

Women and Politics: Women's Participation in The Indonesian National Political Movement, 1923 -1942

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze women's political participation during the national movement. The movement period began the women's movement to voice their political ideas towards independence. The women's political movement has long existed. Women have struggled to establish their existence since colonial times. Analysis of women's participation efforts in the political field is described in three organizations from three cities, namely Batavia (Jakarta), Jogjakarta, and Medan, each through Perhimpunan Kaoem Betawi representing regional organizations, Aisyiyah representing socio-religious organizations and Keoetamaan Isteri representing socio-political organizations. This research uses historical heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography methods. The heuristic stage is carried out by searching for library sources, documents, and archives, and it is selected based on the source criticism carried out. The results show that the wishes and demands for women's political participation have not been realized. The limited opportunities for women to sit in the Volksraad and direct competition with men were factors that did not directly result in women being involved in politics.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis partisipasi politik perempuan pada masa pergerakan nasional. Masa pergerakan mengawali gerakan perempuan untuk menyuarkan ide-ide politiknya menuju kemerdekaan. Gerakan politik perempuan sudah ada sejak lama. Perempuan telah berjuang untuk membangun eksistensinya sejak zaman kolonial. Analisis terhadap upaya partisipasi perempuan dalam bidang politik digambarkan pada tiga organisasi dari tiga kota, yaitu Batavia (Jakarta), Jogjakarta, dan Medan, masing-masing melalui Perhimpunan Kaoem Betawi yang mewakili organisasi daerah, Aisyiyah yang mewakili organisasi sosial keagamaan, dan Keoetamaan Isteri yang mewakili organisasi sosial-keagamaan. organisasi politik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah yang terdiri atas heuristik, kritik, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Tahap heuristik dilakukan dengan mencari sumber perpustakaan, dokumen, dan arsip, serta dipilih berdasarkan kritik sumber yang dilakukan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa keinginan dan tuntutan partisipasi politik perempuan belum terwujud. Terbatasnya kesempatan perempuan untuk duduk di Volksraad dan persaingan langsung dengan laki-laki menjadi faktor yang tidak secara langsung menyebabkan perempuan terlibat dalam politik.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in politics is an issue that never ends up being discussed. More and more Indonesian women are entering politics, but this tendency does not negate an adequate quality because it still does not place women in a central position. Women's political representation is important in strengthening women's participation and encouraging decision-making that supports and prospers women. Currently, women's representation in Indonesian politics continues to in-

crease, one of which is visible is the increase in women's representation in the legislature from the 1999 to the 2019 election. In the 1999 election, women's representation was 8.8% of seats in the DPR. In the 2004 election, women's representation rose to 11.82%, then in the 2009 election, women's representation rose to 17.86%, but in the 2014 election, it fell to 17.32%, and rose again in the 2019 election which was 20.87% (BPS, 2023; Ardiansa, 2016). The data illustrates that the quota of 30% of women's representation in the legislature has not been achieved even though it has increased in each election. This fact raises the question of why the quota of 30% women's representation in the legislature has not been achieved.

The low political participation of Indonesian women cannot be separated from the cultural factors of our society, namely patriarchal culture. In society, there is still a stigma that women are mothers and wives who are not suitable in the political realm. The conception that asserts "leaders are men" deters women from participating in politics. This inequality extends to all aspects, including politics. Such a view has long existed in Indonesian society (Putri & Farha, 2022). Therefore, women activists have tried this view for decades, from the Kartini era to the present. The struggle for women's equality with men's position continues, especially equality in the political field. The purpose of this study is to analyze how women's participation in politics during the national movement. The movement period became the focus of this study because it was the beginning of the women's movement to voice their political ideas toward Indonesian independence. This shows that the women's movement in politics has existed for a long time. Since the colonial era, women have struggled to establish their existence. To analyze how the women's movement in the political field will be described, three organizations in 3 cities, namely Batavia (Jakarta), Medan and Yogyakarta, and Perkumpulan Kaoem Betawi, represent regional organizations. Keoetamaan Isteri represents socio-political organizations, and Aisyiyah represents socio-religious organizations.

METHOD

This research uses historical methods consisting of 4 stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Gottschalk, 1985; Sjamsuddin, 2007). Researchers prioritize the search for primary sources supported by a secondary source. Primary sources searched are documentary sources that include newspapers, magazines, and archives

from existing organizations. The sources of documents excavated include ideas and thoughts about the role of women in the pride movement during the national movement, especially in *Berita Kaoem Betawi* Magazine, published in Batavia, *Kaoetamaan Isteri* Magazine, published in Medan, and *Majalah Soeara Muhamamdiyah and Aisyiyah* published in Yogyakarta. Secondary sources are obtained from books and scientific journal articles. The next step after source tracing is source criticism, both internal and external criticism. Internal and external criticism begins with sorting and distinguishing between valid and less valid sources. After obtaining valid and credible sources through the stages of criticism, proceed with interpretation, which includes interpretation and analysis to relate logically between research questions and the data obtained. The final step of this research is historiography, which is writing the research results in a structured, complete, and comprehensive manner (Gottschalk, 1985; Sjamsuddin, 2007).

WOMEN AND POLITICS: FROM THOUGHT TO ACTION MOVEMENTS

Looking at the historical journey of women in Indonesia, especially during the Indonesian national movement (1908-1942), we can learn many lessons about how Indonesian women tried to empower themselves and increase their political role. However, the efforts of women were not always easy because there was still a common view that prevailed at that time that hindered women's movement. At the beginning of the 20th century, women still experienced discrimination in education, especially in modern politics. Discrimination occurred due to the colonial government's general policy in education and cultural and religious restrictions. For example, the view that women's activities should be carried out only in the domestic sector or certain values in Islam that place men as leaders. Thus, there is an assumption in most people that the political world is considered a men's world where women are considered inappropriate side by side and active in it.

Several Indonesian women leaders are trying to empower themselves to face challenges in women's political participation during the Indonesian National Movement. Although initially, it was not directly in the political world, it was in education and the press. Nevertheless, their activities in empowering themselves inspired other women to participate more broadly in the political field of the Indonesian National Movement.

Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi: Inviting Women to Join the National Movement

Since the beginning of the 20th century, women's political participation has continued to be pursued. It aligns with the growth of political organizations fighting for Indonesian independence, including Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi, a political organization from the Betawi community in Batavia. Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi, since its establishment in 1923, continues to pay attention to the women's kaoem movement. *Berita Kaoem Betawi*, as the mouthpiece of the *Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi*, contains the writings of Njoja S.A. Manaf Gony, who voiced an invitation for Betawi women to be directly involved in the Indonesian national movement, it was stated through his writing "Kaoem Isteri dengan Pergerakan Kebangsaan" following the quote:

Ta' bisa kita poengkiri! Bahwa pada zaman dewasa ini, doenia pergerakan Kebangsaan Indonesia menghendaki tenaga jang lebih banjak dan lebih sampoerna. Keadaan internasional menendjoekkan kepada kita, bahwa apa-apa jang terdjadi disekeliling kita pada masa ini, memaksa kita berdjombang jang terlebih bersoenggoehsoenggoeh kearah perdjalan Kebangsaan goena mentjapai: Indonesia Raya dan Moelia! ("Kaoem Isteri dengan Pergerakan Kebangsaan", 1940)

The quote explains that in the 1930s, the Indonesian national movement demanded great energy to strive earnestly to achieve Indonesia and be noble. However, the Betawi people support those who move in the field more. Manaf Gony explained that the movement carried out by men towards the glory of the Indonesian nation needs support from wives. Kaoem Isteri, and one of them, Kaoem Isteri Betawi at that time, was still standing outside the line. The wives did not sign to help the men in the national stream's direction. Some Kaoem Isteri Betawi still believe that there is no point in women being invited to meet and help morally and financially among nationalities because the national movement is very dependent on men only.

Betawi women are still not called to fight alongside men in the national movement. It appears that although among the women's movement have been born such as Isteri Sedar, Pasoendan Isteri, and others, the Betawi wives are still unwilling and unable to associate, let alone associate themselves with the national community, even if there are already those who associate among the movement no more than 1% of the number. The reason for this is that the Betawi wives have not been moved into the movement because they do not want to mix. They

do not need to mix with men because the national movement is intended for men, and women stay home. Nevertheless, this is not true because women are responsible for educating their children so that they will later have intelligence for the nation and the nation. Manaf Gony believes it is time for the Betawi Wives to join men in fighting in the movement. Wives are obliged to help men both morally and materially. This is based on the opinion of Dr. Heinrich, who said that without women, a nation's civilization cannot be aspired to and cannot be born the intelligence of a nation if its women do not fight alongside men.

Berita Kaoem Betawi strongly supports the writings of Manaf Gony, asking women to participate in the national movement and men to encourage their wives to join the movement. In the 1930s, the involvement of women in the world of movement was still a matter of debate. Some supported active women in the movement, but some still said the taboo of women mixed with men. Manaf Gony's writing received both pro and con responses from *Berita Kaoem Betawi* readers. Here are excerpts of writings that support women moving together with men in the national movement. The post supports:

Istri Betawi bersatoelah!!

(Samboetan dari artikel Njonja S. A. Manaf Gony).

Artikel dari Njonja Manaf Gony jang termoeat dalam madjallah *Berita Kaoem Betawi* No. 1 boelan Januari jl, saja samboet dengan 100pCt persetoedjoean. Memang saja mempoenjai tjita tjita oentoeak membangoenkan kaoem Istri Betawi, tetapi beloem ada djalan oentoeak memoelainja. Maka setelah membatja seroean Njonja terseboet, dengan tida ajal lagi maka saja goeloeng tangan dan sigra menjamboet artikel itoe. Bahwa selain dari saja, ada djoega jang mempoenjai toedjoean sebagai saja, seperti Njonja itoe maka saja jakin bahwa tida hanja kami berdoea, tentoe banjak lagi Istri-istri Betawi jang sefaham dengan kami. Maka kami minta dan harap, nanti Njonja Manaf Gony dapat mendirikan tjabang Istri dari Perh. Kaoem Betawi, jang mana tentoe dapat dibentoeak ("Isteri Betawi Bersatulah", 1940).

The above quote shows strong support for the writings of Manaf Gony, who invited women to join the national movement—and asked Manaf Gony to establish or form an Isteri Perhimpunan Kaoem Betawi branch. Manaf Gony's writing, in addition to receiving support, was also challenged by readers of *Berita Kaoem Betawi*, especially those from groups who viewed from Islamic law the gathering

of women with men in the world of movement.

There is a letter from Sahlani that opposes women joining the movement; according to him, in Islamic circles, women do not need to appear together with men in the movement. Men have a lot to achieve what they aspire to. Women should not mix with men in all matters.

Sahlani's letter received a response from *Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi*, which *Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi* did not support Sahlani's opinion and still supported Manaf Gony's opinion that wanted Betawi women to join men moving in the world of the national movement. *Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi* emphasized that the basis of the association movement is the national movement. The following is an excerpt from the statement from the association:

Soeatoe pergerakan jang berdasar KEBANGSAAN atawa Nationalisme, akan melingkoengi kepentingan kepentingan Ke bangsaannya sadja, walaupun diantara bangsa itoe, terdapat beberapa orang jang memeloek Agama jang b'erlainlainan. Oempamanja Perhimpoean „Kaoem Betawi”, jang berdasar KEBANGSAAN, walaupun namanja seperti bersifat provincialistisch dan IOOpCt. anggotanja beragama Islam, akan tetapi Perhimpoean itoe, tetap mempoenjai dasar Kebangsaan Indonesia oentoek menoejoe kepada Indonesia Raya dan Moelia. (Lebih landjoet lihat Statuten K. B. Ajat 3 sub a dan b. Red.) (“Doenia Isteri”, 1940)

The quote above shows that *Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi* strongly supports women's active participation in the world movement together with men to achieve Greater Indonesia. As Mrs. S.A. Manaf Gony thought, women must be actively involved in movement organizations, voicing aspirations about the world of women's lives, even further contributing to voicing the political world of the national movement to lead to Indonesian independence.

Aisyiyah: Building the Character of Indonesian Women

One of the areas of concern after the enactment of Ethical Politics is education. The expansion of educational opportunities at this time began to reach women. Although not all groups can sit in school, the change in education policy has brought significant changes for women. Later, girls' schools founded by indigenous people, such as Kautamaan Isteri School and Kartini School, began to emerge. In addition to the emergence of all-girls schools, associations have also developed to teach various skills such as cooking, sewing, and other household

skills. (Suryochondro, 1984, p. 77-79) The increasing level of education women obtain impacts the awareness of women's rights and abilities. This then gave birth to various women's organizations, which then struggled to improve the position of women through various fields, one of which was through politics.

Women's roles and politics will always be interesting. The word politics comes from the Yunan language, namely *polis*, which means city-state. At that time, the development in the city-state was that people interacted with each other to achieve prosperity. It can be interpreted that politics is a process of interaction between individuals and other individuals to achieve the common good. (Seta, 2011, p. 2)

One of the organizations established then was Aisyiyah, an extension of the Muhammadiyah organization. Aisyiyah's organization itself focuses on women and children. Just like Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah is one of the organizations that does not directly participate in politics. Nevertheless, through her activities, Aisyiyah also fosters political awareness, especially for women. In political practice, the name Aisyiyah is not often heard. One of the reasons that caused this was the nature of the Aisyiyah organization, which did not engage in practical political practices to maintain the purity of the Aisyiyah movement as an organization.

As a social organization based in Yogyakarta, the initial focus of Aisyiyah's activities was to invite women to be involved in the community. According to Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, who is the founder of Aisyiyah, kitchen affairs, which at that time were still attached to women's affairs, should not be a barrier for women to go directly into society (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2011, p. 19). Through her various programs, Aisyiyah invites the community to come down directly and get involved in community life.

The establishment of Aisyiyah is expected to encourage Kauman women to participate in society, da'wah movements, and education. In addition to the housework they usually do, women are expected to be able to bring themselves up more in society (Darban & Mu'arif, 2017, p. 57). This is also considered the first step expected to bring changes to women, especially in Kauman, where previously, many daily activities were limited at home (Rofah, 2000).

At the beginning of its establishment, Aisyiyah focused on religious fields such as the construction of *musala* for women, the celebration of Islamic holidays, religious courses for women, and

training for *muballighat* in remote areas. Along with the organization's development, Aisyiyah expanded her movement activities into other fields, such as education, health, social services, and community empowerment. In its development, Aisyiyah's affairs increased to eight parts, namely Teaching Affairs, Wal'Asri Affairs, Dzakhir Affairs, Tabligh Affairs, Naswiatul Aisyiyah Affairs, Orphan Wives Affairs, Tabligh Aisyiyah and Illiteracy Extermination (HB Moehammadijah, 1934). The decision of the 24th Muhammadiyah Congress was simplified into three affairs, namely Tabligh Affairs, Teaching Affairs and Naswiatul Aisyiyah Affairs. (Setiawan, 2007, p. 85)

Through her various programs, such as eradicating illiteracy, recitations, and others, Aisyiyah involved women in the community's social life. Furthermore, Aisyiyah was also involved in one of the important events in the history of Indonesian women, namely the Indonesian Women's Congress.

1928 was an important year in the history of women in Indonesia. This year, women held the Indonesian Women's Congress for the first time. Initiated by R.A. Soekonto, Nyi Hadjar Dewantoro, and Soejatin, the congress was successfully held in Yogyakarta on December 22-25, 1928. The congress was attended by representatives of more than 30 women's organizations from various groups and regions.

With generally excellent front-speaking skills, Siti Moendjiah was chosen to represent Aisyiyah and read her speech at the 1928 Indonesian Women's Congress. Siti Moendjiah read a long speech entitled 'Women's Degrees' on the second day of the congress. First, she said that Aisyiyah had long wanted to hold an event that gathered Indonesian women from various organizations. Siti Moendjiah began her speech by reminding the women at the congress that anyone with noble ideals will be achieved if there is a desire and tone of strength. According to her, the purpose of this women's congress can be achieved if women have a strong line and close brotherhood. She also said that women are not easy to divide. Women must have a broad view and knowledge to have such a close brotherhood and a strong line. In addition, women must also work patiently and carefully (Sutjiatiningsih, 1991, pp. 21-22).

On the last day of the congress, December 25, 1928, at about 8:00 p.m., a meeting was held to discuss the results. The first decision taken by Congress was to establish Perikatan Perempuan

Indonesia (PPI). The organization is formed like a normal organization with a chairman, secretary, and treasurer. For the organization's financing, members of the PPI must pay at least one guilder. Not only as an organization, PPI will also establish a newspaper whose editors will be chosen by the PPI management (Sutjiatiningsih, 1991, p. 145). Of the 30 organizations present, 18 immediately stated their availability to join the PPI, while the rest stated they had to ask permission first from the organization's management (ANRI, nd.).

Furthermore, PPI will establish studies to help underprivileged women continue their schooling. The establishment of these *studiefonds* will be separate from PPI and have its special management to help girls who cannot afford to pay for schooling. In addition, the establishment of this body will be separate from the PPI itself. Not only that, PPI will also strengthen scouting education for women and prevent child marriage (Blackburn, 2007, p. 146).

This Indonesian Women's Congress produced three motions to be sent to the government. The first motion was about girls' schools, where the congress talked about the lack of girls' schools, which caused many girls to not go to school. Based on this, the congress participants wanted PPI to ask the government for additional schools ("Motie-Motie Congres Perempoean Indonesia Jang Pertama di Mataram," 1929).

The second motion deals with *taklik* nikah. *Taklik* is a declaration of the fall of talaq or divorce, according to the vows pronounced for breaking the marriage vows. At the time of the speech, many women still did not know about the rules of *taklik* in marriage in Indonesia. This causes many Indonesian women to misunderstand their marriage rights and obligations. The absence of regulations explaining this matter is considered to be a factor that results in ignorance on the part of women. Therefore, PPI requested that the government write the regulations regarding *taklik*. In addition, the congress participants also requested that the *Religious Raad* so that when married, both the female and male parties be made a letter so that when talaq occurs, it can be carried out according to religious regulations ("Motie-Motie Congres Perempoean Indonesia," 1929).

The third motion proposed addresses financial assistance to widows and orphans. At that time, many widows and children lived unworthy lives after being divorced by their husbands. This happened because there was no government regulation regarding the assistance of widows and or-

phans. Therefore, the congress participants wanted the PPI to ask the government to make a regulation regulating the provision of assistance to widows and orphans. In addition, these three motions are also expected to reach the *Volksraad* and the press throughout Indonesia ("Motie-Motie Congres Perempoean Indonesia," 1929).

In addition to these three motions, congress also made decisions on the issue of child marriage. Through this congress, it is hoped that the participants will make propaganda about the bad marriage of children. In addition, the congress participants wanted government officials to explain to their people the severity of child marriage so that child marriage could be prevented.

Keoetamaan Istri: Women's Struggle to Penetrate the *Volksraad*

Unlike Perhimpoean Kaoem Betawi, which is still in the stage of inviting women to join the world of movement, Keoetamaan Istri in Medan, with its magazine, voices the aspirations of women sitting in the *Volksraad*. The struggle of women to elevate their status continues gradually, step by step, to a higher level. As a result of the ethical politics that developed in the early 20th century, educated women have begun to realize the values and rights that need to be fought. This was stated in the December edition of *Keoetamaan Indonesia* magazine No. 3 of 1937 article entitled *Menentoekan Aliran Pergerakan Poeteri Kita*, which presented the results of Rasoena Said's thoughts. According to her, women must be prepared to step up to determine the flow of their movement. They follow the example of feminism that had developed in Europe then. The principle of feminism aims to eliminate the difference between men and women. Concrete movement guidelines by upholding equality and carrying out the division of labor for men and women. They believe men and women have their share in everything, including political, social, and economic affairs. Women's struggle to improve their position in the eyes of society starts from just taking care of the household, becoming involved in social circles, increasing general knowledge, and finally participating with men to improve society. This step was achieved when women representatives managed to sit in the *gemeenteraad* (City Council) to the *Volksraad* ("Motie-Motie Congres Perempoean Indonesia," 1929) ("Kaoem Poeteri Kita ke *Volksraad*", 1928, p. 7).

The role of women in the Dutch East Indies was initially minimal, especially in the political

field. In politics, there are many conditions for women to get the right to vote. As emphasized in the article entitled "*Perempoean dalam Badan Perwakilan*" for December 1938 No.2, it is said that to obtain the right to vote, one must have paid a tax calculated on an income of approximately 300 guilders. However, the right to vote for women still existed at that time, one of which was the right to elect village heads. In *Wet op de Staatsinrichting van Nederl. Indie* article 55 states that those who can be elected or appointed to the *Volksraad* are Dutch citizens who have been 25 years old, residents of the Dutch East Indies, and so on. Therefore, with this policy, women in the Dutch East Indies tried to fight to be able to sit in the *Volksraad*.

In improving society, women have begun to realize the importance of their involvement in the *Volksraad* because, with the involvement of women in the *Volksraad*, they believe that the struggle to improve society is considered easier. As explained by the editor of *Keoetamaan Istri* magazine in the February 1938 edition as follows:

Sangat besarlah goenanja kita kaoem poeteri mempoenjai wakil didalam satoe badan seperti *Volksraad* itoe. Sebab boekan sedikit soal2 jang diperbintjangkan disana, jang teroes langsoeng mengenai soal poeteri dan kepoeterian kita. Dan kita yakin dan pertjaja, bahwa soal2 jang mengenai kaoem perempoean lebih bagoes dan lebih patoet dibtjarakan oleh orang perempoean djoega, sebab bagaimanapoen dalamnja pengetahoean laki-laki tentang kaoem perempoean, tentoe tidak akan dapat melebihi dari pengetahoean kaoem perempoean sendiri ("Kaoem Poeteri Kita ke *Volksraad*", 1928, p. 7).

There are proposals for the involvement of women in the *Volksraad*, among others proposed by Serikat Kaoem Iboe Sumatra (SKIS) in Padang Panjang. After a meeting of members, it was decided that there should be a female representative in the *Volksraad*. At that time, Nj. Maria Ulfah Santoso was appointed as a candidate. In addition, the Executive Board of Istri Indonesia in Semarang advised members of the *Volksraad* to support the candidacy of female representatives in *Volksraad*. In addition to the recommendation from Istri Indonesia's General Manager, Perhimpunan Kaoetamaan Istri also advocated and supported the representation of women in the *Volksraad*. This was explained by the editor of *Keoetamaan Istri* magazine as follows:

Kita dari Keoetamaan Istri mengandjoerkan djoega soepaja perhimpoean-perhimpoean kaoem poeteri seloeroeh Indonesia, menjatakan

persetoendjoennja tentang adanja wakil kaoem poeteri didalam Dewan Ra'jat itoe, dan menjatakan fikirannja masing-masing, djika sekiranja tidak setoendjoe dengan kandidat jang terseboet diatas. Sebaik-baiknya segala soerat-menjoerat tentang hal ini diteroeskan kepada comite di Djakarta atau kepada P. B. Isteri-Indonesia di Semarang. ("Kaoem Poeteri Kita ke Volksraad", 1928, p. 8)

Women's struggle to become members of the *Volksraad* was initially in the form of demands against the government for women's representation. The government answered the demand with a statement that it did not object to the presence of women's representation in the *Volksraad*. As explained in the *July 1939 issue* of *Keoetamaan Isteri* magazine as follows:

Tempo hari telah kita dengan, bahwa Pemerintah tidak merasa keberatan akan adanja anggota poeteri didalam Volksraad dari pihak perempuan Indonesia, asal sadja ternjata golongan itoe mempoenjai minat jang tjoekeop besar terhadap soal perwakilan itoe. Tjoekeop atau tidaknja perhatian kaoem poeteri Indonesia terhadap soal itoe rasanja tidak perloe dikadji lagi, karena sebagai mana telah tersiar dalam soerat-soerat chabar dan madjallah-madjallah, soera dan seroeran kaoem poeteri, dari segala podjok dan pendjoeroe, telah gempar memenoehi soeasana Indonesia (Keoetamaan Isteri, 1939).

The government's support was welcomed by women with the hope that in the next selection of *Volksraad* members, female representatives would be elected to sit as members of the *Volksraad*.

At the time of the election of members of the *Volksraad* for the period 1939-1943, each faction in society competed to show the figures they brought to membership in the *Volksraad*. One of the sizable groups at the time was women raising candidates. By the time the members of the *Volksraad* were elected, the women were already happy because they thought the hope of women becoming members of the *Volksraad* would soon be realized. However, after the elections were over and the members of the *Volksraad* were announced, it turned out that no female Indonesian member was sitting as a member.

After the election of members of the *Volksraad* was completed with disappointing results for women, several women's associations held a meeting on July 28, 1939 intending to hold demonstrations or protests against the government because of the non-appointment of Indonesian women representatives to the *Volksraad* in 1939-1943.⁴² The representatives of women's associations who

held the meeting were: Pasoendan Isteri, Isteri Indonesia, PKVI, Perserikatan Isteri Minangkabau, dan Serikat Isteri Djakarta (Keoetamaan Isteri, 1939, p.6).

The support of Perhimpunan Keoetamaan Isteri for the struggle to create women's representation in the *Volksraad* included publishing news about demands and development and encouraging women to continue to fight for what they wanted. As well as in the closing article written by the editor of the July 1939 edition of *Keoetamaan Isteri* magazine as follows:

Kita yakin dan pertjaja, bahwa tindakan saudara-saudara kita di Betawi itoe akan dapat samboetan dan persetoedjoean jang sepenoehnja dari seloeroeh kaoem poeteri Indonesia jang sadar dan insjaf akan nasibnja. Kita dari K.I menjatakan persetoendjoeandan kegembiraan kita, dan bersedia boeat membantoe sekedar tenbaga jang ada pada kita.

Melihat gaja-gajannja, bertambah koeatlah kejakinan kita, bahwa pintoe gedoeng Volksraad jang kokoh dan masih tertoe toep rapat bagi kita itoe, nanti akan terboeka djoega... an kemoedian akan masoeklah wakil kita kesana, oentoek berdjoelang bersama dengan kaoem poeteranja, membela kaoem poeteri Indonesia seloeroehnja" (Keoetamaan Isteri, 1939, p.6).

Women's political struggle in the Dutch East Indies was successfully carried out in 1935 when Mrs. Razoux Schultz, president of Indo-Europeesche Verbond (I. E. V.) Vrouwenorganisatie was appointed lid of the *Volksraad*. Until February 1938, a regulation stated that women were given the right to be elected to the *Gemeenteraad* (city council). However, the right to vote is still given to men, and they are men who can decide whether a woman will be elected or not. The role of women in the representative body can be said to be advanced at that time. Among the Indonesian women's associations that will fight for their place in the council or *raad* include Pasundan Isteri, Perhimpunan Isteri Sedar, dan P.I.P.B. (Persatuan Isteri Pegawai Bestuur).

One female representative, Maria Ulfah Santoso, will be proposed to the *Volksraad*. According to the February 1938 article No. 2, "Kaoem Poetri kita ke Volksraad," she came from Sarikat Kaoem Iboe Sumatra (SKIS) in Padang Panjang. Then, this decision was immediately sent by telegram to Jakarta to be conveyed to the government. Furthermore, P.B. Isteri Indonesia, through her information, has been recommended by Mr. Maria Ulfah as a female representative in

the Volksraad. Maria Ulfah was considered capable of becoming a representative because she was a scholar who graduated from the High Judge School in the Netherlands. He also received the title of *Meester in de rechten*.

This was an amazing thing at that time because women had capable figures such as Maria Ulfah, Soendari, Dr. Ida, and others capable of politics. As emphasized in the October 1938 article No. 9 entitled "*Kemadjoean Poetri Indonesia: Bahan-Bahan Jang Memudahkan Djalannya*" it was written that in some regions, there were already female representatives such as in Surabaya had sat Mrs. Soedirman, in Semarang Mrs. Soenarjo, and Bandung Mrs. Emma Poeradiredja.

The presence of female representatives in *the raad* becomes very useful and has a good influence. No matter how deep men's knowledge of women is, it certainly will not exceed the knowledge of women themselves. With the role of women, they will be able to pay more attention to other women's interests, such as expanding job opportunities in *gemeente* and establishing schools for women. Ki Hadjar Dewantara, in his speech in front of Perhimpunan Kaoem Iboe in Medan, stated that there are many laws about women and children. All these legal regulations are unsatisfactory because men regulate them. It was also explained in the article entitled "*Kepoetrian dalam Masyarakat*" December 1938 edition No. 12, that according to him, all matters concerning women and children should be regulated by women.

Since then, many women's organizations have sought to play an active political role. As written in the January 1939 magazine article *Keoetamaan Isteri* No. 1 entitled "*Soeara dari kongres Poetri Boedi Sedjati*" the organization of Poetri Boedi Sedjati, which initially only focused on working on household needs, then PBS had other goals that were focused. Other objectives include promoting social work, public knowledge, and promoting and improving society, allowing each member to enter political associations.

However, many groups still have expressed objections to women becoming Volksraad lids. The article "*Perempoean dalam Volksraad*," published in April 1939, No. 6, stated that some national press still looked down on women. Some say that women are not suitable to be Volksraad lids because they are only suitable for discussing kitchen and concubine matters. In general, people felt no need for women to sit in the *Volksraad*, because even men could fight for all the interests of women.

With the opportunity for women in the Volksraad, they gladly welcomed and immediately sent candidates to the Volksraad elections in 1939-1943. However, as written in the July 1939 issue No. 7 entitled "*Pintu Telah Terkaboel: Kehendak Beloem Terkaboel*" stated that after the announcement, there was not a single female member of Indonesia sitting as a member. After that, the women were so dissatisfied with the treatment that they protested to the government. Even so, they continue to fight for what is rightfully theirs. They also issued a motion that broadly contained a request to the government in 1943 for a candidate for an Indonesian wife in the Volksraad. This was mentioned in the August issue No. 8, entitled "*Motie Kaoem Poetri Indonesia*".

In the August 1940 issue of News No. 8, entitled "*Soedah Masanja... Poetri Indonesia duduk sebagai anggota di Volksraad*" broke the news of the departure of the only female member of the Volksraad, Mrs. C. H. Razoux Schultz-Metzer. He went to the Netherlands but could not return due to impossible circumstances. As a result, the only female seat in the Volksraad was vacant, and many groups contested the seat, including men. It is unfortunate because the only seats that should be given to women must also be contested by men.

Women at that time felt that the government should be fair to women and did not listen to those who wanted to remove women from the *Volksraad*. This led European women to object to the seat being given to men and to demand that it be given back to women. Demands not only came from one organization but also from various European women. However, from this, it can be seen that the role of indigenous women is still poorly placed in government, in this case, the *Volksraad*. In addition, from the picture conveyed, it can also be seen that society still underestimates women.

The struggle carried out by women to get fair and equal treatment in politics continued to be discussed by the *Wife Virtue Magazine*, namely in October 1941 No. 10 entitled "*Kaoem Iboe dan Hak Memilih*." This article talks about women's struggle to vote. The reason why women are not given the right to vote is that there is an assumption that women who pay attention to politics are extremists so that they can endanger the political world. However, if a woman does not care about politics, then she is considered immature to receive the right to vote. This situation makes women go awry. In addition, some think that if women enter politics, then household affairs that should be taken care of by women will be neglected. In

reality, household affairs are the responsibility of men as well. Then, it is very unfair that the right to vote is given only to men.

One of the struggles to get the right to vote was also fought through the 3rd Indonesian Women's Congress in Bandung. Through this congress, Indonesian women proposed that the right to vote be given to them as widely as possible. In addition, several Indonesian women's associations such as Pasoendan Isteri, Isteri Indonesia, and other women's associations were confirmed through an article published in April 1941 No. 4 entitled "*Perempuan dan Dewan2*", where they also submitted requests in the form of Indonesian women to be given seats in the People's Council, but the request was rejected.

Another event regarding women's struggles also occurred in Minangkabau, namely the demand for seats for women in the Minangkabau Council. The March 1941 issue No. 3 described this event as "*Kaoem Poetri dan Dewan2 (Raad)*". This request was expressed through a motion submitted to the Minangkabau Council. Of the 20 existing commissions, only one commission approved the motion. So, the motion submitted was rejected. The refusal is because it is considered contrary to religion and custom. In addition, the desire to be given the widest possible suffrage to be noticed by men was also included in the GAPI (Gabungan Politik Indonesia) memorandum, which was then submitted to Commissie Visman because women and men should be treated equally.

CONCLUSION

Factors that limit or hinder women's political movements in Indonesia that still exist today can be seen from the history of women's journey in fighting for their political rights since the time of the Indonesian National Movement. Much can be learned from the history of women's political movements in Indonesia, so it becomes a lesson to continue to strive to empower women to obtain their political rights in a patriarchal Indonesian society.

During the Indonesian National Movement, women's political movements were limited in terms of custom, culture, and religion. There is an assumption that women are considered unfit to enter politics and take part outside their domestic duties as daughters, wives, and mothers in the family. On the contrary, customary, cultural, and religious support puts men at the helm. This creates a general perception of men towards women,

becoming an accepted perception by women. Most women believe their duty is only subordinate to men's political movements. So, some of the obstacles also come from women's beliefs.

In addition, the colonial government's policies, which did not fully favor women, also contributed to the narrow opportunities for women to play a role in politics. Government policies limit Indonesians' access to school because they have adjusted to their social strata. Access to Western (Dutch) education is generally intended for those with high social strata. While among the nobility (especially in Java and some other regions), women are also traditionally and religiously restricted from activities outside the home, including receiving education. This has resulted in fewer opportunities for girls to attend school. This limitation, in turn, also impacts the opportunity for them to play a greater role in various fields outside the home, including in the political field.

However, some women try to get out of this perspective and stigma. They realized that many women's problems could not be solved by relying solely on policies produced by men's thinking. Especially women's rights in politics and the general welfare of their lives. They are women who joined several socio-political organizations that existed during the National Movement, which men still dominated. The joining of women in the organization is possible because of the support from the organization and the section intended for women in the organization. Among other women in Perhimpunan Kaoem Betawi and Aisyiyah in Yogyakarta, the organization Keoetamaan Isteri actively voices its demands through the press.

Women's movement and political role in Perhimpunan Kaoem Betawi in 1923 was generally still in the form of discourse, appeal, and support, not concrete action. This female figure who voiced the political interests of Betawi women was still limited to Batavia, represented by Mrs. S.A Manaf Gony. The scope of the movement is still limited among Betawi women.

While in the Aisyiyah organization in the 1920s, their role was mostly in the social, educational, and religious fields. There is no real movement or role in politics. This follows the purpose of establishing the Aisyiyah organization as part of the Muhammadiyah organization, which deals with the problems and socio-religious interests of Muhammadiyah women. However, it later developed by empowering the wider community, other than women, and political roles and movements are still not part of the activities of this organiza-

tion. Their work also seems very local, namely in Yogyakarta and its surroundings. Compared to politics, Aisyiyah focuses more on building the character of women so that they can develop and descend into society as social beings.

The Indonesian women's political movement showed more marked progress, both in thought and in action, around the late 1930s. This is shown by the women in Medan who voiced their interests in the political field through writings in *Keoetamaan Isteri* magazine. The desire to be directly involved in making decisions and conveying the aspirations of women was shown by motions to the Dutch East Indies government and their demands to be able to sit as members of the *Volksraad*. In addition, efforts to voice their interests in the magazine involve and mobilize women from and to other regions outside Medan. So, it can be said that the women's movement through the press of *Keoetamaan Isteri* is much wider in scale than in Batavia and Yogyakarta.

Although Indonesian women fully brought Maria Ulfah Soebadyo as a member of the *Volksraad* in 1939, in the end, the wishes and demands of women could not be realized. The limited opportunity to sit as a member of the *Volksraad* and direct competition with men who also wanted to get a seat in the People's Council were factors that Maria Ulfah Soebadyo had not succeeded in sitting in the *Volksraad* seat. Nevertheless, at the very least, concrete action demanding their political rights has already been taken. This is in line with the development of the policy of the Dutch East Indies colonial government in the 1930s-1940s, which opened opportunities for all people of the Dutch East Indies, without exception women, to take part in politics as long as it was done cooperatively through the People's Council.

Indonesian women today are still trying to voice their political rights, and we can look at the history and work of women in the three organizations and newspapers and take valuable lessons on how Indonesian women at that time tried to empower themselves and increase their role in politics. What kind of political actions and thoughts can be the key to the success of women's participation in politics in Indonesia today and in the future.

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