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IDEOLOGY AND IMPACT OF THE FEMINISM MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA BEGINNING OF THE XX CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to describe the feminist movement in Indonesia in the early 20th century. This research employed the historical method, encompassing several key stages. Heuristics involved the systematic gathering of relevant sources, including articles, books and existing research related to the study. Subsequently, source criticism was conducted to assess the authenticity, reliability and credibility of the identified sources. Following this, the interpretation stage involved analyzing the collected data to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions. Finally, the findings were combined and presented in a scholarly format through the writing of a research paper. In addition, the author collects data through the Dutch website (Delpher) which is a website that provides digitized full texts of newspapers, books, journals, and copy sheets of historic Dutch-language radio news broadcasts. The research reveals that the Indonesian feminist movement arose in response to the injustices faced by women during Dutch colonial rule in the East Indies. A key example of this inequality was the restricted access to education for women compared to their male counterparts. This disparity spurred the emergence of the feminist movement, driven by the goal of securing equal rights for women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Movement comes from the word move, which adds the suffix -ment, which describes an action— the act of changing position or location. According to great Indonesian dictionary, feminism is a women's movement that demands full equality between women and men (Departemen, 1989). Feminism comes from the Latin word *femina*, which means woman. In French, the word *femme* refers to woman (Abbas, 2020). In this case, feminism feels closer to the

word feminine, so it is not uncommon for feminism to be interpreted as a social movement for feminine people (Hastanti, 2004).

At the beginning of the 20th century, gender equality and justice were the main issues of feminism. A prominent concern was the rampant gender inequality women faced, particularly in access to education. Women were often severely restricted in their educational pursuits, fueling the rise of feminist activism aimed at dismantling these barriers and securing equal opportunities for all. women are portrayed as humans who experience discrimination and injustice. Consequently, a struggle for gender equality and justice ensued. The women's movement arose as a response to the societal injustices and discriminatory treatment women faced. Broadly, feminism refers to all those who seek for recognition of women's worth and dignity, attempting to establish a just and equitable society. In the early 20th-century, the Indonesian feminist movement primarily focused on securing women's rights to education and opposing the practice of polygamy. The early wave of feminism was more cultural than structural. women began to actively seek emancipation, striving to gain access to education and broaden their opportunities.

According to Nighat Said Khan and Kamla Bhasin, feminism is the recognition of women's oppression and the active pursuit of social and political change to dismantle systems of inequality that disadvantage women in society, the workplace and the family (Mardinsyah, 2018). Similarly, Budhy (2004) mentioned that feminism primarily addresses the issue of injustice faced by women. Wolf defines *feminism* as a theory that describes all women's personal self-esteem and self-esteem. A woman must have faith in herself (Suryamah, 2019). Emancipation often involves women's participation without directly challenging the underlying structures of gender injustice. In contrast, feminism challenges systemic inequalities and discriminatory practices that women face in society, including limitation in education and other areas.

Previous studies have explored the topic of feminism in Indonesia, they are Pratama Agustiningsih (2019), Erman (1928), Ilaa (2021), though they have not gone further detail into the discussion. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the feminist movement in the early 20th century in Indonesia by exploring 4 key questions, 1) how did the feminist movement emerge in Indonesia, 2) how feminist movement are carried out 3) what ideologies drives the feminist movement, 4) what was the impact of the feminist movement in Indonesia in the early 20th century. This research hopefully will provide a deeper understanding of the feminist movement in Indonesia and its contribution to social change during this period.

II. METHODS

The research method is the process used to conduct a research (Ahmad, 2008). This research employs historical research methods, including heuristics (source collection), source criticism, interpretation and historiography (historical writing). In the first stage of heuristics, relevant materials were gathered through the collection of books and articles. This included searching Dutch digital archives like Delpher and journals related to the research theme of the women's movement. The second stage is source criticism, involved critical evaluation of the collected sources to assess their validity and ensure the data accuracy (Azizah 2022). The third stage, interpretation, utilizing an interactive analysis model, where a study has been carried out since the initial stage of data collection. Then, the data obtained is compared interactively, then reduced in terms of strength, discarding irrelevant or redundant information to refine the analysis (Mubarak, 2020). When it has been analyzed, conclusions can be drawn. The final stage of the research process is Historiography which involves writing of scientific papers or research journals.

The dissecting tool in the study used feminism theory, a concept that examines social life and human experience from a woman-centered perspective. Feminist sociological approaches begins with the sociology of knowledge because feminists seek to explain, analyze, and transform the world from a woman's lived experiences. Recognizing women's subordinate positions within social structure, feminist sociological theorists view knowledge production as inherently intertwined with the power system that shape all aspects of production in society. Through this lens, efforts are made to redress the imbalance of power within social discourse by strengthening women's voices and perspectives (George Ritzer, 2007).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Emergence of the Feminism Movement in Indonesia Early 20th Century

In the early 20th century, women in the Dutch East Indies often confined to domestic roles, such as washing and cooking. Besides, women's freedom was very limited as they were unable to go to school, let alone leave the house. Women's educational freedom was severely restricted, especially in a patriarchal society. Patriarchy is a structural system where men dominate, oppress, and exploit women and believe that men are always in a position of power and women are in an inferior position (Ilana, 2021).

The emergence of feminism in Indonesia in the early 20th century followed the publication of R.A Kartini's correspondence with her friends in the Netherlands in the form of letters. The book was then notoriously titled *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (Mori, 1925). The book contains Kartini's passionate decry writings about the limitations imposed on women's education, which severely obstructed their emancipation. Her letters offer a valuable window into her perspective on the subjugation of indigenous women during that time. In her letters, she expressed her views on the status of indigenous women at that time, highlighting her experience as a second-class citizen

compared to her brother. Her position was considered inferior to men that she was not permitted to pursue higher education beyond her brother's. Kartini's father was a polygamist, so she also experienced being the wife of a polygamous husband. Kartini's experience led her believe that women must actively resist injustice. She wanted to educate women, prioritizing moral development, to cultivate independent and self-reliant mothers capable of earning a living and exercising the freedom to choose their own marital status. Kartini fervently believed women deserved the freedom to pursue knowledge and education (Perempuan, n.d.). With this conviction, this book inspired women to strive for equality and reclaim their dignity alongside men.

In addition, Rohana Kudus played a crucial role in advancing Indonesian women during her time. She witnessed firsthand the injustice prevalent in her society, impacted by a deeply patriarchal system. This system severely limited women's educational opportunities and subjected young girls, as young as twelve, to restrictive confinement. Witnessing these injustices, Rohana Kudus implored women to be more preceptive to subtle forms of discrimination that could diminish the role of women in both domestic and public spheres.

To fight women's freedom and justice, a movement emerged, initially spearheaded by individuals, which subsequently gave rise to various groups and organizations. Prominent examples include the Putri Mardika organization, PPI (Persatuan Perempuan Indonesia), KAS (Amay Setya craft), and other organizations. These organizations advocating for women's rights and amplifying their voices. Concurrently, the women's movement was infused with a growing sense of nationalism, fueled by the efforts of nationalist organizations—key issues such as the right education, the prevalence of polygamy and the practice of forced marriage became focal points for women's demands. During the Dutch colonial period, justice did not favor women, such as getting a proper education. Therefore, education was one of the efforts to raise the status of women and free them from harmful customs. Therefore, this organization fights for education by assisting women so that they can criticize education.

Overall, these women's organizations aim to improve women's position in the community's social life to elevate women's status within the social fabric of the community by prioritizing women's education as a key strategy. Thus, women's organizations can serve as crucial catalysts in encouraging (social movements), acting as powerful advocates for democratic rights, justice, and the liberation of the people. Furthermore, these organizations were inseparable from the goals of the Indonesian movement, namely pursuit for nationalism, emancipation, and liberation from colonial rule (Urifatulailiyah, 2017).

Feminism is based on defending and supporting women's equality and improving their social standing. Therefore, feminism enhances the position of women in society. Feminism values participation, mutual support, complementarity and cooperation with the aim of creating a more equitable and just society. Consequently, these values and principles are used as a reference for women's groups and organizations to continue moving forward (Da Meisa & Anzari, 2021). The

goal of feminism remains rooted in the pursuit of a more humane society, namely supporting women with equal rights and roles with men.

Feminism in Indonesia in the Early 20th Century

The pioneering Minangkabau journalist, Rohana Kudus, the founder of the “*suntiang melayu*”, dedicated herself to liberating women from backwardness. At that time, the press or mass media also functioned as a tool to spread ideas of women's empowerment and a means of education and teaching, hoping that women would gain awareness of their responsibilities. While efforts to achieve equality through education faced limitations in terms of economics, opportunity, or local culture, then awareness of women's roles and rights through the mass media could have a wider impact, reaching the minds and hearts of all people regardless of customary or cultural boundaries (Urifatulailiyah, 2017). At that time, newspapers played a critical and progressive role because they departed from issues that were detrimental to women, such as customs that were not friendly to women in terms of education, as well as in the social community where women were forced to marry and were honeyed. Hence, there is a need for women to acquire education or skills (Arvia).

This exemplifies Rohana's courage, expressing her struggle and movement. Rohana Kudus's desire to inform the public about women's liberation from backwardness. With that, this is where Rohana's desire to change the image in society about women, where women must be freed and liberated from orders or colonization. Furthermore, it expresses women from scientific backwardness and limitations in a culture built on the domination of women by injustice, including in the field of education.

Rohana Kudus also established the *Amai Satia* craft school to empower women economically. Before establishing the *Amai Satia* school, she was rejected by various traditional people there. Traditional leaders revealed that Minangkabau culture already privileged women in their matrilineal system, and women were even appointed as caretakers of the *rumah gadang*. The status of women is respected, and they no longer require education. In addition, women must submit and obey adat as a form of morality and virtue. Rohana's many contradictions and obstacles encouraged her to advance women. To express her good intentions to create an educational institution for women, Rohana would hold a large meeting; she called all the women in her area, and she informed them that she would hold a meeting. In the meeting, she explained her mission and the will she wanted to achieve to advance women (Oktarina, 2021). Nurjati concluded that as follows:

““Especially for poor women. If women can earn a living, they will not depend on others. Life goes on, and problems always exist. We cannot be silent and cry,” Rohana Kudus said at the meeting (Nurjati, 2019)”.

Rohana Kudus's good intentions were well received by the women who attended the meeting. To continue the next mission, Rohana Kudus tried to find a solution to why she wanted to build an

educational institution. Therefore, Rohana tried to meet the migrants. Rohana asked for support and cooperation to eliminate injustice against women. Finally, her efforts paid off; Rohana's goal was achieved thanks to the help of a lawyer's wife from Kayu Tanam, Ratna Putri, with whom she established a school called Amai Satia Craft (Oktarina, 2021).

Rohana Kudus was a fervent advocate for women's education so that women would not be left behind. At that time, Rohana was one of a group of women who believed that discrimination against women, including access to education, which was very unfavorable to women, had to be resisted to not be arbitrary towards women (Hanani, 2011). According to her, education is very important so that women do not become marginalized. Moreover, she perceived that injustice was unfavorable to women, and she did not accept; she desired to sow the seeds of "women's liberation". Rohana did not want to let women be buried in the seduction of the unfair cultural construction. Therefore, through Sunting Melayu, she voiced women's issues more loudly; Rohana Kudus's space acted as a fighter for women's rights became free until the end of her life. Rohana Kudus fought for women to get education and recognition in the public world.

In addition, the Poetry Mardika organization is the first organization that actively motivates women to improve their standard of living in education and social life. Putri Mardika aspires to progress towards women so they are no longer the only women who are fixated on following customs. However, as women, they must be active in improving their status. This organization received support and assistance from Budi Utomo, who emphasized education. The efforts made by Poetri Mardika for the advancement of Indonesian women include the following: Providing a discourse on women's emancipation through newspapers and publishing newspapers that contain the content of their ideas or ideas as a means of providing teaching and education. So, Poetri Mardika can issue a newspaper that comes from the thoughts or perceptions of its members; with that, Poetri Mardika requires each member to pour out their writings containing the feelings, thoughts, or anxieties of its members. A women's movement that seeks to improve the state of education for women by providing scholarships.

The Ideology of the Feminism Movement in Indonesia in the Early 20th Century

The women's movement in this era had varied ideologies. In terms of knowledge, women at that time were far behind men. This was explained earlier: women in the Dutch East Indies at that time could not discourage higher education from men. In terms of culture, traditional customs require an adult woman to undergo a tradition called Remington (she is at home) and is only allowed to leave the house if she is married.

In addition, it was also in the religious aspect that Kartini criticized. Women in the Dutch East Indies endured significant injustices, including forced marriages, polygamy practices ((where men often had multiple wives residing in the same household) and arbitrary divorce proceedings. These

experiences compelled women across the Dutch East Indies to fight for women's equality rights in all aspects of life to overcome gender injustice.

The impact of the feminist movement on women throughout Indonesia in the early 20th century

The struggle of the Feminists in Indonesia in the early 20th century produced results or had a positive impact on women in Indonesia as follows:

Kartini School

R.A. Kartini established specialized schools for women at the time because she wanted Indonesian women to get an education (De Groot, 1939). The colonial government implemented education policies solely to serve its own interests, neglecting the educational needs of the Indonesian people. Students from ordinary background were not given a proper education, and they could not enter European schools because they were prohibitively expensive for most, so many people cannot go to school (Yuniarnengsih, 2023). That was why Kartini founded the school then (Gameran, 1938).

Kartini first established Kartini's school, where the curriculum encompassed reading, sewing, writing, and others essential skills. In addition, Kartini's school also taught material about religion because religion is the basic material used to understand other sciences. Kartini taught religion because religion has a very large role in human civilization. At the beginning of the establishment of the school, there were nine students, and the longer the students grew (Humanitas, 2020).

Amai Satia Crafts

The Amai Satia Craft School in Koto Gadang is recorded as the first female school in Minangkabau. The subjects in this school were reading and writing Malay, Arabic, and Latin letters at the basic level. At the same time, other lessons taught are household skills, spiritual and moral education according to Islamic teachings, customs, arithmetic, childcare procedures, embroidery, weaving, sewing, and other skills that were needed then. The school did not give an age limit for its students, which was very interesting for KAS (*Kerajinan Amai Setia*.) so that small to older adults could learn. The tuition fee for the school at that time was 0.5 guilders per month. Students who could not afford to pay could pay with deductions from the sale of stitches and crafts produced (Pratama Agustiningsih, 2019).

Rohana Kudus has successfully educated the women in her community and made women independent, enabling them to break free from the traditional confines of domesticity, often symbolized by the phrase 'dapur, sumur, kasur' (kitchen, well, mattress). She even managed to establish the Amai Satia Handicraft School. She has raised the status of women by teaching them Arabic and Latin, managing households, making handicrafts, and organizing marketing. Even then, the number of illiterate women was very low, and she founded the first Girls' School in Sumatra.

Her success in empowering women in education and making them intellectual, advanced, and intelligent also made women economically independent. In addition to Rohana's movement, Kudus did not stop at educating through Amai Satia crafts alone; she also moved into the world of journalists, educating women through the *surat kabar suntiang melayu*.

In addition, the impact of the early 20th-century Feminism movement on Minangkabau women, as revealed by Erman that in the early 20th century which is the growth or awareness of women, which is to demand justice for equal rights of women and men in the social and other fields. Erman concluded that:

“The growth of women's role in the inheritance of the yellow book tradition is in line with changes in the attitude of the Perti ulama who are more open and tolerant of gender equality in obtaining education after the change of traditional surau-surau into madrasas” (Erman, 2022). From this, it can be seen that Perti clerics provide women opportunities to inherit the yellow book tradition in Minangkabau.

So, the feminist movement in the early 20th century had a very significant impact on women. The movement raised women's awareness of the importance of equal rights with men in various fields, including social and educational. One tangible result of this movement was the change in attitude of the Perti ulama, who became more open and tolerant of gender equality. This allowed women to play a more active role in the inheritance of the yellow book tradition after converting traditional surau-surau into madrasas.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the above points, it can be concluded that the feminist movement emerged as a response to the different treatment of women and men, which is the basis for this movement. It also involves the activities of women struggling to achieve gender balance and gain their rights within society. The main goal of the feminist movement is to achieve equality and equal rights and responsibilities between all genders, both women and men.

Rohana Kudus, the first female journalist from Minangkabau, who made the Sunting Melayu Newspaper, took action to liberate women from underdevelopment. The newspaper at that time was very progressive and critical because it raised sensitive issues such as the problem of customs that were not friendly to women, polygamy, the need for education and skills for women, and so on. Several ideologies, such as knowledge ideology, move women to seek justice because women are far behind men. Religious ideology, where men at that time arbitrarily divorced their wives. Besides that, men at that time practiced polygamy without the knowledge of their wives. In addition, the impact of the feminist movement was that women throughout the Dutch East Indies could write, read, and sew and had begun to be independent in terms of education.

This research can provide deeper insights into the social history and struggles of women in Indonesia, thus helping readers understand the historical context of the feminism movement. The

findings of this research can serve as a reference for policy makers in formulating programs and policies that support gender equality and women's empowerment in Indonesia today. In addition, this research can enrich the literature on feminism in Indonesia, open space for further research on the same or related topics, and broaden perspectives on the women's movement. While this research has limitations, such as the unavailability and accessibility of primary and secondary sources related to the feminist movement during this period, the interpretation of historical sources can be subjective, so there is a possibility of different views in assessing the impact and ideology of the feminist movement.

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