Sri Ayati’s Legacy
Artist: John van der Sterren
Oil on Canvas, 200 x 130 cm., 2006
Sri Ayati’s Legacy—
The Vision of Indonesia’s Founding Fathers

When does a tale become a myth? Perhaps, when it expresses profound values that motivate and unite humanity, thus lending it universal appeal.

Born in Tegal, Central Java, in 1919, Sri Ayati moved with her parents to Jakarta as a young child. An avid student of literature, she became involved in radio broadcasting and poetry during the Japanese occupation and the revolutionary era that followed.

Renowned for her beauty, Sri Ayati’s rejection of his advances—and decision to marry a young doctor named Soeparno—led Chairil Anwar to compose one of his famous poems, *Senja di Pelabuhan Kecil* (Twilight at a Small Harbor), which he dedicated to Sri Ayati.

When the Dutch reoccupied Jakarta, Sri Ayati and her husband left to join the revolutionary forces then waging a guerilla struggle from the forests of Banten, with their headquarters and military hospital in Sarang. Once, approached by Dutch officers who asked why she and her husband did not join their side, Sri Ayati replied, “Had the Germans not been defeated, would you be content to remain beneath their rule?”

“Of course not,” the Dutch replied.

A friend of both Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta, Sri Ayati once told the artist, John van der Sterren, something that Hatta had confided to her amidst the political turmoil of the early 1950s. While he and Soekarno had major differences on many issues, there was one point on which they wholeheartedly
agreed: that while a majority of those who fought for Indonesian independence may have been Muslim, countless martyrs of the war for independence were Christian, Hindu or Buddhist. Soekarno and Hatta were convinced that these men’s sacrifice had earned, for their co-religionists, an equal right to all that Indonesia has to offer.

Sri Ayati’s story inspired the artist to paint this picture, in the hope that it might serve as an inspiration for present and future generations and a fitting memorial to a remarkable Indonesian woman who was loved and admired by all.

Sri Ayati spent her later years in Magelang, Central Java, whose lush countryside and towering volcanoes provide the setting for this remarkable painting. Magelang is a major stronghold of the Nahdlatul Ulama and its youth movement, GP Ansor. It was also the site of fierce resistance to the Dutch during the 1945 – ‘49 struggle for Indonesia’s independence.

To this day, the majority of Magelang residents are devout followers of the NU, who share its unwavering commitment to NKRI (the Indonesian nation state); the 1945 Constitution, which established Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic nation; Pancasila; Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (“Oneness Amid Diversity”); and the profoundly spiritual—i.e., humanitarian—values of Sunni Islam, which flourished in harmony with pre-existing East Indies civilization and cultures to produce Islam Nusantara.

Gerakan Pemuda Ansor wishes to thank the family of His Excellency Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid for their generous gift of this painting, which expresses the noble values upon which the Republic of Indonesia was founded. Sri Ayati’s Legacy will be displayed in Ansor’s headquarters building in Central Jakarta, and employed in Ansor’s global campaign to promote Humanitarian Islam (al-Islam li al-Insaniyyah).
The Old Cathedral’s Silhouette
by Leo Kristi

The old cathedral’s silhouette
soars above the horizon,
only the peak of its tower a dark black
footbridge leading to You
across the ash-gray sky.
The world of passion grows faint,
loosening its grip….

{Kararararara…rarararara… rarararara…} 2x

The old cathedral’s silhouette
soars above the horizon
as an old monk chants my requiem.
Lord Christ, I come to You
with gaping red wounds.
Gunpowder smoke and the scent of
white jasmine envelope me.
Tell them I sacrificed my youth and future dreams
upon the altar of our nation.
Tell them I sacrificed my youth and future dreams
upon the altar of our nation.

{Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu
Gloria / Hail the Lord!} 4x