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## Loving nature, praising the creator; The visualizations of the natural world in the Islamic magazine *Pandji Masjarakat*

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# Loving nature, praising the creator

## The visualizations of the natural world in the Islamic magazine *Pandji Masjarakat*

MUHAMMAD YUANDA ZARA

### ABSTRACT

This study examines previously unexplored visual representations of the natural world published in *Pandji Masjarakat* magazine in 1960. Known at the time as the most popular Islamic magazine in Indonesia, this publication not only discussed Islamic teachings as hitherto understood, but also provided ample space for the publication of drawings, paintings, and photographs of the natural world. This study argues that the visualizations of the natural world in *Pandji Masjarakat* were aimed at providing its Muslim readers all over Indonesia and in the wider Malay world with guidance on how to see the natural world and people's place in it in proper perspective, namely beautiful nature is Allah's creation and people are welcome to use it taking full responsibility and expressing proper gratitude for it. This study sheds light on the changing attitude of Muslims to the portrayal of living things by presenting how progressive Muslims represented the natural world visually amid the throes of the rapid physical development in increasingly modernized Indonesia.

### KEYWORDS

Natural world; Islam; visual representations; arts; photography; print media.

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INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Throughout history, nature has been a source of awe and inspiration for people. In response to their fascination with nature, people have reproduced their impressions, knowledge, and idealization of nature in various forms in a number of media. Recently, scholars have produced a number of studies of the representation of nature in the arts and literature.

Scholars argue about how man perceives and represents nature and what world views and social contexts give birth to these representations. They have explored the ways in which knowledge of nature has been envisioned, visually represented, and then disseminated to the public over the last hundred years, particularly in Europe (Martin Kemp in David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill 2010; Isabelle Charmantier 2011; Kärin Nickelsen 2018). Other studies have focused on the idea that visual representations of non-European nature and human beings in the era of European expansion more than a quest for pure knowledge. They were also a means of reinforcing European colonialism and racial stereotypes (Snait B. Gissis 2011).

The bulk of studies about natural representations in Indonesia deal with reliefs on temples in Java during the pre-Islamic period (Bambang Agus Suropto and Listia Pranowo 2001) and on the development of the *Mooi Indië* (Beautiful Indies) painting genre during the Dutch colonial period which focused on the natural beauty of Indonesia, especially from a European aesthetic point of view, and more prosaically aimed to entice European tourists to visit and enjoy the natural scenery of the Netherlands East Indies for themselves (Robert Cribb 1995; M. Agus Burhan 2008; Harsja W. Bachtiar, Peter B.R. Carey, and Onghokham 2009; Susie Protschky 2011; Louis Zweers 2013). The *Mooi Indië* paintings can even be said to have served to strengthen the grip of Dutch colonialism on the Indies by concentrating on the beauty of the idyllic rural nature of the region and ignoring any visual narratives of the destruction of nature which was also occurring there simultaneously in the wake of the colonial exploitation of Indies land. The biggest culprit was the expansion of plantations, for instance the clearance of large areas of forest for the cultivation of rubber in Dutch Sumatra (Protschky in Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie 2014).

However, despite my efforts, I have not found any studies which discuss the visual representation of nature in the popular Islamic print media in Indonesia. More specifically, studies of the relationship between Islam and art in Indonesia generally focus on music, architecture, and film (H.J. De Graaf 1963; Anne K. Rasmussen 2010; Alicia Izharuddin 2017). So far, no scholar has seriously researched how modernist Muslims (those Muslims who encourage the renewal and reform of the Islamic faith by amalgamating Islamic principles with modern values) visually represented nature in print media, especially in an era in which Indonesia was not too long free of Western colonialism and was striving to take its place as a developed country without forfeiting Islamic and

<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions on the earlier version of this article.

local values. Certainly, several studies of *Pandji Masjarakat* (Society's Banner, henceforth *Pandjimas*) magazine have appeared, but they have focused more on its function as a part of the Islamic press, its role in advancing Islamic literature and its ban by the Soekarno government in 1960 (Teguh Prasetyo 2014; Aprini Erlina 2015; Deni Fitria 2017; Teguh Prasetyo and M. Yoesoeb 2017). Hence, there is a tendency to assume that Indonesian Muslims have not played a role in the visual representation of Indonesian nature and people, at least in comparison to pre-Islamic Javanese artists and to European and Indonesian painters of the *Mooi Indië* genre or other European-style genres, such as romantic naturalism. Scholars have rarely discussed how Indonesian Muslims see and imagine nature.

However, the Indonesian Islamic bi-weekly magazine, *Pandjimas*, a famous Islamic magazine published in 1959-1960, is an excellent source for such a study. As can be seen from its ever-increasing print run and range of circulation, it flourished from its very beginning. The biography of its first editor-in-chief, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka), by James R. Rush (2016: 128), recounts that, although early print runs of *Pandjimas* ran to as many as 10,000 copies, within a year that number had risen sharply to 15,000 copies. At the height of its initial fame, this magazine printed as many as 20,000 copies. The number could have been more but the regulations on paper rationing prevented more than 20,000 copies of this magazine being run off (Rush 2016: 128). The distribution area of the magazine reveals the geographical breadth of its influence on Indonesian society; the magazine's loyal readers were spread across all the major islands of Indonesia such as Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan (Rush 2016: 128).

This study explores previously unexamined visual representations of the natural world in the issues of *Pandjimas* published in 1960. First appearing in June 1959 and banned by the Soekarno government at the end of 1960 for publishing a critical article written by the former Indonesian vice-president, Mohamad Hatta, it was the most popular Islamic magazine in Indonesia in 1959-1960.<sup>2</sup> Its fame rested on two points: its content which focused on aspects of culture and modernity and the big name of one of its editors-in-chief, Hamka, who enjoyed a sterling reputation as a leading modernist scholar, prolific novelist, and experienced journalist (Jeffrey Hadler 1998; Rush 2016; Khairudin Aljunied 2018). The circulation of this magazine, of which each edition consisted of thirty-two (sometimes forty-eight) pages, encompassed Indonesia and Singapore. The material I have studied is taken from nineteen editions of *Pandjimas* which were published between 1 January 1960 (No. 14) and 1/15 September 1960 (No. 32/33). These are the editions which are physically available and in good condition at the Library of the Central Board

<sup>2</sup> This magazine resumed its publication on 5-10-1966 after the fall of President Soekarno but various problems prevented this magazine from being published regularly. Since 2019, this magazine has been transformed into a digital magazine and left the print edition (<https://panjimasyarakat.com/tentang-kami/>; <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1183223/panjimasyarakat-majalah-besutan-buya-hamka-lahir-kembali/full&view=ok>, accessed on 8-8-2021).

of the Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta. Unfortunately, the library possesses no earlier editions. In order to provide an analysis of the background to the publication of this magazine, I have examined a few of the earliest editions from June 1959 which I found in its digitized versions available on the website of the National Library of Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> Hence, one of the limitations of this research is the period under study which focuses on 1960 only and does not explore the 1959 period.

Three major aspects are discussed in this paper, namely: 1) how *Pandjimas*, as an Islamic magazine, viewed nature and its artistic visualizations; 2) how *Pandjimas* presented the natural world visually in its publications; and 3) what strategies did *Pandjimas* use to strengthen the spread of its ideas about the proper relationship between Islam, art, and the natural world. The visualizations I want to discuss are of two types: illustrations, a picture or sketch drawn in ink or in oils (so, including drawing and, to a lesser extent, painting), and photography. Although paintings are usually more highly valued than photographs, despite the fact it relies on the assistance of technology, photography is also an art because its creators are artists who are inspired by the genres in painting, including landscapes, to take photos (Lucy Soutter 2013: 3). The themes of the images and photos studied here sometimes overlap, so what I have done is to classify them according to the most prominent aspects which feature in the visualization. While examining photographs, I have explored not only what kinds of elements appeared in them but have also investigated the accompanying captions to obtain a deeper understanding of *Pandjimas*'s views on the importance of photography in conveying its views about Islam, nature, people, and the visual arts.

What I mean by the natural world takes it in its broadest sense: the physical world (mountains, waterscapes, landscapes) and the living things which inhabit it, including plants, animals, and people – although human activities are often regarded as social rather than natural phenomena, just as are plants and animals, people are essentially living organisms. I argue that *Pandjimas* not only published various articles on Islamic teachings as the present general conception of it is, it also circulated numerous visualizations which represented aspects of nature in an Islamic framework. *Pandjimas* provided its readers with a guide to how a Muslim in the modern era should see nature and the important position of humans, as God's creatures, in it. *Pandjimas* succeeded in convincing its readers that both people and nature are Allah's creations and therefore, whenever a person witnesses the beauty of nature, he or she should praise Allah before utilizing the natural resources according to their needs, taking full responsibility for their actions. *Pandjimas* wanted the illustrations and photos of nature and humans it published to reach out to both the aesthetic and spiritual sides of the readers, awakening them to the importance of nature and its creator to human being.

<sup>3</sup> "Panji Masyarakat", <https://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=664048>, accessed on 8-8-2021. All English translations of Indonesian texts in this article are mine, unless stated otherwise.

ISLAM AND *PANDJIMAS* ON NATURE AND ITS VISUALIZATIONS

Apart from its enormous spiritual and political influence, Islam has also affected art. The expansion of Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula gave birth to Islamic art, especially in the fields of mosque architecture, tombs, calligraphy, and ornamentations on cloth (carpets and silk textiles). While the development in these arts progressed rapidly, there was one aspect which stagnated and even declined amid the rapid expansion of Islam. On the basis of the majority of interpretations by Islamic scholars, with the exception of stylized vegetation motifs, Islam does not allow the artistic depiction of living things in order to avoid worship of images.

In Indonesia, the question of whether Muslims are allowed to depict living things was first raised at the time at which ideas about of modernity began to emerge in the Indies. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Dutch colonialism was at its peak and public spaces in the colony were being increasingly filled with paintings, drawings, sculptures, and even the artistic products of the latest technology, photographs. Kartini (1879-1904), an educated Javanese Muslim woman who later achieved fame as a prominent figure in the movement for the education of women in the Indies, delighted in photos and even wanted to have her own camera so that she could take pictures of the daily lives of the villagers and produce a genuine representation of the indigenous people of the Indies. In contrast to Kartini, among villagers in Java at that time (in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and apparently still very much alive in the decades which followed), there was great resistance to the visual representation of people in the form of photographs. Impelled by superstition, villagers in Java, the majority of whom were Muslim, refused to be photographed because there was a growing misconception that, if a person allowed him- or herself to be photographed, their lifespan would be shortened (Rudolf Mrazek 2006: 131). Only very few Javanese were receptive to and even took up the art of photography. Those who did tended to be associated with the Dutch who introduced and dominated photography in the Indies because of their education, occupations, and religion. One example is Kassian Chepas, a Javanese Christian, who was the first indigenous photographer in the Indies. He took many photographs of Javanese temples as well as of the buildings and of activities in the Yogyakarta palace (Gerrit Knaap 1999). In their visualization of native Muslims, the Dutch themselves tended to portray indigenous Muslims as enemies (see, for instance, a colonial era Dutch-made documentary film about Indonesian Muslims as the enemy of the Dutch army in Jean Gelman Taylor, in Protschky 2015: 56).

Among the Indies Muslims themselves in the colonial era, there was heated debate about drawings, paintings, and photographs. In fact, while there was an association between being photographed and the threat of loss of life among Javanese villagers, among more sophisticated urban Muslims the visualization of living things, either in the form of photographs or pictures and paintings, was feared as a cause of arousing feelings of guilt about their obedience to God. In 1922, in an issue of the official magazine of the Muhammadiyah, *Soewara Moehammadijah* (first published in 1915), a reader sent in a question.

He asked: "Is it sinful for people to take pictures, draw, and depict either themselves or everything which is alive?"<sup>4</sup> In its approach to this question in 1922, the *Muhammadiyah* was already thinking progressively. The editor of this magazine, citing the opinion of a number of prominent religious scholars, stated that photos and pictures were not prohibited as long as they were for domestic consumption only or to reproduce an image of the body in the medical field. However, it was forbidden to produce pictures as an aid to worship as had happened in the days of the Prophet. This view of the *Muhammadiyah* was undeniably broadminded for its time but it represented that of only a small section of Indies Muslims, considering that in 1922 the *Muhammadiyah* was only a decade old and its influence was still limited to Yogyakarta and Central Java (M.T. Arifin 1990).

Debates about photographs continued in Indonesia until the first decade and a half of independent Indonesia. However, some educated Muslims who had to contend with new technologies such as photography as well as the increased production of paintings and photographs in the 1950s, were beginning to question the old doctrines or myths about visual representations. They renegotiated the Islamic perspective on visual arts and modernity by promoting the idea that the beauty of God's creation could also be represented and appreciated visually in the form of photographs or paintings.

During the colonial period, Muslims had already adopted some of the facilities offered by the modern world, among them printing which later gave birth to Islamic newspapers, magazines, and books. Initially these works were generally unillustrated and it took some time for Muslims to develop an interest in visual works. In independent Indonesia, Muslims had an even greater opportunity to engage in religious modernization. In this era, with easier access to cameras and the many benefits derived from producing and viewing photos, Muslims were growing more and more familiar with photography, including displaying photos of the deceased at funerals, a custom which had previously only been observed by the Chinese (Karen Strassler in Protschky 2015: 217), and perhaps also the Europeans in colonial times. On the other hand, around the 1950s ordinary Indonesians, including Muslims, also began to frequent photographic studios to have their pictures taken against backdrops depicting the natural world of Indonesia, such as mountains and beaches. About a decade later, Muslim families in the city began to become increasingly interested in immortalizing themselves in photos, especially during the Eid al-Fitr holiday. They had family photos taken in the studio with (especially those in the Central Java region) the Syuhada Mosque or the Kauman Mosque (perhaps including the natural landscape around them), both located in Yogyakarta, as common backdrops (Strassler 2010: 93-94).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Soewara Moehammadijah*, date unclear (the front cover is damaged), probably July 1922, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the Indonesian nature and mosques, other backdrops which Indonesians commonly chose for studio photos around the 1960s were pictures of the latest modern facilities in Jakarta such as the Hotel Indonesia and the Parliament building, no doubt making them feel part of the newly modernized Indonesia. See Strassler (2010).

Clearly in the 1950s and 1960s, growing numbers of urban Indonesian Muslims were beginning to accept and even appreciate photography which featured not only built environments but also living beings and natural landscapes. These photos were a reflection of their acceptance that they were part of the progress of post-colonial Indonesia.

*Pandjimas*, published between June 1959 - September 1960, was one of Indonesian Islamic media institutions which published various kinds of representations of the natural world both openly and enthusiastically. How exactly did *Pandjimas* reproduce views of nature and its visual representations? First of all, it is necessary to discover those who were behind the running of the magazine. Their backgrounds will provide an appropriate socio-religious context to help in our efforts to understand the magazine's views of nature and the visual arts from an Islamic perspective. *Pandjimas* was managed by experienced journalists and eminent modernist Islamic figures. The editor-in-chief was Moh. Faqih Usman, a prominent Muhammadiyah cleric. He twice held an important role in the Indonesian government, that of Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (in 1950 and 1952-1953), representing the Masyumi Party. The Muhammadiyah itself was known to be tolerant of illustrations, as seen in numerous pictures and photos which had been published in *Soewara Moehammadijah*, especially since the 1920s. In the editorial chair were two prominent authors. Firstly, the prolific writer Jusuf Abdullah Puar and, secondly, Hamka. Hamka was a true Renaissance man. Born in Minangkabau (West Sumatra), the centre of Islamic modernism in the Indies in the early-twentieth century, he enjoyed a wide reputation as an experienced journalist (he had published a popular magazine in the late-colonial era). He was also an immensely popular novelist (his novels, which combined Islam, Indonesian local cultures, and Western modernity, were very in demand from the late-colonial era onwards) and a Muhammadiyah preacher who was involved in promoting this organization in various regions in Indonesia. His curriculum vitae reveals that Hamka was someone who really appreciated art in all its various forms. He loved beauty; at the beginning of his career in the 1930s this took the form of the beauty of language and, in his *Pandjimas* era, he added visual beauty to it. Hamka was undoubtedly the most influential intellectual figure at this magazine or, in the language of Hamka's biographer, James Rush, *Pandjimas'* voice was basically Hamka's voice (Rush 2016: 128).

This elucidation of the background of some of its administrators tells us that they had something in common, that is, the tendency to amalgamate Islam, Indonesian culture and modernity. This tendency was also reflected in the magazine's views about nature and the visual arts. From the beginning of its existence, *Pandjimas* emphasized the importance of cultural aspects and modernity in building up an understanding of Islamic teachings. In the editorial of its inaugural issue in June 1959, those in charge of this magazine expressed their concern about the lack of attention paid by Indonesian Muslims to cultural affairs.<sup>6</sup> At that time, the Islamic leaders themselves were more

<sup>6</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 1 (15-6-1959): 2.



preoccupied with political matters, which makes good sense given the intense ideological competition then raging in Indonesia.

The editorial board of *Pandjimas* declared that it “will focus more on its tasks in the field of culture and popular general knowledge aligned with the struggles which form the foundation for reform and modernization in Islam”.<sup>7</sup> The enemies of this magazine were clearly stated: materialism and atheism. This magazine was also tasked with enlightening not just those groups who blindly followed their tradition (*taklid*) but also awakening “Western-educated groups and worshippers who saw Islam as a factor contributing to the decline of the nation”.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the aim of this magazine was to introduce the torch of reform and modernism into the practice of Islamic teachings, including in the field of culture.

Islamic modernism was also manifested in the relationship between nature and the visual arts. The magazine’s first exploratory views on the themes of nature, art, and Islam appeared in the fourth issue, 1 August 1959.<sup>9</sup> In his article in that issue, “Hidup dan Keindahan” (Life and beauty), Hamka expressed his thoughts in a column entitled “Pandangan Hidup Muslim” (Muslims’ views on life), which affirmed that Hamka’s thoughts were intended to be a guide for readers of this magazine in matters to do with nature, art, and Islam. Hamka argued that human life would be empty if man were to think only about material things. Humans needed to have feelings, among these the awe aroused by the glories of nature. He gave the example of a human heart which could beat faster when a person saw flowers bloom or heard the cooing of turtledoves. Another natural phenomenon he called to mind was the “beauteous but mighty” sun.<sup>10</sup> He even wrote about landscapes in various parts of the world which were unique and had their own beauty, mentioning the Bengawan Solo River in Central Java, the scoured rocky mountains in the Arabian Peninsula, and the snow-covered Alps in Europe.

After taking his readers around the world to imagine the varied landscapes on the Earth, Hamka emphasized that the upwelling of a feeling of beauty after seeing or imagining these places was still not enough for a human being, especially Muslims. Hamka thought that, behind all these beautiful landscapes, there was an even greater beauty which was absolute and eternal. To know this a Muslim must realize who was the creator of that beauty. He is God. So, Hamka advised his readers that, after viewing and enjoying various natural beauties in various parts of the world, a Muslim should praise God by saying, “My God, You never make a living creature without a purpose. Holy is Allah”.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 1 (15-6-1959): 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 1 (15-6-1959): 2.

<sup>9</sup> As I mentioned in the Introduction, I have used materials from 1960 because these were editions that were in good condition and physically accessible to me in Yogyakarta, while I used the digitized but hard to read editions from 1959 only as background material.

<sup>10</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 4 (1-8-1959): 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 4 (1-8-1959): 5. Here, Hamka translated the Arabic word *Rabbana* into Indonesian, and he used ‘Tuhanku’ (My God).

This indicates that, for Hamka and, of course, also *Pandjimas*, the most important aspiration was that humans should appreciate the beauty of nature and venerate the Creator of Nature; such beauty could be in the form of seeing nature directly or viewing it through two-dimensional media such as pictures, paintings, or photographs. Hamka's views set the main guidelines for *Pandjimas* in its treatment of the relationship between nature, the visual arts and Islam, as seen in the various visual representations of nature which it published, as will be explored below.

#### OUTDOOR VIEWS: LANDSCAPES AND WATERSCAPES

Outdoor scenery, both landscapes and waterscapes, are the types of visual representations of nature which often appeared in *Pandjimas*. The landscape category was principally composed of plains, mountain-scapes, village-scapes, and cityscapes. A waterscape is an aquatic natural environment which could take the form of a seascape, lake-scape, or riverscape. In that era, when television was not yet broadcast Indonesia (it commenced in 1962), magazines were one of the few media available and one of the most important channels through which Indonesians were able to see visual representations of various landscapes beyond their villages or communities, even outside Indonesia.

A perusal of the issues of *Pandjimas* from early 1960 shows that the earliest visual representations and the one most frequently published in this magazine was the landscape. *Pandjimas* reproduced pictures, paintings, and photographs of the out-doors, offering idealized visualizations of rural life which were absent in a city.

One of the earliest nature paintings in this magazine was that by an artist who later became known as one of Indonesia's legendary painters, realist, and naturalist and often painted natural landscapes in villages in Indonesia, Rustamadji. The untitled painting recreates the atmosphere of a beautiful, calm rural scene on the outskirts of Jakarta (see Illustration 1).<sup>12</sup> It shows a modest wooden house surrounded by various sorts of tropical plants, including coconut palms, banana, and papaya plants. Several goats are cropping the grass in front of the house. Besides the purely aesthetic quality of this breath-taking picture, *Pandjimas* adds an Islamic concept to its publication of the image. The caption reads: "The livestock and gardens which fill the yard of the house also reveal the balance and wisdom of God Almighty".<sup>13</sup> This caption conveys two ideas; firstly, the sense of harmony, beauty and balance in the countryside and, secondly, the irreplaceable role of God in creating such a landscape and awakening such senses. Apart from the gorgeous scenery in this village, it was clear that the editorial staff of this magazine also chose Rustamadji's painting because the painter was known to be a devout Muslim<sup>14</sup> and his paintings were consequently seen as imbuing

<sup>12</sup> *Pandji Masyarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Pandji Masyarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 7.

<sup>14</sup> For Rustamadji's works and paintings, see Burhan (2013: 100); Agus Dermawan T. (2020: 215).

Islamic spirituality in visualizing nature. This confirms that, for *Pandjimas*, the visual representation of the natural world in the form of a painting was not only acceptable, it was even highly esteemed, because it could help people to come closer to and praise God Almighty more fervently.



Illustration 1. The atmosphere of a beautiful, calm rural scene on the outskirts of Jakarta. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 7; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

Another issue contains photos and landscapes of villages. One photo showing trees has a caption extolling the cool air, adding that there is no reason for people to destroy those stunning green trees. This sent the Islamic message that people should not only enjoy nature, but must also protect it and prevent it from being damaged,<sup>15</sup> a perspective which was leading towards Islamic eco-spirituality. A sketch in another issue shows various types of plants, including bamboo in the foreground, in the middle is a road and two mountains loom in the background (see Illustration 2).<sup>16</sup> The village landscape image at night appears on another occasion, featuring trees, mountains, land and, in the background, a large luminous full moon.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 27 (15-7-1960): 5

<sup>16</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 24 (1-6-1960): 24. Picture of a mountain with a cloudy sky also appeared in *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 25.

<sup>17</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 24 (1-6-1960): 26.



Illustration 2. Various types of plants, including bamboo in the foreground, in the middle is a road and two mountains loom in the background. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 24 (1-6-1960): 24; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

For *Pandjimas* readers, the majority of whom lived in cities, seeing these kinds of illustrations offered a retreat back into the countryside, a visual journey back to their villages with their wooden houses, thickets, and trees, with livestock left to roam free, with fresh air and awe-inspiring views on offer. In short, it was an escape from the madness of the city, giving a visual and spiritual excursion into the green and peaceful countryside.

For *Pandjimas*, the greatness of God in nature was visible not only in Indonesia, but also throughout the world, indicating the universality of the Islamic notion of nature. *Pandjimas* published a photo of an arid mountain located outside Indonesia, Mount Jabal al-Nur (Mountain of Light), near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, taking readers of this magazine on a photographic trip abroad. The caption reads: "Jabal al-Nur, the Mountain of Light. On this hill is located the Cave of Hira in which the Prophet sought solitude and received his first revelation".<sup>18</sup> This indicates that, even though the rocky mountain is very arid – so different to the lush Indonesian mountains covered in trees – *Pandjimas* readers could still appreciate it because, for them, this mountain has a strong spiritual value because it is Allah's creation and this is where Allah sent His first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad. This revelation later gave birth to Islam which spread from the Arabian Peninsula to Indonesia. So, in this photo, not only is the landscape important, the historical value and spiritual meaning behind it is just as significant. Looking at this Quranic-themed photo, Indonesian Muslims,

<sup>18</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 19 (15-3-1960): 3.

who lived thousands of kilometres away from the Arabian Peninsula, could visually identify with one of the important places in the history and doctrine of Islam, a place previously known to them only verbally and through texts.

In another edition, *Pandjimas* published a photo of a semi-natural landscape; a view of gardens filled with plants cultivated by man to create the attractiveness and harmony to which he aspired. An example is the photo of the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore, Pakistan and the caption states that this park was “a testament to the peak of Islamic culture. This park was founded by Emperor Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century” (see Illustration 3).<sup>19</sup>



Illustration 3. The Shalimar Gardens in Lahore, Pakistan. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 18 (1-3-1960): 16; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

This photo shows a beautiful Persian-style garden containing one major building constructed during the Mughal period. It stands in a setting of calm ponds and neatly arranged trees. Abdul Rehman argues that this garden was created to reflect a combination of nature, architecture, and Islamic spiritual values (Abdul Rehman 2009: 207). This garden was laid out with order and beauty in mind. However, Rehman continues, the most important thing was that the design of this garden created the perception that it was like a little paradise on earth, in which living things (people, plants, animals) interacted with the natural environment (sun, moon, stars, and air) in an atmosphere of beauty, gentleness, and tranquility. This photo conveys the idea that Islam teaches Muslims to be very close to nature and builds on the idea of the continuation of a gardening and botanical tradition which had been deeply rooted in Islamic history since

<sup>19</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 18 (1-3-1960): 16.

Islamic medieval times. By placing this photo, *Pandjimas* was also encouraging Indonesian Muslims to create a garden like the Shalimar Gardens; one which was not only lovely to the eye but also had deep spiritual value which helped its visitors to draw closer to the Creator. Yet another way to link religious teachings to the beauty of plants was to display photos of plants in a mosque environment, for example, a photo of plants neatly lined up near a mosque in Berlin, Germany.<sup>20</sup>

As a magazine circulated in tropical Indonesia, *Pandjimas* published various pictures of rice-fields, the quintessential Indonesian landscape, and the scenery most familiar to all its readers. Although the rice-field illustrations in *Pandjimas* were only in black and white, the lines and shapes convey an image giving the readers an impression of an awesome rice-field view and hinting at a life which still continued its tranquil tenor in the village. An example is a picture of a female farmer who is planting rice seedlings in a rice-field. She is enveloped in a natural setting, with mountains in the distance and trees, including coconut palms, in the background of this illustration. In the sky are clouds and the suggestion of a gust of wind (see Illustration 4).<sup>21</sup>



Illustration 4. A female farmer who is planting rice seedlings in a rice-field with mountains in the distance and trees, including coconut palms, in the background. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 26 (1-7-1960): 8; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

There is also a photo of a farmer working his rice-field with his buffalo, with a caption in the form of a question about whether or not the land belonged to

<sup>20</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 32/33 (1/15-9-1960): 25.

<sup>21</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 26 (1-7-1960): 8.

him, challenging the prevailing power relationships and access to economic resources in the village at that time.<sup>22</sup>

A village house constructed of wood surrounded by its large yard filled with various plants was another theme *Pandjimas* pursued; once again emphasizing the agrarian roots and closeness to nature of Indonesian society. One issue shows a landscape photo depicting the traditional houses of the inhabitants in the interior of the Island of Timor, East Nusa Tenggara. They were simple houses constructed of *rumbia* (sago palm) fronds, with a number of coconut-palms scattered among them.<sup>23</sup> A photo of a traditional Indonesian house with a *rumbia* roof and woven bamboo walls, with a coconut tree in the background, was featured in another issue.<sup>24</sup>

Another fascinating natural world visualization theme presented by *Pandjimas* is the waterscape. The visualization of waterscapes in this magazine provided an overview of the beautiful bodies of water which will cast a hypnotic spell over those who see them. Of course, seeing real waterscapes will indeed give a different impression because one can hear the sound of the water and smell it, but waterscape scenery in the form of photos also gives an amazing sense of the shape, strength, and benefits of water, including thoughts about the ecosystem existing below it. The visualization of waterscapes encouraged readers to reflect on how small people are in the midst of the extraordinary power of water, so that all they can do is to thank God Who created these waterscapes and bestowed extraordinary natural resources under their surface. More specifically, by presenting various pictures of bodies of water in Indonesian territory, *Pandjimas* hoped that its Indonesian readers would realize and be proud of how vast, varied, and useful bodies of water (including the Indonesian seas and the islands in them) were putting Indonesia right up there with the rest of other world waterscapes.

Several seascapes are worth exploring. The first is a photo of a seascape in Kotabaru, South Kalimantan, at dusk with a small traditional ship sailing across it. In its caption, *Pandjimas* also called on its readers to contemplate a more spiritual question either when looking at this photo or on seeing other natural landscapes similar it: "Even this natural landscape will make us believe in God's wisdom to regulate and maintain the balance of the universe" (see Illustration 5).<sup>25</sup> The light of the setting sun, the only source of light, appears to be reflected from the surface of the sea, contrasting with the colour of the seawater and creating a sense of balance and harmony. In this photo, the sky, sun, and sea are the dominant visual elements, again drawing the imagination of the viewer to the extraordinary power of God in creating nature and arranging it in an orderly fashion to enhance human well-being. To connect this view of nature to human experience, the message that the picture reflected the fishermen's task to earn a living from their small boats in the middle of a large sea was conveyed.

<sup>22</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 19.

<sup>25</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 6.



Illustration 5. A seascape in Kotabaru, South Kalimantan, at dusk with a small traditional ship sailing across it. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 6; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

This magazine also published photos of the coast and the Indian Ocean in the Sukabumi area of West Java. Apart from the information about the location of the photo above, the caption also exclaims: “My beautiful Indonesia!”<sup>26</sup> Readers of *Pandjimas*, who had previously been guided in the direction of praising the beauty of nature and thanking God for this gift, were now asked to foster a sense of love for their homeland. Therefore, in *Pandjimas* the natural world was viewed not just from the perspective of beauty, spirituality but also of nationalism.

In another photo, two men are seen on a quite large boat, rowing with long oars to propel the ship forward. The caption reads: “Challenge and response”.<sup>27</sup> These are the only three words but, by combining the content of the photo and the caption, readers were given the impression that the ocean presented both a hope and a challenge, stressing that people must strive with the ability God has given them to be able to conquer this great challenge. It was also a symbol of the idea that, to achieve success, man must work hard and must always be alert. This view is confirmed by another photo which shows two traditional ships in the middle of the ocean. It also contains the images of some fishermen.

<sup>26</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 40.



The caption states that: “There is no time to be lazy. There is still much that has not been done. The vast ocean needs your concern”.<sup>28</sup> This is both a kind of question and also an invitation to readers not just to stop at admiring the beauty and power of the sailing-ship but also to impress on their imagination the extraordinary potential of natural wealth, especially the various types of fish, which existed in the Indonesian oceans, created by God for the well-being of the people.

The relationship between man and the sea continued to be the theme of *Pandjimas'* visual narrative. *Pandjimas* reproduced a painting showing several small sailing-ships – painted by a Pakistani artist<sup>29</sup> – and a picture of sailing-ships with people rowing them.<sup>30</sup> In another issue, the magazine showed a photo of a boat returning from fishing on the ocean. A fisherman is seen getting off the boat. The caption of this photo is somewhat different to the previous ones because it illustrates that democracy will return like a ship returning from the vast ocean.<sup>31</sup> In short, it was subtly using natural scenery to convey social criticism of the tendency towards authoritarianism during the Old Order era, at a time in which Islamic politics was weakening. In another unique image, *Pandjimas* also presents a scene below the surface of the sea. It is possible to make out the fronds of the sea-weeds on the seabed, some rocks, the eddies of a current the sea, and a fish swimming around.<sup>32</sup>

What is also interesting to note are the photos of lake-scapes which depict the atmosphere pervading a lake, an area of water in the form of a basin. While rivers reflect the power of the flow of water, the clear, reflective water of lakes symbolizes serenity, a sentiment enhanced by their natural bastions of beautiful mountains. An example is the photo of Lake Karar (not stated where its exact location is) in which people are walking beside it. In the middle of the lake, people can be seen paddling canoes. The background is replete with leaves and trees.<sup>33</sup>

In the context of *Pandjimas'* efforts to cultivate a feeling of love of the homeland among its readers, the magazine published photos of lakes in Indonesia to convey a nationalistic textual narrative. The first I want to point out is a photo of Lake Toba in North Sumatra (see Illustration 6). Around the lake are grouped the mountains which enfold it and in the foreground lies a valley through which a river flows into the lake. The caption reads: “Lake Toba in Tapanuli. Even though you are far away in a foreign country experiencing the beauty of a foreign land, this lake will be forever in your mind”.<sup>34</sup> Another photo shows Lake Maninjau in West Sumatra (see Illustration 7).

<sup>28</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 27.

<sup>29</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 27 (15-7-1960): 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 28 (1-8-1960): 22.

<sup>31</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 23 (15-5-1960): 30.

<sup>32</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 5.



Illustration 6. "Lake Toba in Tapanuli. Even though you are far away in a foreign country experiencing the beauty of a foreign land, this lake will be forever in your mind". (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 5; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).



Illustration 7. Lake Maninjau in West Sumatra. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 31 (15-9-1960): 4; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

Like Lake Toba, Lake Maninjau is surrounded by mountainous land. What makes it different is the foreground; in this photo of Lake Maninjau, the foreground is filled with vast areas of terraced rice-fields. In the centre, between the lake and the rice-fields, lies a stretch of land covered with various types of plants, including coconut palms. The caption to this photo also fosters a sense of love of the homeland, this time issuing a more emphatic invitation: "Lake Maninjau in West Sumatra, its calm water, its waving palms, its terraced rice-fields bind the heart to love of the homeland".<sup>35</sup> In this instance, *Pandjimas* was seeing water in the context of nature and territorial-based nationalism.

There is a possibility that Hamka played an important role in this. It seems that the choice to publish photos of Lakes Toba and Maninjau (and not Lake Singkarak in West Sumatra, which is bigger than the latter) was also Hamka's idea, given that the location of both lakes occupied an important part in his past. His birthplace, Tanjung Raya (West Sumatra), is in the same area as Lake Maninjau, while Lake Toba is located in North Sumatra; Hamka's fame as a novelist and journalist began in Medan, the most important city in North Sumatra, in the 1930s. Sumatra has many lakes but these two bodies of water are those often called to mind when people think of the island. Publishing photos of two large lakes in Sumatra in a magazine based in the nation's capital might also have been intended to cultivate nostalgia among Sumatran migrants outside their island, urging them always to remember the natural world which shaped them in their childhood. In this case, by presenting a kind of visual tour to the countryside to give them nostalgic pleasure, the photos were an attempt to awaken a sense of longing for home among the nomads inhabiting and working in the cities.

Another water element featured in *Pandjimas* is riverscape. *Pandjimas* published visualizations of rivers showing the beauty of their sinuous curves, the strength of the flow of their waters, human dependence on them, and fish plus hinting at the promise of the adventurous experience they can offer. One example is the photo of the Martapura River, one of the longest rivers in Indonesia, which flows through Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. On the left of the photo is a picturesque riverbank on which are clustered houses and shady trees, reflecting the bonds between people and plants and this river and once again emphasizing that the river is the lifeblood of the development of the human community. In the middle and right lies the main course of the river. In the background, it meanders on and its banks are covered with various kinds of plants. On the river itself are several small boats with people rowing them.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from these themes, there is yet another interesting theme which appears in *Pandjimas*, namely images which combined skyscape and nightscape. *Pandjimas* also chose to pay attention to the depiction of the nocturnal atmosphere in combination with the sky (including celestial bodies, especially the moon). This was an attempt to send a message that, among Muslims, night is not only a natural phenomenon but is also imbued with

<sup>35</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 31 (15-9-1960): 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 21 (15-4-1960): 13.

a spiritual meaning. Images of the moon appear frequently in *Pandjimas*, perhaps symbolizing the night as a serene time, perfect for contemplation and performing night prayers. Night also provides an opportunity for a Muslim to enjoy and admire the greatness of God in calm contemplation of the heavenly bodies He has created which are not visible during the day. One example is a picture of a village night scene, with banana plants in the foreground. In the distance, visible through the banana leaves is a round, white full moon, illuminating the dark night, giving the impression that, even in the darkness, there is always light (see Illustration 8).<sup>37</sup>



Illustration 8. A village night scene, with banana plants in the foreground. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 11; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

Another image is of a night scene with coconut palms to the right and left and in the background looms a dark grove of trees. In the sky, the full moon shines from behind the clouds.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, *Pandjimas* also presented images of the sky not as seen from the Earth but from space. In one issue, the magazine published a photo of two astronauts in outer space fully ensconced in their

<sup>37</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 11.

<sup>38</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 21.

space-suits including helmets. In the centre of the photo, away in the distance, lies the Earth. The caption reads: "Two travellers to the moon in their spaceship with the Earth is visible to them".<sup>39</sup> In another issue, *Pandjimas* published an imaginative image showing a spacecraft which was travelling between the Earth and its satellite before landing on the lunar surface. The caption poses a rhetorical question asking Muslims, especially the readers of *Pandjimas* who wished to explore the universe, not only what was on Earth, but also beyond the Earth: "Does outer space appear as illustrated in the picture? *Wallahu alam bis sawab* [Allah knows the truth]!".<sup>40</sup> These two visualizations clearly expanded the definition of the natural world to apply not only to the Earth, but also to outer space. Both images were placed in writings which discuss astronautics and the role of Islam and science in space exploration in the context of the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to land humans on the moon.<sup>41</sup> One of the points raised in the two articles is that Islam is a religion which encourages science, including space exploration. The verse of the Qur'an on which this assertion is based is Ash-Shuraa verse 29 which emphasizes that among Allah's signs is the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and the living beings He dispersed between them. Muslims, therefore, should feel encouraged by this verse to find out what life in outer space is like. Such images and writings prompted *Pandjimas* readers to ask the fundamental question: Are there living beings elsewhere in the vast universe? This is indeed a scientific question but one with religious and philosophical dimensions. More importantly, these two illustrations were positioned to motivate Muslims to think scientifically, including contemplating the possibility of Muslims taking part in the exploration of outer space in the era known as the space age, at a time at which two non-Muslim countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, were dominating space exploration.

Based on my observations of the photos and illustrations of views of nature published in *Pandjimas* recorded above, it is possible to postulate that *Pandjimas* wanted its readers not to stop at simply being amazed when they saw the reproductions of landscapes, but that they would also be persuaded to reflect more deeply on the many spiritual and philosophical elements behind the landscape illustrations. *Pandjimas* wanted its readers to contemplate the great questions with which human beings had to contend: Who had created these landscapes and man's place in the universe? It was an attempt to imbue artistic representations of nature with a spiritual meaning by relating the beauty of nature to the greatness of God. *Pandjimas* readers would feel how small they were in this vast macrocosm and therefore they should try to come closer to the Creator and not exploit, let alone, destroy the nature God has created.

<sup>39</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 24.

<sup>41</sup> Osman Raliby, "Astronautika dan agama kita", *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 23-26; K.J. Wassil, "Fikiran pembatja", *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 23-24.

## FLORA, FAUNA, AND THE DECORATIVE ARTS

Plants are a natural element whose representations feature heavily in *Pandjimas*. Some of the plants shown are realistic visualizations (especially the photos) and some are drawn from the artists' imagination (in the form of sketch or drawing). I have already mentioned a little about the frequency with which plants appeared in photos and images of landscapes, waterscapes, village-scapes, cityscapes, and mosques-capes. Even though plants do not play the dominant role, their presence shows that, as far as *Pandjimas* was concerned, plants were a feature which had almost always to be present when humans, nature and the built environment were reproduced. *Pandjimas*, therefore, displayed a deep interest in plants as a symbol of life on Earth, a symbol of beauty and as a symbol of the greatness of God. In this section, I shall explore the photos and illustrations in *Pandjimas* in which plant representation occupy a dominant place.

One of the earliest photos of plants shown in *Pandjimas* is of jasmine leaves and flowers.<sup>42</sup> This photo was published in a discussion about the work of the linguist Madong Lubis (1890-1959) in advancing the Indonesian language. It was explained that, sometime in the past, Madong had sent *sitarak* leaves as a literary interpretation of a relationship. It is not clearly stated to whom these leaves were given, but most likely it was to the author of the article in which this photo was placed, Jusuf Abdullah Puar, a prolific contemporary writer. The Mandailing Batak people (especially their young people) of whom Lubis was one, use "the language of the leaves" (*bahasa daun*). A young man will send a certain type of leaf to convey a message to a woman he likes; each type of leaf, therefore, carries a different message. The *sitarak* leaf symbolizes separation or divorce, indicating the breaking down of a relationship between two humans (Sutardji Calzoum Bachri 2007: 160). The context in which this *sitarak* leaf is used in *Pandjimas* was probably the death of Lubis at the end of 1959, signifying the breaking of his relationship with his family and friends. The author, who seems to have contributed to choosing this picture, asks his readers rhetorically: "What is the significance of being given jasmine flowers? Do you understand the metaphor?"<sup>43</sup> There was no explicit explanation of the meaning of jasmine here but, among Indonesian people in general, jasmine is associated with beauty and fragrance. So, possibly the photo of jasmine here served to show that, even though Lubis was dead, his name and work would still be remembered by the public. On the next page, still in the Puar's article, is a photo of a pineapple plant. A ripe pineapple is nestled amid its long, spikey leaves (see Illustration 9). The caption once again shows *Pandjimas'* characteristic of seeing nature within the framework of God's power:

When he saw the flowing water, Pak Madong's heart immediately turned to God. Then, what about gazing at this juicy pineapple which is even more beautiful because it has been captured by the art of photography? What literary traveller will not have his or her consciousness turned to the greatness of God?<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 14.

<sup>43</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 15.



Illustration 9. A ripe pineapple is nestled amid its long, spikey leaves. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 14; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

In another example, *Pandjimas* shows a photo of a flower which resembles an orchid. This orchid photo was placed in another article by Jusuf Abdullah Puar on the position of Islamic poetry in the midst of a storm of ideas about liberalism, naturalism, and proletarian realism. The caption of this photo, which clearly emphasizes the importance of the divine aspect in art and literature, reads:

The inspiration exuded by colourful flowers like this in a garden should not be taken as an unconsidered use of parables. Pak Hamka would say that the beauty seen by the eye is actually a reflection of the beauteous characteristics of the God of the Universe.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to photographs, *Pandjimas* also added illustrations of plants, from simple and imaginative compositions to complex and virtually accurate representations. Several examples can be cited here, including a picture of a small flower in a transparent glass pot filled with water;<sup>46</sup> a picture of a jasmine flower, which is used as a symbol of beauty for a column called '*Bahasa dan Sastera*' (Language and Literature);<sup>47</sup> a picture of a tall coconut palm heavy with fruit;<sup>48</sup> and a sketch of abstract leaves.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 15 (15-1-1960): 13.

<sup>46</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 22.

<sup>47</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 15 (15-1-1960): 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): 25.

<sup>49</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 16.

Fauna is yet another element of the natural world which often appeared in *Pandjimas* at this time. Muslims are quite familiar with the symbolic use of animals because living creatures often feature in Islamic teachings and in the history of the prophets. The animals depicted in *Pandjimas* are in line with the idea that this magazine was trying to convey about the strong connection between nature, including animals, human beings, art, and Islam. One of the earliest animals depicted was the owl, which was used as a logo for the table of contents in this magazine, symbolizing both the great curiosity of the readers and the vast knowledge contained in this magazine (see Illustration 10).<sup>50</sup>



Illustration 10. The owl, which was used as a logo for the table of contents in the magazine. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 2; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

The mythology of the owl as a symbol of science is based on the ancient Greek tradition, a metaphor widely known in the West but clearly less common in Indonesia, especially among Muslims. Here, instead of rejecting this western symbolism, *Pandjimas* was using it for the Muslim community as a universal symbol of the search for knowledge. In an attempt to symbolize the beauty of language, this magazine used an image of two geese flying in a literary column (see Illustration 11).<sup>51</sup> To illustrate tenacity as well as elegance, *Pandjimas* presented an illustration of an old deer with sturdy antlers, drawn by the artist M. Basry (see Illustration 12).<sup>52</sup> In order to encourage Muslims to sacrifice at Eid al-Adha (the Festival of the Sacrifice), *Pandjimas* published a photo of a cow which was to be sacrificed, with the addition of a caption about the meaning of sacrifice.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 14.

<sup>53</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 26 (1-7-1960): 5.





Illustration 11. Two geese flying in a literary column. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 20; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).



Illustration 12. An old deer with sturdy antlers. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 14; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

One distinctive animal which is most often associated with the Islamic world is the camel and this animal also appeared in *Pandjimas*. One example is the photo of camels carrying humans and personal belongings on their backs progressing through the desert in a caravan. The caption states that camel caravans are commonplace in the Middle East. However, such camel caravans “are no longer of practical for use in the Sputnik age”.<sup>54</sup> The word Sputnik refers to the Soviet-made artificial earth satellite, the first of its kind ever made by man, which had been launched three years earlier (1957), marking the superiority of the Soviet Union’s space technology over any other country and inaugurating the Space Race. The launch of Sputnik took the US by surprise and clearly made Muslim countries appear to lag even farther behind in technological development. By publishing the camel photo in conjunction with a reference to Sputnik, *Pandjimas* hoped that Muslims would also gird up their loins to make huge leaps in the fields of science and technology, including in such high-tech branches as space technology.

#### PERSON, PEOPLE, AND THE PORTRAITURE IN THEIR STORIES

*Pandjimas* also published quite a few photos and pictures of people as one aspect of biology in nature. Most of these were men prominent in their respective fields at the time who each had his own story. The stated aim of *Pandjimas* was for its readers to gain knowledge, inspiration, or enthusiasm from the achievements of these individuals. This human visualization connected the *Pandjimas* readers to various people – and their thoughts – in the past and in the present, conveying more than can always be revealed in a text. These visualizations acted as a reminder of human existence and of man’s accomplishments in this vast universe. The depths of emotions and thoughts are reflected in the individual’s faces, while their style of dress and gestures reflect their views on Islam, culture, and modernity, thereby conveying certain impressions to *Pandjimas* readers. Pertinently, the publication of these photos, especially of national and international figures, was also one way to strengthen the magazine’s brand as a modernist Islamic magazine with a global perspective.<sup>55</sup>

*Pandjimas* published many photos of people who had achieved fame as prominent persons in the context of Indonesia, Indonesian Islam, the Islamic world, and the international world in general. They were people whose thoughts and work were judged to have had an influence in changing the course of history. Some categorizations can be made on the basis of their backgrounds: scientists, men of letters, scholars, politicians, and intellectuals. Some of the photos overlap thematically, given that some figures were known for their expertise in a number of fields.

<sup>54</sup> *Pandji Masyarakat* 15 (15-1-1960): 10.

<sup>55</sup> I have made a list of all the individuals whose photographs, drawings, or paintings appeared in *Pandjimas* during 1960. However, the number is very large and our space is limited. So, here I am mentioning only some of them and placing them into several thematic frameworks.

The first category is composed of photos of individuals who were important in the fields of science and culture, among them Professor Aulia (psychosomatic expert from Minangkabau),<sup>56</sup> Professor Bahder Djohan (scholar from Minangkabau, Minister of Education and Culture 1950-1951, 1952-1953, and President of Universitas Indonesia, 1954-1958),<sup>57</sup> and two linguists, Madong Lubis<sup>58</sup> and SSB Nan Sati.<sup>59</sup> The second contains group photos which provided social and spatial context about some people and some of the things which connected them. An example is a photo of a discussion between figures in various fields such as Bahder Djohan, Hamka, Mukti Ali, and Abdullah Arif Atjeh<sup>60</sup> and a photo of the meeting between Mohamad Hatta (Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945-1956) with Indonesian students at the University of California, Berkeley, in US.<sup>61</sup> The third group is represented by photos of the *Pandjimas* family, for instance, a photo of *Pandjimas* employees chatting,<sup>62</sup> a photo of Hamka as the editor-in-chief in the middle of a group of *Pandjimas* magazine sales agents in Banjarmasin<sup>63</sup> and a photo of a *Pandjimas* contributor with several other people at a Sikh temple in India.<sup>64</sup> In the fourth category are photographs, drawings or paintings of Islamic figures or religious scholars (*ulama*), both in Indonesia and abroad. The visualizations of Indonesian Islamic figures or *ulama* published include the prominent Sarekat Islam leader in the colonial period, H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto,<sup>65</sup> the founder of the Nahdlatul Ulama, Hasyim Asyari,<sup>66</sup> the Minangkabau cleric Syekh Jamil Jambek,<sup>67</sup> the founder of the Muhammadiyah K.H. Ahmad Dahlan,<sup>68</sup> the Minangkabau cleric who was also Hamka's father, Abdulkarim Amrullah,<sup>69</sup> and Acehese scholar Hasbi As Shidiqy.<sup>70</sup> The photos or paintings of Islamic figures or scholars from abroad include the Rector of Al Azhar University M. Sjaltut,<sup>71</sup> the Egyptian pioneer of Islamic reformism Sayyid Jamaluddin al Afghani,<sup>72</sup> and a painting of the great sultan of Egypt and Syria and prominent Muslim commander in the Crusades, Salahuddin Al Ayyubi.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, there are some photographs of international figures. *Pandjimas* hoped to inform its readers about the important figures behind recent events

<sup>56</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 17 (15-2-1960): 16; *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 13.

<sup>58</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 18 (1-3-1960): 11.

<sup>60</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 15 (15-1-1960): 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 29.

<sup>62</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): 41, 43.

<sup>64</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 31 (15-9-1960): 22.

<sup>65</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): front cover.

<sup>66</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 16 (1-1-1960): front cover.

<sup>67</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 17 (15-2-1960): front cover.

<sup>68</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 17 (15-2-1960): 19.

<sup>69</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 18 (1-1-1960): front cover.

<sup>72</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 21 (15-4-1960): 16.

<sup>73</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 25 (15-6-1960): 18.

in various parts of the world in the past or at that time and, if necessary, draw lessons and inspiration from these figures. Some examples are the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who is described as the enforcer of democracy in India,<sup>74</sup> the Pakistani President Ayub Khan, who is described as an anti-corruption figure,<sup>75</sup> the Saudi Arabian king, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud and his son,<sup>76</sup> and the US presidential candidate J.F. Kennedy, who was giving a speech during the presidential election campaign.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from photos, *Pandjimas* also had pictures of humans both rough sketches and more advanced versions. Drawing people gives the artist the opportunity to create the images he wants, an accomplishment which is sometimes difficult to achieve with photos. Examples of images which fall into this category are a drawing of a person playing the violin,<sup>78</sup> a drawing of a man wearing glasses reading a book using a magnifying glass<sup>79</sup> and a drawing of a villager, a sarong draped over his shoulder, carrying a modest bag with a waterfall and trees in the background, symbolizing the more adventurous sorts of people who explore nature and life and draw lessons from their experiences.<sup>80</sup>

#### THE NATURAL WORLD IN THE ADVERTISEMENTS

As a best-selling magazine, *Pandjimas* accepted the advertisements of numerous shops or companies who wanted to sell their products or services by advertising them in the pages of this magazine. Advertising requires a variety of strategies, designed not only to grab the readers' attention but also stimulate them to buy the product. Advertisements which contain photos or images make it easier to achieve this goal, as the avowed purpose of visualizations in the advertisements is to touch the emotional side of the person who sees them, the determining factor in whether someone will decide to buy the product or not. The representations of the natural world in advertisements in *Pandjimas* are now enshrined as a special advertising genre in the history of advertising in print media in Indonesia, given the large use of photos and images in them (including those representing the natural world) and the strong Islamic framework visible in these advertisements, reflecting the dawning of an era of a consumer culture among urban Indonesian Muslims, whose numbers began to increase in the 1960s.

There are various pictures of people and nature to choose from to illustrate the sorts of items advertised in this magazine. One of the early examples is a picture of a mosque set in a natural environment used as an illustration in a book advertisement (see Illustration 13).

<sup>74</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 18 (1-3-1960): 29.

<sup>75</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 21 (15-4-1960): 29.

<sup>76</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 31 (15-9-1960): 14.

<sup>77</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 30 (1-9-1960): 28.

<sup>78</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 28 (1-8-1960): 25.

<sup>79</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 14 (1-1-1960): 30.

<sup>80</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 15 (15-1-1960): 9.



Illustration 13. Book advertising displaying natural landscape, flower, and mosque. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): back cover; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

Readers are presented with a picture of a mosque with its triple-layer roof, a minaret, another building and a tall, beautiful tree. A list of the names of the books being sold was put below. The landscape and mosque images and the list of books are placed in a column decorated with beautiful floral ornaments, indicating that reading books, especially religious books, not only strengthen a person's faith, but also refine a person's feelings and beautify his or her life.<sup>81</sup> There are also pictures of people typing and of two scholars in an advertisement for a French language course. In another advertisement, a painting depicts Hamka promoting his book entitled *1001 soal-soal hidup* (A thousand and one problems of life).<sup>82</sup> *Pandjimas* also published an advertisement for an Arabic textbook. On the cover of the book is a picture of a classroom scene in which a teacher teaching her pupils.<sup>83</sup>

Visual advertisements for Muhammadiyah products have also appeared in *Pandjimas* on a number of occasions. One example is an advertisement for the Muhammadiyah almanac for the year 1960/1961. A picture of the product was published in a combination with various scenes, revealing the artist's desire to convey a number of important ideas. It shows women and children reading books, farmers working in the rice-fields, village houses, coconut palms, a typically West-Sumatran mosque, a mosque minaret and rice-fields.

<sup>81</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 20 (28-3-1960): back cover.

<sup>82</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 21 (15-4-1960): back cover.

<sup>83</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 22 (1-5-1960): back cover.

Interestingly, whereas these elements refer to the nuances found in the village and in Islam, there is one other element in the image, which has been placed in the background, conveying a completely different message, the image of skyscrapers.<sup>84</sup> These buildings were clearly not inspired by Indonesian cities, considering that there was not a single city in Indonesia which had as many or indeed any skyscrapers as in the picture in 1960. Hence, the ideas conveyed here are that, although the Muhammadiyah paid major attention to Islamic teaching, it also had local roots but was also simultaneously imbued with a modern spirit. This last characteristic encouraged it to strive to encourage economic and technological progress like that the West had achieved.

In its advertisements, the Muhammadiyah always tried to combine elements of human beings, nature, art, Islam and progress. A good example is an image in an advertisement promoting another Muhammadiyah almanac (see Illustration 14).

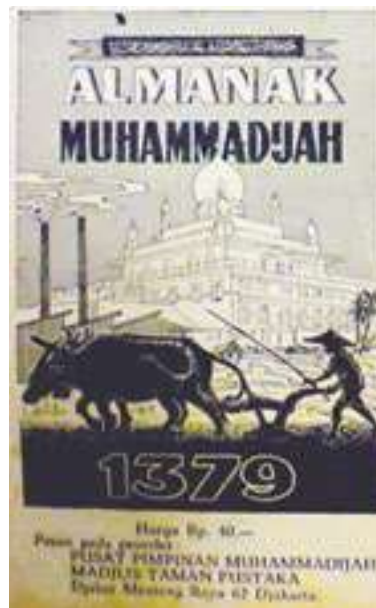


Illustration 14. An image in an advertisement promoting a Muhammadiyah almanac. (Source: *Pandji Masjarakat* 29 (15-8-1960): back cover; Courtesy of the Library of Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta).

In the background is a picture of the Syuhada Mosque in Yogyakarta. Remarkably, in the foreground are not the Dutch-style houses, which actually stood in front of the Syuhada Mosque – built in the former Dutch residential quarter of Kotabaru area in Yogyakarta (Muhammad Yuanda Zara 2016) –, but a picture of a terraced rice-field, so typical of rural Indonesia. To the right of the rice-fields stand several trees, including two towering coconut-palms. On the left side of the rice-field stands a farmer's dwelling. In the foreground,

<sup>84</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 29 (15-8-1960): back cover.

there is another dominant image, a picture of a farmer ploughing his field. In his right hand he carries a whip and in his left hand he grasps the shafts of a plough, which is harnessed to the two large buffaloes in front of him. To the left is a completely different image: a factory with two chimney-stacks which billow smoke into the sky, symbolizing modern industry and technology.<sup>85</sup> So, once again, the pictures in this advertisement confirm that the Muhammadiyah was indeed the pioneer of Islamic modernism in Indonesia and that Muslims must work hard, look forward and be industrious, but never lose sight of their piety nor forget the beauty of their agrarian roots.

## CONCLUSION

By analysing a wide variety of visual representations of the natural world in nineteen issues of the popular Islamic magazine *Pandjimas* published in 1960, this study shows that visual arts such as paintings, illustrations, and photographs played an important role in its effort to convey its progressive ideas about nature, humans, religion, nationality, and modernity. Instead of debating whether Islam prohibits or allows the representation of living creatures or whether or not paintings and pictures can undermine the faith of a Muslim, this magazine openly showed its acceptance, even appreciation, of the visual representations of the natural world. In fact, the natural beauty created by God was the focus of this magazine's attention since the beginning of its existence. For *Pandjimas*, the natural world far exceeded the physical place in which human life existed. This magazine asked fundamental, significant questions about such topics as the importance of beauty, the creation of the natural world, the relationship between nature and humans, religious views on nature and the place of humans, and nature in the modern world. Illustrations of natural beauty and narratives which invited contemplation of the greatness of God Who created nature built the perception that Islam does pay great attention to nature and its visual representations.

This magazine used illustrations to teach its readers about the extraordinary beauty of nature and the power of God in creating nature and, last but not least, the responsibility of humans to preserve nature. In addition, by analysing the captions which accompany this vision, this study has hopefully offered some new insights into understanding the efforts of the modernist Islamic media to see nature not only as the environment in which living creatures live, but also as an entity which can be approached from a spiritual, philosophical, and artistic perspective. From the very beginning, but especially under the leadership of Hamka, *Pandjimas*, set about convincing its readers that Islam appreciates the beauty of nature because, by enjoying the beauty of nature, people will appreciate God as the creator of that nature.

Moreover, this study also finds that the illustrations in this magazine, especially those relating to Indonesia's picturesque natural landscapes, including romantic lakes, magnificent seas, impressive rivers – all bathed in

<sup>85</sup> *Pandji Masjarakat* 21 (15-4-1960): back cover.

abundant sunshine – and all the indigenous ecosystems have also played a role in building a sense of patriotism, a geographical expression of Indonesian nationalism, in its Indonesian readers. *Pandjimas* reminded its readers of their wonderful rural and maritime roots and assured them that Indonesia is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. In an era in which Islamic print media were very few and modern information channels such as television had not been introduced in Indonesia, *Pandjimas* was one of the most important sources of religious knowledge and guidance for Indonesian Muslims.

This study has contributed to exploring a theme which has not been much discussed by scholars: that of how nature was represented visually by the popular Islamic print media in Indonesia in an era in which Indonesia had just gained its independence from Dutch colonialism and was trying to find a balance between the agrarian basis of Indonesian society, the Islamic ideology embraced by most of its population and modernity, a necessary consequence of Indonesia's efforts to work towards being a developed country. Therefore, the visual representations of the natural world in *Pandjimas* redefined the relationship between nature, art, and religion. This study demonstrates that the photos, paintings, and drawings in *Pandjimas* are part of the Indonesian Islamic cultural heritage which has been forgotten but has played a significant role in the way Indonesian Muslims have built up their consciousness of and concern for the natural world, especially the land and waters of Indonesia and the living creatures which dwell there, in an era when Indonesia was experiencing massive urbanization and modernization. *Pandjimas* responded to and communicated the desire of Indonesian Muslims at that time to become a Muslim who was not only pious but also forward-thinking, who cared about nature, loved their homeland and had an artistic consciousness of an Indonesia which was moving towards a place in the modern world.

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