

## FOR DONATION, ORGANISATION, AND NATION Muhammadiyah's Charity Stamp Program, 1941-1942

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### Abstract

*Studies on Muhammadiyah's charitable works mostly discuss the charitable institutions Muhammadiyah founded, such as hospitals and orphanages, and neglect one-off fundraising activities. This study examines Muhammadiyah's strategies in promoting 'Muhammadiyah charity stamps' to the Netherlands Indies people in 1941. This study shows that although stamps are only small postal items, Muhammadiyah paid great attention to promoting and selling these stamps. It ran a well-organised and national-scale campaign, mobilising its network of branches and groups throughout the Indies. Muhammadiyah used all available campaign media, such as magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, pictures, songs and meetings. To maximise promotion, Muhammadiyah emphasised that buying these charity stamps meant giving donations that Allah would reward, supporting Muhammadiyah's movements, and helping the welfare of the indigenous people. These charity stamps helped Muhammadiyah raise enormous funds and strengthened its reputation at home and abroad as a social movement that cared for the less fortunate. This study elucidates the largest and most successful one-off charitable fundraising effort, but so far still forgotten in the historiography of Indonesian Islam, which was carried out by an indigenous Muslim socio-religious organisation during the colonial period,*



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*using previously overlooked primary documents dating from 1941-1942.*

*[Studi mengenai kiprah Muhammadiyah di bidang amal umumnya membahas tentang institusi amal yang didirikannya, seperti rumah sakit dan panti asuhan. Kegiatan pengumpulan dana yang sifatnya sekali waktu saja banyak diabaikan. Kajian ini membahas strategi Muhammadiyah dalam mempromosikan 'prangko amal Muhammadiyah' kepada masyarakat Hindia Belanda pada tahun 1941. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa walaupun prangko hanya berupa benda pos kecil, Muhammadiyah memberikan perhatian yang luar biasa untuk mempromosikan dan menjual prangko ini. Organisasi ini menjalankan kampanye yang rapi dan berskala nasional, dengan menggerakkan jaringan cabang dan rantingnya di seluruh Hindia. Muhammadiyah menggunakan segala macam media kampanye yang tersedia, seperti majalah, surat kabar, pamflet, gambar, nyanyian, dan pertemuan-pertemuan. Untuk memaksimalkan promosi, Muhammadiyah menekankan bahwa membeli prangko amal ini berarti melakukan amal yang berpahala, menyokong gerakan sosial Muhammadiyah, dan membantu menyejahterakan masyarakat pribumi. Prangko amal ini membantu Muhammadiyah mengumpulkan dana yang sangat besar dan memperkuat reputasinya di dalam dan luar negeri sebagai gerakan sosial yang menaruh perhatian pada mereka yang kurang beruntung. Kajian ini menerangkan tentang usaha pengumpulan dana amal sekali-waktu yang terbesar dan tersukses, namun sejauh ini masih terlupakan dalam historiografi Islam Indonesia, yang dilakukan suatu organisasi sosial-keagamaan Muslim pribumi pada masa kolonial, dengan menggunakan dokumen-dokumen primer yang berasal dari tahun 1941-1942.]*

**Keywords:** Muhammadiyah, Islamic charity, colonial Indonesia, promotion strategies, postage stamp

## **A. Introduction**

The history of charity and the role of private socio-religious institutions in Indonesia in advancing society has received a lot of attention from scholars in recent times, especially with the growing role of established religious institutions in managing charity, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the emergence of other religious-based charitable institutions. Assisting the underprivileged in the form of almsgiving, for example, is one of the main teachings in Islam, and this practice of Islamic philanthropy has been carried out in

various ways in various parts of the Islamic world, which is becoming the foundation for an 'Islamic humanism'.<sup>1</sup> Several scholars who focus on the history of Islam in Indonesia have argued that research should focus on the motivations that drive these charitable activities, how these activities are institutionalised, and what impact they have on the community. Amelia Fauzia argues that philanthropic activities in Indonesia, which have been going on since the Islamic kingdoms until now, are strongly motivated by religious urges among Muslims to provide assistance to the poor.<sup>2</sup> Important actors in philanthropic activities during the Dutch colonial period—whose government considered philanthropic affairs to be private matters—were private organisations such as Muhammadiyah and NU, two institutions that continued their activities in the postcolonial era. Muhammadiyah itself, after more than a century of its age, is not only able to survive, but can even expand extensively, as can be seen from the large number of schools, universities, health institutions and community services that it organises. Hilman Latief views that the emergence of the philanthropic movement in Indonesia is the result of the attention and efforts of various groups, such as civil society, middle-class Indonesian Muslims, political parties and the government in responding to various socio-economic problems faced by the Indonesian people, especially in the field of education, health, and economy.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of Muhammadiyah, according to Hilman Latief, its philanthropic activities are based on the habit of mutual assistance that already exists in Indonesian society, which was later strengthened by the principle of mutual assistance among human beings as instructed in the Quran; Muhammadiyah then instituted a collective 'culture of kindness' through the various social institutions it established, such as orphanages and hospitals, not only to help those less fortunate, but also to empower them.<sup>4</sup> In the contemporary era, social media facilitates the Indonesian

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Benthall, *Islamic Charities and Islamic Humanism in Troubled Times* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Hilman Latief, "Health Provision for the Poor: Islamic Aid and the Rise of Charitable Clinics in Indonesia", *South East Asia Research*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2010); Hilman Latief, "The Politics of Benevolence: Political Patronage of Party-Based Charitable Organizations in Contemporary Indonesian Islam", *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>4</sup> Hilman Latief, *Melayani Umat: Filantropi Islam dan Ideologi Kesejahteraan Kaum Modernis* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2010).

middle class to collect voluntary almsgiving more quickly and easily and then promote it to the public.<sup>5</sup> In addition to voluntary almsgiving, another Islamic philanthropic theme that scholars quite widely discuss is *zakat* (Ar: *zakāh*, obligatory almsgiving) as a means of realising religious instruction in helping others, especially in alleviating poverty,<sup>6</sup> and the management of *zakat*, *infak* (charity) and *sedekah* (alms), through the organisation, such as *Lazismu* (Muhammadiyah Philanthropic Board) by Muhammadiyah.<sup>7</sup>

However, none of the above studies seriously discusses one-off charitable activities that are only carried out once. This activity is only considered an additional activity for a charitable organisation. There is a neglect of how charitable organisations carry out noninstitutionalised activities conducted only once and of the important role these activities play in the growth of the organisation and their impacts on the broader community. Therefore, the study of charities in Indonesia is almost always identical to the study of the institutionalisation of charitable activities. As a result, existing works build on the idea that the history of charity in Indonesia is the history of charitable organisations and marginalise activities of an irregular type. Without an in-depth study of one-off or sporadic charities, we tend to overlook the importance of these seemingly small—but actually important—activities in developing organisations, collecting donations, and, more broadly, in the welfare of indigenous people in the colonial era.

The sale of charity stamps to obtain donations has only been done once by Muhammadiyah in its more than 100 years of existence. Although the activity looks unique from this point of view, almost no serious study has discussed this issue. Amelia Fauzia considers the stamps as proof that Muhammadiyah can cooperate with colonial and traditional authorities,

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<sup>5</sup> Fatimah Husein and Martin Slama, “Online Piety and Its Discontent: Revisiting Islamic Anxieties on Indonesian Social Media”, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 46, no. 134 (2018); Najib Kailani and Martin Slama, “Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: *Zakat*, *Sedekah* and the Immediacy of Social Media”, *South East Asia Research*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2020).

<sup>6</sup> Konstantinos Retsikas, “Reconceptualising *Zakat* in Indonesia”, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 42, no. 124 (2014); Iim Halimatusa’diyah, “*Zakat* and Social Protection: The Relationship Between Socio-religious CSOs and the Government in Indonesia”, *Journal of Civil Society*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2015); Asep Saepudin Jahar, “Marketing Islam Through *Zakat* Institutions in Indonesia”, *Studia Islamika*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy, “*Lazismu* and Remaking the Muhammadiyah’s New Way of Philanthropy”, *Al-Jami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2015).

but she only provides two short paragraphs about these charity stamps (including two photos of the stamps).<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Benthall even put a photo of the charity stamps as the main picture on his book's cover, which discusses Islamic charities' practices in various parts of the Islamic world. However, a comprehensive explanation of the stamps is still absent, and he focuses more on the study of Islamic charity in the postcolonial era until the early 21st century.<sup>9</sup> Several other scholars have also mentioned this charity stamp—signifying its importance in Muhammadiyah's charities—but the mention just a glance is next to nothing when compared with elaborative explanations of Muhammadiyah's works in the fields of institutionalised religious, educational, and healthcare practises.<sup>10</sup> In his article focusing on how Muhammadiyah financed its organisation in the 1920s-1960s, Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard ignores Muhammadiyah's act of selling charity stamps, perhaps because of its irregular nature compared to such regular economic initiatives as cooperatives.<sup>11</sup> In other words, because the charity stamp sale is seen only as a once-in-a-lifetime activity, it is considered less important and less massive than the establishment of charitable institutions such as schools or hospitals, whose presence and influence have continued to be felt after its founding even today.

This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining Muhammadiyah's strategies in promoting the sale of its charity stamps in

<sup>8</sup> Fauzia, *Faith and the State*, p. 156-7.

<sup>9</sup> Benthall, *Islamic Charities*.

<sup>10</sup> Harry Jindrich Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam Under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (The Hague and Bandung: W. van Hoeve, 1958), p. 96; Soebagijo Ilham Notodidjojo, *K.H. Mas Mansur: Pembaharu Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1982), p. 43; Khalijah Hasanuddin, *Al-Jamiyatul Washliyah, 1930-1942: Api dalam Sekam di Sumatera Timur* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1988), p. 68; M.T. Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret yang Berubah* (Solo: Institut Gelanggang Pemikiran Filsafat Sosial Budaya dan Kependidikan, 1990), p. 131; Nur Achmad and Pramono U. Tanthowi (eds.), *Muhammadiyah "Digugat": Reposisi di Tengah Indonesia yang Berubah* (Jakarta: Penerbit Harian Kompas, 2000), p. 148; Darul Aqsha, *Kiai Haji Mas Mansur, 1896-1946: Perjuangan dan Pemikiran* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), p. 85. A few brief and popular articles are also written on this theme, namely Muhammad Yuanda Zara, "Perangko Amal Muhammadiyah, Antara Ibadah dan Adaptasi Komunikasi", *Suara Muhammadiyah*, no. 18 (2016); Muhammad Yuanda Zara, "Aisyiah dan Franco 'Amal Muhammadiyah'", *Suara Muhammadiyah*, no. 10 (2018); Adib Sofia, "Fundraising Melalui Franco 'Amal Muhammadiyah'", <https://suaraaisyiah.id/fundraising-melalui-franco-amal-ala-muhammadiyah/>, accessed 1 May 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard, "Financing Muhammadiyah: The Early Economic Endeavours of a Muslim Modernist Mass Organization in Indonesia (1920s-1960s)", *Studia Islamika*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2014.

1941-1942, the last years before the downfall of the Netherlands Indies. In these years, Muhammadiyah organised a fundraising activity by selling the so-called *‘franco ‘amal Moehammadijah’* (Muhammadiyah charity stamps). Inspired by charity stamps previously sold by Christian and Catholic missions, the stamps were sold to the Netherlands Indies society, and from the sale of these stamps, Muhammadiyah received donations in the form of a few cents from each stamp sold. The purpose of selling the stamps in collaboration with the colonial government and traditional rulers in Yogyakarta and Surakarta was to raise funds for Muhammadiyah to mobilise its socio-religious activities, especially in the social, health, and education fields.<sup>12</sup>

The key research question of this paper is: What strategies, plans, and campaigns were used by Muhammadiyah to popularise its charity stamps and encourage the public to purchase them? In order to answer that question, three subquestions are involved. First, what were Muhammadiyah’s considerations about issuing the charity stamps? Second, what organisational policies and media strategies did Muhammadiyah use to introduce its charitable stamps to the Netherlands Indies public and persuade them to purchase the stamps? Third, how were Muhammadiyah’s efforts to shape public perceptions and direct their behaviour to believe that these charity stamps were more than just postal items and had higher socio-religious values for the donors, for Muhammadiyah, and for the people in general? By using the historical method, this paper examines a number of primary sources, especially the official magazine published by Muhammadiyah, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, which was published in 1941-1942 and is now kept in the Suara Muhammadiyah Library in Yogyakarta. Other primary sources include *Soeara Aisjijah* magazine (Yogyakarta), *Adil* magazine (Surakarta) and two Dutch-language newspapers, namely *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad* (Surabaya) and *Amigoe in Curacao* (Curaçao, the Dutch Caribbean), all from the period between 1941-1942.

This study argues that Muhammadiyah paid great attention to the promotion and sale of the charity stamps by mobilising all its branches and groups throughout Indonesia to work together within 40 days (the period of selling this stamp) to make the sale of the stamps a success. Different from the establishment of hospital and educational

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<sup>12</sup> Fauzia, *Faith and the State*; Amelia Fauzia, “Penolong Kesengsaraan Umum: The Charitable Activism of Muhammadiyah during the Colonial Period”, *South East Asia Research*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2017.

institutions, where the busiest one in doing so is the branch or group of Muhammadiyah where the institution is established, in this case of charity stamps, the busiest one is the Muhammadiyah Central Board and Muhammadiyah's branches and groups throughout Indonesia. So, from the scale of organisational involvement and area coverage, the promotion and sale of charity stamps is far wider than any other organisational or charitable activities that Muhammadiyah had carried out up to that time. I believe that it is the seriousness of this strategy that allowed Muhammadiyah to sell its charity stamp so successfully, brought a lot of donations to this organisation, and increased its reputation in the colony and abroad.<sup>13</sup>

## **B. The Idea of Selling Charity Stamps**

Since its beginning, one of the focuses of Muhammadiyah's attention has been to advance the welfare of society. This is evident from the belief of the founder of Muhammadiyah, Ahmad Dahlan, that Muslims in the Indies needed to implement the teachings of al-Mā'ūn, a Quranic chapter that advocates solidarity and social care. Dahlan encouraged Muslims to care for orphans, the poor, and the marginalised. The idea is an important call amid backwardness and poverty that afflicted many indigenous people in the Indies in the second and third decades of the 20th century when Muhammadiyah was born and began to develop. At first, Muhammadiyah helped these neglected people with irregular assistance, but later, Muhammadiyah institutionalised its humanitarian movement, including through the establishment of the *Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoem* (PKO, then PKU, Assistance for the Relief of Public Miseries) in 1918 as a centre for public health care, and was followed by the establishment of nursing homes and orphanages for the

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<sup>13</sup> The sale of Muhammadiyah charity stamps was great. The Dutch-language newspaper in Surabaya, *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, reported that in the first two days after the stamps' launch, Muhammadiyah managed to get 1,500 guilders from selling the stamps. See "Verkoop van Moehammadijah Zegels. Groot Success", *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 24 September 1941. In fact, the reputation of Muhammadiyah's charity stamps also extended beyond the Netherlands Indies, to be precise in Curaçao, a city in the Dutch West Indies in the Caribbean islands. An association of Curaçao stamp collectors, Curaçaose Postzegel Vereniging, held a meeting in August 1941, where it discussed various stamps that were issued in Dutch colonies, such as Suriname and the Netherlands Indies. Stamps from the Netherlands Indies referred to here were the Muhammadiyah charitable stamps, which were considered unique and have social values and purposes. See "Curaçaose Postzegel Vereniging", *Amigoe di Curacao*, 19 August 1941. *Al-Jāmi'ah*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2024 M/1445 H

less fortunate, especially in the 1920s.<sup>14</sup>

Muhammadiyah's charitable institutions and activities grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s, marked by their expansion outside Yogyakarta, the core city of Muhammadiyah. In addition, in the early 1940s, Muhammadiyah had an idea to obtain funds to develop its social institutions by selling charity stamps to the Indies. At that time, a growing number of indigenous people of the Indies could read and write, and therefore, they needed postage stamps when sending letters to communicate with their families or colleagues.

At that time, the Muhammadiyah charity stamps were known as *franco 'amal Moehammadijah'* (*weldadigheidspostzegels* in Dutch). These stamps were sold between 22 September-31 October 1941 (40 days), or between the month of Ramadan and the ninth day of Shawwal that year. Initially, Muhammadiyah proposed that these stamps be valid from 22 September 1941 to 30 September 1942, but what was agreed by the central PTT (Post, Telegraph and Telephone Services) in Bandung was from 22 September 1941 to 31 July 1942.<sup>15</sup> The stamps can be used for letters, postcards (*briefkaart*) and *postblad* (letter sheets).<sup>16</sup> The stamps were sold at all post offices and their branches throughout the Indies, as well as at the Charity Stamp Committee, which Muhammadiyah established to manage their promotion and sales. There were five types of postage stamps sold by Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah included the price of the stamps and the donation that would be given each time someone bought a stamp. They were: 1) 20 cents (15 cents for stamp and 5 cents for donation); 2) 12.5 cents (10 cents for stamp and 2.5 cents for donation); 3) 10 cents (7.5 cents for stamp and 2.5 cents for donation); 4) 5 cents (3.5 cents for stamp and 1.5 cents for donation); and 5) 3 cents (2 cents for stamp and 1 cent for donation). With this division of price, Muhammadiyah gave the people of the Indies the opportunity to buy stamps and donate to charity according to their needs and abilities.

Muhammadiyah believed in religious and social values related to charity, and it wished to disseminate them through its stamps. Muhammadiyah hoped that its charity stamps will be purchased by the public, not only Muhammadiyah's members, but also the Indies society

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<sup>14</sup> M.T. Arifin, *Muhammadiyah: Potret yang Berubah*, new ed. (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2016), pp. 96-8.

<sup>15</sup> "Waktu Berlakoenja Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>16</sup> "Postblad dan Briefkaart", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

in general and, if possible, philatelists abroad. Muhammadiyah called the Indies people to not only buy these stamps for practical purposes (sending letters, sending postcards, etc.) or entertainment purposes (e.g. enjoying the pictures, collecting them, etc.) but also to go beyond, namely to encourage them to participate in improving the welfare of the indigenous people without having to be part of an institution, be it government institutions or charitable organisations like Muhammadiyah. So, by buying Muhammadiyah charity stamps, one can get stamps and take part in establishing social solidarity.

In its first communique on charity stamps, which was published in the March 1941 issue of *Soeara Moehammadijah* magazine, Muhammadiyah stated that the main purpose of these charity stamps was so that 'we can expand the reach of Muhammadiyah, to reach all places and corners, interact with various groups of and classes of people, both behind forts and in offices, both inside the buildings and within huts, both in the marketplaces and in the shops where people gather'.<sup>17</sup> This first objective contained Muhammadiyah's desire to enlarge its influence to more places in the Netherlands Indies, not only by establishing branches and groups—which may take a longer time—but through a simple thing such as a postage stamp. In addition, Muhammadiyah had another goal with the sale of charity stamps, namely to encourage more people to get divine rewards (*pahala*) for doing good in accordance with religious advice to help the poor. Muhammadiyah emphasised that persuading people to buy charity stamps was an activity that would bring divine rewards because it was the same as 'persuading people to do good deeds, in a good way, for goodness' sake'.<sup>18</sup>

To facilitate the sale of the stamps, Muhammadiyah formed a special committee, the Hoofdcomite Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (HCFA, Head Committee of Muhammadiyah Charity Stamps), chaired by M.H. Mansoer (who was also chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board), and M.J. Anies as vice chairman. They were assisted by three secretaries, two treasurers and four commissioners.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the charity stamp committee was led by the Muhammadiyah's general chairman shows that for Muhammadiyah, the charity was an

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<sup>17</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 1)", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 2, March 1941.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> "Hoofdcomite Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 4, May 1941.

act of paramount importance—usually, Muhammadiyah will hand over the implementation of a program to the councils (*majelis*) under the Muhammadiyah Central Board, for example Majelis Taman Pustaka (Council for Publication and Printing) was responsible for publication and printing matters and the PKO Council was in charge of health care affairs. In other words, the highest leadership of Muhammadiyah directly intervened when it was organising an activity that was considered irregular or additional. This refutes the impression that this act of selling charity stamps is only supplementary and less important, especially when compared to hospitals or other charitable institutions established by Muhammadiyah.

This charity stamp committee will soon appoint certain people or institutions as *voorschothouders* (down payment holders), who will help the committee take care of technical sales issues, such as finding potential buyers, making purchase forms, taking charity stamps from the post office, and selling them to consumers. In short, in the language of the stamp committee itself, this large national scale effort was carried out as well as possible so that in the public eye, Muhammadiyah was known as an organisation that ‘can do a great job, quickly and thoroughly’.<sup>20</sup> Soon after, Muhammadiyah’s branches (on the regency level) and groups (on the village level) also participated by establishing local committees in their respective places,<sup>21</sup> thereby ensuring that the promotion and sale of these charity stamps could spread even to rural areas in the Indies.

Selling the stamps was not easy. Besides creating a special committee internally, Muhammadiyah also needed to seek permission from the colonial government. Muhammadiyah repeatedly applied for permission with the aim of convincing the government of the importance of selling these charity stamps, given the fact that only government institutions (in this case, the post office) could issue and sell stamps. Muhammadiyah Central Board intervened to ask for permission at least twice from the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies, Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer. Muhammadiyah had been sending out applications for this permit since the first half of 1940. It was only in November 1940 that the government granted the permit, which at the same time allowed the net income from the sale of the stamps to Muhammadiyah and that the stamp design reflected the five charities of Muhammadiyah, including

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<sup>20</sup> “Franco ‘Amal Moehammadijah (no. 2)”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 4, May 1941.

<sup>21</sup> “Ma’loemat (no. 4)”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 6, July 1941.

the care of orphans, the poor and the sick.<sup>22</sup> Once a permit is obtained, the sale of stamps can begin. Its sales were carried out at all post offices at the provincial level and its local branches throughout the Indies. In fact, Muhammadiyah's branches and groups in a number of places were allowed to set up kiosks at local post offices to sell the charity stamps. So, there were four elements within Muhammadiyah that played a crucial role in selling these charity stamps: Muhammadiyah Central Board, the HCFA, and Muhammadiyah's branches and groups.

It is interesting to note that the permit granted by the government stated that the word 'Nederlands Indië' should be written on the stamp as a sign that this stamp came from and was sold in the territory of the Dutch colony. Consequently, the government emphasised to Muhammadiyah that all matters relating to the charity stamps were under the jurisdiction of the Netherlands Indies state. In fact, Muhammadiyah did use the term 'Nederlands Indië' in the design of the stamps. However, Muhammadiyah inserted its national ideals to the public in promoting these stamps. In its communique, while promoting this stamp, the Muhammadiyah stamp committee used the word 'Indonesia' to refer to 'Nederlands Indië', thus giving the impression of Muhammadiyah's nationalist political choices. It also shows that for Muhammadiyah, the biggest beneficiary of this charity stamp sale should be the 'Indonesian' people rather than the 'Netherlands Indies' society, a term that refers more to the interests of Europeans than the interests of indigenous peoples.

When mentioning the post office at the provincial and local levels, the HCFA stated the stamps were sold at the post office 'all over Indonesia' instead of 'all over the Netherlands Indies',<sup>23</sup> which means that for Muhammadiyah, the geographical area where the stamps were sold was Indonesian land, and ignores the fact that the post office was an institution built by the colonial government and essentially serving the interests of the European community's communication, both with the metropolis in Europe and within areas under colonial powers in the Indies. On another occasion, the HCFA emphasised that they hoped that the leaders of Muhammadiyah's branches and groups would not only promote the stamps to their colleagues but also to the 'Indonesian population in general'<sup>24</sup> (and not to the 'population of the Netherlands Indies'). Therefore, Muhammadiyah put the sale of charity stamps into

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<sup>22</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 2)", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 4, May 1941

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; "Nomer Franco 'Amal'", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>24</sup> "Nomer Franco 'Amal'".

the contemporary debate among the natives about national identity at that time. For Muhammadiyah, its campaign to sell the stamps also served to strengthen awareness about the geography, nationality, and population of 'Indonesia' amid a very strong colonial regime, even though the country called Indonesia was not yet formally born in 1941.

On another occasion, in August 1941, the Muhammadiyah Central Board underlined that it hoped that these charity stamps would not only be used for correspondence by Muhammadiyah members or Indies Muslims in general but also be 'used by people outside [Muhammadiyah], by all the people from all nations and groups, to encourage their enthusiasm for charity.'<sup>25</sup> The encouragement shows that Muhammadiyah desired to expand the scope of potential consumers of the stamps, not being limited to Muslims, let alone Muhammadiyah members, but also the Indies people in general, regardless of their ethnic background and social class, as long as they had a common good intention, namely advancing the welfare of native people.

### **C. Muhammadiyah's Promotional Techniques to Promote the Charity Stamps**

Since before the charity stamps were sold, or to be precise since March 1941 (charity stamps were sold since September 1941), Muhammadiyah had called on all its members, especially at the branch and group levels, to order the charity stamps to the Muhammadiyah Central Board immediately.<sup>26</sup> Muhammadiyah even requested its members to use family and work relationships as a way to disseminate the reach of the stamps widely. In a communique, Muhammadiyah instructed its members to 'persuade relatives, friends, and acquaintances to buy Muhammadiyah charity stamps'.<sup>27</sup> Muhammadiyah expected that these charity stamps be sold 'as much as possible and as widely as possible, to Muhammadiyah members in particular and to people from different layers and levels and to those in the movement organisations'.<sup>28</sup> The HCFA even underlined that the target of the promotion and sale of the stamps was not only native people but also people from other nations in the Indies who also often used stamps for correspondence, such as Europeans, Arabs, and

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 1)".

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 2)", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 4, May 1941.

Chinese.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to being sold through the Muhammadiyah Central Board, along with Muhammadiyah's branches and groups, these charity stamps can also be purchased directly through the post office, both the central and its supporting offices. Muhammadiyah cooperated with PTT, and the PTT also helped promote the sale of these charity stamps so that more people were interested in buying them. One of the ways PTT employees promoted Muhammadiyah charity stamps was to ask every visitor who came to buy postal items at the post office if they were interested in buying Muhammadiyah charity stamps. Furthermore, the HCFA suggested that the branches and groups of Muhammadiyah discuss with the post office management the possibility of making a special booth or counter to sell the stamps at the post office.<sup>30</sup>

The HCFA called on Muhammadiyah's branches and groups that sell charity stamps to invite youths affiliated with Muhammadiyah to sell these charity stamps from door to door. According to the HCFA, this was especially important in the month of Ramadan and ahead of Eid al-Fitr, considering that at these times, there will be an increase in people using letters to express Eid greetings, and also because during this period, people tended to give more charitable donations than usual days. Muhammadiyah perfectly chose promotions during the month of Ramadan and the beginning of Shawwal because this was the right momentum for a large-scale fundraising activity.

Internally, Muhammadiyah continuously strengthened the promotion of the stamps to its members. The HCFA held a so-called 'charity stamps week', with the plan that for one week (14-21 September 1921), Muhammadiyah's branches and groups throughout the Indies should hold member meetings where these charity stamps were promoted in attractive and persuasive ways. These methods included singing along to the audience the charity stamp promotional song, giving speeches about the importance of the stamps, and expressing the supportive stance of Muhammadiyah members towards the stamps. Through *Soeara Moehammadijah*, the HCFA also provided promotional placards with pictures of charity stamps that Muhammadiyah members could paste in

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<sup>29</sup> "Pendjelasan Mengerdjakan Franco 'Amal", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

various public places to ‘attract public attention to our charity stamps’.<sup>31</sup>

The HCFA called on Muhammadiyah members to listen to the charity stamp promotional song seriously because the song, HCFA stressed, ‘called and requested us all to wake up and be aware, work and be active, with mind, energy and wealth, entirely for the advancement of Muhammadiyah.’<sup>32</sup> It underlined that if some branches and groups received letters bearing charity stamps, the stamps in the letters were instructed to be re-collected and then handed over to the Muhammadiyah branch in Betawi (Batavia). The latter will resell them at a certain price so that Muhammadiyah can get more donations.<sup>33</sup>

Print media affiliated with Muhammadiyah often recommended and reminded Muhammadiyah members and the general public to use Muhammadiyah charity stamps in the letters they send. *Adil* magazine, published by the Council for Publication and Printing of Muhammadiyah’s Surakarta Branch, repeatedly published advertisements inviting its readers to buy the stamps in various places in Java.<sup>34</sup> On another occasion, a reader who sent a letter to the editor of *Adil* also suggested that in communicating, people should send more letters using the charity stamps.<sup>35</sup> Different from *Soeara Moehammadijah*, which only published once in two weeks, *Adil* greeted its readers more often—once a week— thus making public exposure to charity stamps even more frequent.

## D. The Most-Used Promotional Media

As soon as the colonial government approved the sale of the charity stamps, Muhammadiyah immediately developed an agenda for promoting these stamps, including planning what media Muhammadiyah would use to promote these stamps as widely as possible. The Muhammadiyah Central Board used various mass communication media to reach as many audiences as possible. Three types of communication channels are used: verbal, written, and visual.

First, regarding the verbal communication means, Muhammadiyah believed that one of the effective promotion strategies for the stamps

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<sup>31</sup> “Bersama-sama Ledenvergadering Moehammadijah”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>32</sup> “Menghadapi Batoe Oedjian”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>33</sup> “Pengoempoelan Bekas Franco ‘Amal Diterimakan dalam Congres ke 30’”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 10, November 1941.

<sup>34</sup> *Adil*, 22 January 1942; *Adil*, 29 January 1942.

<sup>35</sup> *Adil*, 4 December 1941.

was word-of-mouth promotion because once a number of enthusiastic people know about them, they will start to discuss the stamps with each other, thus encouraging more promotion. This type of means made the public feel great about themselves because they were framed as part of a nationwide charitable action. Muhammadiyah encouraged its members to create promotions and broadcasts on the radio (branches and groups were asked to contact the radio station in their respective places to promote these charity stamps). Then, public discussion about the stamps should be stimulated, especially in places where people gather. Besides, Muhammadiyah members were requested to promote the stamps in their speeches. The Muhammadiyah Central Board also suggested that Muhammadiyah's branches and groups hold meetings with 'people of high rank and great reputation' and promote the stamps.<sup>36</sup> Branches and groups were also asked to promote the stamps in any meeting. A verbal approach was also taken to 'people and associations who like to buy stamps', which referred to stamp collectors who buy stamps because of the beauty of the designs and the unique story behind them.<sup>37</sup>

The HCFA persuaded all Muhammadiyah members to 'propagate, offer, participate in selling, and doing it as much as possible, and must also be happy to set an example to many people, by buying as much as possible'. It requested that during the validity period of the charity stamps (22 September 1941-30 September 1942), Muhammadiyah members used the charity stamps for any correspondence activities or other activities requiring stamps that they carried out.<sup>38</sup>

Another element of this verbal promotion was the use of songs to convey a persuasive message about the stamps. The HCFA realised that an optimistic song would relax people and easily touch listeners' hearts. Song lyrics composed with attractive singability will encourage listeners to be enthusiastic about donating and evoke feelings of devotion to the Indonesian people. The first strategy implemented by the HCFA was to hold a singing competition for the public with the theme of Muhammadiyah charity stamps. To attract public interest, the HCFA advertised this competition in various print media, such as *Adil*, *Moetiara*, and others, around May 1941. The jury would choose the best songs, and the three winners would be given big prizes. The HCFA also planned to publish the winning songs into a book, which would be sold for extra

<sup>36</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 2)".

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> "Menghadapi Batoe Oedjian".

donations. Thus, Muhammadiyah hoped that the sale of this charity stamp would be more ‘enthusiastic and in high demand’.<sup>39</sup>

The HCFA promoted the charity stamps promotional song in various ways, including advertising it on *Soeara Moehammadijah*. In a half-page advertisement in this magazine, the HCFA promoted the publication of a sheet containing the music notation campaigning for the charity stamps. The HCFA called the charity stamp song ‘very melodious, full of joy and encouraging the spirit of giving charity’.<sup>40</sup> These sheets were sold in packages, namely 50, 100, 250, and 500, with prices between f 0.50 to f 3 (including shipping charges from Yogyakarta). While promoting this music sheet, in this advertisement, HCFA once again persuaded the readers of this magazine to buy the stamps by providing information about the sale period and the validity period of the stamps. Besides, the Muhammadiyah Central Board, in its communique in August 1941, or before the stamps began to be sold, ordered Muhammadiyah schools all over Indonesia, which had singing lessons in their curriculum, to sing frequently the so-called ‘*lagoe (njanjian) franco ‘amal*’ (charity stamps song).<sup>41</sup> It hoped that with this method, ‘our children will casually propagate Muhammadiyah charity stamps by singing them happily’.<sup>42</sup> The lyrics of the charity stamp song itself contained at least three elements, namely that these charity stamps were circulated by Muhammadiyah, that the sale of these charity stamps had received permission from the government, and that the public was strongly encouraged to donate by buying the charity stamps.<sup>43</sup>

The second promotional channel is written media. The Muhammadiyah Central Board asked its branches and groups to contact various print media in their respective places to promote the stamps. In addition, the board also prepared placards containing promotional texts and pictures. The board will prepare both large and small placards, which will be distributed to Muhammadiyah’s branches and groups at the local

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<sup>39</sup> “Franco ‘Amal Moehammadijah (no. 3)”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 5, June 1941.

<sup>40</sup> “Baroe terbit! Njanjian franco ‘amal Moehammadijah”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 8, August 1941. This advertisement reappeared in *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 9, October 1941 with the same title, “Baroe terbit! Njanjian franco ‘amal Moehammadijah”.

<sup>41</sup> “Nomer Franco ‘Amal”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>42</sup> “Njanjian Franco ‘Amal”, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>43</sup> S.N. Ratmana, “Melihat Muhammadiyah dari Dalam”, in *Muhammadiyah “Digugat”: Reposisi di Tengah Indonesia yang Berubah*, ed. by Nur Achmad and Pramono U. Tanthowi (Jakarta: Kompas, 2000), p. 148.

level. When they received it, they were asked to put the placards in public spaces. They were encouraged to paste the placards in almost all public places, including, but not limited to, train stations, government offices, city halls, regent's offices, buildings of organisations, newspaper offices, hospitals, hotels, guesthouses, libraries, *sociëteit* (the private clubhouse for the Dutch), performance venues such as *schouwburg* (theatre) and cinemas, markets, even places of worship such as mosques and *langgar* (smaller mosques) and madrasas in their vicinity.<sup>44</sup> The wide range of promotional places recommended by the board shows Muhammadiyah's confidence that there were many potential buyers and that Muhammadiyah took into account almost all public places that the Indies people can access.

These all reflect the types of audience that Muhammadiyah was targeting, which would read and then be touched by the placards, namely the general public, the press, movement organisations and government employees. The board stated they had obtained permission to put these placards at post offices. In addition, the board would also ask for permission from the railway and ship authorities so that they were allowed to put promotional placards for this charity stamp there. This move would allow information about the charity stamps to travel hundreds and thousands of kilometres from Yogyakarta, thus guaranteeing a wider range of potential buyers of these stamps. If there were other public places that have not been covered and require government permission, the board assured that it would seek permission from the government. Moreover, the board requested that Muhammadiyah's branches and groups purchase large amounts of the stamps, either for resale or use in Muhammadiyah correspondence during the one-year validity period of the stamps.<sup>45</sup>

For cinemas, the HCFA also had an idea to ask Muhammadiyah's branches and groups to approach cinema owners in their respective areas and ask them to allow Muhammadiyah to put up placards promoting Muhammadiyah charity stamps. The HCFA wished that the cinema owners would be motivated to take part in acts of charity, so they would allow the placement of the placards in their cinemas.<sup>46</sup>

*Soeara Moehammadijah* greatly helped to promote stamps. The magazine published a special issue of charity stamps, the so-called *Nomer*

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<sup>44</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 2)".

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (no. 3)".

*Franco 'Amal'* (charity stamps special edition).<sup>47</sup> Even though they were both affiliated with Muhammadiyah, the HCFA financed all promotions related to charity stamps issued in *Soeara Moehammadijah*. Besides, in one of its editions, the magazine called on its readers to propagate these stamps and said that if they wanted to know more about this charity stamp, they could read the information in this official magazine of Muhammadiyah.<sup>48</sup> The magazine even put information about these stamps in its table of contents, showing the urgency so that readers can immediately get the latest information about the stamps.<sup>49</sup>

The Muhammadiyah Central Board, in its decision in August 1941, expressed its hope to Muhammadiyah's branches and groups throughout the Indies that starting from 22 September 1941, all letters from branches and groups, as well as their divisions and subdivisions, should use the charity stamps. To create stronger persuasion, the board stated, 'We do not allow any letters from that date to arrive without using Muhammadiyah charity stamps'.<sup>50</sup> For the board, this was a way to show that Muhammadiyah members were not only verbally promoting the stamps to others but also using them so that other parties outside Muhammadiyah could follow this action.

When the stamps were about to go on sale, the HCFA again issued instructions and motivation as a way to keep the enthusiasm for the stamp alive and not fade in the crucial days leading up to its sale. The HCFA, in a notice published in *Soeara Moehammadijah*, called local HCFAs, as well as Muhammadiyah's branches and groups, to be more eager to find buyers for the stamps. It persuaded all Muhammadiyah members to go all-out in the campaign:

...let us persuade the general public, friends and relatives, let us encourage them to flock to the post office to buy Muhammadiyah charity stamps. Or, please carry out mobile sales, in shops and in stalls, please enter buildings, dormitories and houses, as well as factories, plantations and companies, and offer them to buy Muhammadiyah charity stamps.<sup>51</sup>

Supportive decisions related to the charity stamps made by

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<sup>47</sup> "Nomer Franco 'Amal'".

<sup>48</sup> "Propagandakan: Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah'", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 3, April 1941.

<sup>49</sup> "Fihrasat", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 4, May 1941.

<sup>50</sup> "Soerat-soerat Moehammadijah", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>51</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah (Ma'loemat 6)", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 8, August 1941.

Muhammadiyah's branches and groups at the local level were then also published in *Soeara Moehammadijah* as a way to communicate to the Muhammadiyah Central Board and the HCFA that Muhammadiyah members outside Yogyakarta were also very enthusiastic about selling the stamps. For example, the Muhammadiyah branch of Kediri, in one of the decisions of its regional conference at the end of June 1941, recommended that Muhammadiyah's branches and groups, as well as members of the Muhammadiyah, provide a certain budget (*begroting*) for one year to buy Muhammadiyah charity stamps.<sup>52</sup>

Muhammadiyah branch of West Java held its eighth regional conference on 18-20 July 1941. One of its decisions was to encourage local Muhammadiyah members to find out more about the stamps, and therefore, they hoped that the HCFA would enlighten them.<sup>53</sup> Muhammadiyah branch of Lampung and Palembang, in their regional conference, even made eight stamps-related instructions for their members, namely requiring every branch or group closest to the post office to appoint a *voorschothouder*, submitting a letter of commitment and requesting to become a *voorschothouder* as soon as possible to the local Muhammadiyah consul, requiring every group and branch bought charity stamps when they were available at the post office, require all letters in branches and groups to use charity stamps (if anyone did not use charity stamps, the envelope would not be opened), requiring each branch and group to buy charity stamps for stock for a year, suggesting that every Muhammadiyah member use charity stamps when sending letters to anyone, requiring every 'Aisyiyah (the Muhammadiyah women's wing) member to buy charity stamps (even if they would not be used), and recommending to Muhammadiyah-affiliated teachers and students to buy the stamps.<sup>54</sup> Decisions with identical tones also emerged from other Muhammadiyah branches and groups, including Muhammadiyah in Minangkabau,<sup>55</sup> East Sumatra,<sup>56</sup> Semarang,<sup>57</sup> Purworejo,<sup>58</sup> Madiun,<sup>59</sup> and

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<sup>52</sup> "Daerah Kediri", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 8, August 1941.

<sup>53</sup> "Daerah Djawa Barat", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 9, October 1941.

<sup>54</sup> "Daerah Lampoeng dan Palembang", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 9, October 1941.

<sup>55</sup> "Daerah Minangkabau", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 9, October 1941.

<sup>56</sup> "Daerah Sumatra Timoer", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 9, October 1941.

<sup>57</sup> "Daerah Semarang", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 8, August 1941.

<sup>58</sup> "Daerah Iboe Tempat", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 3, April 1941.

<sup>59</sup> "Daerah Madioen", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 10, November 1941.

Pasuruan.<sup>60</sup> Youths affiliated with Muhammadiyah,<sup>61</sup> as well as members of Muhammadiyah's boy scout, Hizbul Wathan, were also asked to work hard to make these stamps sell well.<sup>62</sup>

The third is visual communication channels. It was mentioned above about the pictorial placards used by Muhammadiyah to promote its charity stamps. The HCFA designed a visual advertisement in the form of an image that reflected Muhammadiyah's call to buy the stamps and Muhammadiyah's beliefs about charity and public contribution. At the top of the picture was a large text encouraging the public to 'please help and buy Muhammadiyah charity stamps'.<sup>63</sup> The price of each stamp was listed there, along with the selling date. The main image there was of a woman wearing a *kerudung* (headscarf for Muslim women), a long skirt, and what appeared to be high heels, which emphasised aspects of progress and self-confidence of Indonesian Muslim women. In front of her was a small boy whose left hand was bandaged. The woman's gestures showed that she cared a lot about the boy and wanted to help him; her left hand touched the boy's head while her right hand handed over a useful object to the boy.

An important point to note here is that Muhammadiyah's charitable endeavours were represented by the image of a caring mother, thus symbolising that the act of selling the stamps was an endeavour based on motherly compassion to help those in need. Behind them, the sun shone brightly, resembling the Muhammadiyah symbol. Another aspect worthy of note is the display of two of the most modern means of transportation at that time, aeroplanes and trains. In general, the design of this advertising image sent a message about Muhammadiyah, which played an important role in at least two things, namely in the efforts to help the marginalised people in the Indies and in the efforts to call the people of the Indies to adopt modernity. This kind of visual advertisement was created by the HCFA in several sizes and published many times in *Soeara Moehammadijah*, both on the magazine cover and inside the magazine, thus ensuring that the readers were constantly reminded of the urgency of buying the stamps.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Daerah Pasoeroean", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 10, November 1941.

<sup>61</sup> "Daerah Lampoeng-Palembang", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 9, October 1941.

<sup>62</sup> "Daerah Semarang", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 10, November 1941.

<sup>63</sup> Front cover, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 6, July 1941.

<sup>64</sup> "Ma'loemat (no. 4)", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 6, July 1941; front cover, *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941; *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 8, August 1941.

Apart from Muhammadiyah's all-encompassing plans above in campaigning for its charity stamps, however, it is not known for certain which plans were later successfully implemented, considering that from a search on primary sources at that time, there was no detailed, thorough and in-depth evaluation about how far Muhammadiyah has succeeded in realising these numerous plans. What is clear is that even in the planning stage, Muhammadiyah has made a very detailed plan by utilising all Muhammadiyah resources and by using all available mass communication media. However, in some cases, some evaluation of the media used and their effectiveness can be done, especially if the primary sources mention it, albeit briefly, as previously mentioned.

Another thing worth mentioning is the fact that the women's wing of Muhammadiyah, 'Aisyiyah, also had an important role in promoting the Muhammadiyah charity stamps in various ways. While most of Muhammadiyah's promotion targets were the general public, the target of 'Aisyiyah's promotion was more specific, namely urban Muslim women. For example, the official magazine of 'Aisyiyah, *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, provided a few spaces for Muhammadiyah to share information about the importance of stamps for funds for the care of the sick, poor and orphans. In addition, the magazine also published advertisements for the stamps, which called for more people to buy the stamps. The Malang branch of 'Aisyiyah, on the eve of Eid al-Fitr in 1942, held a meeting that included charity activities, and the majority of participants were women. There, the students at the 'Aisyiyah school sang the charity stamps song in order to encourage the audience to promote and buy the stamps further. The activities above show 'Aisyiyah's beliefs that there were numerous benefits to the public behind the sale of the charity stamps, and therefore, this organisation actively participated in building attention and encouraging contributions from the society, especially women, in the sale of the stamps.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> See *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, August 1941; *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, 30 January 1942; *Soeara 'Aisjijah*, 16 February 1942.

## E. Charity Stamps and Muhammadiyah's Emphasis on Their Good Values

### 1. *Rewards from Allah for Donors*

One of the important strategies that Muhammadiyah took to promote the charity stamps was to sell them during Ramadan and around the first week of Shawwal (1 Ramadan-9 Shawwal 1360 Hijri, or 22 September-31 October 1941). According to the HCFA, this was an ideal time:

What a time to sell those charity stamps! The charity stamps will be sold during the month of Ramadan, and it is known that the month of Ramadan is the month when Muslims are multiplying their worship and good deeds; it is a holy month and the month to get closer to Allah by performing various good deeds. Indeed, in the month of Ramadan there will also be a lot of alms and donations, which are fully intended to purify oneself and increase good deeds.<sup>66</sup>

According to the HCFA, buyers of the charity stamps will receive two major benefits. First, they obtained postage stamps that can be used for long-distance communication between people. Second, the HCFA stressed that by buying the stamps, one 'can also do an act of "charity", which will be rewarded double by Allah'.<sup>67</sup> For devout Muslims, this double reward from Allah is the goal they always want to achieve when doing various good deeds. The HCFA cited a Malay proverb to emphasise this point: 'drinking the water while diving' [killing two birds with one stone].<sup>68</sup> That is why, according to the HCFA, the name 'charity stamps' was the right name for the program because it reflected the two goals above, practical and divine.

In a promotional advertisement, the HCFA displayed the picture it often used, depicting a woman helping a child, accompanied by a call for the public to help buy Muhammadiyah charity stamps. On another occasion, the HCFA complemented this image with a text that further strengthened the value of the divine reward behind the stamps. It was stated that: 'A good deed, even if it is a little, has a divine reward. By doing it together, the good deed will increase its benefits, and the reward will be multiplied'.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Menghadapi Batoe Oedjian".

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

## 2. *The Charity Stamps and Their Benefits for Muhammadiyah and Indies Muslims*

The HCFA provided a draft of a speech, the essence of which was expected to be delivered during the Muhammadiyah member meeting (*ledenvergadering*) on 14-21 September 1941 by all branches and groups of Muhammadiyah throughout the Indies. The concept of this speech, written by Asna, emphasised the importance of the stamps for Muhammadiyah as an Islamic organisation in the Indies. It was stated there that Muhammadiyah was like a house, which was built when the Muslims of the Indies were shrouded in darkness. This Muhammadiyah house later became a shelter for Indies Muslims and a place where they followed Allah's commands and emulated Prophet Muhammad as a role model for all Muslims, with the ultimate goal of bringing Muslims to happiness and salvation. Indies Muslims who joined the Muhammadiyah house were depicted as entering there with a calm and contented heart as well as a safe mind, especially because of the belief that the Muhammadiyah house was the right place to carry out Allah's commands and follow the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>70</sup>

In the context of Muhammadiyah as a home for fully devout Muslims, the HCFA highlighted the importance of the stamps for Muhammadiyah as an organisation. The members' meeting, which was simultaneously held by all branches and groups of Muhammadiyah in the Indies for a week (14-21 September 1941), was described as a major breakthrough and a historic event for Muhammadiyah because, for the first time in three decades of this organisation's existence, this was the first time it held member meetings simultaneously throughout Indonesia within a week. In the HCFA's view, this meeting of the members was especially significant in measuring the extent of the presence, position, and influence of Muhammadiyah throughout Indonesia. This was also to prove whether Muhammadiyah members had succeeded or not in maintaining the legacy of Ahmad Dahlan, who was branded as the 'father and builder' of Muhammadiyah.<sup>71</sup>

According to the HCFA, Muhammadiyah was a common house, and all works done within Muhammadiyah were intended to be dedicated to Allah, 'for our charity and plants of service that we will reap on the Day of Mahsyar'.<sup>72</sup> The HCFA urged Muhammadiyah's

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<sup>70</sup> "Menghadapi Batoe Oedjian".

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

works to be maintained and improved in accordance with Allah's command, and not to let Muhammadiyah be neglected or even destroyed. Therefore, Muhammadiyah members were asked to continue to serve in advancing Muhammadiyah and all its works that have charitable values. Muhammadiyah members were requested to help each other finish all of Muhammadiyah's work so that even the most difficult ones would be completed quickly and totally. One of the most challenging jobs for Muhammadiyah was the sale of charity stamps, an act of selling postal items on a national scale, which was the first time Muhammadiyah had conducted in its 30 years of existence, and the sale only lasted for 40 days (so, it must be carried out immediately), with Muhammadiyah's big name and the public's hopes were at stake on this small postal item. The HCFA labelled this selling of Muhammadiyah charity stamps 'an extremely extraordinary' task throughout Muhammadiyah's history and a mission 'which demanded the full attention of all Muhammadiyah members, and even demanded responsibility from every Muhammadiyah member'.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the importance of these charity stamps to Indies-based Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah, the HCFA even emphasised that selling charity stamps also had major meaning for the Indies Muslims in general. For the HCFA, the sale of charity stamps was a tremendous achievement for Indies Muslims, especially when compared with similar efforts that had been made previously by Christian and Catholic missions. The HCFA explained that Islamic leaders had been asking permission from the government to sell charity stamps for a long time. At the same time, Christian and Catholic missions had been allowed to raise funds from their charity stamp sales. The HCFA remarked that such action brought at least two impacts: the spread of 'Christian spirit throughout Indonesia and beyond' and a sizable income for Christian and Catholic missions.<sup>74</sup> Considering these, the HCFA asked rhetorically fellow Muslims whether Muslims would still preach in the old way and whether they viewed the stamp sale as useless. It, therefore, encouraged the Indies Muslims also to reform the way of preaching Islam and getting donations for Muslim charities, including, if necessary, by imitating what the missionaries did. To promote the Islamic proselytisation movement in the Indies, Muhammadiyah decided to sell charity stamps and tried hard to secure permission from the colonial government to sell them.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

The HCFA claimed that this meant that 'for the first time Muhammadiyah will face a task that has never been done before by Indonesian Muslims, a task that has great responsibility'.<sup>76</sup> This task of managing charity stamps was considered a '*batoe oedjian*' (touchstone), especially for every member of Muhammadiyah, to see and test how far they worked hard and were responsible for the success of a task that will not only benefit Muhammadiyah as an organisation but also for Muslims in Indonesia in general. For the HCFA, this stamp is the first Islamic charity stamp in the history of Indonesian Islam, so this breakthrough effort should be pursued to be successful.<sup>77</sup> In other words, Muhammadiyah envisioned that the act of selling charity stamps was a joint struggle for Muhammadiyah members and Indonesian Muslims in general, so it took the combined effort of both elements to make this sale a success.

For this reason, the HCFA emphasised that if this work was neglected, let alone failed, then Muhammadiyah and the Muslims would also get a bad name, and even worse, 'the light of Islam will fade if seen from the outside'.<sup>78</sup> However, if successful, then 'the name of Muhammadiyah and the Muslims and the religion of Islam will shine more and more brightly, taller and more radiant, and can become an example and a mirror of comparison [for others]'.<sup>79</sup>

The HCFA believed that even though this task was extremely difficult, Muhammadiyah members were certainly able to carry it out. The reason was that Muhammadiyah members were used to conducting heavy work within Muhammadiyah. The HCFA did not mention specifically what it meant, but it can be assumed that what it meant here were various social and religious efforts carried out by Muhammadiyah independently by involving the enthusiasm and hard work of its members, from building schools and clinics to holding public meetings. The many experiences of Muhammadiyah members in executing various social programs convinced the HCFA that Muhammadiyah had sufficient human resources, skills and experiences so that it would be easier for Muhammadiyah to run the charity stamps program. Another important point emphasised by HCFA was the fact that the number of Muslims in Indonesia was far higher than that of other religions who had successfully implemented

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

charity stamp programs, in this case, Christians and Catholics; thus, for the HCFA, there should be no reason for Muslims in Indonesia to fail in organising this charitable stamps sale.<sup>80</sup>

The HCFA encouraged Muhammadiyah members to be active and enthusiastic in this charity stamps program by providing a big picture of the importance of the stamps for Muhammadiyah and for Muslims in Indonesia:

Let's bear this 'touchstone' together! Let us fulfil this responsibility by showing hard work and sincerity! Let us, from now on, also intend to show the general public that the Muslims and the followers of Muhammadiyah can indeed be entrusted with a heavy burden for the glory of Islam and the reputation of Muhammadiyah!<sup>81</sup>

The HCFA stated that its calls were addressed to all members of Muhammadiyah, as well as autonomous organisations under it, such as 'Aisyiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah (the Muhammadiyah Youth) and Nasyiyatul 'Aisyiyah (young women's section of Muhammadiyah). They were asked to be serious and active in 'propagating, offering, and inviting anyone to buy and encourage the "Muhammadiyah charity stamps"<sup>82</sup>. The HCFA ordered Muhammadiyah members to be role models and to show a match between campaign and action by buying as many charity stamps as possible.

So, it is not surprising that the HCFA stressed that this charity stamps program was a 'touchstone' for Muhammadiyah. The program is a test to prove the sincerity, loyalty and enthusiasm of Muhammadiyah members in the success of this gigantic program. It was also a kind of competition for Muhammadiyah branches and groups to find out which branches and groups were the most enthusiastic and serious and which ones were slow or negligent, or in the HCFA's language, which ones were 'golden' and which ones were 'brass' in their service to Muhammadiyah.<sup>83</sup>

### *3. Charity Stamps and the Care for the Native Nation*

The design of the five types of Muhammadiyah charity stamps reflected Muhammadiyah's great attention to efforts to overcome the major societal problems faced by the native people in the Indies at that time, namely the lack of health care, inadequacy in education, and

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

the neglect of orphans and poor people. Muhammadiyah's significant contribution in the field of improving the health of Indigenous people in a modern way was well represented in a few stamps, as was evident from the 2-cent stamp which depicted a native doctor (wearing a shirt and doctor's long white coat) examining the body of a native boy (wearing a black cap) and from a 7.5-cent postage stamp showing an image of a native Muslim nurse (wearing a female headscarf) wrapping a patient's head in a bandage (one part of the stamp says 'PKO').<sup>84</sup>

Four of the five Muhammadiyah charity stamps were intended to remind the public of Muhammadiyah's huge contribution to advancing the health of the native population and to stress that the profits from the sale of these charity stamps will be used to support health care activities carried out by Muhammadiyah clinics.<sup>85</sup> The four stamps, namely the 3.5-cent, 7.5-cent, 10-cent and 15-cent stamps, bear the words 'PKO'. The 3.5-cent stamp shows an older man sitting on the floor eating rice, thus emphasising the role of PKO in caring for older people, including by fulfilling their food needs. The 10-cent stamp shows an image of a motherly native Muslim woman, her hand touching a boy's head in front of her; next to the boy was a girl. This stamp image sends a message to the world about Muhammadiyah's care and compassion, through PKO, in caring for children, which in this context may refer to orphans. The 15-cent stamp shows a picture of a young native man (wearing a Javanese headgear) holding a long leaf, thus indicating that he is at work, perhaps weaving the leaf into a craft product. The image portrays one of PKO's main and ultimate goals, which is to empower indigenous people to have diverse skills and well-paid jobs and eventually increase their well-being and that of their families. These five types of charity stamps aim to show the outside world Muhammadiyah's belief that the indigenous people deserve attention and care in modern ways, and in efforts to empower the indigenous people, Muhammadiyah has a central and distinctive position.

In an attempt to show that these charity stamps would benefit the native population in the Netherlands Indies, the HCFA publicly announced that the program was supported by the indigenous rulers, both traditional rulers and indigenous aristocrats who took part in the colonial bureaucracy. In its edict in August 1941, the HCFA mentioned the names of so-called '*pengajoem loeboer*' (*beschermberen* or protectors) for this charity stamps mission. There were three native protectors, with two

<sup>84</sup> *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

from traditional powers, namely the Sultan of Surakarta, Paku Buwono XI, and the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengku Buwono IX. Another protector, originating from native aristocrats, was Prince Ario Hoesein Djajadiningrat, a member of the Raad van Nederlandsch Indië (the Netherlands Indies Council).<sup>86</sup> The support gave the impression that these Indigenous aristocrats, who had many privileges and were in many ways close to the colonial government, had a concern and passion for any efforts aimed at improving the welfare of the Indigenous people, and they also placed great trust in Muhammadiyah to run these efforts.

These names were emphasised several times in promotions conducted by the HCFA, clearly to convey the impression that local rulers, to whom many native people, especially in Java, still showed great respect and devotion, were apparently also eager to support this charity stamp movement. The HCFA expressed its pride, joy, and gratitude for the willingness of these figures to patronise this charity stamps program. It also mentioned that in addition to these figures, a number of kings, sultans, and other noblemen supported this program, thus showing the very wide base of support for this program among the country's native rulers. Moreover, a number of Islamic leaders and the print media have also shown their support for this program. With this huge support base, Muhammadiyah wished its members would maintain such enormous trust, support and appreciation by running this program as well as possible.<sup>87</sup>

## F. Concluding Remarks

This research aims to study the promotional strategies used by Muhammadiyah to effectively carry out its charity stamp sales program in 1941-1942. Based on an analysis of primary sources, it can be concluded that for Muhammadiyah, this was a very important act of charity. Hence, this organisation paid great attention to promoting it despite this being a one-off donation activity, and stamps were only small postal items that were easily available at the post office. Muhammadiyah organised this activity neatly, as seen from the formation of the charity stamps committees, both at the central level in Yogyakarta and at Muhammadiyah's branches and groups outside Yogyakarta. Muhammadiyah made remarkable use of various types of communication media, including verbal, textual, and

<sup>86</sup> "Franco 'Amal Moehammadijah: Beschermheren", *Soeara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, August 1941.

<sup>87</sup> "Menghadapi Batoe Oedjian".

visual media, to persuade potential buyers. For *Soeara Moehammadijah* magazine, any developments about the charity were deemed worthy of news coverage. Muhammadiyah tried to attract attention and encourage the purchase of this charity stamp. The targets of Muhammadiyah's promotions were extensive, including Muhammadiyah members, Muslims in general in the Netherlands Indies, and the Indies people as a whole, including the natives, Europeans, Chinese, Arabs and other groups.

To convince the Indies people to buy and use these charity stamps, Muhammadiyah emphasised that these stamps had a practical function as an important element when sending letters or postcards. What made them different from other postage stamps was their public worth and use. Muhammadiyah constantly highlighted at least three important values on these stamps. First, for Muslims, buying these stamps was the same as giving charity, which would be rewarded with abundant rewards by Allah. This program, therefore, was considered an act of religious piety with a social dimension, which complemented the obligatory personal worship for a Muslim. The act of selling charity stamps was also a new breakthrough in the way in which Muslims collected donations and built social solidarity in the colonial era. Second, Muhammadiyah accentuated that buying this charity stamp meant supporting Muhammadiyah's works as an organisation for its members and sympathisers. As a private organisation, Muhammadiyah was very dependent on the contribution of thoughts, energy and funds from the public, and the success of the charity stamps sale will show that Muhammadiyah was an organisation that had pious, professional, responsible, hardworking, and loyal members. These were modernist Islamic values that Muhammadiyah has always promoted for a long time.

Lastly, Muhammadiyah underscored that the sale of the charity stamps would be beneficial for advancing the welfare of the native people in the Indies in general. Muhammadiyah stressed that the profits from the sale would be used to realise the demands and aspirations of the native people in the Indies in the form of improving health facilities and public services, especially for the poor and marginalised. In its promotions, Muhammadiyah often focused on the practical benefits of charity stamps, such as caring for sick and neglected children, a few groups of people who could be found everywhere in the Indies.

This research indicates that Muhammadiyah's promotional strategies were aimed at building awareness about the importance of social solidarity in advancing society's welfare and convincing the public that

Muhammadiyah deserved to be trusted in selling these charity stamps. Muhammadiyah built awareness that Muslims can get divine rewards not only through their spiritual and personal worship but also through social-based religious acts, including supporting donation activities, which were facilitated by the latest communication technology, in order to empower indigenous people in the Indies whose colonial politics largely disregarded the aspirations of the Muslim-majority native.

Measuring the effectiveness of Muhammadiyah's promotion strategies is interesting, but such an in-depth study is beyond the scope of what I am going for in this study (except in footnote number 13, when I briefly mention a few achievements of Muhammadiyah's strategies). Such analyses can form part of another kind of study in the future. This study shows that despite the fact that stamps are just a simple postal item, Muhammadiyah treated them very seriously through professional, all-out, multimedia, and technology-based promotional strategies and heavily relied on Muhammadiyah's wide and solid network all over the Indies. The sale of charity stamps should not only be seen as an internal activity within Muhammadiyah but as a movement initiated by a native Islamic organisation aimed at the interests and needs of the wider community, namely the Netherlands Indies community in general. Muhammadiyah used various ideas, strategies, people, and media to encourage the public to participate and collaborate in overcoming various crucial problems faced by the people of the Indies, especially the natives. For Muhammadiyah, solving the biggest challenges of indigenous peoples in the Indies in the field of health care and protection of the weak, including by collecting donations through the sale of charity stamps, was one of the manifestations of Muhammadiyah's mission to empower and advance the Indies society.

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