

Musalla ‘Aisyiyah: The Transformation of Islamic Women’s Public Space in Indonesia 1922-1942

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Introduction

Entering the second decade of the 20th century, the stirrings of change in the Dutch East Indies were no longer confined to political movements in meeting rooms but began to encompass a conscious need for physical spatial ownership. During this period, the *bumiputera* community started to reinterpret their identity through building structures that were more functional and independent, a subtle attempt to escape the colonial architectural hegemony that had dominated the urban landscape for centuries (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020). This transformation was not merely a matter of aesthetics regarding bricks and mortar; rather, it was a statement of existence, proving that the local society possessed the capacity to design its own future. Amidst dense residential environments beginning to embrace modernity, an urgent need arose to create public spaces that no longer piggybacked on old structures but stood tall as symbols of a new sovereignty (Knudsen et al., 2021).

This passion for construction initially emerged as a response to the limited access experienced by the Bumiputra people within the segregated colonial urban layout. In the context of Islamic society, this triggered a wave of reform that did not only touch theological thought but also manifested physically in the form of schools, orphanages, and places of worship with more efficient architectural styles. Here, the role of modernist organization actors became pivotal. They

gradually began to shift the narrative of heritage from something static and past-oriented to something dynamic and progress-oriented (Dutch Culture, 2024). Through their hands, the architectural landscape in residential pockets like Kauman began to transform, creating a “living monument” that recorded the footprints of cultural resistance against both traditional established norms and foreign influences.

The emergence of these new spaces initiated by the Bumiputra community was ultimately not merely a complement to the urban landscape, but a highly dynamic negotiation of identity. Through the mastery of physical space, they successfully dismantled the dichotomy between the traditional and the colonial by introducing a third alternative that was more inclusive and progressive (Vickers, 2017). This phenomenon serves as an important marker that the consciousness of sovereignty had permeated deep into the daily aspects of society, including how they treated buildings as living cultural heritage. At this juncture, the role of social-religious organizations became crucial, where the spirit of decolonization began to be institutionalized through modern organizational structures that were not only adept at crafting discourse but also passionate about manifesting those ideas into tangible physical structures (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020).

The organizational behavior in establishing various building structures can also be interpreted as a highly conscious political statement. Modernist Islamic elites utilized physical construction as an instrument to demonstrate identity sovereignty and economic independence as a form of resistance against colonialism (Alfian, 2024). The construction of school buildings, orphanages, and healthcare facilities was carried out with efficient and modern architectural styles, which simultaneously functioned to challenge the establishment of traditional structures often regarded as static. In this perspective, every inch of the established buildings was part of a grand

strategy to position Islam as a force relevant to the demands of the era, where the sovereignty of the ummah was no longer just shouted in discussion forums but manifested in the form of "monuments of progress" accessible to the general public.

On a more specific level, the 'Aisyiyah women's movement utilized this momentum of physical construction as an effort to assert their identity and position within a public space often dominated by men. Having independent buildings and facilities was a way for 'Aisyiyah to detach themselves from dependence on old structures, while simultaneously proving that women possessed equal managerial and architectural capacity in managing modern organizations (Ro'fah, 2020). Thus, the passion for construction within 'Aisyiyah was not merely a matter of fulfilling spatial needs, but an emancipatory act aimed at creating "spaces of sovereignty" for Muslim women amidst the social transformations fluctuating in the early 20th century.

The fundamental problem in the layout of traditional places of worship in Java lies in the marginal position of women, which is physically manifested in a space known as *pawestren*. In the architectural history of ancient Great Mosques, *pawestren* was often positioned as a supplementary space on the side or at the back, hierarchically placed under the dominance of the main male hall (Felisiani, 2011). This limitation was not merely a technical construction issue but a reflection of social religious segregation that restricted women's access to authority, knowledge, and leadership within the mosque. In a more critical view, the male dominance in this sacred space created a strong assumption that the mosque belonged exclusively to men, while women were placed as passive participants in hidden, leftover spaces (Jenner, 2023).

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history of great mosques, *pawestren* was often positioned as a supplementary space on the side or at the back, hierarchically placed under the dominance of the main male hall (Felisiani, 2011). This spatial deadlock created a sharp gap between the progressive aspirations of Bumiputera women and the physical reality that shackled them. A more serious reading of the archives reveals that the 'Aisyiyah Musalla (1922) is a unique structure, as it was entirely established by the Muhammadiyah organization in its early years, contrasting with KH Ahmad Dahlan's Langgar Kidul, which chronologically predates the organization. This independence is further evidenced by its spatial positioning; unlike early educational complexes such as Qismul Arqa or the Normaalschool, which remained within the founders residential compounds, the 'Aisyiyah Musalla was built on a completely separate site a radical step that reinforced the values of independence and female spatial authority (Jenner, 2024).

This spatial sovereignty was not merely a local phenomenon in Kauman but triggered widespread public attention within the colonial mass media constellation. Its establishment was not just the inauguration of a place of prostration, but a political-cultural event extensively recorded in prominent newspapers such as Bintang Islam, Bendera Islam, and Jawa Tengah. The significant media attention indicated that the founding of this musalla was viewed as a public breakthrough that dismantled the dichotomy between domestic and public spheres for Muslim women. In this place, women were no longer in the isolated back rows but became primary subjects who managed, led, and defined their own cultural heritage. As a prototype, this musalla marked a historical shift where sovereignty over physical sites became a vital instrument in the identity struggle, proving that architectural manifestations can transform social structures established for centuries.

The significance of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla as a heritage object lies not only in the age of the building but in the historical and scientific significance it embodies. In the discourse of public archaeology and architectural history, a building is worthy of being categorized as a cultural heritage site if it holds significant value for strengthening national character and the history of civilization (UU No. 11 of 2010). This musalla meets these criteria as the first prototype of a Bumiputra women's public space with high historical integrity. Its existence is not merely a silent artifact but material evidence of the radical social-religious transformation in the early 20th century. As an archaeological entity, this building records traces of human activity that consciously constructed space as a form of sovereignty, making it equal to other archaeological objects in its capacity to narrate the chronicle of identity struggle.

The academic justification for the 'Aisyiyah Musalla can also be examined through the concept of cultural significance as stipulated in the Burra Charter, where aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social values are the main pillars of preservation (Burra Charter, 2013). From a scientific and historical standpoint, this building is a living laboratory for Gender Archaeology studies in Indonesia, demonstrating how a marginal group utilized architecture as an instrument of cultural resistance. This building possesses a very high rarity value as it is the first physical representation of a Muslim women's movement capable of managing infrastructure independently amidst the dominance of colonial urban planning (Hernowo, 2015). Therefore, the 'Aisyiyah Musalla holds a very crucial position in the city's historical landscape, functioning as a collective memory anchor that connects the past struggles of the Bumiputra with today's modern urban identity.

The series of arguments above confirms that the Kauman 'Aisyiyah Musalla is not merely a static architectural entity frozen in history, but a physical manifestation of a conscious spatial

decolonization project carried out by Bumiputra women amidst the restrictive tides of colonial modernization. Its presence radically broke the deadlock of religious access and female religious authority, which for centuries had been isolated within marginal, cramped, and subordinate *pawestren* spaces (Felisiani, 2011; Jenner, 2024). Archaeologically, this site holds extraordinary significance as a "living monument" that transcends conventional cultural heritage criteria; it serves as a collective memory anchor that defines urban identity and provides vital historical value to the modern city (Hernowo, 2015).

Furthermore, as a prototype, the Kauman Musalla embodies the ideological DNA that served as the blueprint for the development of hundreds of other women's public spaces across the archipelago. The success of this spatial experiment in Kauman created a ripple effect that enabled the massive replication of Islamic modernist organizational networks, where architecture functioned as a primary instrument in the dissemination of progressive ideas (Nakamura, 2017). Thus, conducting an in-depth study of this site is a crucial step toward understanding how identity sovereignty and the independence of Indonesian Muslim women are constructed through spatial materiality. This profound understanding of the discourse on space, gender, and historical archaeology will be further dissected with greater theoretical rigor in the following literature review section.

Literature Review

This literature review originates from a specific gendered spatial discourse within the context of women's musallas in Yogyakarta. Research by Jenner (2024) titled *The Masjid is for Men: 'Aisiyah women's mushollas in Yogyakarta provides a crucial foundation on how 'Aisiyah constructs places of worship as a form of negotiation against masculine dominance in*

grand mosques. Although Jenner's research shares a strong subject overlap with this study, there is a fundamental difference in its approach; while Jenner focuses more on sociological dynamics and contemporary religious practices, this research pulls that focus back toward Historical Archaeology to dissect the physical materiality of the Kauman Musalla as the primary prototype. This distinction is vital to emphasize that the existence of 'Aisyiyah musallas today cannot be understood without dissecting the physical blueprint and spatial authority first established in Kauman in 1922.

Furthermore, defining the 'Aisyiyah Musalla as organizational heritage requires a perspective that transcends pure colonial heritage categories. In this regard, the study by Khotimah (2023) regarding the Sarekat Islam (SI) Building in Semarang provides a highly relevant analogy of how buildings owned by movement organizations function as models of living history. Similar to the SI building serving as a laboratory of collective memory for the Indonesian movement's struggle, the 'Aisyiyah Musalla is a manifestation of spatial sovereignty born from an independent organization, where emancipatory values are not merely stored in narratives but manifested in the ongoing physical function of the building. This aligns with the argument, which asserts that 'Aisyiyah's step in establishing independent public spaces was an effort to emerge from the shadows of traditional patriarchal structures toward full female authority.

Method

This study adopts the Foucauldian Archaeological paradigm, which emphasizes discourse analysis through artifacts and communicative archives (Listiorini, 2024). Departing from traditional archaeology that focuses solely on physical description, this method views the Aisyiyah Musalla as a material archive that embodies discursive statements regarding power and gender.

The research phases follow the established Historical Archaeology workflow consisting of four main stages: (1) Data collection or procurement through physical observation and documentary studies; (2) Data processing or typological classification of the building; (3) Analysis linking physical findings with socio-political contexts; and (4) Data interpretation (Mundardjito et al., 1999).

The data collection phase employs Media Archaeology techniques by elaborating on communicative artifacts, specifically colonial newspaper reports such as *Bintang Islam* and *Bandera Islam* from 1922 to 1923 as discursive data (Listiorini, 2024). These data are juxtaposed with physical data from the buildings structural inventory (Inventory Document, 2023). Analysis is conducted at the micro (physical building elements), meso (the buildings position within the Kauman environment), and macro (its relation to the national emancipation movement) levels. This step aims to identify historical ruptures where the *Aisyiyah Musalla* emerges as a new discourse that breaks the dominance of marginal pawestren spaces within the traditional Javanese mosque architecture (Felisiani, 2011).

The interpretative analysis in this study also borrows the Living History framework to examine how the organizations movement buildings maintain their authority in the present day (Khotimah, 2023). By comparing the typology of the *Aisyiyah Musalla* against other national heritage models, such as the Taman Siswa legacy belonging to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, this research traces how national identity and female sovereignty are constructed through spatial materiality (Towaf, 2017). This integrated approach ensures that the updates provided in this study are not merely technical archaeological but also contribute to the development of multidisciplinary historical archaeological theory in Indonesia.

The 1922 Origins of Aisyiyah Musalla: A Historical Reappraisal

The mosque has become a crucial part of the life structure of Indonesian society including in Java both in terms of social functional aspects and architectural manifestations (Santosa, 2025). The significance of the mosque in its social dimension is inherently attached to the gender identity of its users where this space serves as an arena for Muslims to interpret the positions of men and women within a social sphere. As a socio-cultural product, the interpretation and construction of values built within the mosque related to these gender identities are not static but instead undergo continuous transformation and renegotiation over time.

In the 14th century, during the early development of Islam in Indonesia, the existence of a dedicated space for women within a mosque was not yet clearly visible. This is observed in the structures of the Demak Mosque and the Kudus Mosque. Dedicated spaces for women only emerged several centuries later, specifically in the 16th and 17th centuries. Several mosques such as the *Masjid Agung Banten*, *Masjid Agung Mataram Kotagede*, and *Masjid Agung Gedhe Kauman* provided specific rooms for women on one side of the mosque called pawestren. The term pawestren originates from the word *estri* meaning woman, which was then given the suffix *pa-an* to indicate a place, becoming *paistrian*. Due to the local linguistic structure, especially Javanese, *paistrian* evolved into the word *pawestren* (Felisiani, 2011). The existence of *pawestren* as a specific space for women cannot be separated from the gender constructions of that era, which had not yet provided an equal public sphere for women in religious worship.

The institutional strengthening of 'Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah, evidenced by the growth in membership and the expansion of branches, provided the movement with the leverage and courage to conduct broader social experiments. In this context, the need for a physical building to serve as both a consolidation center for the women's movement and a space for worship became increasingly crucial. This idea began to emerge in 1920 and was subsequently realized in stages starting in 1922 through the plan to construct the Women's Musalla. Organizational records state that the *Hoofdbestuur* of Muhammadiyah allocated its treasury funds specifically to support the construction of the musalla.

i. begrooting pemboeatan mesdjid perempoean vergadering menentoekan f 7.500, dan wang jang soedah dikoempoelkan oentoek biaja pekerdjaan ini pada waktoe sekarang ini terbilang hanya f 4.000, sadja. (point ke-6) bahagian Jajasan diminta soepaja memboeat gambar mesdjid terseboet (Hoofdbestuur Vergadering, no. 12, 5 Mei 1922, lembar p-8) .

i. Poetoesan no. 62. Permintaan MD bahagian P.K.O. akan memakai tanah di kidoel masdjid perempoean, P.B. tiada dapat mengaboelkan, karena bahagian 'Aisjijah masih ada maksoed menjempoernakan masdjid perempoean itoe. Ini haroes dinantikan dahoeloe (Hoofdbestuur Vergadering, no. 23, 5 Mei 1922, p-97).

The construction of the Women's Musalla represented a significant breakthrough as a socio religious organization established a place of worship to meet specific organizational needs. This musalla was built in *Kampung Kauman* on land acquired from H. Irsyad. Visually, the building's form adapted a modern *indische* style while still retaining local elements in its *limasan* roof shape. Compared to other buildings erected by Muhammadiyah during that period, it is highly probable that this musalla was the first mosque structure entirely established by the Muhammadiyah organization using a modern architectural style. Following a brief fundraising process that lasted for one year, the "Musala 'Aisyiyah/Musala Istri" was officially inaugurated on Tuesday, 5 Maulid 1341 Hijriah, coinciding with October 1, 1923 AD.

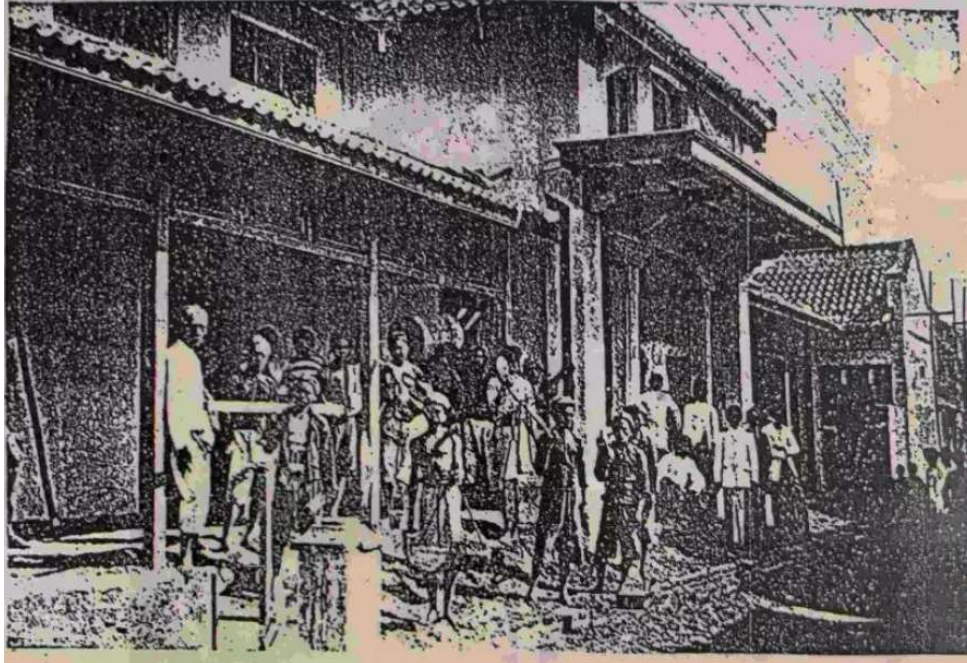


Figure 1. Illustration of the construction phases of the 'Aisyiyah musalla (Source: Moehammadoeayah Bahagian Jajasan Pembangoenan, Mesjid Perempoean 1922).

The inauguration of this musalla was a deeply memorable moment for the Yogyakarta public at the time. The event took place from late afternoon into the evening, commencing at 4:00 PM and attended by high ranking government officials such as the *Rijksbestuurder*, R.T. Mangoendjojo, and the *Hoofdpenghoele*. During this occasion, *Kampung Kauman* became densely crowded with hundreds of guests arriving to witness the inauguration, which opened with a speech by the Chairman of the Muhammadiyah *Hoofdbestuur*, K.H. Ibrahim, along with other leadership figures like Ki Bagus Hadikusuma. The event continued with a congregational maghrib prayer accompanied by two calls to prayer performed by Haji Ilyas and Haji Djafar (Bintang Islam, October 1923). The presence of royal officials and key figures at this event emphasizes that the establishment of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla was not merely a local physical construction, but a symbolic statement confirming the recognition of a female public sphere at the heart of Javanese religious authority.

BINTANG-ISLAM.

MASDJID PEREMPOEAN DI DJOKJAKARTA.

Maka ketika hari Selasa tanggal 5 Mauloed, moelai djam 4 siang sampai djam 11 malam, telah kedjadian Masjid perempoean itoe moelai di boeka. Maka pemboekaän itoe adalah sebagi di bawah ini kita kabarkan dengan ringkesnja.

Moelai djam 4 siang hari terseboet, berhadlirlah beberapa kaoem Moeslimin di Djokja dan di loear Djokja, teroetama kaoem Moehammadijah di mana Masjid terseboet. Wakil negeri (Rijkbestuurder) jalah padoeka R. T. Mangoendjojo Regent Seleman. Dan padoeka K. Kejai Pangoeloe besar Hoofdbenghoeloe hakim di Djokjakarta. Semoeanja jang hadir, kira-kira ada 300 orang.

Djam 1/2 5, Bestuur Moehammadijah Bg. Jajasan, menjerahkan Masjid terseboet kepada Hoofdbestuur Moehammadijah, kerna soedah rampoeng memboeatnja. Pemoeka Moehammadijah K. H. Ibrahim laloe menerima pasrahan itoe, dan membilang banjak terima kasih kepada Moehammadijah Bg. Jajasan jang telah mengorbangkan tenaganja memboeat Masjid terseboet moelai pertama sahingga rampoeng sama sekali, dengan tida ada jang mengetjewakan sedikitpoen.

Figure 2. News report on the inauguration of the 'Aisyiyah musalla titled "Mesjid Perempoean di Djokjakarta" (Source: Bintang Islam, October 1923).

Bentangan dan soal djawab.

Keterangan pemboekaan langgar perempoean.

Pada hari Selasa 16 hari boelan October 1923 waktoe sendja, berhimpoeulah sekalian Bestir Moehammadijah oemoem dan tamoe-tamoe, djoemlah kesoeemoenja tiada koerang dari 300 orang, dilanggar perempoean. Padoeka toean Regent Seleman dan Toean Hoofd Pangoeloe hadir djoega disitoe. Kesoeemoenja itoe akan menjaksikan pemboekaan langgar perempoean itoe, dan akan menjaksikan penerimaan langgar itoe oleh Pangoeroes Besar Moehammadijah dari pada ang mengerdjakan, jaitoe Moehammadijah jbahagian Jejasan. Poekoel 5 penerimaan ini dimoelai, dengan oetjapan bahagia selamat

Laloe diterangkan berawaän waktoe jang telah keleuar goena keperluan langgar itoe, dan soepaja moedah diketjhoel akan biaja itoe dibagikan mendjadi 8 bahagian, ja ni:

Dan dibawah ini nama-nama perkakas jang soedah dibeli oleh bahagian Jejasan harap dimasoekkan kedalam keterangan pemboekaan langgar perempoean, jaitoe:

1. Kajoe dan toekang	f 5104,30
2. Batoe	5208,10 ³
3. Tjat	301,15
4. Besi	879,46
5. Genteng	259,95
6. Katja-katja	153,55 ³
7. 301, 17 M2 Tegel	1154,25
8. 100 st: Eterniet (pjan)	170,15
9. Gambar	25,85
Djoemlah f 13256,77. —	

*) P. T. Regent Seleman terachir datanguja.

N.B. Bangoen langgar itoe menoeroet atoeran jang tida mendatangkan penjakit, jaitoe: penerangan tjoekoop, djalan keleuar masoek hawa tjoekoop, air boeat woedhoe memakai pantjoeran; roeang didalam (tengah) lebar dan bersih, dan lantainja dari pada tegel.

Figure 3. Financial report for the construction of the 'Aisyiyah musalla in the Soera Moehammadijah Magazine report titled "Pemboekoean Langgar Perempoean" (Source: Soera Moehammadijah, September 1923).

Prior to the establishment of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla, the religious spatial structure of "Kampung Kauman" was dominated by the existence of family "langgar" which were private and semi public in nature. These *langgar* historically functioned as centers for religious activities as well as the identity of specific social groups or family lineages within the village (Yetti et al., 2025). In contrast to traditional *langgar*, which were generally integrated with the owner's residence and had limited access based on kinship lines, the 'Aisyiyah Musalla emerged with a completely different concept. Its existence challenged the dominance of those older *langgar* by offering a space managed collectively by an organization, rather than being based on the authority of specific individuals or families.

This marked a paradigm shift in the development of religious infrastructure in Indonesia during the early 20th century. Unlike previous traditions, this musalla was born from detailed and systematic organizational planning. As a result of a collective institutional decision, its construction reflected the modern administrative culture that characterized Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah. In the midst of the *Kampung Kauman* environment, which historically already housed various traditional mosques and *langgar*, this musalla emerged as a completely new and distinct entity, both in its managerial functions and the ideological vision it carried.

The entire inaugural ceremonial sequence, involving key figures and the formal handover of financial reports, demonstrated that women had achieved a status equal to men within the public sphere. This phenomenon can be understood through the Third Space perspective, where the musalla is not merely a physical place of worship, but a representational space that collapses the binary between domestic and public spheres for women (Soja, 1996). Through the establishment of this musalla, 'Aisyiyah was proclaiming the presence of women as independent and sovereign

subjects. These 1923 events became a historical turning point where domestic boundaries for women began to be dismantled through sovereignty over space and tangible managerial authority.

As the time for Isha arrived, the series of events continued with a dedicated worship service for women, attended by the leaders of 'Aisyiyah, students of the *Siswa Praja Wanita*, and participants of the *Kursus Arabiah*. This Isha prayer was led directly by Siti Walidah as the imam. The program concluded with an address by K.H. Ibrahim, which also marked the formal handover of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla and its financial treasury reports to the *Hoofdbestuur* 'Aisyiyah. This transfer of assets and financial accountability signified a new chapter in the autonomy of the women's movement, where full control over public and managerial spaces was now placed entirely in the hands of women.

The presence of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla marked a paradigm shift in the development of religious infrastructure in Indonesia during the early 20th century. Unlike the prevailing tradition of mosque or *langgar* construction at that time, which was generally based on individual initiatives or personal endowments, this musalla was born from detailed and systematic organizational planning. As a result of a collective institutional decision, its construction reflected the modern administrative culture that characterized Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah. In the midst of the *Kampung Kauman* environment, which historically already housed various traditional mosques and *langgar*, this musalla emerged as a completely new and distinct entity, both in its managerial functions and the ideological vision it carried.

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The Architecture and Spatial Morphology of the 'Aisyiyah Kauman Musalla: A Physico-Material Analysis

Physically, the 'Aisyiyah Musalla building in Kampung Kauman currently remains relatively authentic in its structure, despite undergoing several developments and functional adjustments over time. The building's location is directly adjacent to dense residential housing; on the north and west sides, the musalla's walls are in immediate contact with residents' houses, leaving no space for boundary fences. Conversely, on the front (east) and side (south), the building is equipped with a fence that clarifies the boundary between the musalla area and the surrounding public space. The presence of this fence provides a more private spatial impression while protecting the terrace area from direct access to the village paths.



Figure 4. Photograph of the 'Aisyiyah Kauman Musalla in the 1932 Muhammadiyah Album (Source: Album Moehammadijah Jang kedua, 1932).



Figure 5. The 'Aisiyah Musalla' taken in May 2025 (Source: Documentation of the Council for Information and Library of the Muhammadiyah Central Board, 2025).

While both visual records show a relatively consistent form, conclusive evidence has yet to be found regarding whether the fencing was part of the original design. However, reviewing its primary structure, the 'Aisiyah Musalla' was clearly designed as a long-term place of worship. Its roof typology adopts the limasan model, harmonizing with the architectural character of Kampung Kauman, utilizing original "vlaam" tiles that remain intact to this day. The presence of *overstek* (eaves) on the front and sides of the building is an original weather protection element, although a modern canopy structure has since been added beneath it. This addition is purely functional, aimed at protecting the congregation's footwear from rain, without altering the original roof structure.

Moving into the interior, transformations were made to enhance congregational comfort while preserving the building's essence. The main hall's ceiling now uses asbestos-free sheets,

while the plastered brick walls are finished in a light green paint that has become its visual signature. The most significant change occurred in 2006, when the original floor layer (red cement) was replaced with ceramic tiling. This step was taken not merely for aesthetic beautification but as an adaptation of the facility to the high intensity of religious activities for women in Kauman, particularly during the month of Ramadan.

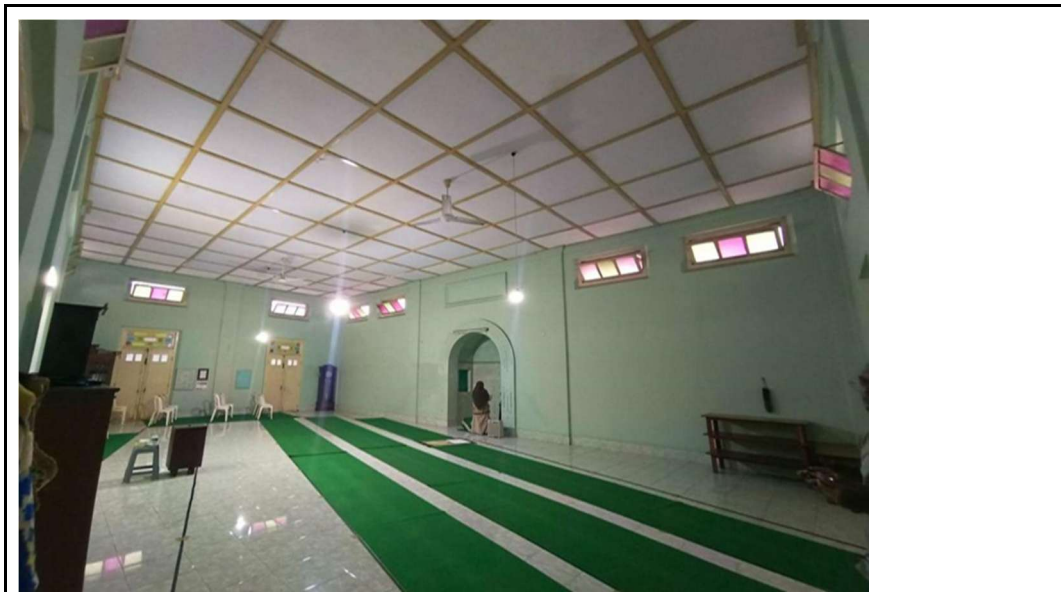


Figure 6. Interior view of the 'Aisiyah Musalla taken in May 2025 (Source: Documentation of the Council for Information and Library of the Muhammadiyah Central Board, 2025).

As a multifunctional building, the "Aisiyah Musalla" was designed with room divisions tailored to their capacity and supporting facilities. The main hall is specifically allocated for prayer and other collective religious activities. Within this space lies a mihrab for the imam, which was originally flanked by windows on both sides.

There is a significant archaeological anomaly regarding the positioning of this mihrab. Despite being constructed in 1922—long after K.H. Ahmad Dahlan had corrected the qibla direction—the physical structure of the 'Aisiyah Musalla's mihrab remains aligned straight to the

West (following the orientation of older buildings), rather than being tilted to follow the accurate qibla. This pattern mirrors the structure of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's "Langgar Kidul", which was also built post-qibla correction. This strengthens the hypothesis of a spatial diplomacy strategy; K.H. Ahmad Dahlan likely maintained the building's orientation toward the West to minimize social conflict and resistance from traditional religious authorities of that era. The adjustment of the qibla direction was implemented substantially through the arrangement of prayer rows within the room, without needing to alter the building's facade that was already familiar to the community.

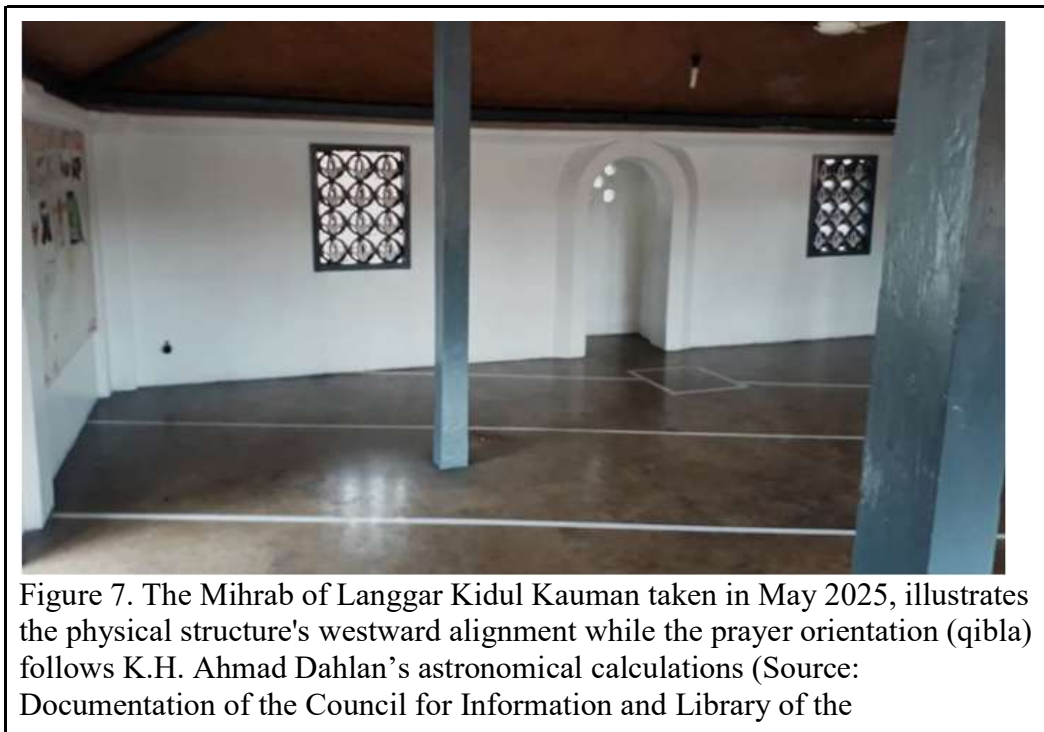


Figure 7. The Mihrab of Langgar Kidul Kauman taken in May 2025, illustrates the physical structure's westward alignment while the prayer orientation (qibla) follows K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's astronomical calculations (Source: Documentation of the Council for Information and Library of the

Muhammadiyah Central Board, 2025).

The main hall of the "Aisyiyah Musalla" is characterized by abundant natural lighting and ventilation, making it the most vertically dominant (tallest) building within the complex. The architectural authenticity is preserved through seven double-leaf doors with sturdy wooden panels. Above each door, colorful "nako" glass decorations provide a distinct visual character to the interior. Similar aesthetic elements are found in twelve ventilation points just below the ceiling, all of which still utilize original materials from the time of its founding. Although several other interior components have undergone modernization, these doors and stained-glass decorations are meticulously maintained as original artifacts representing the aesthetic advancement of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah in the 1920s.

Before entering the main hall, there is a terrace area that wraps around the east and south sides of the building, with a roof elevation slightly lower than the central roof. This terrace is supported by thirteen sturdy wooden pillars measuring ± 20 cm x 20 cm, providing an impression of openness and shade. Interestingly, on the eastern terrace, there is a structural section that protrudes forward (a projection) directly in front of one of the entrances. This element serves as an architectural marker (entrance marker) that directs the congregation toward the primary access point into the musalla.



Supporting facilities such as the ablution area are located on the eastern side and are directly connected to the main hall via a sliding door decorated with distinctive ornaments. This ablution area is accessible both from within the main hall and via the outer corridor. In addition to the core worship area, the 'Aisyiyah Musalla complex is also equipped with other functional rooms: a storage room on the western side, two rooms on the north side of the corridor, and a bathroom to the east of the ablution area. All these spatial components are integrated by a corridor that encircles the main hall, creating efficient circulation and reinforcing the main hall's position as the center of all activities within the building.

The entire morphology of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla proves that this building is not merely a product of physical construction, but a manifestation of highly calculated social and ideological strategies. Through the fusion of local typology, modern materials, and spatial diplomacy in its mihrab orientation, the musalla successfully balances respect for tradition with the courage to innovate. The authenticity of the elements preserved to this day serves as material evidence of the

enduring sovereignty of women's space in Kauman, which from its inception was designed to be a center for a movement that sustains itself beyond its era.

Heritage and Public Transformation: Material Evidence of the Socio-Historical Shift in the 'Aisyiyah Musalla'

Public space transformation is a historical consequence of Muhammadiyah's position as an Islamic reformist movement in the Archipelago. The roots of this transformation lie in the overt presence of women in public spheres, fundamentally breaking through the boundaries of traditional customs. This shift began with the opening of equal educational access and the audacity to appear in political forums. Historical evidence recorded in the 1922 *Verlag Central Sarekat Islam* notes that Siti Munjyah delivered a public speech before thousands of male participants at the *Openbare Vergadering* in Kediri. This phenomenon served as a deconstruction of the then-prevailing image of Javanese women, who were largely confined to the domestic sphere. Such courage emanated from the mentorship of Siti Walidah who, despite lacking a Western education, instilled a profound sense of public leadership within 'Aisyiyah members. These individual initiatives eventually necessitated a permanent vessel, a physical space that would later manifest in the establishment of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla.

The achievement of 'Aisyiyah in reclaiming public space represents a progressive anomaly, even when compared to Islamic women's movements in the Middle East during the same period. This phenomenon was made possible by the sociological character of Southeast Asia, which historically provided a broader agency for women. As posited by Anthony Reid regarding the societal patterns of Southeast Asia, the region maintains a long tradition of placing women in significant and autonomous positions within public, economic, and even diplomatic interactions,

contrasting sharply with the gender restrictions found in other Eurasian regions (Reid, 2014). In this context, the founding of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla was not merely a local religious event, but a representation of the convergence between the spirit of Islamic reformism and the inclusive cultural roots of the Archipelago. The building stands as material evidence for the birth of a sovereign female public sphere, an achievement that was ahead of its time and reinforced the moderate identity of Southeast Asian Islam.

The success of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla in Yogyakarta rapidly triggered a wave of similar movements that expanded to various regions within less than a decade. This growth encompassed strategic areas such as Kotagede, Surakarta, Semarang, and Temanggung, reaching as far as Garut, Bandung, Batavia, and Sigli in Aceh (Boeah Congres Moehammadijah XXI, 1932). This phenomenon marks a unique historical symptom where the musalla no longer stood merely as a static symbol of worship, but as the hub of a systematically planned movement network. These spaces functioned as the starting point for broader female public activities, ranging from religious study groups and child education development through Froebel Schools to the provision of public health services.

As a pioneering structure, the physical authenticity of the 'Aisyiyah Musalla in Kauman holds significant value for colonial era archaeological studies in Indonesia across multiple dimensions. Architecturally, the building represents an evolution of mosque typology that accommodated shifting gender roles within religious spaces. Socially, it stands as a material monument to the history of the national movement driven by women. Ultimately, the preservation of this musalla is not merely about maintaining its original wooden structures and stencilled glass windows, but about safeguarding the practical evidence of historical consciousness and spatial sovereignty that has been championed for a century.

Conclusion

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