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## **Persatuan Pemuda Muslim Se-Eropa : identity, encouragement for giving, and network, 1971-2009**

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## Conclusion

Having discussed the existence and formation of religious identity, encouragement for giving both financial and non-financial assistance, and the networks of PPME in the Netherlands and Indonesia, we now come to the conclusion. In principal, PPME came into existence in 1971 because of the idea of *da'wa* aimed at its Indonesian fellows and other interested persons who lived in Europe. Accordingly, the organization has become a vehicle to fulfil religious and socio-cultural needs of its members and fellow Muslims.

The concerns of PPME encouraged its founders and supporters to expand its existence. It was established not only in the Netherlands (1971), but also in Germany (1973). This latter PPME could no longer prolong its existence after the 1990s due to its Indonesian political orientation and the absence of its cadres. This is unlike the PPME in the Netherlands which still exists today because its members tend to live there for a longer time, with the exception of those who are students. Between 1971 and 2005, PPME established branches in The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Heemskerk, and Breda-Tilburg.

Because of its establishment for Indonesian Muslims living in Europe, PPME in the Netherlands has made significant efforts for its existence there and it can continue to thrive today. The developmental stages can be divided into three periods: before May 1974, after May 1974, and after August 1993. Despite having no legalisation from the Dutch authority before May 1974, PPME as an Islamic faith-based socio-religious organization had made much effort towards self-identification. After its legalization in May 1974, many efforts by PPME between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s went into disseminating Islamic knowledge to improve the understanding of Islam to its members and to other interested persons through both oral and written media. After August 1993 when PPME was registered as an association with no time limit on its existence, and specifically from the mid-1990s to the late 1990s, much of the effort of PPME aimed to educate the children of its members and of those who turned to the organization for Islamic guidance, particularly related to the development of its Dutch-speaking

group. In the 2000s, with respect to the religious orientation of the branches of PPME, it was the more puritanical religious orientation among the congregation of PPME Amsterdam that came to the fore. During that same period, outward-oriented activities were initiated; PPME branches in Amsterdam and The Hague had also been able to establish joint socio-religious activities in Indonesia.

Subsequently, PPME shaped its religious identity by promoting the adherence to religious obligations and disseminating Islamic discourses through its periodicals. In doing so, it took into account the different backgrounds of its members by not speaking out in favour of one or another interpretation of Islam, by paying attention to developments in the Netherlands and Indonesia such as marriage laws, Islamic activities for children, converts, and Muslim youth activities. From 1974 to 2009, no serious conflicts emerged regarding how religious rituals should be performed, but there is one exception: the performance of *dauroh* that began in 2008 by PPME Amsterdam. In fact, it has become the means for PPME Amsterdam to purify the creed of its congregation after the internal conflict in 2005 which was caused by different devotional practices and led to the emergence of two PPMEs in Amsterdam; PPME Amsterdam and PPME al-Ikhlash. PPME Amsterdam turned into a Salafi congregation which prompted the members who could not agree with it to leave and establish their own organization, PPME al-Ikhlash. With respect to the dissemination of Islamic discourses, the periodicals of PPME *al-Ittihaad* and of PPME Amsterdam *Euromoslem* have taken the abovementioned principle of respecting the religious diversity of its members as their guiding principle; for the former until it ceased publication in the late 1990s and for the latter until 2004. *Euromoslem* continued to publish articles written by authors with a different religious background until 2004. Thereupon, the policy PPME had so carefully adhered to was abandoned. Contributions by Salafi authors have coloured the pages of *Euromoslem* since the late 1990s, but now *Euromoslem* has become a digital, and exclusively Salafi, magazine. What PPME Amsterdam did was to breach with the past. Not responding to the diverse religious backgrounds of its members in the religious rituals performed during its meetings or in the pages of its

periodical meant that its leaders disregarded the history of PPME and the ideals of its founders. This will be harmful not only to the cohesion of its congregations, but also to its existence in a non-Muslim society.

Moreover, it is indispensable for PPME as a faith-based organization belonging to ordinary people and lacking financial means to frequently involve its members and supporters in financing its programmes or reducing the costs involved. Therefore, it has always aimed at gaining their support. From 1973 to 2009, PPME tried to encourage them through socio-cultural and infrastructural endeavours. These former efforts were done by organising all kinds of socio-cultural activities jointly or separately; all of its branches supported *Maulid Nabi*, *halal bihalal*, and sports days, whereas *istighotsah* was only supported by some of them. Up to 2005, all of its branches allowed its members and sympathizers to participate in these activities, with the exception of the *istighotsah*, but, in that year, distinct religious identity made its impact. Consequently, *Maulid Nabi*, *halal bihalal*, and *istighotsah* gatherings were considered *bid'a*, or tending towards polytheism, and were condemned by PPME Amsterdam which went its own way and organized its own sports days.

With respect to the latter attempts in procuring places of worship, PPME experienced financial problems. To solve this dilemma, PPME turned to people in the Netherlands and Indonesia. This had positive results as reflected in the purchase of a place of worship (1982) in The Hague that would be called the *Muṣallā al-Ittihaad*, as well as the purchase of a church there with the goal of converting it into a mosque (1996) that would become *al-Hikmah*. PPME Rotterdam has also planned to have its own place of worship since 2003 whereas PPME Amsterdam succeeded in purchasing a place of worship, then called *at-Taḳwa* between 2004 and 2005. In the case of the mosque in The Hague, PPME succeeded in getting the financial support from a rich Indonesian businessman in raising the funds needed to purchase the church. With respect to the *muṣallā* in The Hague and the mosque in Amsterdam, PPME had to take out mortgages with Dutch banks to cover the costs. The fact that until 2011, its branch in Rotterdam could not yet realise its plan to build a mosque without such a mortgage seems to prove

that both encouragement and a mortgage are central to PPME when seeking to provide such places for its members. PPME and its branches have also encouraged their congregations and supporters to cover the monthly mortgage payment using diverse means such as financial assistance by its preachers and selling products made by PPME and the members of its branches.

Next, PPME has established connections with diverse Indonesian communities living in the Netherlands. It not only cooperates with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI), but also with non-governmental organizations such as an intellectual association (ICMI), a centre affiliated with a political party (PIP PKS), and a socio-religious organization (PCIM). With the exception of ICMI, PPME kept the diverse networks intact, at least until 2009. Networks with other associations and institutions were generally established to promote its religious activities and sometimes also to help them run their activities. The connection of PPME with ICMI in the Netherlands took place from the early 1990s to the late 1990s and that relationship no longer exists. This happened because ICMI transformed from an inclusive into an exclusive association that did not take into account the socio-religious needs of the ordinary Indonesian people who form the majority of PPME members. It is worth noting that its connection with the PIP PKS, from 2005 to 2009, involved not only members of the PPME central board in the Netherlands, but also board members of some PPME branches. In contrast, only PPME Amsterdam was involved in the cooperation with the PCIM from 2006 to 2009. Apart from the fact that PPME Amsterdam and PCIM shared a similar view on the traditionalist practices, that the central PPME did not support this cooperation indicates that PPME had failed to be an organization uniting members who had different religious and socio-cultural backgrounds. A bone of contention was the differing viewpoints regarding the traditionalist religious practices.

Furthermore, PPME has also established networks in the Netherlands with non-Indonesians. These networks include not only organizations led by people with similar ethnic backgrounds such as Rukun Islam and AJH, but also such Dutch and Turkish institutions as the Indonesian section of

RNW and Haremeyn Vakfi. The contacts with these four organizations appear to have contributed to the efforts of PPME to solve its financial and infrastructural problems. In addition, these connections have facilitated PPME to expand its *da'wa* using diverse means, i.e. its *da'wa* was performed not only among its congregations, but among others through radio and music, in addition to delivering conventional speeches.

PPME's link with the Indonesian section came to an end in the early 1990s after an internal reorganization in the RNW aimed to promote cooperation between its different sections. The fact that the other ones did not broadcast religious programmes was the stated reason for the RNW to end its cooperation with PPME. Both traditionalist and reformist preachers of the PPME were involved in supporting the religious programme of the Indonesian section (from 1977 to the early 1990s) and Rukun Islam (from the early to the mid-1980s). A religious re-orientation that moved away from the Indonesian traditional practices to the more puritanical religious ones of the Rukun Islam took place in the mid-1980s. PPME remained involved because it could provide preachers with reformist backgrounds – at least up to 2011 the reformist people were still involved in the religious activities of the Rukun Islam. Having reformist and traditionalist Muslims among its leaders, PPME could keep its connection with the AJH (1988 – present) and Haremeyn Vakfi (2008 – present). Instrumental in cementing relations with the former were representatives of its traditional wing, while members with a puritanical religious orientation kept in close touch with the latter. This indicates that when members with different religious orientations support each other, this enables PPME to extend its networks. The fact that PPME is supported by traditionalist and reformist preachers seems to have worked to its advantage, allowing it to sustain its relations with the non-Indonesian organizations, despite changes in the latter's religious orientation.

Unlike its networks in the Netherlands established since the late 1970s, PPME's individual networks in Indonesia were established in the late 1990s, much later than those in the Netherlands. From the late 1990s at least until 2009 there were, in general, two means used by the branches to establish their networks in Indonesia, i.e. mandatory almsgiving

and voluntary donations, as well as *Ramaḍān* programmes. A former member of PPME Amsterdam (from the 1990s) and Indonesian *imams* (in the early 2000s) who had previously been invited to participate in the *Ramaḍān* programmes of PPME The Hague and Amsterdam became their middlemen to help distribute the donations. These Indonesian partners have played both as regular and as active beneficiaries of the alms and voluntary donations remitted by the branches. Their involvement reflects the fact that the board members of the PPME branches had confidence in them, a trust based on past experience. Moreover, unlike the 1990s when a former member of PPME Amsterdam living in Indonesia focused on supporting Islamic organizations in the 2000s, PPME The Hague's support via a relative of the *imam* (Anwar) went to the development of villages in Indonesia, which implied that non-Muslims also benefitted. In the latter period, more careful consideration was given by PPME's branches in The Hague and Amsterdam when providing financial support to their middleman in Indonesia. Nevertheless, in the case of the PPME branch in Amsterdam, freedom in terms of selecting its targeted regions or beneficiaries was still given to the middleman of PPME Amsterdam, Muttaqin. As a result, it was free for the middleman of the Amsterdam branch to allocate its donation to his interests such as building an integrated educational institution in Depok, West Java, responding to the concern of the middleman's party, PKS. Supporting Muttaqin fitted the new Salafi ideological focus of the PPME Amsterdam that began in 2005. Muttaqin had an affiliation with the Salafi Islamic foundation Roisah, where despite the familial relation of the people living there, the contestation of religious orientation has been going on between Nawawi, the owner of the Roisah and his sons, including Muttaqin, since at least 2007. The Islamic foundation was established in 2008, but when it was originally established in Jepara in 1982, it was a traditionalist *pesantren*. Muttaqin's traditionalist father led the *pesantren* until 2007 when his younger brother, Kamilin, started to transform the traditionalist *pesantren* towards a Salafi religious orientation; Salafi Islamic books have replaced the traditionalist ones, in particular with respect to subjects on faith and ethics. It is worth noting that Kamilin graduated from the Institute for Islamic Knowledge and Arabic (LIPIA) which was founded in Jakarta in 1980 and is under



the coordination and the supervision of Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh. The religious transformation of Roisah clearly fitted well with the current views of PPME Amsterdam in terms of rejecting traditionalist religious practices. This transformation was another factor in its endorsement of the joint activities with PPME Amsterdam (2007-2010). In addition, the social projects in Indonesia, supported by PPME Amsterdam in cooperation with the foundation, can be a precedent stimulating other branches of PPME in the Netherlands to create similar projects.

Since the early 2000s, in addition to the former members, the *imams*, themselves, have remained the main contact for PPME in Indonesia. Some were politically active, specifically affiliated with PKS, but others not. The *imams* neither attended an *imam* education session in the Netherlands nor could speak Dutch. This meant that they could not discuss the daily socio-religious problems that their congregations encountered. Their failure to give advice in such matters shows how important it is that such *imams* are not only experts in Islam, but also familiar with life in Dutch society.

Looking back on PPME's history of more than forty years, a number of developments stand out. One is that throughout its existence PPME presented itself as an inclusive Islamic faith-based organization open to all Muslims, irrespective of whether they had a traditionalist or reformist background. Its members supported each other for the sake of Islamic preaching for its congregation and adherents living in Europe, especially in the Netherlands. Another is the way in which PPME succeeded in creating an infrastructure to meet the spiritual needs of its members and others who turned to it. The networks it built and the way its activities involved both Muslims in the Netherlands and in Indonesia made the purchase of a number of places of worship possible (between 1980 and 2005). This is significant as there was a great need at that time because as elsewhere in the world, the Islamic community experienced a religious revival. Contacts with Muslims in Indonesia and creating an *esprit de corps* in its congregations and with other persons involved in its activities were also important in collecting *zakāt al-fīṭr* and *zakāt al-māl*, as well as for distributing the

proceeds in Indonesia (especially between the 1990s and the early 2000s). PPME showed the same dexterity in providing religious instruction, not only by inviting preachers from Indonesia, but also by organizing meetings for converts and others not well versed in Islam who needed more basic information. Dutch speaking converts have played significant roles in its branches since the late 1990s. Some of them are not only members, for instance, but also serve as chairs of their boards. Another major development is the way in which PPME, as well as the people and organizations it cooperated with in Indonesia, reacted overtime to the growing appeal of puritanical interpretations of Islam. From the start, leaders of PPME had intended it to be an organization open to adherents of both traditional and reformist Islam. The central PPME and most of its branches continued on this course, specifically in view of the traditionalist background of many of its members. Early in this century (2005) this policy was contested by leaders of PPME Amsterdam who rejected religious practices inherent among, if not considered essential by, traditional Indonesian Muslims. Those who could not agree to this new Salafi orientation of PPME Amsterdam were forced to establish their own branch, PPME al-Ikhlash. PPME Amsterdam itself, for the distribution of alms in Indonesia, turned to the Rosiah Foundation, developed from a religious boarding school of the same name which, at that moment, was making the transformation from a traditionalist to a Salafi pesantren. The position taken by PPME Amsterdam is indicative of the challenge PPME is facing today. As it looks now, the existence of the PPME as an inclusive organization in which Muslims of different religious orientations are all welcome will continue to be contended by those averse to accepting Muslims with different interpretations of Islam in their midst.