

## THE AUTONOMY OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE NOVEL 'ADHRĀ' JĀKARTĀ BY NAJĪB AL-KYLĀNĪ

### A Feminist Literary Criticism Perspective

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**Abstract:** This article reviews the novel '*Adhrā' Jākartā* (Jakartanese Girl) by Najīb al-Kylānī. Through the approach of feminist literary criticism and the hermeneutic method it's aimed to express the autonomy of Indonesian Islamic women within the novel by interpreting the structure of symbols or texts in a number of language signs in the literary system. The results of the analysis revealed that the character of Fāṭimah is a symbol which represents the concept of autonomy of Indonesian Islamic women in the public and domestic sphere due to the universal and cosmopolitan Islamic values that Fāṭimah implements in personal, social, national, and civil life. This universal and cosmopolitan Islam illustrates an Islamic paradigm offered by the author to be translated into a unity in diversity of Indonesian context, so as to be able to present the figure of an autonomous Indonesian Muslim woman in a pluralistic and elastic Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** '*Adhrā' Jākartā*, Indonesian Islamic women, feminist literary criticism, hermeneutics, communism.

### Introduction

'*Adhrā' Jākartā* is an Arabic literary work that tells the story of the September 30, 1965 movement related to the rebellion of communism in Indonesia. It was written by Najīb al-Kylānī, a doctor and a modern-contemporary Arabic writer who was born in Egypt in 1931 and died in 1995. The novel tells the persistence of a Muslim girl from Jakarta named Fatimah who fought hard to defend Pancasila as the basis of the state and philosophy of life for the Indonesians. With courage, intelligence, and a spirit of high patriotism filled with a very strong light of faith, Fatimah continued to struggle in various ways to sacrifice

her life to save the Indonesian people from the threat of communist ideology that would destroy the Indonesian nation.

This novel is interesting to be analysed from a feminist perspective because it offers new thoughts on gender and Indonesian Islam that are different from the majority of novels written by Arabic writers and also Indonesian writers. In the early phases of the formation of Indonesia, this novel has voiced firmly the concepts of gender and Islam through the autonomous portrayal of Indonesian Islamic women in personal, community, and national life. The idea of Indonesian Islamic gender called by this novel increasingly finds urgency because today there is a massively rampant Islamic gender perspective which is characterised by fundamentalism, both at the level of publications, traditional religious studies, and in the movements. This Islamic gender fundamentalism is characterised by the inclusion of women to return back to home that made it a space of their movement; devoted to their husband and looked after their children. Such gender ideas also appear in works of Indonesian and Arabic or Middle Eastern fiction.

Najīb al-Kylānī, the author, was born in Egypt in 1931 AD writer who was born in Egypt in 1931 and died in 1995. His education began when he was a child and memorised the Koran. He then studied at the *Sanbaṭ* madrasa, a secondary school in *Ṭanṭā*, then studied at *Fu'ūd Annwal* University majoring Medicine. He has been in prison with the members of *Ikhwān al-Muslimin* [Muslim Brotherhood]. He began his working and scientific careers as a doctor in various hospitals in Egypt, then worked in Kuwait then Dubai. His last position was as director of Health Sciences in the United Arab Emirates, also as a member of the health council at the Gulf Cooperation Council.<sup>1</sup>

The journey and life experience experienced by Najīb al-Kylānī exerts influence on fiction patterns he produced<sup>2</sup>. When he was 8 years old, World War II occurred and it caused a prolonged economic crisis in his hometown, then aggravated by British regulations requiring villagers to give all crops to them<sup>3</sup>. As a Muslim, he highly committed to his religion that reflected in his works (fiction and non-fiction). He paid great attention to the problems experienced by Muslims over the world after gaining their freedom from colonialists, including

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<sup>1</sup> Abdullah Bin Šālīh Al-Arīnī, *al-Ittijāb al-Islāmī fī A'māl Najīb al-Kylānī al-Qaṣaṣīyah* (Riyādh: al-Lajnah al-Ummah li al-Mahrajan, n.d.), pp. 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Indonesia<sup>4</sup>. Data sources that he used as the basis for developing fiction are history and facts. The work of Najīb al-Kylānī in the fields of fiction and science is no less than 59 volumes of books. His works of fiction including 32 novels, 6 short stories, 2 anthologies of poetry, and a drama<sup>5</sup>. He has obtained various national and international awards for scientific works and literary works<sup>6</sup>.

The progress of Najīb al-Kylānī's thought also cannot be separated from the context of modern-contemporary Arabic literature which is the result of a long process accelerated by *Nahḍa*, namely a cultural revivalism movement or renaissance that began in the early 19th century and spread to various regions of Arabia as well as the Middle East in various forms<sup>7</sup>. Western influences had brought changes not only in military aspects of the Arab world, but also in social, economic, and literary. In Arabic language and literature, the new influence was caused by the emergence of printing, modern schools, translation of scientific and literary works, the distribution of newspapers and journals, the establishment of the theatre and several libraries<sup>8</sup>.

The relation between literature and history is both classic and yet new. Many authors make history a basic ingredient of a story, but it is served imaginatively with aesthetic criteria. So history is not literature, and literature is not history, although there is a dialectical relationship between them<sup>9</sup>. This is also the same phenomenon in the historical novels of Najīb al-Kylānī.

Literary works are objects of humanity and cultural facts. It has a unique existence that distinguishes it from other human facts, such as the social system and the economic system. Ontologically, if the other system is considered as a unit built by the relationship between actions, literary work is a unit built on the relationship between signs and meanings, between expressions and thoughts, between external and

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel; an Historical and Critical Introduction* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1982), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Badawi, et. al. (eds), *Studies in Arabic Literature Supplements to the Journal of Arabic Literature* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1976), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Syukrī Azīz Mādhi, *fi Nadharyyah al Adab* (Bayrūt: Dār al Farīs li al tauzī' wa al Nasyr, 2005), pp. 145-146.

internal aspects<sup>10</sup>. Mukarovsky<sup>11</sup> calls literary works in particular and works of art generally as semiotic facts. One important issue which often appears in literary works as semiotic facts is gender. In general, the image of women in literary works, both in the West and in the East is portrayed as not yet human, negative, and inferior<sup>12</sup>. Various studies that have been carried out confirm that the marginality and objectivity of women appear in Indonesian literary works<sup>13</sup> and also Arabic literary works<sup>14</sup>. Male domination appears in the canon of American literature<sup>15</sup> and in Western literary works in general<sup>16</sup>. The marginality of women's literary works is also illustrated in France<sup>17</sup>.

In the majority of popular novels in Indonesia, even those which are written by women themselves, female characters are often portrayed as having weak character and viewing marriage and giving birth to children as their main life goals<sup>18</sup>. Meanwhile, in the majority of Arabic literature, female characters are always portrayed as inferior, slumped, suffering, and never be complete and autonomous subjects<sup>19</sup>. But in this novel, unlike the scripturalist-fundamentalism's general Islamic gender view, Najīb al-Kylānī has made a critical reading of the existence of Indonesian Islamic women and at the same time offers a

<sup>10</sup> Faruk, *Metode Penelitian Sastra Sebuah Penjelajahan Awal* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> Jan Mukarovsky, *Structure, Sign, and Function* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 82-88; Faruk, *Metode Penelitian Sastra*, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup> Nawāl al-Sadāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Ed. and trns. by Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Books, 1980), p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> Tineke Hellwig, *The Shadow of Change: Images of Women in Indonesian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> al-Sadāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp. 155-168; al-Sa'dāwī, *al Wajh al 'Āry li al-Mar'ah al 'Arabīyyah*, pp. 150-156; al Kabīr al-Dadīsī, *Aḡmah al Jins fī al Rimāyah al 'Arabīyyah Bi Nūn al Niswah* (Bayrūt: Muassasah al rihāb al hadīts, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Soenardjati Djayanegara, *Kritik Sastra Feminis Sebuah Pengantar* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2000), p. 18; Tineke Hellwig, *The Shadow of Change: Images of Women in Indonesian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Maggie Hume, *Feminist Criticism Women as Contemporary Critics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 21-41.

<sup>17</sup> Apsanti Djokosujatno (ed.), *Wanita dalam Kesusastraan Prancis* (Magelang: Indonesia Tera, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Hellwig, *The Shadow of Change*, p. 182; Soe Tjen Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu Identitas Perempuan Indonesia: Antara yang Publik dan Privat* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2011), p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> al-Sadāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*; Idem, *al Wajh al 'Āry li al-Mar'ah al 'Arabīyyah*.

new holistic view of gender and Islam in an anthropological, sociological, and historical manner that can be applied in Indonesia as a pluralist and moderate country.

In the context of the rampant domination of masculinity that subordinates women in literary works, both in the West and in the East, putting forward '*Adbrā' Jākartā*' as the object of research is highly significant. However, literature not only offers a general perception that represents the domination of hegemonic culture, but it is also believed to be a driving force for the creation of a more humanist and dignified cultural order. Teeuw<sup>20</sup> (1993: 19-25) asserts that the strength of caste exists in its multi-layered or multidimensional dynamics, in a number of tensions that allow a continuous shift in value and meaning due to the different responses of readers from generation to generation.

Several studies examining '*Adbrā' Jākartā*' have been carried out. Among these are the writings entitled "Forms of Alignment Between the Reality of '*Adbrā' Jākartā*' and the Realities of Indonesian History" by Taufiq Ahmad Dardiri. He concluded that there are three homologies between novel stories and Indonesian historical facts in the 1960s, namely: the presence of communist ideology in the political arena in Indonesia, the Indonesian Communist Party's coup to convert Pancasila, and Muslims to become victims of ideological battles<sup>21</sup>. "*An niswiyah fi riwayat 'Adbrā' Jākartā li Najīb al-Kylān?*" was written by Nur Retno Ning Tyas in 2017. The study concluded that there were four types of feminism in '*Adbrā' Jākartā*', namely: Marxist-socialist, liberal, radical, and psychoanalytic<sup>22</sup>.

This article tries to review '*Adbrā' Jākartā*' from Islamic views on gender by interpreting text structures through hermeneutics, Schleiermacher's hermeneutic method in particular, and feminist literary criticism. In this regard, feminist literary criticism deals with two main points, namely how to read texts from a certain perspective and view writings as part of the political process of resistance. This criticism focuses on the representation of women in literary works

<sup>20</sup> A. Teeuw, *Khazanah Sastra Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Taufiq Ahmad Dardiri, "Bentuk Kesejajaran Antara Realitas Adra Jakarta dan Realitas Sejarah Indonesia", *Adabiyat Jurnal bahasa dan Sastra*, 8, 2 (2009), pp. 349-371.

<sup>22</sup> Nur Retno Ningtyas, "*Al Niswiyah fi al Riwayāh 'Adhra' Jākartā Lī Najīb al-Kylānī*" (Unpublished undergraduate thesis UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2017). <http://digilib.uinsby.ac.id/180079/> Accessed on 25 May 2020.

which are often represented in a limited way; as a sexual, marginal object, the image of limited femininity is then limited.<sup>23</sup> With regard to Schleiermacher's hermeneutics approach, it focuses on the gap between what is said and what is thought that considers there is a movement from the outside (expressions in language) to the thoughts behind the expression. The gap between word and mind is overcome by a rational effort called 'interpretation'.<sup>24</sup> The four hermeneutic steps taken to express the meaning of the text with a feminist perspective are: 1) finding primary direct meaning; 2) explain implicit meanings; 3) determine the theme, and; 4) explain the symbolic meanings in the text<sup>25</sup>.

### **Criticising Religious Narrow Fanaticism: A Primary Direct Meaning**

The primary meaning of a text can be found from knowledge of language which is not the same for everyone because the reader gives meaning to one or more of the many signs. Literary texts are often ambiguous, can be interpreted in various ways and require the activeness of the reader<sup>26</sup>. The primary direct meaning in '*Adbrā' Jākartā*' is that the character of Fāṭimah has represented an ideal Indonesian Muslim woman because it is in accordance with universal Islamic values. The universality of Islamic values related to gender is the autonomy of women as a whole subject with high and noble human dignity. The Koran states that man and woman are created from the same substance (soul) or *nafs waḥidah*<sup>27</sup>. Another verse in the Koran also affirms that those who believe, both male and female, then some of them are helpers for the others<sup>28</sup>. Some of the Prophet's hadiths also state that women are siblings of brothers, and human

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<sup>23</sup> Jill LeBihan, "Feminism and literature", Sarah Gamble (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 103.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Van Luxemburg, Mieke Bal, Willem G. Weststeijn, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*. Transl. by Dick Hartoko (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989), pp. 64-65.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>27</sup> Quran 4:1, 7:189, 39:6, 6:98, 31:28; Nawāl al-Sadāwī and Hibah Ra'ūf Izzat, *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Dīn, wa al-Akhlā* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2000) p. 72; Riffat Hassan and Fatima Mernissi, *Setara di Hadapan Allah Relasi Laki-laki dan Perempuan dalam Tradisi Islam Pasca Patriarkhi* (Yogyakarta: LSPPA Yayasan Prakarsa, 1995). p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> Quran, 9:71.

beings are of the same rank as comb teeth<sup>29</sup>. This is the universal principle of Islam that has laid the foundation for the recognition and enforcement of women's autonomy, both in the domestic and public sphere.

Narrated in the novel, Fāṭimah is a girl and a student of the Faculty of Literature who is autonomous, independent, and brave who has a spirit of nationalism and huge sacrifice for the sake of the nation and state to defend Pancasila as the basis of the Republic of Indonesia. Fatimah's autonomous and patriotic figure cannot be separated from her identity as a devout Muslim who has a broad and deep understanding of Islam. The following is a quote from the novel.

With your philosophy, you have drowned this country in a sea of blood... this country is in the worst condition in history.<sup>30</sup>

The arrival of Islam in our homeland is a revolution against destruction, immorality, fanaticism, and narrow religion. Islam is a generator of noble values in the hearts of humans... which gave birth to civilisation... This is a reality that remains in the history of the past and the very near future will arrive... Only those believers who dare to oppose the despotism of the Dutch and wrestle with the Japanese and realise the rights of independence...they destroy disbelief and sleaze...<sup>31</sup>

The law is not limited by the measure of benefit for a particular class, but the law is a fair set of rules established by the Sharia for the benefit of all human being... and human differences in various personal, physical, and material skills will unite them in a valuable meaning... that is brotherhood... brotherhood is not contradicting

<sup>29</sup> al-Sadāwī and Izzat, *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Dīn*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>30</sup> All translations are mine, unless otherwise attributed. See Najīb Al-Kylānī, *‘Adbrā’ Jākartā*, p. 262. The original text says:

لقد أغرقت البلاد بفلسفتك في بحر من الدماء... تردت في شقاء ماراته طوال تاريخها العريق

<sup>31</sup> Al-Kylānī, *‘Adbrā’ Jākartā*, p. 20. The original text are:

وكان مجيئ الدين الإسلام في بلادنا ثورة على الفساد و الظلم و التبعية والعبودية...كان باعثاً للقيم الفاضلة في قلب الإنسان...كان مولد حضارة...هذا ما هو ثابت في التاريخ القديم والقريب... المؤمنين وحدهم هم الذين تصدوا لجبروت "هولندا"، وصارعوا "اليابان" وحقوق الحرية... وسحقوا شيعة الكفر والعبث...

social class... brotherhood makes all humans equal like a comb  
teeth before God and before the law...<sup>32</sup>

The three quotations above are the words of Fāṭimah which based her thoughts on her criticism and opposition to the Communist Party which carried out bloodshed in Indonesia with the slogan of economic equality. With her belief in Islamic values, Fāṭimah criticised religious narrow fanaticism. With her deep Islamic insight, Fāṭimah fought and attacked the communist ideology which only sided with certain classes on the grounds of justice and economic equality. Islam recognises differences and plurality, but brotherhood between humans is the main principle. In Islam, poverty is a problem that must be a solution, but not by contrasting class and bloodshed.

Fāṭimah is similar to Islamic feminist characters such as Assia Djebar, Fatima Mernissi, Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī, and Zaynab al-Ghazālī. They view transnationalism in Islam to empower themselves as women and as Muslims. In the complexity of the situation, they criticise global, local, and domestic institutions that destroy themselves as women, Muslims, citizens, and citizens of the world. For them, Islamic feminists are feminists who go back to the history of the Prophet Muhammad's time filled with strong, brave, and intelligent women in the process of establishing the *ummah* (society) in the 7th century AD where the Prophet Muhammad was a representation of interpreter of the Koran<sup>33</sup>.

The primary direct meaning as stated above is a deconstruction carried out by the author due to the image of an Islamic women commonly found in literary works, that is the image of passive and inferior being. The progressiveness of the author's views is in line with rational beliefs about religion for feminists related to religious philosophy whose readings are based on Hegel, Freud, Lacan, and post-structuralism. If religious construction perpetuates patriarchy,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20. The original text says:

و الحكم لا تحدده مصلحة طبقية مهما كان وزنها، ولكنه مجموعة من القواعد العادلة التي أقرتها  
شريعة الله لمصلحة جميع الناس... واختلاف الناس في المهارات الشخصية والجسدية والمادية  
يجمعهم على معنى سام.. هو الإخوة... الإخوة غير العداء الطبقي... الإخوة تجعل من الجمع  
سواسية كأسنان المشط أمام الله وأمام القانون...

<sup>33</sup> Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 61-62.



then feminist epistemology emerges in four ways, namely: 1) faith in rational and objective religion does not emerge on empirical reality related to the experiences of things related to women; 2) the importance of changes in religious thought, related to gender and its stratification; 3) understanding of binary opposition that must be deconstructed, and; 4) a combination of objectivity and female desires must emerge<sup>34</sup>. In Arabic literature, there were socio-religious sects that approved the women's liberation in the early 20th century, especially in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon which in the literary world had emerged as early as 1911. The initiators were Muḥammad ‘Abduh, at Ṭaḥṭāwī, Qāsim Amīn who liberated women from patriarchal interpretations in religion, emphasised women's education, eliminated domestic and public boundaries, and equality in the social, cultural, and nationalist movements<sup>35</sup>.

The author is well aware that Islamic feminism is not a single identity. As emphasised by Miriam Cooke<sup>36</sup>, Islamic feminism is more contextual in strategic self-positioning in action, behaviour, and writing in describing gender and religious problems to create justice and independence for women. Indonesia as the largest Muslim country in the world has a typicality and uniqueness characterised by plurality and pluralism so that the figure of Fāṭimah in the novel become an ideal figure offered by the novel.

### Comprehending Implicit Meanings within Two Political Regime Context

Literary texts often contain a number of implicit meanings which the reader must make explicit. If there is a distorted metaphor, syntax, or semantics than others, then the reader must clarify it<sup>37</sup>. If Fāṭimah is depicted as an Indonesian Muslim woman who is autonomous and independent, strong and brave, rational and progressive in her decisions and actions, then it is an explicit meaning that conceals implicit meanings that need to be revealed and explained. In the context of Indonesian politics, there are two implicit meanings appear

<sup>34</sup> Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion The Rationality and Myths of Religious Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 119-120.

<sup>35</sup> Amal Tamīmī, *al-Sirab al-Zatīyyah al-Nisāyyah fī al-Adab al-‘Arabi al Mu‘āṣir* (Riyad: Markaz al-Šaqāfī al ‘Arab, 2005), p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Van Luxemburg, Bal, Weststeijn, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, pp. 65-66.

in the interpretation of the structure of the text, namely; 1) Politics of the Old Order or Sukarno's leadership, and; 2) The politics of the New Order or Soeharto's regime.

The portrayal of Fāṭimah as an autonomous and humanising Indonesian Islamic girl is a depiction which implies an implicit meaning of the Old Order (Soekarno). Historical books about Sukarno and the women's movement explain Sukarno's democracy in the lives of Indonesian women who have the same rights as men in any case, including in politics. The following is a quotation from the novel emphasizing the importance of plurality of discourses and ideologies as well as the multiple historical realities that represent Soekarno's idealism.

Fāṭimah said: I have learned a lot of understanding of poetry and narrative ... I read Pushkin... Gogol and others... I read your works...but I did not fall into the trap of one particular philosophy... I also read the history of our nation's youth and Islamic history... Iqbal Indian poet and Tagore.<sup>38</sup>

Fāṭimah's cosmopolitan insight and critical power in understanding the thoughts of the world leaders above, namely from Russia, Germany, Pakistan, India, Islamic history and Indonesian national history have made her a visionary and critical minded Muslim woman. Implicitly, Fāṭimah's autonomous image cannot be separated from the political policies of the Old Order (Soekarno) which provided the spirit for the flourishing of democracy in all aspects of life, including for the dynamics of Indonesian women's lives. As Fāṭimah said in the quotation above that she knew a lot of the history of the Indonesians, so that she knew that Indonesia had its own local wisdom so that it gave birth to Pancasila (Five Principles) that was godly and socially just; neither an Islamic state nor a communist state. In a feminist perspective, among the local wisdoms of the Indonesian nation in its history is the emergence of many women leaders who are strong, intelligent, and independent as the queens that existed in the Indonesian archipelago before the country Indonesia was born.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Kylānī, '*Adhbra*' *Jakarta*, p. 30. The original text says:

قالت فاطمة: لي محاولات في كتابة الشعر والقصة...قرأت لبوشكين...وجوجل وغيرهم...وقرأت مؤلفاتك...لكني لن أسقط فريسة ثقافة واحدة...قرأت أيضا تاريخ شعب بلادنا والتاريخ الإسلامي...واقبال شاعر الهند وطاغور .

Long before the revolutionary strive, the movement of Indonesian women had emerged. Organisation of Putri Merdeka was formed in 1912 and has an affiliation with Boedi Oetomo (a first nationalist organisation founded in 1908). Nationalism of women's organisations was born in the symbolisation of Kartini who sounded women's education and intelligence. Women's organisations began to enter politics in the 1920s when large political organisations such as the Sarekat Islam, PNI and PKI had women divisions. The issues raised by these women organisations revolve around women's participation in politics and women's involvement in decision-making<sup>39</sup>.

In this dynamic and progressive setting of Indonesian history of women, Soekarno emerged and popular as a nationalist figure in the late 1920s. In his speech at the December 1928 Mother Congress, Soekarno emphasised women's rights and provided equality in political rights. New women's organisations emerged, including Istri Sedar who appeared in Bandung in 1930 fighting for the status of Indonesian women through the struggle for independence. The Indonesian Association of Women in 1935 raised the issue of women and nationalism. After the Japanese surrendered, women in the environment of political parties and religious-based organisations such as Aisyah, Catholic Women, Muslimat Women, Bhayangkari wives, and Navy wives worked together to fight for independence<sup>40</sup>.

After Soekarno became president, many progressive organisations of women emerged. Organisasi Laskar Wanita Indonesia, founded by Aruji Kartawinata in Bandung in 1945, took up arms and went into battle to treat wounded soldiers and organise a public kitchen. This organisation spread throughout Java, Central and southern Sumatra, Central and South Sulawesai. In 1945, in Jakarta there was an Indonesian Women National organisation led by Suwarni Pringgodigdo, Sri Mangunsarkono, and Suyatin Kartowiyono who carried out the distribution of rice for the struggle. There was also a left-leaning organisation called Barisan Buruh Wanita (Line of Women Labour)<sup>41</sup>. In its cultural construction, the ideal female figure of the Soekarno period was "Srikandi", an idolised puppet figure. As Arjuna's

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<sup>39</sup> Gadis Arivia, *Feminisme: Sebuah Kata Hati* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2006), pp. 25-26.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-29.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

wife, Srikandi also went to war, had many skills and characteristics of masculinity, and was able to turn herself into a man<sup>42</sup>.

The second implicit meaning is the New Order (Soeharto) regime, and this is the dominant factor that causes the loss of autonomy for Indonesian Muslim women. The killing of communists and those accused of being communists was the initial phase of the New Order. Admittedly, as one of the biggest communist parties in the world, the existence of the PKI threatened the authority of the United States so that the CIA cooperated with Soeharto by sending a list of communist names that had to be eradicated. The New Order eradicated the PKI as a political tool to establish its new power which was also very oppressive. That is why the expression Pancasila is 'sacred' when it is convenient, this is because Soeharto sounded his action as an act to defend the Pancasila, even though he has violated the five precepts that exist for his rule<sup>43</sup>. The implicit meaning of the New Order can be seen in the following quotation.

We all play with fire (hell) if we are busy carrying out economic development and poverty alleviation by plunging people into false beliefs...we are trying to eradicate nationalism and religion with stupid ideas...<sup>44</sup>

The novel excerpt above is Fāṭimah's statement which implicitly criticises any authoritarian government, including the New Order, which only emphasises the economy but destroys existing noble values, including the perpetuation of patriarchal values in political policy by manipulating religion and the concept of nationalism. The implicit meaning of the New Order period could reveal why Indonesian Muslim women then became marginal, subordinate, objectively positioned, and lost subjectivity and self-autonomy.

The meaning of "nationalism" during the New Order era was loyalty to the powerful, not to the oppressed nation or society. In the

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<sup>42</sup> Soe Tjen Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu Identitas Perempuan Indonesia: Antara yang Publik dan Privat* (Yogyakarta: Ombak: 2011), p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Julia Suryakusuma, *Julia's Jihad Tales of the Politically, Sexually and Religiously Incorrect: Living in the Chaos of the Biggest Muslim Democracy* (Jakarta: Jakarta Post-Komunitas Bambu, 2013), pp. 383-386.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Kylānī, 'Adbra' *Jakarta*, p. 20. The original text says:

إننا نلعب بالنار إذ نستغل انهيار الأوضاع الاقتصادية، ومأساة الفقرى تحويل الناس إلى العقائد الفاسدة الداخلية...ونقضى على تميزنا القومى و الدينى بفلسفات مرقعة...

name of stability, the New Order paralysed the political awareness of the people by tightly censoring the mass media. Krishna Sen and David Hill estimate there are around 2000 books that are banned from publishing each year when the New Order came to power<sup>45</sup>. The People's Cultural Institute (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, LEKRA) which was formed in 1950 was considered communist and dismissed by Soeharto, even though many artists in it were not actively involved in politics and disagreed with the PKI. The New Order replaced it with the Cultural Manifesto (Manifesto Kebudayaan, MANIKEBU) which was used as the mouthpiece of the ruler<sup>46</sup>.

During this New Order regime, Indonesian women were grounded at home. Gender is placed in definite definitions such that it is not human. The figure of women or mothers who are militant and active in politics popularised by GERWANI is considered a threat to the stability of the nation<sup>47</sup>. While in Soekarno's time many organisations of women with diverse ideologies could grow freely, such as PERWARI (liberal), GERWANI (left-wing), and several faith-based organisations, then during the Soeharto's regime all organisations of women were completely deprived. Only organisations that support their policies are allowed to continue their existence. In fact, it was during this New Order era<sup>48</sup> that GERWANI women were reported differently and politically, that they were irreligious, immoral, hypersexual, aggressive and cruel. They were accused of slashing the generals' bodies, raping them, then cutting off their penis while dancing around. In fact, all of that were just political engineering of the New Order.

During the New Order, Indonesian women were tamed by organisations such as the Dharma Wanita and the Family Welfare Education (PKK) as a facility for mothers to hold social gatherings and gossip. Kartini's figure as the first feminist figure in Indonesia was

<sup>45</sup> Krishna Sen and David Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 37; Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>46</sup> Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu*, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Wieringa Saski E, *Rethinking Gender Planning: A Critical Discussion of the Use of the Concept of Gender* (The Hague, Netherlands: Institute of Social Studies, 1998), pp. 149-150; Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu*, p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Cribb, "How many deaths? Problems in the statistics of massacre in Indonesia (1965-1966) and East Timor (1875-1980)", Ingrid Wessel, and Georgia Wimhofer (eds), *Violence in Indonesia* (Hamburg: Abera, 2001); Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu*, p. 16.

manipulated in such a way that Kartini was only introduced as a "true princess" as in the song "Ibu Kita Kartini" and the domestic image. On the contrary, the commemoration of Kartini Day (April 21) which becomes a ritual obligation every year is only indoctrination and patriarchal perpetuation; all women students must wear *kebaya* and hold cooking competitions in each school. Kartini's thoughts that were very critical and visionary were never introduced, let alone socialised. Marching<sup>49</sup> said that the Kartini's rebellion against Javanese court culture and its criticism of the construction and interpretation of patriarchal religion was never revealed, let alone mentioned in the school curriculum.

The New Order also suppressed women's rights by promoting the obligation of women to become good mothers, educators and wives without self-interest. These compliance demands are summarised in Panca Dharma Wanita, namely: 1) The husband's faithful companion; 2) Children educators and the nation's next generation; 3) Household regulators; 4) Workers to earn additional money, and; 5) Useful community members<sup>50</sup>. Indonesian women are not only required to look after themselves, but are also demanded to be able to look after their families, the humans around them, and even the future of the nation. For this reason, Susan Blackburn writes that the functions of Indonesian women are markers and guardians of the boundaries of Indonesian culture<sup>51</sup>.

The implicit meaning of the democratic Old Order and the authoritarian New Order is important in order to understand the potential and gender construction of Indonesia. The Old Order is a symbol of the potential of women who are essentially autonomous, independent, and sovereign, as the image of Indonesian invention in history and in Islamic history. Women's autonomy is also strengthened by universal values of Islam which are cosmopolitan. Meanwhile, the New Order was a symbol of the emergence of indoctrination processes in constructing patriarchal values and culture that caused the potential

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<sup>49</sup> Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Blackburn, "Women and Citisenship in Indonesia", *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 34, 2 (1999), pp. 189-204; Marching, *Kisah Di Balik Pintu*, p. 15; Muhammad Ansor and Yaser Amri, "Being Christians in the Acehnese Way: Illiberal Citizenship and Women's Agency in the Islamic Public Sphere," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, 1 (2020): pp. 77-112

for women's autonomy to be eliminated and eradicated due to various factors. Fāṭimah's autonomy as an autonomous figure of Indonesian Muslim women in the novel's story occurred in the 1960s has been lost since the New Order regime whose impact hitherto, due to the New Order's indoctrination has shaped the mindset of women and patriarchal-style culture.

### Representing Autonomous Indonesian Muslim Women Theme

The semantic unity that we suppose in a text is called a theme that permeates the entire work. The theme is the main idea of a literary text<sup>52</sup>. The theme of this novel is "Autonomy of Indonesian Muslim women in fighting for their nation in a period of bloody political upheaval in the events of Movement of September 30 in 1965". Fāṭimah's autonomy as a Muslim is formed from the character of the Koran reflected in her autonomy in the domestic and public sphere. Fāṭimah's autonomy in public spaces is reflected in the following novel quotations.

Fāṭimah said: I want to write my thoughts freely.<sup>53</sup> She (Fāṭimah) likes to work in the newspaper to help her reveal the truth that rumbles in her heart, so that she can also forget the sadness of her heart from being separated from her father and fiancé.<sup>54</sup>

All the family members sat as if they were in a funeral and Fāṭimah's eyes lit up like crazy. She banged on the wall and said: "So my father will never return and Abū al-Ḥasan will never get out (from prison)... Muslims will be led to jail until they are old... they will die of noble values in our beloved country". Fāṭimah shouted, cried, and screamed unconsciously: "Long live the revolution... long live the revolution..."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Luxemburg, Bal, Weststeijn, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Kylānī, 'Adbra' *Jakarta*, p. 181.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 182. The original text says:

قالت فاطمة: "أريد أن أكتب رأيي حراً". إنها تحب العمل الصحفى لعله يساعدها على التعبير الصادق عما يعتل في قلبها، وهو في الوقت نفسه سوف ينسيها آلام الفراق با لنسبة لأبيها وخطيبها

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 222-223. The original text says:

Fāṭimah said as if she did not understand: How? Everyone is silent in his house? Isn't this a joke? I (Fāṭimah) want to know... do you know how human being gain victory? You... you... you... you answer... will I answer myself... we win because of death...the killers will die of body and soul... what is the value of life if it is attributed to the killers... if we are killed in fighting for the truth, then that's where the meaning of life... pleasure...<sup>56</sup>

Together with a great victory there was a happy heart and lots of tears streaming down, the story of thorns and roses is the original story... Abū al-Ḥasan and Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs have returned home... but "Fāṭimah" is carried home on a wooden coffin...the sacred white shirt covered in blood... the Jakartanese girl had fallen as a *shaheed*, and in her hand was a thorny red rose... her lips had a smile of sincerity... and in her pocket there was a small mushaf (Koran), tears of eternal longing (to God) wet the curling eyelashes...<sup>57</sup>

The quotations above illustrate that Fāṭimah is a Muslim girl who has high autonomy. When the coup movement began to develop its strategy, Fāṭimah actively gave speeches on campus so that the public

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وأهلوها يجلسون كأنهم في مأتم وعيناها تترقان في جنون. وأخذت تدق الحائط وتقول: "إذا لن يعود أبي... ولن يخرج أبو الحسن... وسيتحول رجال لإسلام خلف الأسرار إلى عظام نخرة... ستموت كل القيم الفاضلة في بلادنا الحبيبة". وأخذت تصرح وتبكي وتهتف بلا وعي: "تحيا الثورة... تحيا الثورة..."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 225. The original text says:

قالت فاطمة في اندهاش: كيف؟؟ بقاء كل فرد في بيته؟ أليس هذا مضحكا؟ 223 أريد أن أفهم... أتدرون كيف ينتصر الرجال أنت... وأنت... وأنت... أجيبوا... سأجيب أنا... ننتصر بالموت... المنهزمون يموتون... موتا ماديا أو معنويا... فما قيمة الحياة بالنسبة للمنهزمين... إننا إذ نموت ونحن نناضل من أجل الحق ففي ذلك حياة... نعيم..."

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 263-264. The original text says:

مع النصر الكبير كانت الفرحة تعم القلوب، وعيون كثيرة تذرف الدموع، قصة الشوك والورود الأزلية... وعاد أبو الحسن وعاد حاجي محمد إدريس... لكن "فاطمة" لم تعد إلا في صندوق خشبي... وملابسها البيضاء الطاهرة مهضبة بالدماء... سقطت عذراء جاكارتا شهيدة، وفي يدها وردة حمراء ذات أشواك... وعلى ثغرها ابتسامة رضى... وفي جيبها مصحف صغير، تبلل أهدابها الطويلة دموعه عشق خالد...



was aware of the communist-leaning movement in Indonesia<sup>58</sup> and actively wrote in newspapers. Fāṭimah dared to debate and oppose the communist views sounded by her leader. During the kidnapping, torture, and imprisonment of religious leaders (including the torture and imprisonment of Fāṭimah's father and Fāṭimah's fiancée), Fāṭimah was active in various negotiations and guerrilla acts of liberation. When the coup erupted accompanied by riots and assassinations of the Indonesian generals, Fāṭimah joined forces to fight against the enemy on the battlefield. In fact, only Fāṭimah was brave enough to make the decision to go ahead in the battlefield in saving the Indonesian nation and state, while her other siblings (even though there were many of them men) did not dare to take that decision. Until finally Fāṭimah died as a *kusuma bangsa* (nation's patriot) after Indonesia's victory was achieved.

In the domestic space, Fāṭimah also had high autonomy. She was free to determine when she would get married and his father appreciated her decision<sup>59</sup>, was free to choose and decide who her future husband would be<sup>60</sup>, and free to develop herself according to the talents and interests she had. Her autonomy made her a strong, intelligent, brave, educated, broad-minded, and forward-thinking woman. Fāṭimah often had a different view from her mother, or siblings, even with her boyfriend and father. When her family forbade Fāṭimah from going to war, Fāṭimah still went to war to defend the nation. Fighting against enemies on the battlefield is far more important to her than thinking about her own marriage.

It seems clear that '*Adbrā'* *Jākartā*' is different from most novels written in Indonesia during 1960s. In the initial phases of the formation of Indonesia, this novel has spoken out loud about the autonomy of Muslim women, both in the domestic and public spheres. Fāṭimah is a symbol of the autonomy. There is no idea of "ibuism (motherism)" raised by novels which in general "ibuism" is an ideology that is constructed and perpetuated patriarchally, that it is "home" the only place where women live from birth to death; a place of existence by caring for children and husbands. In the public sphere, the figure of Fāṭimah also deconstructs the image of domestic domestication, that

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

women are also entitled and have the ability to take part in the public world, as members of society, citizens, and even citizens of the world.

As Arvia<sup>61</sup> put it, female discrimination occurs because of differences, hierarchy, and oppression systems. In almost all discriminatory actions, taking patterns from the initial footing are forms of myth, otherness, and dichotomic thinking. This is precisely what has happened in the discrimination of women. The theme offered by this novel has given us a space of awareness. As Maggie Hume<sup>62</sup> explained, the insights of feminist literary criticism help and ask us to think about cultural identity in new ways. It is not metaphorical, but develops from a strong belief that this criticism will be able to present a more gender-just world.

### **Islam and Cosmopolitan Universal Faith: An Explanation of Symbolic Meanings**

Symbolic meaning can be a translation of implicit and thematic meanings whose inquiry is carried out with allegorical readings, namely readings made on all texts or large sections of the text according to figurative meaning<sup>63</sup>. *'Adhra' Jakarta'* contains a number of linguistic signs which have symbolic meanings that confirm the theme, implicit meaning and primary meaning. Symbolic meanings that exist serve as a binder and reinforcement of the idea of Indonesian Muslim women's autonomy which is characterised by the application of universal Islamic values based on the idea of esoteric Koran as practiced during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad PBUH. Symbolism appears in the novel's title, "*'Adhra' Jakarta'*" and in "the naming of the main characters".

The title of the novel, *'Adhra' Jakarta'* (Jakartanese Girl) is a symbolic expression. *'Adhra' Jakarta'* is not just a limited "Faṭimah", but an "idea" about "unlimited Indonesian Muslim female identity". Indonesian Muslim women are not women who are generally portrayed in Indonesian literary works (and also literary works in other countries) that are constructed patriarchally so that women are always identical with objects, subordinates, inferior, and marginal. But on the contrary, the concept of Indonesian Muslim women is those who are

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<sup>61</sup> Arivia, *Feminisme: Sebuah Kata Hati*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>62</sup> Maggie Hume "Teori sastra Feminis", Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones (eds), *Pengantar Teori-teori Feminis Kontemporer*, Transl. by Jalsutra's Translator Team (Yogyakarta: Jalsutra, 2009), p. 331.

<sup>63</sup> Luxemburg, Bal, Weststeijn, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, p. 66.

fully autonomous, independent and sovereign; in domestic as well as public sphere. Jakarta is a symbol of Indonesia's plurality. In a pluralistic Indonesian state: religion, ethnicity, nation, culture, and language, Islam is still able to colour and provide identity and meaning. As the largest Muslim country in the world, universal values contained in the Koran need to be continuously implemented. The existence of Fāṭimah as an Muslim girl is very prominent. Islamic expression emanating from Fāṭimah's faith gives a very broad meaning to the enforcement of the autonomy of Indonesian Muslim women in personal, social, national, and state life.

There are three main characters of the novel. All of them are given symbolic names, namely: Fāṭimah, Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs, and Abū al-Ḥasan. Fāṭimah is the main character of the novel, a warrior girl who is persistent and brave until she died as a *kesuma bangsa*. Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs was the leader of the Masyumi Party (*Majlis Syura Muslimin Indonesia*) as the only major Islamic organisation during the Old Order (Soekarno) and Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs was Fāṭimah's father. Abū al-Ḥasan was an educated young man who also fought fiercely with Fāṭimah and he was Fāṭimah's lover and fiancé.

The naming of Fāṭimah, Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs, and Abū al-Ḥasan also contain symbolic meaning. Siti Fāṭimah is the name of the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad. The name of Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs has three symbolic meanings, namely: Ḥājī as a symbol of shari'ah or religious teachings, Muḥammad as a symbol that refers to the name of the Prophet Muḥammad, while Idrīs is a symbol of the names of other prophet in Islam, Prophet Idrīs. The symbolic meaning is: that Muslim leaders must be able to understand the sharia as religious teachings in a proportionate way so that the teachings of Islamic substance can be used as a reference for values and philosophies of life in personal, social, national, and state life as has been done by the Prophet Muḥammad and the other Prophets. As the leader and figure of the Masyumi (an Islamic organisation in the past period of Indonesia), Ḥājī Muḥammad Idrīs has represented the mission. He has educated and treated his daughter, Fāṭimah, democratically and fairly. He fought continuously that Islam is a religion of love and brotherhood<sup>64</sup>, Islam which contains the *rahmah li al-‘ālamīn* (mercy for

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<sup>64</sup> Al-Kylānī, '*Adbrā' Jakarta*', pp. 66-68.

the entire world) is an idea that can be applied when one is referring to the value of the substance of Islam, namely: justice, compassion, equality, and brotherhood<sup>65</sup>, awareness of divinity is the most important metaphysical awareness<sup>66</sup>, opposing materialism and atheism which nullify the existence of God<sup>67</sup>. While the name of Abū al-Ḥasan, Fāṭimah's lover and fiancé, is a symbol of the family of the Prophet Muḥammad. Ḥasan is the name of the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson, while Abū al-Ḥasan means Ḥasan's father, namely 'Alī Bin Abī Ṭālib (the beloved nephew of the Prophet Muḥammad) who was also his son-in-law. 'Alī Bin Abī Ṭālib is Siti Fāṭimah's husband.

In giving names to the main characters of the story, it is clear that the author has a broad and deep historical understanding of the history of Islam, specifically related to the life history and struggle of the Prophet Muḥammad. As a true interpreter of the Koran, the Prophet Muḥammad had succeeded in creating a democratic and just civil society, because of the substantive values affirmed by the Koran on the principles of equality, freedom, justice, brotherhood, and love between people. Here it is clear that Najīb al-Kylānī greatly exalts the noble values practiced by the Prophet which reflect democratic and liberating Koran's values.

The Koran which always accompanies Fāṭimah's life is a symbol of Islam and a cosmopolitan universal faith. At the beginning of the story it is told that Abū al-Ḥasan proposed marriage to Fāṭimah with the Koran as proof of his love statement<sup>68</sup>. When Fāṭimah was shot on the battlefield and died, there was also the Koran (a small manuscript) in her pocket<sup>69</sup>. The Koran is a symbol of the true ideals of Islam. However, the Koran chosen by the author is the Koran which was actualised by the Prophet Muḥammad in building civil society.

## Conclusion

The novel offers ideas about the form of translating “universal and cosmopolitan” Islam into Indonesian context related to feminism. These two characteristics of Islam (namely universal and

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Kylānī, '*Adbrā'* *Jakarta*, p. 58.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

cosmopolitan) are used as the “Islamic paradigm” by the author in offering the concept of Islamic gender that can be implemented in the lives of Muslim women everywhere, including Indonesia. This paradigm provides basic principles for Muslim women in building their self-autonomy in their personal, social, national and state lives.

The finding of the data in *'Adbrā' Jākartā* with four meanings through the Schleiermacher hermeneutic method above confirms that the main character of the novel, Fāṭimah, is an autonomous Indonesian Muslim female figure who describes the ideals of universal and cosmopolitan Islamic values in the Indonesian context. Fāṭimah's autonomy is portrayed as sovereign *being*, independent, free from decisions in the emanation of esoteric values (core, substance, universal) of religion. Fāṭimah's autonomy symbolises a peaceful and non-violent Islam, an Islam that is consistent in fighting for justice and freedom for mankind from various forms of tyranny, political, economic, socio-cultural shackles.

In short, the reading on the novel *'Adbrā' Jākartā* with a feminist literary criticism approach has reinforced the idea of Indonesian Muslim women's autonomy related to Islam and democratisation that can be concluded into four points: first, Indonesian Muslim women have high autonomy both in the domestic and public world. They can choose their actions as has been confirmed by the Koran through the interpretation of the Prophet Muḥammad that has been practiced during his lifetime. This is a universal-cosmopolitan Islamic idea that can be translated into the context of Indonesia so that it is compatible with Indonesian culture. Second, the Qur'anic values that emphasise women's humanity as a whole are the backrest and estuary of values related to the concept of Indonesian Islamic gender. Third, with the concept of Islamic gender, Indonesian Muslim women can actualise their full autonomy because it is in line with the principles of Pancasila contained in the five precepts. Fourth, through their faith and Islam, Indonesian Muslim women can continue to contribute in strengthening the life of the nation and state as responsible citizen's, in addition to being able to strengthen their personal and family lives through the created quality of self. []

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