

Breaking the Barriers: Women's Participation in the First Election in Indonesia, 1955

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Abstract: Women are often absent from the political sphere, which is considered the domain of men. Indonesia's first general election, held in 1955, became an important political event. The democratic party not only shows the political attitude of the Indonesian government as a newly independent country but also the participation of the people in it, including women. This study seeks to trace the breakthroughs made by women in the first election in Indonesia. Historical research methods are used in this research, utilizing primary and secondary sources in archives, newspapers, photographs, and relevant literary sources. The study results showed that women can break down the barriers of gender construction to be active in elections with various roles they have. They are not only voters but also actively participate as election organizing committee members, party cadres, campaign teams, and candidates in elections. Various efforts were also made to increase women's participation in the first general election, such as establishing various regulations and laws, education, courses, and political socialization for women, as well as supporting various facilities provided to support women's involvement in elections.

Abstrak: Perempuan sering kali absen dari ranah politik yang selama ini dianggap sebagai ranah laki-laki. Pemilihan umum pertama di Indonesia yang diselenggarakan pada tahun 1955 menjadi peristiwa politik yang penting. Pesta demokrasi tidak hanya menunjukkan sikap politik pemerintah Indonesia sebagai negara yang baru Merdeka, tetapi juga partisipasi masyarakat di dalamnya, termasuk perempuan. Penelitian ini berupaya menelusuri terobosan-terobosan yang dilakukan perempuan pada pemilu pertama di Indonesia. Metode penelitian sejarah digunakan dalam penelitian ini, dengan memanfaatkan sumber primer dan sekunder berupa arsip, surat kabar, foto, dan sumber literatur yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan mampu mendobrak hambatan konstruksi gender untuk aktif dalam pemilu dengan berbagai peran yang dimilikinya. Mereka tidak hanya menjadi pemilih dalam pemilu, namun juga berpartisipasi aktif sebagai panitia penyelenggara pemilu, kader partai, tim kampanye, hingga kandidat dalam pemilu. Berbagai upaya juga dilakukan untuk meningkatkan partisipasi perempuan pada pemilu pertama, seperti menetapkan berbagai peraturan dan undang-undang, pendidikan, kursus, dan sosialisasi politik bagi perempuan, serta mendukung berbagai fasilitas yang disediakan untuk mendukung keterlibatan perempuan dalam pemilu.

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INTRODUCTION

Politics is always synonymous with a male-owned field, with masculinity full of power, requiring leadership, competition, etc. The construction makes it difficult for women to enter it. Thus, to ensure the fulfillment of women's rights, the United Nations in 1948 stated that women and men have the same fundamental rights. The UN also ratified the Women's Political Rights Conference, which states that women

have the same rights as men to vote in elections, have the right to be elected generally and hold public office and all public functions. Women's political rights are also regulated in CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) articles 7 and 8, namely to be elected and vote, participate in the formulation of government policies and their implementation, hold office and carry out government functions at all levels, participate in non-governmental organizations related to political and public life, represent the government at the national level, as well as participating in the work of international organizations (Hardjaloka, 2012).

In Indonesia, in 2008, through Law No. 2, the government stipulated an obligation for political parties to have a minimum of 30% female members. However, many political parties need help to comply with these rules. Women's participation is still below 30% in both the legislature and parliament. In the legislature, in 2019, only 20.8% of the 575 members of the House of Representatives, or only 120 female members. Meanwhile, the Badan Pusat Statistik recorded that women's participation in parliament was only 21.89% in 2021, then in 2022 it decreased to 21.74% (Badan Pusat Statistik, n.d.).

If traced from its history, women's political awareness in Indonesia grew during the movement era. Through the first Indonesian women's congress held in Yogyakarta on December 22-25, 1928, women sought progress in education, marriage, and society. The congress also succeeded in forming Perikatan Perempoean Indonesia (PPI), a forum for the unity of women's associations in Indonesia. According to Blackburn (Blackburn, 2007), the congress was a form of nationalism. The congress is also the first step for Indonesian women to appear in the public sphere nationally, breaking down the barriers of gender construction attached to them by bringing issues of women's progress with the spirit of mothers. They also worked with the nation's fathers to formulate and fight for Indonesian independence.

Indonesia's independence, proclaimed on August 17, 1945, became a new life for women. They not only broke down gender barriers with the issue of women's progress but also defended Indonesia's independence. They strategize and explore new paths to strengthen their role in the nation and state through the political field (Martyn, 2005). Government policies are established to guarantee women's rights as full citizens. In encouraging women's involvement in politics, efforts were also made through education, courses, and socialization

by women and men. Women were then not only present in women's organizations but increasingly joined the fathers of the nation, moving together in a political party (Wieringa, 2010).

The women's movement from the colonial period to the post-Indonesian revolution showed an increasingly rapid direction. Their actions in politics are getting stronger. They seek to enter political spaces, both as individuals and groups. Especially when elections are sought by the government to be held, women's enthusiasm in politics can no longer be contained. According to this background, this study aims to trace the breakthroughs made by women in the first election in Indonesia in 1955. What role did they play in the first elections of 1955? Who is part of it? Since when have they been in politics? Wherever they come? What was their role in the success of the 1955 elections? Why were they eagerly involved in the 1955 elections?

Literature discussing the first election has been found quite a lot. However, these writings have yet to significantly address how women spoke out in the 1955 elections. Feith (1999) describes the 1955 election in detail from his direct observations (Feith, 1999). Feith's writing gets more complete when juxtaposed with what Maulida added in his book, which discusses cases that arose during the 1955 election. However, the discussion of women is not included (Maulida, 2019). Elections held at the local level were discussed in detail by Salim (2014), Setyowati (2016), and Winardi (2018), namely regional elections in Yogyakarta in 1951 (Salim, 2014; Setyowati, 2016; Winardi et al., 2018). Portraits and images of women in elections are featured in these two writings, showing their participation. The election was considered successful and representative as the basis for implementing national elections in 1955.

The discussions of women's history and politics cannot be separated from the studies that have been carried out by de Stuers (2008), Wieringa (2010), Ningrum (2017 & 2018), and Amini (2021). De Stuers' writing (2008) became a baboon book that holistically understood the history of women in Indonesia. In her writings, she discusses thematically-chronologically the work of women that has been done so that detailed discussions about elections and women do not appear (de Stuers, 2008). The same thing happened in Amini's writing, which seeks to portray the development of women's organizations that transcend various periods, from the colonial period to the New Order (Amini, 2021). For about 70 years, there have been various dynamics in women's organizations, ranging from

issues to strategies. Writings that discuss the relationship between women and politics can be seen in Wieringa's *Destruction of the Women's Movement*. She portrays Gerwani as a representation of women active in politics (Wieringa, 2010). Meanwhile, Ningrum's writing, which focuses on women in Tamansiswa, discusses how the characters participate in various fields, including politics (Ningrum, 2017, 2018).

METHOD

This research uses historical research methods with various stages, namely topic selection, heuristics or source collection, source verification (external and internal criticism), interpretation (analysis and synthesis), and writing (historiography) (Kuntowijoyo, 2018; Wasino & Hartatik, 2020). The theme of women and politics is relevant ahead of the 2024 general election in Indonesia. However, research on the history of women and the first elections in Indonesia is rarely discussed, so this gap needs further research and is used as a theme in this paper.

After determining the theme, a collection of sources was carried out. The sources used are primary and secondary. Primary sources are obtained from laws and regulations issued by the government, such as laws on general elections, presidential decrees on the establishment of political parties, etc. Photo and newspaper sources obtained from the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia, Jogja Library Center Yogyakarta, IVAA, arsip-indonesia.org, delpher.nl, and other sources are also used, both accessible online and offline. Secondary sources are books, journal articles, and internet sources.

The sources obtained are then verified, both externally and internally. After that, the source is analyzed to arrange the facts chronologically. The process carried out gradually can then produce a complete historical writing.

PREPARING FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS

Women's political participation and the women's movement in the colonial period have grown. They talked about and fought for women's progress and nationalism in the spirit of mothers, not only in women's organizations but also in the colonial government. Women's political experience became the initial capital for them to appear after Indonesia's independence. After Indonesia's independence, women's participation in politics became stronger. The government guarantees equal rights of women and men in law through Article 27 of the 1945 Con-



Figure 1. PWR's Congress at the General Meeting Hall Jakarta on 6-8 September 1951 (Source: ANRI, 1951)

stitution, while political rights for women are legalized through Law No. 68. The Indonesian government, through Vice President Muhammad Hatta, also issued a Government Declaration (Maklumat Pemerintah) on November 3, 1945, concerning the establishment of political parties in Indonesia. The determination is closely related to the Indonesian government's plan to hold elections.

Long election preparations encourage women to prepare themselves to expand their wings in the political realm further. Perwari, a women's organization formed at its congress in Klaten on December 15-17, 1945, began to be abandoned by its members because it adhered to non-political principles. Some Perwari members chose to join political organizations (Wieringa, 2010). For example, Nyi Sri Mangunsarkoro and Nyi M.D. Hadiprabowo, chairman and first Perwari deputy, preferred establishing the Partai Wanita Rakyat (PWR). This was chosen due to internal organizational conflicts, where this movement to bring Perwari into the political realm was considered to trigger divisions.



Pengurus Partai Wanita Rakyat 1953.

Figure 2. PWR administrators 1953 (Source: Departemen Penerangan, 1959)



Figure 3. Executive Board of the Yogyakarta branch of the Partai Wanita Rakyat 1954 (Source: Ningrum, 2017)

PWR was established in Yogyakarta on September 6, 1946, chaired by Nyi Sri Mangunsarkoro, while his deputy Nyi M.D. Hadiprabowo. Nyi Hadjar Dewantara, a Tamansiswa figure, became an advisor to PWR. The founders of PWR believed that women's freedom could only be achieved by 100% political struggles. Divinity, citizenship, and nationality are the three principles firmly held by the Partai Wanita Rakyat. The party's areas of struggle include politics, economics, education, society, culture, and defense-security. Unfortunately, the party did not garner many votes when local elections were held in Yogyakarta in October 1951. This made PWR unable to advance to the next stage of the election. The party disappeared from circulation after its chairman died in 1959 (Kementerian Penerangan, 1954).

In the Indonesian revolution, President Sukarno held a political course for women behind the grand building of Yogyakarta in 1947. She called for women to become free human beings and be actively involved in the national struggle. The course was attended by wives of officials and women figures, such as Fatmawati, Rachmi Hatta,



Figure 4. Women's political course by President Sukarno at Yogyakarta Palace on December 17, 1947 (Source: IVAA, n.d.)

Nyi Suratmi Iman Sudiyat, Nyi Sayogo from Tamansiswa, and other participants. Every Wednesday at 10.00-12.00 WIB, the course participants attend with yellow cards containing their names, dates of birth, and addresses (Ningrum, 2017).

After the Revolutionary War ended and stability began to improve, efforts to organize a new spirit emerged. The 1950s became the initial foothold for several women's organizations in formulating their political strategies. This is motivated by the discourse on implementing elections that have been breathed since October 5, 1945. 1950, the two federations of women's movements that split during the revolution reunited. To strengthen this unity, a congress was held in Jakarta in November 1950 under the Indonesian Women's Congress (Kongres Wanita Indonesia: KWI). In addition to discussing women's progress, the congress also discussed forming a state, where Pancasila was approved as a joint guideline and maintaining world peace. The second KWI Congress was held again in 1952 in Bandung. One of the discussions was the involvement of women in elections to vote and be elected (Wieringa, 2010).

Women are increasingly aware of the importance of their involvement in politics. Many of them inflamed the spirit through writing to unite the spirit of these women. These writings are also part of educational media that instills and fosters women's political awareness. For example, Supeni Pujobuntoro (1954) wrote a book, *Wanita dan Pemilihan Umum* (Pudjobuntoro, 1954), while Nj. Mudigdio, Nj. Setiati Surasto, and Nj. Amir Sjari-fudin (1960) writes about *Hak-hak Politik Wanita* (Mudigdio et al., 1960). Many women's organizations were affiliated with political parties, later becoming the women's wings organization. Not all women's organizations or political parties openly acknowledge the affiliation they built. At the party, they are given tasks related to the duties of mothers and wives, such as taking care of health, education, and others. These roles are an essential task for Indonesian women as a mother of the nation. Using their feminine construction, through the jargon of the nation's mother, women can rush into various fields and participate in national issues or are called nationalist feminists (Martyn, 2005).

Women who choose to distance themselves from politics strategize by entrusting the issues they fight for to political parties with similar ideologies. Perwari, for example, entrusted the

Table 1. List of women's political organizations/parties affiliated with political parties.

No	Name of Women's Organization/Party	Party Affiliation
1	Gerakan Wanita Partai Sjarikat Islam Indonesia (Gerakan Wanita PSII)	Partai Sjarikat Islam Indonesia
2	Muslimat	Masyumi
3	Muslimat NU	NU
4	Wanita Katolik	Partai Katolik
5	Gerakan Wanita Sosialis	Partai Sosialis Indonesia
6	Gerwani	Partai Komunis Indonesia
7	Persatuan Wanita Murba	Partai Murba
8	Partai Kebangsaan Indonesia Wanita	Partai Kebangsaan Indonesia (Parki)
9	Wanita Demokrat	Partai Nasional Indonesia
10	Wanita Indonesia	Partai Rakjat Nasional

Source: Martyn(2005)

issues of Marriage, health, education, prostitution, and economic laws to PSI and PNI. The organization also supported the political party in the elections. However, in the end, the issues entrusted were separate from the work programs of the two parties. Finally, Mrs. Kartowiyono ran in the election, although she failed to get a seat (Wieringa, 2010).

In preparation for the elections, the Indonesian government sent a special delegation to India to study the system of direct elections and follow the course of elections to elect members of the House of the People (Madjelis Rendah Pusat) dan State Legislative Assemblies (Madjelis Rendah Daerah) India which lasted from November 1951 to February 1952. The delegation was established by the Minister of Justice decree dated December 18, 1951, Nr. J.B. 2/22/8 and departed on December 30, 1951. Mr. Soebagio Reksodipoero is the chairman, and one of the members is Mrs. Supeni Pudjobuntoro (Panitia Pemilihan Indonesia, 1958; Pudjobuntoro, 1954).

After conducting a study and looking at the experience of Indian elections and the implementation of regional elections in Yogyakarta in 1951, the Wilopo cabinet, which was then running the government, decided to conduct two types of elections: parliament and constituency. In

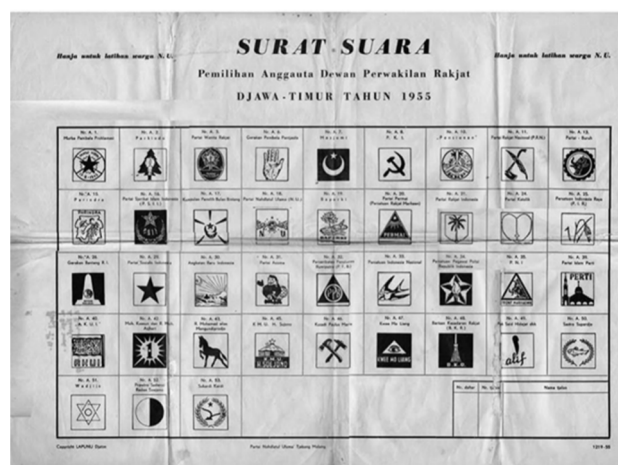


Figure 5. Example of a ballot used to educate voters in the parliamentary election (Source: KPU Kabupaten Sukoharjo, n.d.)

addition, 16 constituencies in Indonesia are also divided. Each region gets seats based on its population, with a minimum of six seats in the constituency and three in parliament. The seats are given to parties and candidate members in each region according to the number of votes they get. Meanwhile, the remaining votes can be combined, either between different parties in the constituency or combined in one party at the national level. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Home Affairs are responsible for elections. At the same time, the Indonesian Election Committee, whose members consist of various parties, is tasked with organizing and making election regulations. Later, at each regional level, there was a committee with members from the ranks of civil servants and representatives of political parties (Panitia Pemilihan Indonesia, 1958).

The Wilopo cabinet increasingly matured preparations for the election. On April 4, 1953, the ratification of the General Election Law marked the first wave of campaigning. The second wave of campaigning itself began on May 31, 1954, when the party's image was endorsed by the Indonesian Election Committee (Feith, 1999). At the same time, the Central Election Committee was formed, of which Mrs. Supeni Pudjobuntoro was one of the members, while Hadikusumo was the chairman of the Central Election Committee. The Election Committee at the regional level has a very small number of women. Of the 16 constituencies whose average number of committees is ten people, only two women are part of it, namely Mrs. Supeni Pudjobuntoro as chairman of the Djakarta Raya regional election and Mrs. A.D. Toule as vice chairman of the Maluku regional election (Panitia



Figure 6. In the atmosphere of the inauguration of the Greater Jakarta Election Committee on January 30, 1954, it seemed that Mrs. Supeni Pudjobuntoro was in it. (Source: ANRI, 2019)

Pemilihan Indonesia, 1958).

When the campaign began, the women's wing organization started to be busy with various activities carried out, one of which was introducing the party to women and spreading their ideology. Gerwani devoted even more attention to the PKI campaign than to registering his own candidates. Not all women's wing organizations that participate in elections have political goals. Bhayangkari, for example, this organization only helps police campaigns (Wieringa, 2010).

During the campaign, every corner of the village and city was crowded with various party attributes. The residents' chatter was filled with election themes. Everyone is talking about elections and their champion party from young to old. Picture signs are installed, not only in the form of posters and billboards but also in mothers' appearances in the kitchen. The atmosphere is depicted in IPPHOS coverage.

"Semakin banjak tanda gambar dipasang semakin lanjut pemitjaraan penduduk kampung kami.



Figure 7. Women's issues were shown in the campaign (Source: ANRI, 2019)

"Ah, orang si tahu siapa jang memasang bulan bintang."

"Ini ni, partai2 ketjil dipasang djuga."

"Biarin deh, itu kan hak rakjat."

"Matjam mana pula itu lilin menjala."

"Ampun, segala tampah dipakai buat tanda gambar."

"Itu tandanja dari rakjat bung."

Dan di tengah-tengah kegaduhan orang dewasa ini menjanjilah anak2 dengan irama lagu "Anna"

"Palu arit PKI, bulan-bintang Masjumi.... [...]" (IPPHOS Report, 1955)

The more signs there are, the more talkative our village residents will speak. "Ah, someone knows who installed the star moon."

"Here, small parties are installed too."

"Just leave it alone, that's the people's right."

"That's also a lit candle."

"Oh my, all the trays are used for picture marks."

"That's a sign from the people, bro."

During the commotion of the adults, the children sing to the rhythm of the song "Anna" "Palu arit PKI, Bulan- Bintang Masjumi.... [...]" (IPPHOS Report, 1955)

The chairman of the Central Election Committee, Hadikusumo, announced on April 16, 1955, that elections to elect members of parliament would be held on September 29, 1955, while elections to elect constituent members would be held on December 15, 1955. Ahead of the election, political parties participating in the election are increasingly increasing their campaigns. Issues and campaign techniques raised in cities and villages have differences. In the city, more national political issues and conceptual ideologies are discussed through campaign techniques such as cinema advertisements and the installation of posters on the roadside, buses, and others. At the same time, the campaign in the village raised local issues and practical matters, such as land issues anti-white. Not infrequently, in the days approaching elections, campaigns are carried out by providing voting training, as well as door-to-door campaigning. Political parties also use many important figures in their parties to highlight their personalities when campaigning to gain people's votes. Fierce competition during the campaign often led to conflicts between parties (Feith, 1999).

As the election approaches, election campaigns are increasingly being carried out by national figures, election committees, and political figures and parties. They not only hold large meetings but also utilize mass media. This was done to attract the masses with comprehensive coverage.



Figure 8. The atmosphere of the Masyumi rally in the north square of Yogyakarta, September 25, 1955
Source: ANRI, 2019

Two national women figures carried out one example of an election campaign and women's involvement. On Saturday evening, September 3, 1955, Nj. Mrs. Maria Ulfa Santoso and Nj. Tridajat held a lecture at Sonobudojo. According to them, the position of women after Indonesia's independence was the same. To be able to fix this, women need to fight harder, one of which is through general elections. Elections are women's rights as citizens. Women can have legal and elected representatives in the DPR and the constituent assembly. So, women's representation in the DPR and the constituency is in the hands of women (*Perjuangan Wanita Dlm Pemilihan Umum*, 1955).

The election committee also carries out the election campaign. They use mass media to socialize ways to vote. In the *Kedaulatan Rakyat* newspaper of September 8, 1955, for example, there is a scheme of the room where voting is held. Hopefully, this scheme will make it easier for voters to understand the voting process (*Skema Ruangan Tempat Pemberian Suara*, 1955).

Meanwhile, political parties realize the importance of having party members. Political parties usually hold general meetings at the regional and central levels to gather mass. People flocked to attend it based on their curiosity and desire to enjoy the crowd with their friends (Feith, 1999)

Masyumi took this opportunity to gain support from the people in Yogyakarta. A meeting in mid-September 1955 called the Grand Meeting of the Islamic Community was held by KPAU Masyumi, Gondokusuman Yogyakarta branch. In the meeting held in the Taru Martani cigar factory

courtyard, Mrs Sunaryo Mangunpuspito, as general chairman of the Muslim board and member of the Masyumi parliament, was one of the speakers. According to Mrs. Sunaryo, the number of women in Indonesia at that time was more than men, so the number of women voters in the upcoming election was more significant. It could be the deciding factor for victory. So, he advised women to use their rights as voters and flock to the ballot box to vote for the Masjumi party. Masyumi should have used this moment as a party competing in the election. The meeting, which was attended by tens of thousands of visitors, was enlivened by the distribution of lottery numbers with prizes of necessities, clothing, and even goats (*Rapat Kapu Masjumi: Kemenangan Pemilihan Umum Ditangan Wanita*, 1955).

Elections are a momentum for women to formulate themselves as individuals as well as new citizens in an independent country. Various preparations were made to welcome the election. Enter political pockets and become election committees to provide political education, both through writing and verbally. This shows that women have political awareness and are actively involved in election preparations.

WOMEN AS VOTERS: THEIR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN GENERAL ELECTION

Electoral voters were registered from May to November 1954. There are requirements that voters must meet, namely being at least 18 years old or married. From registration, 43,104,464 voters were eligible. Voters can cast their ballots by going to the polling station. School buildings, village leaders' houses, and semi-permanent buildings made of bamboo were used for voting. Each village has 2-3 polling stations with a capacity of 300-1000 voters, although this number exceeds the quota limit in practice. The voting process began at 8 a.m., but many voters had arrived early. Those who are literate can write the names of candidates selected from the list on the ballot paper. At the same time, those who are illiterate or visually impaired can pierce the picture of their choice on the ballot paper. Various regulations regarding elections have been drafted in detail and centrally; however, some adjustments were made to conditions at the local level (Feith, 1999).

The festive atmosphere of the election was also seen in various documentation published in various mass media and photo archives. Feith described that Indonesians had voluntarily flocked to polling stations since morning and even when

polling stations had not yet opened. They put on their best clothes. This enthusiasm shows that elections are considered an essential and sacred day. Elections were also considered a way out of the unsatisfactory political situation of the time (Feith, 1999).

The enthusiasm of the Indonesian people is illustrated by the total votes cast. On September 29, 1955, until a few days later, as many as 37,875,299 votes, or 91.54% of the 43,104,464 registered people, cast their votes, with a percentage of valid votes of 87.65%. About 2.5% of voters did not vote because they died before election day, while about 6% voted for abstention. This figure shows that the ratio of voters who use their votes is relatively high. This is motivated by several factors. For elitists, elections are a form of democracy and independence for Indonesia, and efforts can be made to achieve political stability.

Meanwhile, for rural communities, elections are one of the efforts that can be made to support Indonesian independence for the better. Thus, their participation in elections becomes a social



Figure 9. Female voters dressed in their best clothes while voting at the 1955 polling ground. (Source: IPPHOS Report, 1955)

obligation for the community. In addition, by casting their votes, they feel they are playing a role in something great for their nation (Feith, 1999).

The voting results data showed no division of votes between men and women. This makes it difficult to know how much women contribute in quantity as voters. However, we can borrow the analogy used by Pudjobuntoro in his book to predict women's participation in elections. In that case, we can estimate that the number of women participating as voters in elections can be said to be equal to or surpass that of men. Regarding Law No. 7 of 1953, the minimum voting age is 18 years or married. According to Pudjobuntoro, more women under the age of 18 are married than men. So, if women take advantage of their right to vote, the number of female voters will be more than male (Pudjobuntoro, 1954). Descriptions of women's participation in elections can also be seen in documentary sources. They seemed enthusiastic about coming to the voting station. The documentation above shows that women of various ages were present on voting day. They looked like they were wearing kebayas and clothes. Some of them also wear skirts. Their hair was tied in a neat bun; some covered their heads with scarves or headscarves.

Various efforts were also made to minimize voter absence on polling day. The government provides a waiver for people who cannot attend the polling station with an *absentee voting system* (Feith, 1999). For mothers, there are separate



Figure 10. The atmosphere when mothers vote at the polling station. It seems that children were also brought. There was also a daycare center in Wonorejo during the 1955 elections. (Source: Harian Umum, 1955; ANRI; IPPHOS Report, 1955)

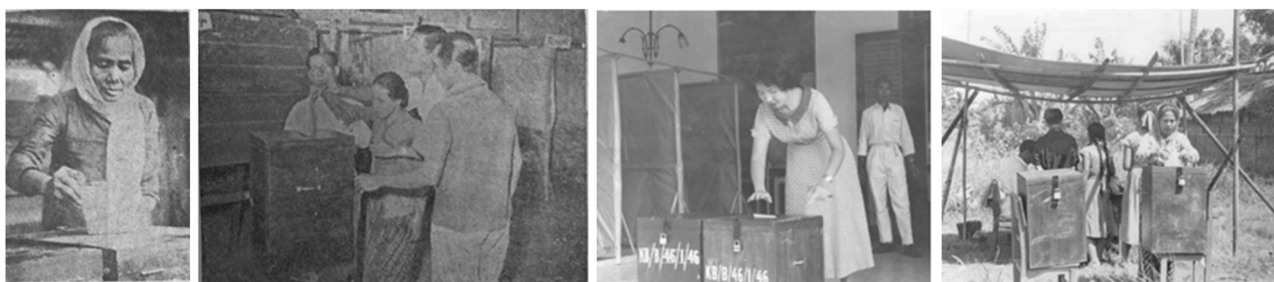


Figure 11. The first picture is an elderly woman casting her ballot; the second picture shows a blind woman being helped to cast her ballot, while the third and fourth pictures show a woman of Chinese and Arab descent inserting a ballot. (Source: ANRI, 2019; IPPHOS Report, 1955; Minggu Pagi, 1955)

strategies that can encourage them to participate in elections. The role and busyness of women as mothers did not dampen their enthusiasm in casting their votes at the general election site.

On *Minggu Pagi* October 9, 1955, it was reported that at the polling station of Rajasari Village, Jakarta, there was a woman who was pregnant and suddenly contractions were about to give birth. Polling station officials also tried to take him to the hospital. However, he refused because he wanted to vote first and decided to be taken to the hospital (Minggu Pagi, 1955). Women can also overcome the difficulty of leaving their children. They took their children to the polls. Even at a polling station in Wonorejo, Central Java, daycare was provided (Harian Umum, 1955). This shows a form of gender sensitivity in the implementation of elections. Although various conveniences are offered to mothers in voting, ill-fated events are inevitable. In Semarang, it was reported that a mother had to lose her child because she was invited to queue to vote at a polling station.

In addition to mothers, the election was also attended by marginalized women, both the elderly, people with disabilities, and racial minorities. This is recorded in several pieces of documentation in various print media and the Ministry of Information. Elderly women came to the polls, both independently and accompanied. Women with disabilities also experience the same thing. Those who are blind are helped by their relatives so that they can still have their rights in elections. The constitution guarantees the right to vote and be elected for racial minorities, so they also attend the polls.

These simple things show that there are efforts made by the government and the Indonesian people to encourage the participation of their citizens, including women, in elections. This shows that there is recognition of women's voting rights. Not only that, but women also have the awareness as citizens to participate in democratic parties while

showing their nationalism.

ELECTED WOMEN IN FIRST GENERAL ELECTIONS OF INDONESIA

Since December 1954, registering candidates from the parties for elections has been open. Candidates must meet the requirements to register themselves as candidates for parliament and constituency. Every Indonesian, both party cadres and individuals, has the right to submit themselves supported by the signatures of registered voters, 200 signatures for the first candidate, and 25 signatures for the next candidate. They must submit a picture mark as identification on the ballot. The candidates register according to their constituencies. They come from parties, organizations, and individuals, whether they are of indigenous descent or Chinese, European, and Arab descent. This shows that candidate registration is indeed open as widely as possible.

The election of candidates for DPR members was attended by 36 political parties, 34 mass organizations, and 48 individual candidates. The total number of people who registered for the election was 5,475. They are contesting 260 seats in the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, the formation of Constituent elections was attended by 39 political parties, 23 mass organizations, and 29 individual candidates. The total number of candidates who registered was 7,127 people to compete for 520 seats (ANRI, 2018). Judging from the two tables below, the number of comparisons between male and female candidates still needs to be more equal. In the DPR candidate market, the number of female candidates is only 161 or 2.9% of the total. Meanwhile, in the constituent candidate market, the number of female candidates was 238 people or 3.3% of the total.

The lack of women's political participation is based on internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to problems within women's organizations. The condition of the newly



Figure 12. Meeting of the General Election Committee to announce the election results on January 23, 1956. Mrs. Supeni Pudjobuntoro explained in front of the participants. (Source: Merdeka, 1956)

independent Indonesia makes its people still feel the final goals and strategies of the struggle they must do, even in women's organizations. There is often an overlap of interests between women's organizations, whether based on groups, religion, politics, professionals, regional, etc. These differences in interests have existed since the first Indonesian women's congress was held, but in the name of unity, conflicts were suppressed with decisions that tended to be weak and became resolutions in each organization (Blackburn, 2007; Martyn, 2005; Wieringa, 2010).

External factors arise from outside women, both within the scope of political parties and society. The patriarchal culture that is still profoundly rooted is an obstacle for women to step into politics. When entering a political party, women are assigned work related to women's gender roles. Not many of them can become leaders in politics unless they have privileges. Women's success in parliament is also due to their closeness to the government. They can lobby parliament and sit in it. They have an excellent opportunity to be present in international forums. Women's advancement is also not a priority in the political parties they fight for (Martyn, 2005; Wieringa, 2010).

After going through the voting process, the General Election Committee announced the results on January 23, 1956. PNI, Masyumi, NU, and PKI were the winners in both parliamentary and constituent elections. PNI's victory in the election can be seen from several factors. From its ideological background, the party was called the "golden road" party, which lay between the two extreme ideologies of the PKI and Masyumi, which were then fiercely rivaled. This made voters more supportive of the PNI in elections (Feith, 1999).

The inauguration of the election results

fraction is carried out in stages. A total of 272 people consisting of 257 people elected from the parliamentary elections, three representatives of West Irian, and 6 European small groups and six small Chinese groups were inaugurated by President Sukarno and held the first DPRD session on March 26, 1956 (M. Sjafe'I Hassanbasari, 2004, in ANRI, 2018). Of the 272 people, only 16 are women or 5.88%, while the male members are 256 people or 94.12% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2015).

In the constituent elections alone, 39 factions were registered from parties, groups, and individuals. A total of 511 members, or 84.7%, came from the results of the December 1955 elections, while 29 members were directly appointed and were representatives of West Irian (5 people), as well as 12 representatives each of ethnic minorities or foreigners (Chinese and European) spread from various political parties. Not all factions were sworn in initially, but as many as 63 members, or about 10.4%, were alternate members. These successors were chosen for several reasons, ranging from more appropriate competence to replacing their ailing colleagues or political fallout (Hidayat & Fogg, 2020).

When viewed from the gender differences, from the table 2, it is known that of the 604 constituent members from 39 factions, only 7.2% or 43 members are women, while men are 92.8% or 561 people. PNI and Masyumi have the most female representatives of constituent members, with 11 each. Meanwhile, the female constituent members of NU are 7 out of a total of 97 representatives, or 7.2%. As a percentage, the number of female constituent members of the PKI is the largest, at 8.8%, of which 68 representatives of the constituent members, 6 are women. Ratu Aminah Hidayat of IPKI was elected vice chief V in the constituency, while four deputies and chairpersons were men.

Some parties that gained small votes in the elections had female members in the constituency. P.R.I.M (Partai Republik Indonesia Merdeka) has the highest percentage of female members of its faction, at 50% of the two members. The second highest percentage is occupied by Parkindo (Partai Kristen Indonesia), which has four female members in the constituency out of a total of 19 members of its faction, or 21%. Meanwhile, GPPS (Gerakan Pembela Pantja Sila) has one female constituent member or 20% of its five factions. He was transferred from PNI. Perti (Pergerakan Tarbiyah Indonesia) has a percentage of 14.2% female members in its faction, and the smallest percentage

Table 2. Factions in the Indonesian Constituent Assembly in 1956-1959 By Gender

No	Faction	Female	Male	Total
1	PNI	11	129	140
2	Masyumi	11	118	129
3	NU	7	90	97
4	PKI	6	62	68
5	Republik Proklamasi	0	22	22
6	Parkindo (Partai Kristen Indonesia)	4	15	19
7	PSII ((Partai Sjarikat Islam Indonesia)	0	18	18
8	Partai Katholik	0	13	13
9	PSI (Partai Sosialis Indonesia)	0	11	11
10	IPKI (Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia)	1	9	10
11	Perti (Pergerakan Tarbiyah Indonesia)	1	7	8
12	Daerah Irian Barat (Persatuan Irian Barat)	0	5	5
13	GPPS (Gerakan Pembela Pantja Sila)	1	4	5
14	Lima Orang	0	5	5
15	Murba Pembela Proklamasi	0	5	5
16	Partai Buruh	0	5	5
17	Baperki	0	4	4
18	P.P.P RI (Persatuan Pegawai Polisi Republik Indone	0	4	4
19	Persatuan Daya	0	4	4
20	Wakil Golongan Keturunan Eropah	0	4	4
21	Grindo	0	3	3
22	Partai Indonesia Raya (PIR)-Wongsonegoro	0	3	3
23	Partai Indonesia Raya (PIR)-Hazairin	0	3	3
24	Kesatuan	0	2	2
25	P.P.T.I (Partai Persatuan Tharikhah Islam)	0	2	2
26	P.R.I.M (Partai Republik Indonesia Merdeka)	1	1	2
27	Partai Rakjat Indonesia	0	2	2
28	Permai (Persatuan Rakjat Marhain Indonesia)	0	2	2
29	PRN (Partai Rakjat Nasional)	0	2	2
30	Angkatan Kemenangan Umat Islam (AKUI)	0	1	1
31	Gerakan Banteng Republik Indonesia (GBRI)	0	1	1
32	Gerakan Pilihan Sunda	0	1	1
33	K. Nope	0	1	1
34	Partai Tani Indonesia	0	1	1
35	Pekerdja	0	1	1
36	Penyaluran	0	1	1
37	Persatuan Rakjat Desa	0	1	1
38	R. Soedjono Prawirosoedardo	0	1	1
39	Radja Keprabonan	0	1	1
Total		43	561	604

Source: Hidayat & Fogg (2018)

is IPKI (Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia) with female members in a constituency of 1 person or 10% of the total 10 factions.

When viewed from the region's origin, as many as 34 people or 79% of the total 43 female members in the constituency, came from Java. They are scattered from various cities and regencies in Banten, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, DIY, and East Java. A total of 9 people, or 21%, came from outside Java, namely Lampung, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, North Sumatra, South Kalimantan,

and South Sulawesi.

The women representing the faction in the constituency are mostly familiar figures in Indonesian politics. They are educated women and have been active in various women's and youth organizations in the national movement in Indonesia since the Dutch colonial period. With this educational capital and work experience, the road to dabbling in local and national politics is wide open. They built their political careers from the grassroots.



Figure 13. Several Members of the Women's Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia 1956-1959 from Various Fractions (Source: processed from Hidayat & Fogg, (2018); Hitipeuw (1986); laduni.id; bbc.com; geni.com; tokohbata.wordpress.com) Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1986; <https://www.laduni.id/post/>

Mrs. Lastari Soetrasno from the PNI faction has been active in the women's movement since the Dutch colonial period. In the period 1932-1956, held various important positions, such as Chairman of the "Mardi Tresno" women's section, chairman of "Puteri Selia", chairman of "Puteri Utomo" Kediri, chairman of "Perwari" Kediri Residency, chairman of P. P. G. D Kediri Residency, chairman of "Kowani Kediri Residency, chairman of P. N. I. Kediri Regional Council, chairman of the Commissariat of the Indonesian Democratic Women Province Djawa-Timur, commissioner of Perwari Djawa Timur, chairman of the Indonesian Democratic Women Leadership Center, member of the Central Leadership Council, and member of the Leadership Council of P. N. I. Since February 16, 1954, he has also been a member of the Temporary People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia, and since March 26, 1956, he remained a member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia.

Masyumi itself has women who are good political fighters. Mrs. Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito whose real name is Siti Sukaptinah. Since adolescence, she was actively involved in the women's movement by joining Jong Islamieten-Bond Dames-Afdeling Yogyakarta and the First Indonesian Women's Congress in 1928. During the Dutch colonial period, she became Indonesia's representative to sit in the Gemente Raad Semarang in 1938. She also became chairman of Fujinkai during the Japanese rule in Indonesia. After

Indonesia's independence, she held an important position as chairman of KOWANI in 1946 and became a representative at the All-Indian Women's Conference the following year. Her involvement in the national political vortex began when she joined Masyumi and became the Chairman of PB Muslimat Masyumi in 1951-1960. She then became the only woman in the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia through the 1955 election (Ningrum, 2018).

During the Dutch colonial period, Nj. Adiani Kertodiredjo, from NU, became the administrator of the Bondowoso Indonesian Princess Association in 1943-1942. When the Japanese came to power in Indonesia, he joined Fujinkai and became its administrator. His involvement as an NU figure began when he joined Masjumi Muslimat. He was the manager for the Bondowoso branch from 1946 to 1949. He then became the leader of Muslimat NU in 1949-1951 as well as a member of the Bondowoso district DPRDS. In 1952-1956, he was a member of Madjlis Kon. Wil. Muslimat NU Surabaya and Comm Muslimat NU Besuki.

Some female members also have ties to male members of political parties. Mrs. Mien Sutari is the wife of Abdul Gani Suriokusumo. She joined in 1946, while her husband had been in the same party since 1927. Previously, she was active in various women's associations from the colonial period until Indonesia's independence. She was also part of Wanita Demokrat, the women's wing of the PNI (Lasmidjah Hardi, 1984: 34). This also shows that

many of them are members of the women's wing of political parties. Masyumi has a female wing under the name Muslimat, as does NU. Gerwani became part of the PKI, although the organization did not say so outright (Hidayat & Fogg, 2020).

The data above shows that women's participation rate and electability in elections still need to be higher. Even so, women's awareness of running in elections needs to be appreciated as a first step in breaking down the barriers of gender construction that place them in the domestic sphere. Entering government is a new opportunity for women to voice and fight for their rights (Martyn, 2005).

Teele (2020) in his study explains that granting women's voting rights in each country is motivated by electoral politics and women's activism in that country. If you look at the international political conditions, WWII had just ended. This gave rise to a new order on the international political map. New countries emerged with independence and developed their systems of government. Equal rights for women and men in politics were still a severe problem during that period. The UN Charter, signed on June 26, 1945, became the basis for recognizing the equal political rights of women and men. At that time, only 36 countries in America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa gave women and men equal opportunities to vote and vote.

Thailand and the Philippines are the two Asian countries in this charter. Thailand is the first Asian country to give equal rights to men and women in the political field. Since 1897, in the local administration law, Thailand has given women and men the right to vote in village elections. This became an important step in the women's suffrage movement in Thailand (Bowie, 2010). The Philippines only granted women full political rights in 1937, after the law on women's suffrage was passed. The legalization of full political rights for women in the Philippines went through a fairly lengthy process. Women activists in the Philippines who fought since the 20th century became essential actors in the birth of the women's suffrage law (Alporha, 2022).

The United States only gave women the right to vote in all states in 1920 through the 19th amendment. This important achievement cannot be separated from the struggle of the Suffrage Movement since the 19th century with activists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott. Suffrage activists conducted

campaigns, demonstrations, and advocacy efforts to fight for women's voting rights. They used a variety of strategies, including delivering speeches, drafting petitions, and publishing writings supporting women's voting rights (Lind, 1994).

In dealing with equal rights for women in various fields, the UN formed the Committee on the Status of Women (Committee on the Status of Women) under the Economic and Social Council in 1946. The UN also held its first session in February 1947 in New York, encouraging its member countries to develop legal steps in setting standards and formulating international conventions to change discriminatory laws and foster global awareness of women's issues. The position of women in politics and law has become a serious discussion, especially after the UN general assembly on December 10, 1948, where human rights were recognized as the basis for world peace. Through a fairly long process, the Committee on the Status of Women finally produced an important decision, namely the signing of the convention on women's political rights at the UN session in April 1953 (UN Women, n.d.) (Division for the Advancement of Women, n.d.). The convention was signed by 20 countries, including Indonesia.

Ali Sastroamidjojo's cabinet approved the draft law concerning a women's political rights convention on December 18, 1956. Long before that, as a sovereign country, in the 1945 Constitution article 27 paragraph (1), the government recognized the equality of citizens without mentioning gender differences. In the first General Election Law of 1955, Indonesia also provided equal rights for women and men, both as voters, election committee members, and selected candidates. This is a major achievement, considering that there are still many countries that still need to be able to recognize equality between men and women in politics and voting.

If we look at the legal basis and implementation of the first elections in Indonesia, women and men have equal rights. However, this does not necessarily support women in breaking down the barriers preventing them from being an active part of the democratic party. Referring to Lind's statement, voting rights for women are an important part of the struggle for women's emancipation and democratic inclusion. However, voting rights alone are not enough to ensure true democratic inclusion, as voting rights can be used to manipulate voters and maintain the dominance of advantaged groups (Lind, 1994). Hence, the

scope of women's involvement in politics should extend beyond mere participation as voters. Women should actively engage in various facets of a nation's political structure, assuming roles such as political leaders, public officials, and strategic positions. This multifaceted involvement enables women to serve as advocates for the principles of equality and social justice.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia's independence became a new era for women's struggle, especially in politics. The implementation of the 1955 elections further encouraged their enthusiasm to participate in building the nation and their country. Her role as the nation's mother is influential in the various actions they take in the political world, both the issues they are fighting for, the tasks, and the strategies carried out. The Indonesian democratic party raises various roles of women in elections, ranging from their role in preparing for elections, as committees, members of women's organizations, members of political parties, and others, their roles as voters or citizens, as well as their roles as election participants who later become part of the constituency and DPR. Women's roles in the elections came slowly but through a long process from the colonial period to independence. The constitution recognizes women's rights to be active in politics. What happened in the 1955 elections and the role of women in them can reflect the current political conditions and participation of Indonesian women. The participation rate of women in politics, which is still below 30%, still needs to be a severe concern for women and the government in general.

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