

The Problem of the Education for Women in Indonesia at 1950's: An Opportunity and a Chance

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the creativity of women in reducing educational and political restrictions through an organization. The opportunity of education for women in Indonesia in the 1950's was a critical problem. There were some problems as to why the culture for women was limited. First, the 1950's was a period of early independent Indonesia. Indonesian society was struggling with the new bureaucracy and curricula. People were in search of a new form of curricula that conformed to Indonesia's independence. Second, the number of the school was still limited and mostly reserved for men. The limitation of space provided the opportunity for the best women to rise. Almost all of the educated women at the during the period became political leaders, such as S.K. Trimurti, Soekaptinah, Maria Ulfah, etc. This proves that women in the 1950 solved their limited opportunities and cultural constraints through their active political participation and gained confidence in their ability to change the situation. Historical methods are used in this paper, including interviews.

Keywords: Education, History, Indonesia, Women

Introduction

The study of Indonesian women's movement has developed rapidly since Coora vrede-de Stuers wrote her dissertation in 1959,ⁱ Saskia Wierenga wrote in 1990's,ⁱⁱ and Susan Balckburn published her books in 1993.ⁱⁱⁱ The three researchers noted that there is a close relationship between the education and the development of Indonesian women's movement. Through the training, women organization was formed, First Women's Congress was attended, and women's newspaper was published. Afterword it was changing when the new Indonesia government disallow some women's organization which closed by the leftist. The activities of leftist women's organization considered as a participant of PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). Saskia argues that 1960's was the crushing period of the women's organization in Indonesia.

The growth of women's organizations from 1928 to 1960's indeed could not be separate from the education. The majority leaders of women's organizations were educated women, who in previous period had pursued modern education. As educated women, they closed by the ideas of modernization. They start to have a new friend, a further reading, and a new hope. It means that through the education, the educated women could learn the awareness of women's right. They realized that their cultural issues were the ideal target to improve the life. That is why the historian cited that the 1950's was period of survival for the educated women after the previous year they called it a substantial period.

There was an interesting dynamic along the Women's Indonesia Congress to 1960's. Historically, the Indonesian women's movement was experiencing a significant reinforcement. The roots of the organization were built not only in the big cities but a small one. Women's organization was not only formed on the island of Java, which became the center of political, economic activities from the colonial era to the present, but in the surrounding islands. Some areas such as Samarinda, Minangkabau, Menado, etc. had grown women's organizations. Besides, organizational activity outside Java Island recorded in various newspapers published at that time. Based on these ideas, this paper discusses how women dealt with the problems they faced with the limited educational space for women in the 1950's. Historical data note that a few women had the opportunity to pursue formal education, however from the limited space women activist could show themselves as an independent and creative person. Their strategy of negotiating with the circumstances and the way to solve their problem is the focus of this paper.^{iv}

The Traces and How to Use the Data

This paper is written using historical methods. The most important thing in using historical data is finding the contemporary sources, such as archives. The public files in Jakarta recorded the activities of women organization in 1940's, entitled "Pendaftaran Orang Indonesia jang Terkemoeke jang Ada di Djawa," that contain the background and the actions of the women leader. It recorded in the bundle of O.T. number 1489 etc. These written records are complete versions of data and never found in others.

Furthermore, the national archives recorded the contemporary interviews with the women's activist. Almost all prominent figures were interviewed and filed on the bundle of the government secretary number 165 etc. These all data later analyzed to write this paper. Indeed, the source that contains women activities is rare than the origin of man. The canonization in the history causes this limitation.^v Legene and Waaldijke argue that the most important thing to remove the myths of canonization in history is critical thinking of the data. Consequently, the various data must be collected, both textual and visual, then be criticized. Essential could start to answer the information about the authors, the backgrounds the publication, and the period this data.

This paper utilizes newspapers and periodicals. The national press such as *Api Rakyat*, *Merdeka*, and *Berita Indonesia* published the various information about educational activities as well as women's activities.^{vi} Through the newspaper, the author should be the critic in answering beyond the data. Then, different treatments were made to visual data in the form of photos and sketches of images. Under certain conditions photographs and drawing, designs are often more realistic in providing data information than written sources. For the picture and drawings of the model, the historian should be given a particular treatment, by looking at the desires of the photographer by questioning the importance of the photo made, where the picture made (natural or artificial images), and the authenticity of photographs/sketches of images. By carefully criticizing the photographs and illustrations of the models, the data collected from the text becomes more meaningful.^{vii} The all data then collected, read, interpreted, and compared before narrated. In the process of narration, situations and narrations produced by men and women must be seen equally. So, historians must accommodate the conditions and narratives recorded in the data.^{viii}

Expected research and writing about women in the past, this paper can fill the void of women's historical studies in the past. The emptiness of women's historical studies in the history has gripped by such researchers, such as Francois Gouda,^{ix} Kuntowijoyo,^x Bambang Purwanto,^{xi} and Jean Gilman Taylor.^{xii} They argue that both, women and man have a history. The role of the historian is to exploit and analyze all of the data.

The Opportunity of the Education and the Political Ideology

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Colonial Government introduced a primary school for Indonesian society. Its school opened in a big city of Java, such as Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta. This program was a part of the Ethical Politic, who known as a humanity program. As a new program, the government invites the European teachers to teach. Just after the number of graduates fulfills, the government opened the teacher's school, and the name of the school increased significantly in the early twentieth century.^{xiii} Although the number of schools is rising slowly, the priority target of this school was the sons of the bureaucrat. Through the bureaucrat, it's become more accessible to set up the political ideology. The evidence of this ideology could be seen through the register of the student at the school who studied at European School, the study on abroad.^{xiv}

The difference situation happened to women. Although the government introduces the education since the end of the nineteenth century, only the son of the bureaucrat can enter. It's difficult for women to join the school. The Department of the Education reported that in 1928 the number of female students in Java and Madura compared to the number of boys was only 24%.^{xv} Most of them were bureaucrat family. A lot of bureaucrat family, such as Kartini and her sisters, had limited opportunities for education. It means that even the bureaucrats realize the importance of education for women, the training for women has not yet given. They usually only bring in private teachers to teach their daughters in the house. Kartini was a part of this type. It fortunate for Kartini, she was given an opportunity by her father to be able to establish relationships with European families. Hence, Kartini had more comprehensive access to the public space, and She could publish as a correspondent book entitled *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*, which was a reflection of her feelings as a woman.^{xvi}

The next chance for women to enter the school was in the 1930's. Some state and private school for women opened in the big city. The curriculum of this school was still at a fundamental level. Only gave women the ability to read, count, and speak in Dutch. Just a few forward-thinking noble families, then present their daughters a chance to pursue a better education, so some names like S.K. Trimurti, Maria Ulfah Santoso, and Soekaptinah Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito were able to continue this school.

Tabel 1: The Distribution of Education

Name	Place of Birth	Educations
Soemasih Yati Aroedji Kartawinata	Bandung	- HIS Pekalongan - Nationale Kweekschool Jogjakarta - Sekolah Mengetik di Jakarta
Soedjatin Kartowijono	Yogyakarta	- Meisjes E.L.S. Jogjakarta - MULO - Europeeschschool Jogjakarta
Soewarni Pringgogigdo	Jakarta	- HIS Kartini Bogor - MULO Bandung - Sekolah Mengetik
Maria Ulfah Santoso Wirodihardjo	Serang	- ELS Jakarta - HBS V Jakarta - Universitas Leiden bagian Hukum
Trimurti	Boyolali	- HIS Kartosura - Meisjekweekschool Solo
Soekanti Soerjotjondro	Ponorogo	- Meisje ELS di Madiun - HBS Bandung
Siti Soekaptinah Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito	Yogyakarta	- HIS Keputran Yogyakarta - MULO Yogyakarta - Kweekschool Taman Siswa Yogyakarta
Srioemiati	Madiun	- Holland Javaanse Meisjeschool Yogyakarta - MULO Yogyakarta - Europese Kweekschool Jakarta - Lager Akte Angels Utrech - Europeses Hoofdakte Den Haag
Emi Soehaemi	Bandung	- Openbare 2de HIS Bandung - Kweekschool Bandung
Siti Wahjoenah Mangoendingrat	Sawahlunto	- ELS di Manado - HBS di Surabaya - Sekolah Kehakiman Tinggi Jakarta

Source: National Archive bundle OT number 1223, 1489, 1511, 1929, 2127, 2274, 2530, 2722, dan 2845.

The table above shows that some of the women consistent to study although they faced by the different situations. They studied across of the period from the Japanese Occupation to 1950's. Maria Ulfah Santoso, for example, they studied in European School, then She continued to study at the school of law in Netherland. She became a first female social minister in Indonesia. As well as Maria Ulfah Santoso, Sri Oemiati, continued her study in Women School, then She continued her education in Den Haag. In the 1950's, Sri Oemiati active in a political organization. She became ones of the leader of Parindra, the nationalist party at 1950's. Another woman, like S.K. Trimurti, Soekaptinah, and others, the study on the teacher school. After they graduated from teacher school, they became a teacher, journalist, or women leaders.^{xvii}

The consistency of study proven by women activist shows that they have an ideal plan for the future. The considered that education was the most important thing to solve the cultural ideology of women. Traditionally, the social thinking in Indonesia controlled by the idea of patriarchy. Its concept reproduced from generation to generation and placing the women only on the subordinate for everything. In the middle of this condition, women did not have the discretion to be independent.

Through the education, women have the imagination to change the situation and proved it. The news in the newspaper showed that condition.

At 1950's Indonesia start to looking for the ideal type of education. The women activist then can be a part of this program. The curricula at that time arranged independently by the activist. In these condition, women activist to be a part of the initiator of the new curricula. Its curricula organize to break out their collective memory from the Colonial era.^{xviii} As a result, the activist thought that they had to open immediately the high level of school. That is way, the senior high school and the university build in a big city in Java.^{xix} Universitas Gadjah Mada, Universitas Indonesia, Universitas Islam Indonesia build at 1950's as a part of this program. It means that the orientation of the study was changing from the primary school to advance.

The Strategy of Women to be Independent

In the 1930's up to 1950's, there was three strategy for women to be independent. Firstly, they entered the education systems even though they should move to another city. Soemasih, for example, that born in Bandung, she should study in Yogyakarta. Maria Ulfah should survey in Jakarta etc. There was some reason why the women activist had to consider in a remote place. Firstly, they followed their father who promoted to another city. Secondly, the had to go out of their hometown because of their own considered. S.K. Trimurti, for example, she was born in Boyolali. Then She studies in women school in Solo. She thought that study in Solo would give her a new chance. Moving to another city and living by another family was a common phenomenon. Traditionally, Indonesian people to be accustomed to staying with another family that has higher status. Its conditions were a part of the effort to raise the state.^{xx}

Secondly, the women could expand their network after they finished their study. The data record that there were several international events that educated women attended. The first event was at 1931 when the women activist visited on Asia Women Congress in Lahore.^{xxi} Afterword in 1951, the Indonesia Women Congress send two delegates (Mrs. Susilowati and Miss T. Kusumo Utoyo) to attended on Pan Pacific Women Congress in New Zealand.^{xxii} At 1952 the Indonesia Women Congress send five envoys conducted by Mrs. Kartowiyono to participate on the Internasional Conference that was held by UNESCO in New Delhi.^{xxiii} At 1955 accompanied to the Women International Conference in Manila. Finally, at 1958 the Indonesia Women Congress send Miss Maria Ulfah Santoso to the Asia-Africa Women Conference in Colombo.^{xxiv} It proved that woman activist in Indonesia at that time start to consider that international networking was essential to make the activities of women organization more confident.

The thirdly, there was a type of educated women, after they were to be a women leader. Several of women were getting married with the political figure. The following table shows this type.

Table 2: Woman Activist and Her Husband

Name	Name of her Husband	Name of Organizations
Soemasih Yati Aroedji Kartawinata	Aroedji-Kartawinata	Journalis (Suluh Islam Medan, Hong Po Jakarta, Tjahaja Timur Bandung)
Soedjatin Kartowijono	P. Kartowijono	Istri Indonesia
Soewarni Pringgodigdo	Pringgodigdo	- Meisjekring Jong Java Bogor - The Leader of Poetri Indonesia Bandung - The Leader of Istri Sedar
Maria Ulfah Santoso Wirodihardjo	Santoso Wirodihardjo	- The Leader Istri Indonesia - The Leader of Marriage Commission at Jakarta
Trimurti	Mochammad Ibnoe Sajoeti	- Gerindo - Gasfi Jakarta
Soekanti Soerjotjondro	Soejono Soerjotjondro	- Keputrian Indonesia Muda - Perkumpulan murid HBS Bandung - Studyclub Jakarta
Siti Soekaptinah Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito	Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito	- The Secretary of Badan Konggres Perempuan Indonesia I - Istri Indonosia Yogyakarta - JIBDA Jakarta - The Leader of 4th Women Congress

Source: National Archive Bundle OT number 1223, 1489, 1511, 1929, 2127, 2274, 2530, 2722, and 2845.

The table 2 shows that a partner of all that women was a political figure. Soemasih Yati Aroedji to be a wife of Kartawinata, Soedjatin to be a wife of Kartowijono, etc. It looks that the marriage was another strategy of women to be a leader of women organization. Through the big name of their partner, the women activist finding the new way to negotiate to the significant issues.

Conclusions

The creativity was the best way for the women activist in 1950's dealt with the dominance of patriarchal culture. The creativity was manifested through their intellectual abilities, socializing and interacting with the lives of societies that transformed through socio-political organizations and realize their ideas through the activities they strive. Another thing that done, the women also create a network of thought with women activists abroad through their participation in various international-scale congress. These conditions reinforce the awareness and sensitivity of women to improve the lives of surrounding communities when independence had just materialized.

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- ⁱVreede-de Steurs, Coora. 1960. *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements*, The Hague: Mouton and Co.
- ⁱⁱWierenga, Saski. 1999. *Penghancuran Gerakan Perempuan di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Garba Budaya dan Kalyanamitra.
- ⁱⁱⁱBlackburn, Susan. 2007. *Kongres Perempuan Pertama: Tinjauan Ulang*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia dan KITLV.
- ^{iv}Abdoelgani, Roeslan. NY. *Bersama-sama Wanita Menjelesaikan Revolusi*, Jakarta: Departemen Penerangan Republik Indonesia, page: 37.
- ^vSusan Legene and Berteke Waaldijke, *Mission Interrupted: Gender, History and the Colonial Canon*, on Maria Grever and Siep Stuurman, 2007, *Beyond the Canon: History for the Twenty-First Century*. Macmillan: Palgrave.
- ^{vi}Stoler, Ann Laura. 2009, *Along The Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- ^{vii}Taylor, Jean Gilman in Henk Schulte Nordholt etc. 2008. *Perspektif Baru Penulisan Sejarah Indonesia*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor-KITLV Jakarta.
- ^{viii}Scott, Joan W. "A Useful Category of Historical Analysis", in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5. (Dec., 1986), page: 1053-1075.
- ^{ix}Frances Gouda dan Julia Clancy-Smith, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Praktik Kolonial di Hindia Belanda, 1900-1942*, Jakarta: Serambi, page: 1.
- ^xKuntowijoyo. 2000. *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah*, Jakarta: Mizan.
- ^{xi}Nordholt, Henk Schulte etc. 2008. *Perspektif Baru Penulisan Sejarah Indonesia*, Jakarta: Obor-KITLV Jakarta.
- ^{xii}Taylor, Jean Gilman in Henk Schulte Nordholt etc. 2008. *Perspektif Baru Penulisan Sejarah Indonesia*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor-KITLV Jakarta.
- ^{xiii}Suwignyo, Agus. 2012. *The Breach in the Dike: Regime change and the standardization of public primary-school teacher training in Indonesia (1893-1969)*, dissertation Leiden University.
- ^{xiv}Poeze, Harry A., etc. 2008. *Di Negeri Penjajah: Orang Indonesia di Negeri Belanda 1600-1950*, Jakarta: KPG and KITLV Jakarta.
- ^{xv}*Algemeen verslag van het onderwijs voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, 1928, vol.1.
- ^{xvi}Cote, Joost (ed.), 2014. *Kartini: The Complete Writing 1898-1904*, Australia: Monash University Publishing.
- ^{xvii}Amini, Mutiah. 2017. *Sukaptinah and Hajinah's Role in the Nationalist Movement in Indonesia*, in *Patrawidya Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 3.
- ^{xviii}Sjamsuddin, Helius etc. 1993. *Sejarah Pendidikan di Indonesia Zaman Kemerdekaan*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- ^{xix}*Indonesia Raya*, 24 November 1955.
- ^{xx}Soemarsaid Moertono. 2009. *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century*, Jakarta-Kualalumpur: Equinox.
- ^{xxi}Vreede-de Steurs, Coora. 1960. *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements*, The Hague: Mouton and Co., page: 126.
- ^{xxii}Vreede-de Steurs, Coora. 1960. *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements*, The Hague: Mouton and Co., page: 167.
- ^{xxiii}Vreede-de Steurs, Coora. 1960. *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements*, The Hague: Mouton and Co., page: 167.
- ^{xxiv}*Bintang Timur*, 19 Januari 1955.

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