well as professional workers in a number of events.<sup>5</sup>

TMKS recognizes the advantages and disadvantages of the rapid development of information technology. It adapts to the current context in which digital technology creates new opportunities and challenges for families. In traditional families the husband is the one and only family earner/provider, while a wife is the housekeeper. Industrialization and the capitalist accumulation of profit has created larger gap between the poor majority and the rich minority. Capitalism has degraded our natural resources and as a result, communities have less access to healthy and safe environments. Disproportionate desires and ignorance of personal and public ethics have resulted in corrupt system. Digital technology has also changed how people communicate, engage in business, make decisions, and behave in everyday life.

The challenges of modernity have impacted marital life. The imagined traditional family life in which the husband is the head of the family and the only provider (earner) for the entire family, and the wife is the keeper of the household and responsible for the education of their children, had faded and new forms of family life have emerged. New experiences have forced Indonesians to rethink the role of each family member. For instance, the death of the husband/father as the sole family earner makes it difficult for wives who lack skill and experience in earning a living. The death or chronic illness of a mother or wife also creates challenges for male family members who are not experienced in housekeeping.

'Aisyiyah has adapted more quickly and creatively than the Indonesian state to the changing social contexts that Indonesian families face. 'Aisyiyah revised the TMKS in 2015. Amongst the most significant revisions is about the variety of family structures. In contrast, the Indonesian Marriage Law enacted in 1974 still promotes one family structure.

Women's groups have advocated to reform the Law. Recently, the minimum age for entering a legal marriage has been revised following extensive advocacy from women's organizations, including 'Aisyiyah. The Marriage Law's provision on the minimum legal age of women to enter a marriage was revised from 16 years old in 2019 to 19 years old, which is similar to the minimum age of marriage for men (Undang-undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 Tentang Perubahan atas Undang-undang No 1 tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan 2019). The law was revised to prevent child marriage and its negative impacts on young girls and to reduce the maternal mortality rate.

In 2015, TMKS recognised new forms of family structure, a departure from the traditional view of family in which the husband is the sole provider for the family. The changes reflect the social imaginaries and the lived experiences of 'Aisyiyah women. The newly recognized family structures are (Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah 2016, 12):

1. Family in which only the husband/man is the source of family income, thus he is the sole provider for the family
2. Family where the wife/woman is the provider
3. Family in which the husband/man and the wife/woman are both providers
4. Family where both the husband/man and the wife/woman do



not have regular income and cannot provide for the family adequately.

##### 5. Single parent with or without income

'Aisyiyah's recognition of different family structures differs from that of the Indonesian Marriage Law, which only recognize one type of family structure in which the man/husband is the head and breadwinner of the family. It also different from the imaginaries of the status and roles of women as depicted by PKK (Pembina Kesejahteraan Keluarga/ Guidance of Family Welfare), a state-sponsored women's organization. The status and roles of women as promoted by PKK are as wife of the husband; as mother of the husband's children; as supporter of husband; and as a member of community (Wieringa 2001).

Chapter Two of TMKS book addresses the concept of *Keluarga Sakinah*. It includes its definition, meaning, foundations and purposes. 'Aisyiyah promotes a concept of family that is based on legal marriage, from both the perspective of religious teachings and the state. It is explicitly against marriages that are not registered at the State's local Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama). Some Muslim communities in Indonesia believe that Muslim marriages do not need to be registered or officiated by State. They think it is sufficient that Muslim marriages are officiated in accordance to classical Islamic *fiqh* (Umar et al. 2006). Problems arise when they have children or encounter unexpected events such as divorce, or the death of the husband. Because there are no records of the marriage, the woman as wife cannot inherit the estate of her husband, cannot access child maintenance payments, and her children have no record of paternal lineage. It is women who are in the weaker position in unregistered marriages. For these reasons, 'Aisyiyah rejects unregistered marriages to protect the rights, safety and interests of women and children.<sup>6</sup>

The rights and obligations of men as husband, father or son, and women, as wife, mother and daughter are explained in Chapter Three of TMKS. In this chapter, again, 'Aisyiyah's concepts of good manhood and womanhood aim to promote a balanced and reciprocal understanding of the obligations and rights of men and women once they enter marriage. The Chapter begins by explaining the shared obligations of a husband and wife, which include (Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah 2016, 102):

- a. To preserve the marriage agreements and keep loyalty to their spouse

- b. To respect, appreciate, trust and be honest to each other
- c. To be kind, ethical and respectful to each other's families
- d. To maintain their dignity and be trustworthy to each other
- e. To be ready to find the best solutions together when they encounter problems
- f. To avoid looking for any blemishes in their spouse and be forgiving to each other.

TMKS also explains the shared rights of husband and wife. Again, the principle of mutuality is clearly stated (Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah 2016, 103):

- a. Enjoyable, lawful, pleasurable sexual engagements
- b. Kinship and *mahram* (Islamic system of protection and honour) with the extended family of the husband and wife
- c. Inheritance from each other on the event of the death of a husband or a wife
- d. Custodianship of their children

Such balanced depictions are quite unusual in *fiqh* books about marriage, which most often focus on the obligation of wives and rights of husbands, and less on the obligation of husbands and rights of wives (Munfarida, Soeratno, and Syamsiatun 2017). 'Aisyiyah's understanding of the obligations and rights of a husband and a wife suggests that good manhood is partly determined by its relationship to womanhood; that is, manhood cannot be separated from being good and kind to women; and vice versa.

### **Main Arguments in TMKS:**

#### **Progressive religious and social imaginaries**

Having analyzed the TMKS and conducted in-depth interviews with a number of 'Aisyiyah women who were involved directly and indirectly in conceptualizing *Keluarga Sakinah* and writing the book, I argue that there are several foundational arguments that the organization promotes that are rooted in theological, scientific, cultural and social change. The following section will address these arguments.

Unlike some Muslim feminist groups who do not defer to theology in arguing for gender equality (Karam 1998), 'Aisyiyah relies heavily on Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions to argue for the equal status of men and women. This can be seen in TMKS, in which we can find theological references from the holy Qur'an and *hadiths* in all

chapters. As opposed to Muslim groups that favour conservative and literal interpretations of the verses (Qibtiyah 2019), 'Aisyiyah adopts a contextual and moderate, and even progressive interpretation of the Qur'anic verses.

This is evidenced by 'Aisyiyah's strong positions on:

- a. equal status of men and women
- b. mutual and reciprocal relations of good manhood and womanhood
- c. monogamous marriage as the norm
- d. changing family structures
- e. flexible gender roles

'Aisyiyah's ability to advance these positions has been reinforced by a culture that celebrates the pursuit of knowledge. An increasing number of 'Aisyiyah women have obtained higher degrees in various fields of study, from Islamic studies to social sciences, humanities and economics. With these qualifications, 'Aisyiyah has gained the confidence to engage in debates on theological issues, an arena many women have historically been reluctant to enter (Siti Syamsiyatun 2007). Support from its cultural partner organization, Muhammadiyah, has also significantly boosted 'Aisyiyah's self-assurance. Mrs. SKW and Mrs. MS state that during the conceptualization of *Keluarga Sakinah* they discussed and invited experts from Muhammadiyah, especially from *Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid*, to provide feedback on the draft. Muhammadiyah's approval of the concept is very noteworthy and gave 'Aisyiyah the assurance to promote it to the wider community.<sup>7</sup>

'Aisyiyah also collects references from history on the permissibility of Muslim women to engage in social, public and political life. They found strong references to the active participation of Muslim women in sustaining Muslim communities and developing Islamic civilization and science. The stories about the roles of the Prophet's wives, especially that of Siti Khadijah, Siti 'Aisyah and Ummu Salamah, in the propagation of Islam, in developing Islamic knowledge and community, have been taken as theological inspiration by 'Aisyiyah women. Mrs. SA remarked:

We take lessons and inspiration from women who lived with the Prophet and his companions. What the Prophet did to them, what they did to the Prophet. In fact, there were a lot of important roles played by the wives of the Prophet. For instance, mother Siti Khadijah was a business woman who supported the Prophet, and contributed greatly in the early establishment of Islam. Mother Siti 'Aisyah was a teacher for the

companions, and the trustworthy narrator of important hadiths. These are only very few examples, there were many more accounts of women's ability and contribution to Muslim communities. Unfortunately, their stories are not yet acknowledged in Islamic history books. So, we have to reclaim that kind of status and contribution.<sup>8</sup>

'Aisyiyah also considers the cultural, social imaginaries of womanhood and manhood in local communities. As an organization with national scope, 'Aisyiyah is aware of the diversity of cultures in which their members come from. The application of principled relations between men and women in TMKS should therefore accord with different cultures. Mrs. CH explained that practising equal relations within the household does not mean that the husband and wife should do or act in the exact same ways. It can mean that a husband and a wife enjoy what they do, help each other to make the family happy, and share responsibilities in completing household tasks. Families living in rural areas might have different mutual arrangements compared to those living in urban areas. To show their respect, Javanese women and men might address their spouses differently from Papuan people. What is important is respecting the values of other cultures, as local expressions of how men and women relate to each other may differ.<sup>9</sup> 'Aisyiyah's endeavours in enhancing women's capacity and authority in religious knowledge conform with new and inclusive Muslim scholars' movement for gender justice of KUPI (Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia/Indonesian Congress of Ulama on Women), which was established in 2017 (Farida and Kasdi 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Having researched manhood and womanhood in 'Aisyiyah's imaginaries as expressed in TMKS, and validated through in-depth interviews with 'Aisyiyah activists, I have come to the following conclusions. The idea of 'good' manhood and womanhood is highly contested. Good men and good women are not born, and neither are superior to each other by birth. These ideas differ from those propounded by patriarchal, androcentric, and conservative societies that consider men superior to women by birth. The idea of male superiority has controlled the production and reproduction of knowledge in almost every field of study, most significantly in religious knowledge and teachings.

With the help and collaboration of men who began by providing access to education, in this case Muhammadiyah's schools for Muslim women in Indonesia, women entered a new realm of academic and religious engagement. 'Aisyiyah women ventured to pursue new social imaginaries, and to do *jihād* by promoting good men and women based on theological, scientific and cultural ideas that oppose the views of conservatives. In so doing, they produced a very important document for the organization entitled *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*, which was used as a primary data source for this paper. 'Aisyiyah women propagated good manhood alongside womanhood. To embody good manhood one must relate to womanhood, and vice versa. The existence of good manhood depends on how good the man behaves to women, and likewise the existence of good womanhood is partly determined by how good a woman behaves to men. Equality, mutuality and reciprocity of good behaviours between men and women is a key parameter for 'Aisyiyah to construct good manhood and womanhood.

This study also found that Muslim women tend to quickly adapt to social changes compared to their male counterparts. This can be seen in 'Aisyiyah's formal recognition of new types of family structure, as depicted in the book *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*, which states that women can be the sole providers for their family or share that role with their husband. During critical family events or crises, such as the death of a husband or the illness of a wife, flexible arrangements and family structures as propagated by 'Aisyiyah can sustain the family.

## Endnotes

1. Interview with Mrs. SKW on 15 July 2021, with Mrs. MS and Mrs. CHS on 16 July 2021.
2. Interviews with Mrs. MS and Mrs. CHS on 16 July 2021.
3. Interview with Mrs. SKW on 15 July 2021.
4. Interviews with Mrs. SKW, Mrs. MS, Mrs. CHS and Mrs. SA on the afore mentioned dates.
5. Personal observations to the activities of informants.
6. Interviews with Mrs. MS and Mrs. CHS on 16 July 2021.
7. Interviews with Mrs. SKW on 15 July 2021, and Mrs. MS on 16 July 2021.
8. Interview with Mrs. SA on 4 August 2021.
9. Interview with Mrs. CH on 16 July 2021.

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**S***tudia Islamika*, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10.000-15.000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

be translated into English. *Studia Islamika* accepts only electronic submissions. All manuscripts should be sent in Ms. Word to: <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>.

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2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
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5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: ' , *b*, *t*, *th*, *j*, *h*, *kh*, *d*, *dh*, *r*, *z*, *s*, *sh*, *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ṭ*, *z*, ' , *gh*, *f*, *q*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *h*, *w*, *y*. Short vowels: *a*, *i*, *u*. long vowels: *ā*, *ī*, *ū*. Diphthongs: *aw*, *ay*. *Tā marbūṭā*: *t*. Article: *al-*. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

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## FOLLOWING THE GLOBAL REJECTION: THE MOTIVES OF MAJELIS ULAMA INDONESIA'S FATWAS ON AHMADIYAH

Fariz Alnizar, Fadlil Munawwar Manshur, Amir Ma'ruf

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## REDEFINING MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD: INSIGHTS FROM THE OLDEST INDONESIAN MUSLIM WOMEN ORGANIZATION, 'AISYIYAH

Siti Syamsiyatun

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لباران كرانجان: التاريخ المحلي لتقاليد  
مجتمع بوهون في جاوة الغربية  
ءيان ياسمينة فجري وسوزانتو زهءي

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