**YOGYAKARTA WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SPACES STRUGGLE DURING 1945-1950**

Miftahuddin¹, H.Y. Agus Murdiyastomo,² Dina Dwikurniarini³

History Department of The Faculty of Social Sciences, Yogyakarta State University

¹miftahuddin@uny.ac.id, ²agus\_murdiyastomo@uny.ac.id, ³dina\_dk@uny.ac.id

**ABSTRACT**

As written in history that Yogyakarta was dominated by the men aristocrats, but they still shared their influence and authority with the women. Until the end of the Java War in 1930, *priayi* (elite society class) and women born in the royal family in southern Central Java enjoyed more freedom and opportunities than those in the late 19th century with the wider colonial rule. Under colonial domination, slowly aristocratic men felt reluctant to share their power with women. The opportunity and equality up to the beginning of the 19th century in Yogykarata had become the basis of women's public roles. After the independence of Indonesia, several women's movements appeared, such as Aisyiyah, Taman Siswa Women, Indonesian Young Woman, Catholic Women, PERWARI-*Persatuan Wanita Republik Indonesia* (Indonesian Women's Association) which was headquartered in Yogyakarta, and the Public Kitchen movement which was structurally under the social affairs of the regional KNI (*Komite Nasional Indonesia*/ Indonesian National Committee). It proves that if women are given the opportunity, they will be able to partner with men to struggle and maintain independence.

Keywords: *Women, Public spaces, Yogyakarta*

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The role of women in Javanese culture did not change significantly until the modern era in the early 20th century. Understanding the women's role in Java should be drawn from each change within society [1]. By knowing the change of women's role in Yogyakarta is beneficial to find a pattern of women's development in Javanese history and culture in a general sense.

Yogyakarta was founded from a political split from the Sultanate of Mataram, an influential political power of Java in the early 18th. Mataram itself was not only a political dominance, but also a new model of culture that had brought many alterations to Javanese people. As explained by De Graff that Mataram was a power that generally changed the background of Javanese culture. Actually, Demak declared as the first Islamic kingdom in Java but, with its short period, it only affected the northern coast of Java and never touched the center of Javanese culture [2]. In contrast to Demak, Mataram was a hinterland of Java that lasted for a quite long time to build its empire and bestow its power to influence various cultural views including women's roles.

The life of Javanese society during the Islamic era cannot be separated from the inheritance of Indian culture (Hinduism and Buddhism), although the domestication of women was very likely to happen. In the spiritual view, a woman brought an important meaning, such as a magic symbol in which a form of supernatural power was personified to women. It can be found mostly in classic stories as in *Pararaton* (“Books of Kings), for instance, the figure of Ken Dedes was seen as a manifestation and symbol of strength. Moreover, many women were found in various political situations like the determination of the crown prince heir to the kingdom [3]. Sacred values ​​in women were still found until the Islam period, even to the extent that Islamic was fully integrated into Javanese society. Dewi Sri's figure as a fertility symbol was still believed among rural people and they still performed the ritual until the mid-20th century. This happened not only because of the long existence of the culture, but also the attitude of Islam in Java which was secretive in accomodating various values of earlier cultures in case of spirituality, social systems, as well as gender construction [4].

The construction and position of women in Java before the modern period in the early 20th century were influenced by many factors, such as social position, and way of life. Yogyakarta as the home of Javanese society had already its roots of tradition that kept growing until the colonial period. Minor or major cultures were synergistically formed based on their respective cultures [5]. In fact, at the end of the 19th century, the position and role of women were still quite different in each class of society. Combining with new concepts and ideas in the modern world and national movement, it was later produced a new model that changed many things in women's roles.

1. **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a historical method by performing heuristic steps, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography[6]. First, heuristics is an attempt to collect historical traces or gather documents so that historical events related to "The Role of Yogyakarta Women in Public Spaces during 1945-1950" can be revealed. Second, the sources that have been collected are verified or tested to investigate whether the sources found are genuine or fake and to examine whether their contents can be trusted or accounted for or not. In this second process, historical facts are discovered.

Third, because the facts that have been collected and are ready to be used are not yet meaningful, they need to be linked and compared to one another through the interpretation process. So, interpretation is intended to establish the meaning and interrelationship between the facts obtained. Interpretation is needed so that dead data can be meaningful. Fourth, historiography or writing of research results are arranged based on serialization (chronological, causality, and imagination).

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Embrio of Women Movement Foundation in Yogyakarta**

Colonialism truly affected the pattern and order among Javanese society which also directly affected the women's role to be re-shaped and re-positioned. Although male aristocrats were dominating, at least they still shared their supremacy and power with the female before the colonial had full authority over Javanese kingdoms, such as Yogyakarta. Until the end of the Java War in 1930, *priayi* (elite society class) and women born in the royal family in southern Central Java enjoyed more freedom and opportunities than those the late 19th century due to the wider colonial rule [7]. Under colonial domination, slowly aristocratic men felt reluctant to share their power with women. The reduction of women's role in the aristocratic society might had been done to maintain their symbolic domination that they wanted.

Women's movement in Indonesia has been through a long process. All nation components including women's organizations were involved in their respective ways and characters, both nationalist and religious actions. The women's movement of Indonesian in the period 1930-1942 consisted of three ideological groups, Islamitisch Religuize (Islamic group), neutral religious group, and non-Muslim group [8]. It made uneven movement related to the purposes, the characteristics, and the movement model.

The first indigenous women's organization was Putri Mardika initiated by Budi Utomo. The goal of this organization was to provide education, opportunities for community gatherings, and freedom of speech in public [8]. After made progress in several years, the women's organizations were perfecting the welfare goals for all local peoples. The emergence of the women's role as equal partners of men supported other women's organizations that were devoted to enhancing the women's lot based on their own goals.

A crucial event in the history of the women's movement in Indonesia referred to the women's congress in Yogyakarta on December 22, 1925. The general objective of this congress was to strengthen the relationship to jointly pursue women's progress, expand intelligence, eliminate injustice in the family and community as well as gained more opportunities for young women to obtain education [9]. As described by Susan Blackbrun, the key to the implementation of the first Women's Congress was the woman's deft attitude in organizing, and they were more realistic, more balanced, and civilized in making approaches instead of men [11]. The implementation of the women's Congress must be appreciated as an important part of Indonesian history.

The convening of the 1925 congress was present in a spatial context to become an important background for women's movement. This can be a proof of which Yogyakarta was a potential place for the growth of a social change for women. The strong cultural traditions in Yogyakarta had provided much justification for the domestication of women, but, this change was born in the heart of Javanese culture. Thus, Yogyakarta had genetically become a suitable ground in the progressive changes for the women's movement in particular.

**The Public Role of Yogyakarta Women during the Physical Revolution**

Independence became the main goal of the women's movement in Indonesia. Although the awareness to build equality was the fundamental issue, almost all women in Indonesia understand if all forms of their struggle will never be realized without independence [12]. Nationalism initially became a plural trend in all women's movements in Indonesia, but then this independence would make the breath of the women's movement for any ideology, nationalist, communist-socialist, or religious.

Independence was an important step in the development of the women's movement in Indonesia to make progress and prosperity. In maintaining independence, especially during the Physical Revolution, women were actively involved in various women's struggle bodies. The wave of revolution did create a period of euphoria where it can be found in various countries that had just gained independence after World War II. However, Indonesia got a unique character and was different from other countries because the formation of nationalism and the goal of independence had grown nearly four decades before its independence was truly obtained. This created a very diverse form of affiliation which influenced the efforts in maintaining independence.

Various movements were indeed recognized as a reflection of their respective political affiliations and ideologies but a moment of reunification was repeated as in the Youth Congress in 1925 and the Women's Congress in 1935. In the right moment, various organizations gathered for common interests [13]. On August 25, 1945, Ruslam Wijaya formed the Youth of the Republic of Indonesia in Surabaya which was stimulated by the existence of many irregulars/ warriors in that period. The unification of these groups played crucial role in the Battle of Surabaya (10 November).

The formation of affiliation was also carried out by the women's movement. Women's irregulars had been formed in various regions, such as WANI (*Wanita Indonesia*/ Indonesian State Women) in Jakarta, LASWI (*Laskar Wanita Indonesia*/ Indonesian Women's Warriors) in Bandung, and Sabil Muslimat Warriors in West Sumatra. The emergence of various irregulars was then responded by several women activists in Yogyakarta, namely Aisyiyah, Taman Siswa Women, Indonesia Young Women, and Catholic Women. Indeed, at this time Yogyakarta became the center of many women's movements. Those organizations agreed to hold a congress in Klaten on December 16, 1945. This congress was a valuable historical moment because it was the first women's congress after independence.

However, the implementation of this congress also faced various obstacles. For example, at the beginning of the congress, there was opposition from KNIP (Central Indonesian National Committee) due to the infiltration of the Allied forces to occupy important cities in Indonesia. With the insistence of Mrs. D. Susanto and the help of Mrs. Junonegoro, the wife of the Klaten Regent who was also a sympathizer of the women's movement, the congress can finally be run. The selection of Klaten as an alternative city for holding the congress was to avoid the Allies' notice to secure the congress participants [14]. Due to several limitations, congress was only attended by five women's organizations, most of which were from Yogyakarta.

The congress which was held behind the closed door and in a precarious state lasted for two days. With the withdrawal of the Allied forces in the battle of Ambarawa on 15 December, the troops in Yogyakarta became increasingly alert [15]. In the end, congress produced several decisions. Firstly, strengthening the role of women to maintain independence by participating in public kitchens formation, health assistance, and joining national struggling bodies led by TKR (*Tentara Keamaan Rakyat*/ Peoples' Security Army) or various regional struggling bodies. Secondly, the congress also resulted in the formation of an organization for the women's movement during the struggling period named PERWARI (*Persatuan Wanita Republik Indonesia*/ Indonesian Women's Association) with Mrs. Sri Mangoensukarso as chairman and Mrs. D.M Hadi Prabowo as representative. This organization was headquartered in Yogyakarta and soon joined TKR [16].

**The First Years of Women's Struggle to Reclaim Yogyakarta**

Independence was tough to maintain because the arrival of the Allied forces who were accompanied by NICA. They returned to take over Indonesia. Though a national movement had been formed, it could become a weak point for the enemy view since the Dutch were had been fully acquainted with the struggle pattern of Indonesian society and its leaders. The landing of the NICA forces in Tanjung Priok in November 1945 gave rise to a series of tensions that triggered several clashes between the youth and NICA forces. This forced the Indonesian leaders to keep moving. Considering Jakarta was not safe, there was an option to move the capital city.

It began with a letter from Sultan Manegkubuwonon IX on January 2, 1946, which mentioned that Yogyakarta was ready to become the capital of the Republic of Indonesia under his protection. The offer was immediately approved by the central government, so that, at night, January 3, 1945, Soekarno-Hatta and the leaders of the Indonesia Republic headed to Yogyakarta [17]. Sultan Hamangkubuwonon IX's willingness to make his city the country's interest since he realized that Yogyakarta was genetically closely related to the birth of the Republic of Indonesia long before its independence. The number of movements including the women's organizations and also the willingness of Yogyakarta people to be the state capital to maintain the sustainability of the Republic of Indonesia.

The movement of the capital city to Yogyakarta gave a big impact on the social life of the people. The escalation of the population was originally 170,000 becoming 600,000 with heterogeneous composition in various aspects [18]. Various changes became an inevitable consequence to maintain the independence of the Indonesian people. However, the gathering of various important elements of the state in Yogyakarta brought its advantages for the women's movement which were previously difficult to make national-level coordination.

Seeing the strategic position of Yogyakarta as the capital of the Republic, PERWARI immediately conducted coordination with various movements irregulars and other women's struggle bodies that resulted in the idea to organize another congress to perfect the previous emergency congress. The congress was held in Surakarta on February 24, 1946. *Kedaulatan Rakyat* newspaper mentioned in one of its rubrics that this congress was the first women's congress meant for them to participate in the struggle for independence [19]. The congress was successfully attended by almost all women's movements throughout Java. This congress also rose the formation of a permanent women's organization to bring together all the women's movements, called KOWANI (*Kongres Wanita Indonesia*/ Indonesian Women's Congress Board).

KOWANI as the result of the Surakarta Congress then formed a management structure which was led by Mrs. Suparjo from PERWARI. All the management structures adjusted to the national needs to maintain independence. KOWANI'S position as a coordinating body was not part of the government, so PTPWI (*Pusat Tenaga Perjuangan Wanita Indonesia*/ Indonesian Women's Struggle Center) was founded to bridge the government necessities to place various existing women's movements based on the state’s needs, such as military, public kitchen, and red cross. All movements in KOWANI through PTPWI were distributed in three main areas. The first was in the warriors class consisting of the Indonesian Women's Warriors, the Indonesian Women's Struggle, and the Uprising Body of the Women's Section. The second was the spiritual area with the members of Catholic Women, Aisyiyah, the Indonesian Muslim Youth Women, Muslimat, and Surakarta Christian Women. The third part was the labor including the Indonesian Women's Workers 'Movement and the Indonesian Women's Workers. The fourth was for social affairs containing the Indonesian Women's Student Association, PERWARI, and Indonesia Young Women [20].

Only a few months after the move of the capital to Yogyakarta, the Dutch pushed increasingly into the territory of the Republic of Indonesia. It stimulated the tense of conflict in Bandung and the surrounding areas. This condition then invited PERWARI's initiative through PTPWI to hold a women's strugglling body meeting on March 21, 1946. The events were published in the Kedaulatan Rakyat newspaper, as follows:

On March 21, 1946, a congress was held by the Indonesian women's struggle body, located in Yogyakarta at the house of B.P.H Hadinegara. It was attended by the General Sudirman and Lieutenant General Oerip Sumoharjo as well as the representatives of women's strugglling bodies from Java and Madura led by Mrs. Srimangoensarkoro who conveyed that all Indonesian women had to devote their support to defending the country [21].

All kinds of struggle had been made to retain the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. The role of women in this situation was very important. Women became the components that can continue the struggle in two sectors at once, maintaining the social conditions of the community both health and food, and for some of them continue to fight with arms because Yogyakarta was prone to get many threats.

Though PERWARI as an organization was young and relatively new, its role was very strong in the struggle to maintain national independence, especially in Yogyakarta where most of the activists were young women and teenagers from Yogyakarta. Their activities were supported by the regeneration process from various women's movements that had long been formed in Yogyakarta. The effort to relocate the capital city could bring a better situation for Indonesia that enabled the state leaders to conduct diplomatic efforts by sending the diplomats to various countries, such as India, Egypt. They also communicated with Australia aiming at obtaining de facto recognition.

During this safe condition, KOWANI expanded its organization to anticipate any threats in the future. The meeting was then held on May 15-17, 1946 to establish PERWARI branches throughout Java and Madura and the results were the opening the branches in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Bandung, Madiun, Madura, and Surabaya. The meeting was also attended by Sri Pakualam, Nyi Hajar Dewantara, and Ki Hajar Diwantara. The ideological process among the Perwari members began to appear as can be seen from the speech from Mrs. Soenarjo Mangoenpoespito below.

“PERWARI Congress is for a political organization that will describe the women ideology to face the struggles during this current critical period. Indonesian people cannot struggle without their mothers’ guidance. PERWARI assisted the government in various fields to distribute food and clothing, as well as urged the regional and national governments to establish midwifery schools for women. " [22].

The speech signaled that an ideological foundation was directly formed in the women's organization no matter what the circumstances. Appreciation was coming from various parties to the women's movement as a manifestation of the desired goals. Therefore, the position of women in public space represented a common need that was consciously agreed upon by both men and women. The women took their roles through the formation of the independent struggling bodies and many decisions were independently made by them.

Entering the 1948 period, conditions tended to deteriorate in the diplomatic sphere between the Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch. The Renville Agreement which was expected to have a positive impact was contradictory. One of the most influential impacts was the migration of the Siliwangi Troops from West Java to Central Java and Yogyakarta which was not only followed by regular soldiers who joined TKR but also various army paramilitary units including women like LASWI (*Laskar Wanita Indonesia*/ Indonesia Women Warriors). The arrival of LASWI in Yogyakarta was positively welcomed because LASWI and PTPWI had already communicated since 1946 starting from the attempt to save themselves after the fail of guerrilla warfare in Malajaya. It was reported that

On Saturday morning, July 12, 1946, in Yogyakarta, the LASWI Bandung was returned from the battlefield and a heavy airstrike from Nica where a dormitory of their headquarters in Malajaya was bombed. Five female warriors died as heroes, i.e. Siti Fatimah from Garut, Sri Morwari, Siti Soediabjah, Siti Murwati, and Sutiawati from Yogyakarta. " [23].

From this event, LASWI in West Java and PTPWI in Yogyakarta made contacts. Arriving in Yogyakarta with the Siliwangi troops, LASWI directly joined the social committee helping the public kitchen to fulfill the needs of the soldiers. The formation of various rescue agencies and public kitchens indicated the acceptance from Yogyakarta people towards the Siliwangi troops' migration. The people under various women's struggle bodies voluntarily provided food to meet the needs of soldiers. This occasion became a critical period and a test for all people of Yogyakarta related to their commitments to the Republic of Indonesia.

The ultimate pressure occurred on December 19, 1949, wherein the morning NICA forces attacked to occupy Yogyakarta and tried to eradicate the Republic of Indonesia. The attack began with aerial bombardments throughout the city and then followed by the occupation of parachuting troops over Maguwo Airport. The attack carried out by General Hendrik Spoor shocked the Indonesian leadership. Within just a few hours, Yogyakarta was successfully occupied [24]. For these emergency circumstances, General Sudirman already had a pre-arranged plan on November 19 1948 by forming a regional defense environment (*wehrkreise*) in the form of guerrilla pockets to maintain the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. The order was immediately delivered to all the Indonesian struggle organizations and it became a critical point for national warfare involving all elements of the Indonesian nation.

At this critical time, women's role was so crucial that the state capital must be moved and the struggle must keep going. Women's struggle bodies were really in difficult conditions to provide guerrilla warfare assistance. The people and the troops needed to have sufficient food but the sources had been occupied by the enemy. Food security was so important to maintain people's trust that it can be a weapon for the enemy to seize the people’s trust from Indonesia.

The struggle in maintaining the trust of the Indonesian people on the food availability had been prepared by the women's struggle organizations in Yogyakarta after independence. The public kitchens were structurally under the regional KNI of social affairs. In Yogyakarta, the kitchen coordination was led by Ms. Roswo and Ms. Joyodiguna. In addition to taking care of food, the kitchen also worked with the Red Cross for the needs of medicine and food. The system used by public kitchens as one of the struggle bodies in Yogyakarta was systematic and professional [25].

Public kitchens in Yogyakarta were divided into several sectors based on each region and function. The public kitchen in Yogyakarta was specifically for soldiers who kept moving from place to place to avoid the chase of the enemy. The public kitchens in Yogyakarta operated with limited duration because the troops mostly did guerrillas attacks at night and they returned to the guerilla pockets in the afternoon [26]. Meanwhile, public kitchens beyond Yogyakarta were more open. Besides assisting in the kitchen, the women also gave community services, especially for the refugees.

The public kitchen could work secretly to avoid the suspicion of the Dutch army, on the other hand, the hospital and the Red Cross were in a very hard position. Their public operation made them difficult to assist in the struggle. Moreover, all hospitals such as the Army Health Service, the Indonesian Red Cross, the Panti Rapih Hospital, and the General Hospital were occupied by enemy forces. During the Dutch occupation, the hospital became a hiding place for guerrillas who could not back to headquarters in the morning. Hospitals became a safer place than residents' houses because in the Red Cross warfare law they receive special protection.

In the hospital, the nurses took part as the shields for the national forces who received treatment. If suddenly a patrol of the Dutch army arrived, the female nurses immediately woke up the sleeping warriors and covered them as if they were usual patients. If the Dutch army wanted to enter the patient's room, the guard nurses refused it even they would say “shoot me first” if the army forced to come in [27]. It succeeded to expel the army since the army did not want to break the rules of war that were too risky.

The crucial moment of the Indonesian struggle to defend their independence was the attempt to retake Yogyakarta with the massive attack on March 1, 1949. The attack gave heavy losses to the Dutch forces and proved the existence of Indonesia. The general offensive of March 1, 1949, was an extraordinary military success with all limitations compared to Dutch facilities. Good coordination was the main key to these results and women played an important role in it. The experienced and systematic women's movement in Yogyakarta made them worked effectively and efficiently. The rescue and public kitchen jobs were no longer regarded as the domestic area because all these things were a vital element for the success of the struggle.

The General Offensive of March 1, 1949, brought extraordinary diplomatic success for Indonesia. In the end, Indonesia who was able to show their existence attracted worldwide attention that put pressure on the Dutch at the negotiating table. The efforts to ensure de facto and de jure recognition of Indonesian independence began with the refinement of the state form in the Inter Indonesian Coordination during July 1949 [27]. The convention became the basis for the laying down of the Indonesian state constitution and form that was temporarily a union.

Indonesia's independence which will soon be completed was enthusiastically cheered by all Indonesian people including the women's movement. The big unity country with all the challenges later invited women to participate in its development. In Yogyakarta, on August 26 to September 2, 1949, the All-Indonesian Women's Consultative Meeting was organized by KOWANI and other 82 representatives of women's organizations throughout Indonesia. Although it was not a congress level, this agenda was enthusiastically welcomed by all the women's movements, because, after all those struggles, they were finally able to meet again. In this meeting, several decisions were made i.e. synchronizing the goal of the women's struggle to fight for and realize complete independence to all Indonesia people and establishing a coordination agency called "Indonesian Women Consultation." At the beginning of 1950, the women's movement run slowly. The efforts to formulate the state form and the compilation of state completeness directed to political contestation among the society, which often lead to conflicts that could never have imagined. In subsequent years, Yogyakarata's status for the women's movement may not be as crucial as Jakarta. However, various remnants and historical traces of the legacy of women's movements in Yogyakarta lives on the struggle of Indonesian women at a later step.

1. **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion on the women's public roles in Yogyakarta, it can be concluded that definitely women's contributions and roles cannot be underestimated. The history must be fair to consider women and women's roles where they should not place as subordinated components. We can look at the women's role as men partners during Indonesia's post-independence, especially in Yogyakarta. So, saying that Indonesian independence cannot be achieved without women role is not such an exaggeration

The women's movements have struggled side by side with the men in realizing and defending national independence. So, it is reasonable if the women's movements that fought after independence, such as Aisyiyah, Taman Siswa Women, Indonesian Young Women, and Catholic Women, gained high appreciation in historical reports. Similar recognition should be given to PERWARI (Women Association of the Republic of Indonesia) headquartered in Yogyakarta that immediately joined TKR and struggled to sustain the independence. Other Women organization also played the crucial roles like KOWANI (Indonesian Women's Congress Body) that brought together all women's movements, LASWI (Indonesian Women's Warriors) that participated in the migration of Siliwangi troops to Yogyakarta, and, of course, the Public Kitchen movement under the social affairs of the regional KNI.

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