

Pattern and Orientation of Indonesian Women's Movement: Comparison of Women Movement in the Era Before and After the Reform

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of women's movement in Indonesia is inseparable from the social, cultural, and political conditions. The emergence of women's movement from the colonial period through post-reform era does not mean that it is opposed in achieving the ideals of women's struggle. It is precisely apparent dynamics of each organization in achieving the ideals of women's struggle. The data in this article was obtained through literature study consisting of books and journals. The purpose of this article is to compare the patterns forming the basis of each women's movement between colonial and post-reform eras. The results showed the women's movement in the colonial era resulted from aristocratic wife groups of national movement figures. Issues raised were around education that once existed and abolished polygamy, and affiliated with national movement organizations. The Orde Lama (Old Order) women's movement was affiliated with political parties. In this era the resistance against the PKI and Gerwani came from Islamic organizations. This period was closed by the destruction of Gerwani. The Orde Baru women's movement was marked by state co-optation of women's organizations to support all state policies. The development of motherism ideology and the organizations like PKK, Dharma Wanita, Dharma Pertiwi dominates the role of women. An independent women's movement emerged with the format of a foundation towards the fall of Orde Baru. Today's women's movement has no relationship with political parties and grows out of empathy for women's problems, and a wide networking ability among the activists of the women's movement.

Keywords: *women's movement, gender equality, Indonesian history*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discussing gender issues cannot correct the discourse of pluralism in Indonesia. Pluralism shows social diversity that must be recognized and accommodated. However, pluralism still faces various challenges. Gender as a part of a culture cannot be implemented separately from pluralism issue. One example of the creation of a dichotomy of sex relations between men and women is still seen from a biological point of view which further perpetuates the patriarchal culture.

Gender construction in Indonesia concerns not only cultural issues but also political issues. This can be seen from the development of women's organizations that began from the colonial period through the post-reform era. During the colonial period, the division of gender roles

was also influenced by the Dutch concept of positioning men with jobs in the public sphere and women in the domestic sphere. Javanese traditional society also enforces a similar gender role division, where women are positioned to support their husbands [1]. This problem raises women and girls who oppose discrimination and want equality between men and women. The development of women's organizations in Indonesia has experienced ups and downs. For example, during the Suharto regime, women's organizations originally having the freedom to speak out for gender equality began to have their rights limited in the public sphere. Women began to be controlled under the auspices of women's organizations that supported the New Order government [2].

After the fall of the New Order regime and the development of the reform movement, all forms of identity, originally restricting their movements, began to

present themselves, including the emergence of women's movements pressed to give women the freedom to represent themselves in all fields. This article is written to describe the development of the women's movement having emerged in Indonesia from the colonial period through post-reform era. The development of the women's movement is described based on the periodization of the movement's emergence. This article also describes the peculiarities coloring each movement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The long history of the women's movement in Indonesia appeared as part of the fight against colonialism. R.A. Kartini is a figure considered to have initiated the growth of women's organizations during the colonial period. During the period, the national movement began to emerge as a women's organization as a part of the national movement organization [3]. After independence, the differences of political ideology led to diversity in the women's movement especially in events leading up to the 1955 general election. Political parties began to expand to reach women [4]. The upheaval of political situation in 1965 caused the downfall of the old order government which was later replaced by the new order government. The New Order era was marked by the restraint of mass organizations from the state and the loss of independent women's organizations. The state created large organizations aiming to control women, so that no one would oppose the ruling regime and make women fully support the interests of their husbands and the military bureaucracy [5]. For almost 32 years the women's movement has been under state pressure. The failure of government in the New Order era was later replaced by the reform era as a milestone for the establishment of a democratic space. The women's movement emerged with a new form of awareness in defining problems and the direction of its movement [6]. This article was written to compare the patterns on which the women's movement was based between colonial period and post-reform era.

3. METHODS

The method used in writing this article is library research, a method of collecting data by analyzing library sources [7]. Data from books and journals related to the development of the women's movement in Indonesia were collected. After being collected, the data are processed, analyzed and generalized so that the data obtained is in accordance with the purpose of this article, namely to compare the patterns on which the women's movement was based from the colonial period to the post-reform era.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Movement of Women from Time to Time

The emergence of women's movement in Indonesia can be divided into the following periods of Indonesia's history:

4.1.1 The Women's Movement in the Colonial Period

The women's movement began to emerge in Indonesia at the end of the 19th century. R.A Kartini (1879-1904) was one of the most prominent and popular women in defending women's rights, which was awaited by colonialism [3].

Dutch colonial influence greatly reduced the contribution of women to Javanese politics. The position of men and women in the Javanese family is also strongly emphasized by the Dutch concept emphasizing on men as breadwinners and women assigned to domestic roles [1].

Javanese culture emphasizes that during adulthood women will be secluded and formed to play roles in the domestic sphere such as cooking, *macak* (dressing up), *manak* (giving birth). As a result, many girls do not have access to knowledge and the outside world [8].

Javanese aristocratic women are parties whose rights are limited. They do not have the right to broad educational opportunities like men from among them. Marriage shows an unequal relationship between men and women where men have the right to marry more than one woman, so that women are disadvantaged parties [4].

The basis of the women's movement during the colonial period was the desire to open educational services for women, to eliminate early marriage and polygamy, to provide the women with the opportunities of appearing in public and getting equal pay, to fight against prostitution, and also to give sex education.

During national movement, the women's movement gathered itself in an organization. The background of the awareness is that indigenous peoples who are still entrapped into the colonial nation have the right to the freedom to gather and to unite in order to increase the status of the indigenous people. Women's organizations were formed from among women themselves, mass organizations, political party organizations, religions, to national youth organizations [9].

The first women's organization in Indonesia, Putri Mardika (1912) was a women's organization affiliated with Budi Utomo. Thereafter in 1913 to 1920, women's organizations also emerged in Java and Minangkabau, such as Pawiyatan Wanito (1915), Wanito Soesilo (1918),

Wanita Oetomo (1920), Kaoem Seomatra Union (1920) and others. Religious women's organizations were also founded such as Aisiyah (1971) and the Catholic Women's Organization (1924). The issues constituting the basis of the movement of other organizations are the eradication of illiteracy, the rejection of polygamy, and the spread of religious teachings to organizations on a religious basis [4]. The women's movement at this time emerged as part of a nationalist organization.

After the Youth Pledge on October 28, 1928, a Women's Congress was held on December 22, 1928. The Congress was attended by 30 women's organizations. The issues discussed are about women's education, early marriage, and the rules of marriage in Islam. Three motions to the Dutch colonial government were produced in this congress: schools for girls needed to be added, the obligation to mention *ta'lik* at the time of the marriage contract and the existence of regulations governing allowances for widows and orphans of Dutch colonial government employees [8].

The women's movement shows a progressive development with regularly held congresses in various cities such as Jakarta (1935), Bandung (1938), and Semarang (1941) by continuing to raise the problem of injustice experienced by women in all aspects. But unfortunately at the beginning of the Japanese occupation (1942) all women's organizations were dissolved and only one organization was allowed, namely Fujinkai. The membership of Fujinkai is filled with government employees where the position of the wife depends on the position of the husband in the government bureaucracy. The basis of Fujinkai's activities is to mobilize women to support the Japanese army in the war in East Asia by becoming health workers, distributing foodstuffs and establishing soup kitchens, eradicating illiteracy and promoting a simple lifestyle. Although women's organizations during the Japanese occupation were disbanded, many of their members carried out underground activities, especially members of the socialist party and also communist women. After independence, Fujinkai was disbanded and the Indonesian Women's Association (Perwari) was established [4].

4.1.2 The Women's Movement during the Old Order

The ideologies that characterized Indonesia after independence were nationalism, Islamic reform, communism and feminism. However, the dominant ideology was filled by Sukarno with the ideology of populist nationalism and Marxism by the PKI. Both ideologies greatly influenced the development of women's organizations during the Old Order era. In its development, the differences among the women's movements increased after independence. The women's movement at this time became increasingly diverse when before the 1955 general election, political parties began to expand to be filled by

women. As a result, many women's organizations prefer to work with political parties rather than fellow women's organizations [4].

In the period leading up to the general election, six women's organizations were formed as part of political parties. One of these organizations was Gerwis (1950) (Indonesian Women's Awareness Movement) which later changed its name to Gerwani (Indonesian Women's Movement) which was affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party [9].

In the 1950s two women's organizations, Gerwani which supported the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the nationalist Marhaen Women, occupied important positions in society. Membership is generally highly educated and politically conscious. From an ideological point of view, this organization is a continuation of Isteri Sedar. The number of Gerwani members from year to year continues to increase. The movement base focuses on the interests of women farmers by working with the women's section of the Peasants Union for the improvement of the socio-economy of women farmers. In addition, they also held mass campaigns to combat illiteracy and political education for women. Religious-based women's organizations also grew rapidly during the Old Order period such as Aisiyah (Muhammadiyah) and Fatayat (Nahdahul Ulama). The two organizations are increasingly conducting various programs to alleviate women from ignorance. [8]

The Old Order era was marked by tensions between the military and the PKI and the Islamic groups and the PKI. These tensions grew even stronger when the results of the 1955 election, declared a shocking result in which the PKI managed to gain a lot of votes and occupy the fourth position. There was fear of the growing influence of the PKI in the government, so that an anti-PKI front was formed consisting of religious groups, the military, and several PNI members.

With the Guided Democracy system in place, President Sukarno's position became absolute power. The dislike of religious groups and the military towards the PKI also grew stronger. This tension also occurs between Gerwani and Islamic women's organizations due to differences in views on the marriage law, in which Islamic women's organizations want marriage law in accordance with Islamic law while Gerwani firmly rejects the practice of polygamy which is still legalized in the Islamic marriage law. Women's organizations were increasingly disillusioned by the personal life of the president of Sukarno who practiced polygamy [4].

The political situation in Indonesia around 1963-1965 experienced turmoil related to West Irian and organized a campaign to crush Malaysia. This situation was exploited by some anti-PKI parties by spreading slander that the PKI was involved in the killing of the window-general at Lubang Buaya. The spread of news with a negative connotation about the PKI succeeded in

forming bad thoughts from the community towards the PKI. As a result, Gerwani as part of the PKI was eliminated from the official history of the Indonesian women's movement.

Since October 1, 1965, the long history of women's struggles in the Old Order era was cut off. The fall of the old order regime marked the beginning of the new order regime which suppressed independent women's organizations [10].

4.1.3 The Women's Movement during the New Order

The fall of the old order became a momentum for the suppression of movements affiliated with leftist politics, including Gerwani. This incident marked the demise of the Women's Movement in Indonesia and marked the entry of a period known as the New Order.

The New Order regime was built by creating bad myths against the PKI and Gerwani and succeeded in constructing society to believe in Suharto's sole power. Women began to be escorted to the place that should be for women, namely in the household and social environment [4].

During the New Order era, values considered ideal regarding women as playing merely a domestic role were re-socialized in the women's movement during the New Order era. Women can work, but must not forget their responsibilities to the family as mothers and wives [8].

The PKI purge incident caused the loss of independent women's organizations and was replaced by large organizations such as Dharma Wanita, Dharma Pertiwi and PKK. The presence of this organization is more related to the interests of the husband. Although these organizations have received assistance from the government both politically and practically, the orientation of these women's organizations is still artificial. The government easily controls women so that no one opposes the ruling regime and makes women fully support the interests of their husbands and the military bureaucracy. As a result, many women cannot take part in politics [5].

The flow of gender discrimination during the New Order era was getting stronger. The role of women continues to be constructed around dedicating their lives to the success of their husbands' careers and children's education. More strictly, those who refuse to accept roles assigned by the state will have limited access rights to government services and will be labeled leftist or communist. To control women without coercion and physical violence, the Suharto regime issued several programs that actually controlled women's participation in the public sphere and perpetuated women's activities as housewives. Women's organizations such as Dharma Wanita, Dharma Pertiwi and PKK do not make women have freedom in political contestation. On the other hand,

the space for women in the organization is very limited because the position of women in the organization is arranged hierarchically and patriarchally with the assumption that the position of the husband determines the position of the wife [1]. The personal qualities of each woman were neglected in the membership structure of women's organizations during the New Order era.

It is not without reason that women's membership status is based on the position of the husband. This membership status allows the government to mobilize women's participation through their wives. The wife of a leader can mobilize members under her to support the decisions made by her husband. Indirectly, the New Order women's organizations manifested the wife's function into a supporter of husband [11]. Although the state politically accommodates women's participation in an organization, in practice women cannot independently compile program designs, and even tend to be not prioritized. On the contrary, the direction of women's movement in this organization is directed to support any state policy.

The New Order regime identified the status of women through their roles as housewives, known as the ideology of *ibuism*. The government creates discourse on exemplary others as measured by the success of supporting the husband's career and children's education. Other successes the women get in society tend to be ignored, where they will not be considered eligible as model mothers if their position as a woman is much higher than that of her husband. Apart from controlling the military as the basis of his power, Suharto demanded government officials to become members of the Golongan Karya party (Golkar), the party with the largest mass base in the New Order era. This party had hegemonic programs, one of which was the Guidelines for the Appreciation and Practice of Pancasila (P4). Suharto obliged party members to seek a P4 pass certificate, if they did not want to seek a pass certificate, the government would limit access to services, even worse, and they would be threatened by radicals [1]. That is why Suharto was able to continue to build his power for 32 years in coercive and dominating ways. At this time the patriarchal values that women's movements had fought for in the previous era were more and more preserved at this time in line with the strong domination of the state with its domineering and dominating ideology.

The government in the New Order era was faced with a world economy that was volatile in the 1980s. This has resulted in the unbalanced condition of the country's development and an increasingly severe economic crisis. This condition caused people's trust to begin to waver in the Suharto government. As a result, NGO-led protest movements emerged; including in it several NGOs accommodate women's power.

In the mid-1980s to the 1990s the independent women's movement began to re-emerge as a reaction against co-opted women's organizations. The women's movement that emerged during this period was

characterized by non-political organizations, with a foundation format that had a narrower membership base. These foundations include *Yayasan Anisa Swasti (Yasanti)* (1982), *Yayasan Kalyanamitra* (1984) and women's organizations based on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in various regions such as *Solidaritas Perempuan*, *Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita (PPSW)*, *Lembaga Studi Pengembangan Perempuan (LSPPA) Anak Rifka Anisa*. In addition, networks with gender-based taglines have also emerged, such as *Forum Setara*, *Kelompok Studi Gender*, *Kelompok Sadar Gender* and so on [2].

The condition of the crisis in Indonesia got worse when it entered 1997. During this period, protest movements began to intensify, both among students, academics, and women's organizations. Until in May 1998 Suharto's New Order regime was overthrown by a large demonstration carried out by students [8]

4.1.4 Women's Movement Today

The reform era was considered a milestone that was able to redefine the political role of women during the New Order. The basis for the activities of these groups was gender awareness raising, political education, advocacy for women's rights and assistance to women who experienced sexual violence. The peak of the women's movement in the reform era was marked by the National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan), aiming to enforce violence against women [2].

In post-New Order regime, in Indonesia, various NGO-based movements emerged as a part of the global project of the World Bank. In addition to injecting debt funds to the Indonesian government, the World Bank is also actively involved in developing civil society participation in politics in the development process. This includes accommodating the women's movement so that they can participate in coloring local to national politics [12].

The opening of democratic space in Indonesia is in line with the strengthening of local values and religious values which have been under pressure from society. The women's movement also has a new form of awareness where at present the women's movement is present as a movement capable of defining problems and the direction of its own movement, and the women's movement is no longer part of the affiliation of other organizations' political agendas, various numbers of actors and fields of work, as well as increasingly diverse definitions of gender issues. In addition, political openness in the post-New Order era opened more space for the possibility of exchanging ideas and interpreting the substance of the movement in women's organizations. This openness gives the public more opportunities to view public policy more critically [6].

Today's women's organizations deal with more

diverse problems such as increasing the reinforcement of political participation, providing legal assistance, violence against women, reproductive health as well as problems that in the previous era were not the domain of the women's movement such as the issue of pluralism, women in Islam, environmentalists and sexualists. In addition, the women's movement actors have broad networking capabilities, allowing for a wider scope of work for the organization. It is important for women's organizations to carry out an agenda to find methods on how to integrate women in the development process. This is based on the assumption that the backwardness of women is due to irrational attitudes that still adhere to traditional culture disabling women to participate in the development process [6]

5. CONCLUSION

The dynamic growth of women's movement in Indonesia from the colonial period to the reform era has had ups and downs. The developing women's organizations have their own uniqueness in terms of the form of the movement, the issues raised and the relationship with the state. The women's movement during the colonial period of women figures emerged from, among others, the aristocratic wives of national movement figures, the content raised around education equality and the elimination of polygamy, and during the national movement women organized themselves in the form of organizations as affiliations of national movement organizations. The women's movement in the Old Order era was marked by the affiliation of women's organizations with political parties, religious and military groups' tension against the PKI and Islamic women's organizations against Gerwani regarding the Marriage Law, and the destruction of Gerwani as a revolutionary women's organization due to political propaganda to overthrow the old order. The women's movement in the New Order era experienced a setback due to the co-optation of the state to support all government policies, the ideology of motherism and large organizations formed by the government to domesticate the role of women, and the emergence of an independent women's movement using the foundation format as a result of the crisis in the 1980s until the fall of the New Order. The women's movement today is synonymous with the independent women's movement and is not affiliated with political organizations, handles a more diverse range of issues, and has the ability to network widely among female perpetrators.

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