

Kartini in two lenses: The shifting image of Indonesian modern woman in R.A. Kartini (1982) and Kartini (2017)

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the construction of Kartini figure in two Indonesian films titled R.A. Kartini (1982) and Kartini (2017) and how it represents the idealization of Indonesian woman in both eras. By utilizing textual analysis, the study finds different images of Kartini presented in the films. The 1982 film tends to emphasize on the critical nature of Kartini and her anti-colonial attitude. Moreover, Kartini is also presented as a figure of Javanese woman who is characterized by her feminine gestures and manner. Meanwhile, the 2017 film constructs Kartini figure differently. Instead of focusing on her femininity, the film constructs Kartini as an energetic, and rebellious young woman. The different characterizations of Kartini presented in the films indicate the shifting image of an idealized woman in both eras. As the first film produced in 1982, the ideal woman is represented as a feminine and motherly figure. Meanwhile in the second film, Kartini is imagined as the representation of the female millennial generation, characterized by their productivity, and creativity.

Keywords: *Kartini, Javanese Woman, Image, Constructed Figure*

INTRODUCTION

Kartini has become an important figure throughout the Indonesian history because of her roles and contributions to nation's life, most of which is her thoughts on encouraging Indonesian women to achieve education. It, furthermore, is mentioned by Taylor (1989), that Kartini was a pioneer of Indonesian people whose personal thoughts were written in Dutch. Unsurprisingly, up to present days, the figure of Kartini is a role model especially for Indonesian women. She is considered a milestone in the rise of Indonesian modern women in fighting for equality and emancipation, especially in terms of education. Kartini's life is widely known through letters she sent to her Dutch friends, which are then collected and posthumously published in a book entitled *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (Out of Dark Comes Light); this book has indeed gained public recognition (Missy, 2022). Through her letters, she expressed her restless feeling of being a Javanese princess and her longing for getting higher education as her brother did. She has inspired Indonesian women to be independent and achieve their dreams.

This significant record of her life is momentous, which later becomes the most celebrated figure in Indonesia, for instance, her birthday is always commemorated in April 21st. Accordingly, the Indonesian government also responded her pivotal contribution by officially declaring Kartini as a national heroine since May 1964. All of these continuations involving her life and contributions have not only attracted historians and researchers but also have inspired Indonesian filmmakers. There have been three films featured her life, namely *R.A Kartini* (1982), *Surat Cinta untuk Kartini* (2016), and *Kartini* (2017). Despite the similar figure featured, each film presents different storyline of Kartini's life¹. In fact, the airing of Kartini movie in 2017 brought out attention in its new depiction of Raden Ajeng Kartini, which is relatable to *R.A Kartini* (1982).

Therefore, this paper uses two film versions, namely *R.A. Kartini* (1982) and *Kartini* (2017), and mainly focuses on how the figure of Kartini is constructed throughout the storyline. As Kartini is a role model for Indonesian women, the filmic construction of Kartini produces the idealized image of Indonesian modern woman that the audience would follow or imitate. As the films were produced in different era (1982 and 2017), it is argued that each film has possibly dissimilar projection in constructing the image of Kartini. It also reflects the changing perception of what is considered as the ideal image of Indonesian woman. Additionally, the first and the third movie weigh the same issue linked to gender relation which is still debatable nowadays; so, the discussion under this issue may give a new perspective in viewing this monumental figure of Indonesian woman.

As a popular image of idealized woman in Indonesia, Kartini has been continuously remembered and institutionalized throughout history subjects in school, by reproducing a historical account, publications of research under this topic, or even popular arts and culture (Wahid, 2021, p. 115). This image of Kartini in abundant access and media inevitably continue to remain the most celebrated image, most of which is being the role model for modern Indonesian women. Although some research publications including a journal article recently written by Wahid is not necessarily focused on neither the perception of idealized woman nor gender relation topic, they keep contributing the growth of Kartini as a great leading figure in Indonesia. Such research article entitled *Mitos Kanca Wingking Perempuan Jawa dalam Film Kartini* discusses on how the movie, *Kartini* (2017), responds to the issue of domesticity of women (Adawiyah & Rachmaria, 2021); here it emphasizes that the domestic area the women should be in is a myth; and so they can oppose this position. Another related topic which uses the same object, *Kartini* (2017), brought up discussion on how this movie represents "a good daughter" in a narrow sense (Hasanah and Witarti, 2018). Based on this research article, it however shows the weak side of Kartini, which particularly examines on the 'submissive' character; it seems to negate the attached persona of Kartini, representing women's emancipation which is always associated with rebellious character. Therefore, it is intriguing to further delve into the discussion on these contrary images whether being an "idealized woman" is understood as the one who can fight for women's right or those who become a "good daughter" with her submissiveness. Thus, bringing up two filmic characters of Kartini is supposed to be enriching the discussion on the movie. To an extent, by comparing *R.A Kartini* (1982) and *Kartini* (2017) will be able to specifically view the shift of Kartini portrayals since different movie potentially performs distinctive style in emphasizing the storyline. Hence, this perpetual topic on Kartini is still relatable and debatable to discuss and fit in the context of Indonesia at the present time.

1 *R.A Kartini* (1982) is directed by Sumanjaya and Kartini character is played by Yeni Rachman (IMDb, 2022). The film is based on *Kartini: Sebuah Biografi* (Kartini: A Biography) written by Sitisomandari Soeroto. Meanwhile *Surat Cinta Untuk Kartini* (2016) is a film by Azhar Koino Lubis and Rania Putrisari plays the role of Kartini. The 2016 film focuses on the love story between Kartini and a mailman named Sarwadi. The last biopic, *Kartini* (2017) is a film directed by and the figure of Kartini is played by Dian Sastro Wardoyo. Like the 1982 version, *Kartini* (2017) is a coming of age film. However, Hanung Bramantyo uses Kartini's letters collected in a book entitled *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* as the main source of the film storyline (IMDb, 2017) when Indonesia was still a colony of the Netherlands, women weren't allowed to get higher education. Kartini grew up to fight for equality for women." "accessed": {"date-parts": [{"2023", "2", "9"}]}, "author": [{"dropping-particle": ""}, {"family": "IMDb"}, {"given": ""}, {"non-dropping-particle": ""}, {"parse-names": false}, {"suffix": ""}], "container-title": "IMDb", "id": "ITEM-1", "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2017"}]}, "title": "Kartini", "type": "webpage", "uris": [{"http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=665959a6-6cd4-36de-b711-79082abf51c7"}]}, "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(IMDb, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kartini biopic film, especially the one released in 2017, has received a lot of attention in various studies. For example, in the study of semiotics in the film *Kartini* (2017) conducted by Sarwoko (2019). By analyzing the symbols, icons and indexes found in the film, he reviews Kartini's heroic values represented through the film. Meanwhile, Triana (Triana, 2019) is interested in examining language politeness shown by the figure of Kartini in this 2017 film production. Through a socio-pragmatic analysis, she found six maxims, namely: wisdom, acceptance, generosity, humility, compatibility, and sympathy. The language politeness is inseparable from several factors, namely relationship status, social distance, age difference, and the palace environment. Another linguistic analysis of the film is the code mixing of Indonesian language in Javanese speech (Ade, 2020). This study found code mixing in words, such as *saya* (I), *kita* (we) and *masuk* (enter), at the phrase level, namely *kebebasanmu* (your freedom), as well as the clause level, namely *saya nulis iklan* (I write advertisements). In this case, code mixing is characterized by an informal situation. However, the linguistic studies of this film, in my opinion, does not provide further elaboration on the importance of the linguistic aspects found in this film, such as the reasons for using certain symbols in the depiction of Kartini's heroism, and why mixing codes must be used in the film.

The figure of Kartini and her life story, which is featured in this 2017 film, has also been extensively studied in gender studies, such as the depiction of patriarchal cultural hegemony and resistance by Kartini (Maulida & Rahmadiyah, 2020; Sari & Haryono, 2019), representation of women within the confines of tradition Java (Putri & Nurhajati, 2020), and a reception study on feminine stereotypes in the Kartini character. However, this existing research does not provide sufficient contextual analysis to see the phenomena or conditions behind the constructions and representations shown in the film. This is very important to disclose, because representation does not exist in an empty space, there are various parties/factors involved in it. The study we conducted was to uncover this discourse. By conducting a comparative study of Kartini's representations in two *Kartini* films, namely films produced in 1982 and 2017, our study emphasizes that each representation produced has a different discourse which is influenced by political, economic and socio-cultural conditions at the time each film was produced.

METHOD

The study aims to reveal the shifting image of Kartini portrayed in two biopic films entitled *R.A. Kartini* (1982) and *Kartini* (2017). The study employs textual approach by analysing the cinematic representation of Kartini constructed in both films. There are five elements which constitute a film, they are: narrative, sound, cinematography, mise-en-scene, and editing. The study analyses how the five elements are used to describe Kartini as the protagonist of the films. It is conducted in some steps: the first, collecting and selecting some shots which describe Kartini characters. The next is analysing the cinematic features which construct the figure of Kartini in both movies. The last step is analysing the contextual aspects which influence the construction of Kartini image in both films. The discussion of the cinematic elements and the contextual aspects is aimed to describe the shifting image of Kartini character and reveal the meaning of the different representation constructed in the films.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

R.A. Kartini (1982)

This 1982 film tells about Kartini's life from the time she was born until she died. From childhood to adolescence, the most prominent character depicted in this film is Kartini's immense curiosity. It is seen in the beginning scene of the film, as the camera focuses on Kartini's eyes (Figure 1). The face- especially the eyes is the body part that appears the most in literary works with various meanings to be conveyed, such as a symbol of love -as in Yeats' poem "Drinking Songs"- "Wine comes in at the mouth / And love comes in at the eye",

expressing thought and feeling- as in Shakespeare play “green-eyed jealousy”, and symbol of intelligence- as in Plato’ Republic “the eye of the soul” (Ferber, 2007). In this film, Kartini’s eyes symbolize her thought and feeling to what she sees happening in her environment. The eyes are linked to Kartini’s curiosity and restlessness on the poor condition of the people and her own life as a Javanese noble woman. It also reflects her emotion and agitation and leads to her action to protest the tradition that limits her freedom.



Figure 1. The close-up shots on eyes symbolize Kartini’s characters of observant, curious and critical (Sjumandjaja, 1982).

The film emphasizes Kartini’s character who has always been curious since her early age. A scene shows how the little Kartini is so stunned by a dance featuring Dewi Srikandi’s battle against her enemy who forces her to marry him. In this scene, the camera moves back and forth to closely capture the expression on little Kartini’s face and then moves on to shot the dance movement. It highlights Kartini’s emotion and curiosity toward Dewi Srikandi’s powerful character. Dewi Srikandi is a famous female character in *Wayang* (Javanese puppet) who is known as a skilled archer. This scene reflects the figure of Kartini who will grow into a tough woman like her. In addition, Dewi Srikandi’s battle shown in the dance reflects her own battle in the future.

Little Kartini is growing to be a smart and critical girl. As a *priyayi* (noble) daughter, she has the privilege of getting an education in a Dutch school. This film depicts Kartini learning Dutch since she was young and learning and making friends with Dutch children. However, this film still shows the figure of Kartini as a Javanese, through a scene where Kartini and her siblings learn Javanese songs, following a scene of her learning Dutch. This confirms Kartini’s image as a girl who adheres to her own culture, regardless of the Western education she received.



00:11:41



00:12:00

Figure 2: Kartini is learning Dutch and Javanese songs in two consecutive scenes (Sjumandjaja, 1982).

With the Western education she received, Kartini got acquainted with the heroic stories of St. Joan d'Arc² and Multatuli³. They influenced Kartini's thinking regarding humanism and anti-colonialism. A scene depicts Kartini's anxiety after eavesdropping on her father's words about the hunger suffered by the local people due to forced cultivation by the Dutch government. Kartini is sickened by the colonization practices in her regent.

"Tomorrow means delaying death, the people have started eating banana stem tubers, while the harvest of sap for export has increased by 40%. What a shame for this country, if that is the case, it is true that everything Multatuli has written, that coffee is more valuable than human life and dignity" (Sjumandjaja, 1982).

The above quotation is a projection on Kartini's anti-colonial thought in which she pours in her writing and urges her to help her people. The film shows Kartini's restless and critical thinking as she witnesses the poor condition of the people in her region under the colonial rule of the Dutch East Indies government.

Kartini's anti-colonial attitude is also influenced by her father and brother. Since the beginning of this film, we will already find his father's concern – as a regent, who on the one hand has to carry out the orders of the colonial government, but on the other hand has to witness the suffering of his people as a result of the government's forced cultivation. He wishes that Kartini would grow up to be a strong woman and a leader who would fight for the interests of her homeland. He addresses his hope during the *Tedak Sinten* tradition, which is a ceremony that marks a child's first step on the ground.

"Get to know the ground you just stepped on, Tini. The drained land of Java, the bitter land, the land that needs *senopati* [leader], freedom, independence. You [Kartini] will be one of those *senopati*" (Sjumandjaja, 1982).

This scene also shows the helplessness of Kartini's father in facing the pressure of colonialism and puts his faith on Kartini to make changes.

In this film, young Kartini, is also described as a person with polite and calm manner. As a noble daughter, Kartini always speaks politely and in a very well-ordered language to other people regardless of their social class. The attitude also implies the intelligence and maturity of Kartini's thinking, even though she is still very young. Another trait that is so prominently displayed in the film is calm and affectionate. It is shown in Kartini's gesture. When she interacts with the poor, Kartini did not distance herself; instead, she embraced them. The similar gesture is shown as she embraced her two younger siblings who also had to undergo seclusion together as a tradition that they had to live with.

Issues of gender equality in the family, in particular, get big portion in the scenes of the film. It features Kartini not only as a noble's daughter but also as a regent's wife. Although she rejected the practice of polygamy, which at that time was widely practiced, Kartini finally had to endure it in her own marriage. However, Kartini put forward preconditions to her husband, with the aim at eradicating other traditions that demeaned women. This film shows that after getting married, Kartini continued to struggle to educate women and help the poor. It also clearly shows her husband's support for this struggle.

Kartini (2017): "Millennial" Woman and Freedom of Choice

In contrast to its 'predecessor', the 2017 Kartini film gives a lot of attention to the young side of Kartini who is trying to break the traditional order at home and in society. The way the figure of Kartini is performed through the film is close with young 'millennial'. Chen mentions that millennials tend to be open and optimistic

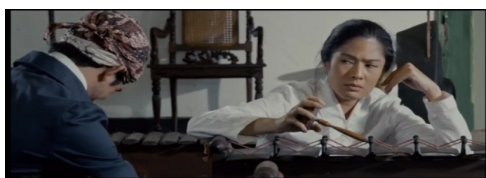
2 St. Joan d'Arc is a French national heroine. She led French army to a victory in the battle against English at Orleans. A year later, she was captured and burnt to death by English and the French collaborator as a heretic. (Vale & Lanhers, 2022)

3 Multatuli, or Eduard Douwes Dekker, is a Dutch writer who is known for his book *Max Havelaar*. This book reveals and challenges the evil practices of forced labour, forced cultivation and corruption that have afflicted the people of Banten. It received wide attention internationally and laid the foundation for the conduct of ethical politics in the Dutch East Indies (Muchtar, 2020)

about their passion or ambitions; in this case, in their younger ages, they are not hesitant to pursue their dreams and know their potentials (Chen, 2022). Furthermore, some of the characterizations with such millennial youth are clearly depicted in the film. Some of the dominant characters shown in this film are:

a. *Young and rebellious*

Played by Dian Sastro, the figure of Kartini is described as a young woman who is a bit tomboyish with a fairly straightforward style of speaking. This is not only depicted in one scene, but several scenes where she interacted with other characters in the film including her brother, sisters, even her mother, R.A. Moerjam, (from her father's second wife) are obviously shown.



00:12:15

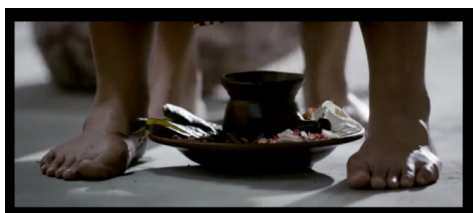


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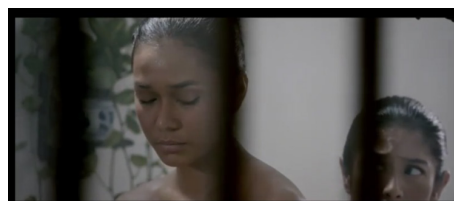
Figure 3. Sosrokartono, Kartini's brother, is talking about how to find a way out of seclusion to her (Bramantyo, 2017).

In minutes 00:12:15 portrays Kartini's cranky facial expression in responding her brother's laughs at her. In addition, the style of speaking that is overtly direct is also a character of young Kartini performed in this film, such as in this scene when she talked with her brother, Raden Mas Sosrokartono. That she was not only responding with the expression, she seemed to be very straightforward with her words literally saying "nonsense" to answer her brother's statement about liberating the mind in order to counter seclusion tradition. Whether through facial expressions or the style of speaking, she did not pretend of being the obedient girl to her brother, rather she showed who she really was. This way of communication, in fact, illustrates the reverse reality; Javanese nobles commonly practice obedience to elders manifested even in the way they speak; and such a way of expressing disagreement with older brother/sister indeed breaks the traditional way of communication.

The way Kartini talked to her brother considers no distant; unlike some other characters represented in this film, they performed common way of communication as siblings of noble people; for example Kartini's younger sisters, they seem to be obedient to her. Moreover, the young usually do not stare at the face of the elders who are speaking to them, and it is taboo to have an eye-contact with elders speaking to them; rarely can they refuse with the idea the elders propose or state a blatant disagreement; the one exemplified by Kartini to her older brother is a case in point. As such it is evidently present in another scene which describes Kartini's unwillingness to follow the rituals of traditional spa with her older sister, Soelastri.



00:10:50



00:11:10



00:11:28



00:11:36



00:11:14

Figure 4. Kartini with her sister follow traditional spa ritual that was commonly carried on the seclusion or in preparing to wedlock (Bramantyo, 2017).

The captures above deliberately express her reluctance to accept the idea of her sister said about women, and a set of ritual that made her tired. It is also evidently shown in the following dialogue.

Kartini : What is this, Sis? (while she glares at her sister)

Soelastri: Your body is your most prized possession. You should always take care of it. Our bodies will lead us to our destiny.

Kartini (2017) 00:11:10 (Bramantyo, 2017)

The above dialogue that matches with minutes 00:11:10 performs how Kartini directly responds with disagreement particularly on how women should be defined as the subdued object of seclusion and wedlock. Later in minutes 00:11:14, it, to an extent, affirms that Kartini does not necessarily like with the idea of the tradition but rather she does not agree with how the woman should be positioned; it seems like she is tired of waiting and cannot enjoy the process. All of her gestures that counter the idea of seclusion inevitably shows Kartini's spirit as a young and rebellious woman.

Several times shown in this film, Kartini's sitting style also does not match the way a noble princess sits. It can be observed in these captures below.



00:12:55



00:21:19



00:21:34

Figure 5. The way Kartini sits in several scenes (Bramantyo, 2017).

In minutes 00:12:55 shows how Kartini sat in front of her brother; her posture was actually folding her legs with lifting her knees up while carrying a jar of cashews. Such a way is unlike her sisters when they sat on the floor with kneeling position. The other scenes, in minutes 00:21:19 and 00:21:34, display the way Kartini sat in the window with lifted-kneed and crossed-legged posture. This pictures an image of Kartini who owns an entirely different style of Javanese princess, particularly compared to her older and younger sisters.

Young Kartini also refused to be called sister by her younger siblings. This is uncommon in Javanese culture, which emphasizes the way addressing *mas* or *mbak(yu)* as a form of respect to older siblings. Here in minutes 00:23:27 (Bramantyo, 2017) Kartini insisted her younger siblings to call her nickname only, and it implicitly shows how Kartini wanted to be friends for her sisters getting rid of the gap between old and young.



00:23:27



00:25:53

Figure 6. She told her younger sisters not to address her with *mbak(yu)* (Bramantyo, 2017).

- Kartini* : Do not call me sister! You don't need to be polite.
 You don't need to use proper language with me. Just call me Kartini. Kar-ti-ni.
- Siblings* : Trinil!
- Kartini* : Trinil.

Kartini (2017) 00:23:27 (Bramantyo, 2017)

All of the above captures and dialogue are the manifested spirit of Kartini as being young. Spirit of the young that characterizes Kartini in this film exhibits young soul which, to an extent, emphasizes that age is not the boundary to befriend with sisters or brothers. She therefore did not want to be so distant with her siblings by having them call her nickname instead of *mbak/mbak(yu)*.

b. *Playful*

This film shows the cheerful side of young Kartini even though she lives in seclusion. The joy of young Kartini is shown a lot when she, together with her two younger sisters Roekmini and Kardinah, told about their dreams and made them come true, in a light and optimistic style.



00:25:53



00:55:06

Figure 7. Kartini and her sisters are sharing their vision happily (Bramantyo, 2017).

They were talking about how they can turn the world into their own. They viewed the seclusion period as the opportunity to cultivate their potentials and later Kartini's younger sisters were convinced that broadening their horizon is one way to not feel secluded as it opens the window of the world. By the time they were exploring the books given by Raden Mas Sosrokartono, Kartini and her sisters seemed to have fun with it. They enjoyed the time they were in seclusion with different activities. As it is seen in minutes 00:25:53 (Bramantyo, 2017) Kartini was spending time joking with her sisters, and another time in minutes 00:55:06 the three of them were enjoying times sitting on a parapet walls sharing stories and their thoughts. The way they spend times being secluded was full of fun; and Kartini in this film really shows her playful side in her character.

c. *Creative and productive*

Another way the young Kartini spent her seclusion period was with creating some writings. She was very good at writing for it made her 'voice' heard to the Dutch government; through this access, she was awarded a scholarship to continue her education in Netherlands. Kartini started reading the books her brother had, and simultaneously began writing letters to her brother and finally Ovink Soer's wife found out that Kartini's writing is very potential to be published. The captures below assert that the creative and productive sides of Kartini were clearly shown through the film.



00:24:14



00:30:16

Figure 8. The process of creating research article to be published with a help of Ovink Soer's wife (Bramantyo, 2017).

The same characterization is also presented in the story even they were not shown in detail. Raden Ajeng Roekmini had an expertise of managing local business based in carving art in Jepara, and Raden Ajeng Kardinah in support had the ability to design carvings which, as the film described, were able to advance the lives of the Jepara carvers at that time.



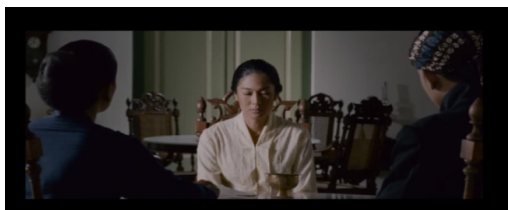
00:50:23

Figure 9. Raden Ajeng Roekmini told her design of carving artworks to the carving artist (Bramantyo, 2017).

Young Kartini with her choices

This film provides ample space in describing the choices made by Kartini herself. Even in the narrow room where she was confined, young Kartini seemed to have the freedom to pursue her passion for reading and later became so firm in deciding the path she wanted to take, one of which is becoming a writer even though she had to ask an agreement from her father first when she was about to publish her writing. The steps she took were actually rare for women in this era; she therefore was considered the figure who reflects liberation for women since she was so assertive with her choice.

Although at the end of the film is closed with Kartini accepting a marriage proposal from a man who was a regent and married twice, this scene indeed performed the strong characterization of Kartini. It was obviously shown how Kartini demanded terms of agreement due to the arranged marriage—this bold characterization marks a difference in the film despite, if it is closely observed, Kartini was portrayed having duality of characterizations; she wanted to rebel but on the other side she was deliberately constituted to return to her Javanese tradition. In the beginning of the story, it seemed that Kartini was not willing to have a marriage life while it still shows her assertiveness on her decision; then in the meantime she unavoidably accepted Javanese belief—that it is better to stay obedient to elders or parents; moreover it was considered unacceptable for (especially unmarried) women in her tradition to have a debate (Kartini & Coté, 2021). Therefore, this scene emphasizes the importance of Kartini's characters which is always firm with her choice even though she was eager to challenge the tradition.



01:17:05



01:18:05

Figure 10. Kartini challenged the tradition not to always follow the rules given by elders (Bramantyo, 2017).

Gender Discourse in Kartini Films

According to the analysis above, the differences in Kartini's character show that the two films carry different 'messages' in representing the image of Indonesian women in the 1980s and 2000s. Women with feminine and maternal sides were the dominant image in the 1980s. During the New Order era, women's representation and gender equality became a major issue. The government domesticates women through *Panca Dharma Wanita* (The Five Duties of Woman), which includes: (1) women are husband's companions, (2) women are the successors of offspring, (3) women are housekeepers, (4) women are additional breadwinners, (5) women are members of

society. As Asyraf and Hazimah pointed out that these *Panca Dharma Wanita* through Family Empowerment Program (PKK) was a form of subordinating women in disguise of glorifying them (2020). This glorification had existed since the regime of Soekarno (Indonesian first president) with the concept of “goddess-stupefying” women which was later continued by the New Order regime by enacting the state ideology of *ibuisim* (motherhood). The ideology encourages Indonesian women “to stay at home and conform to the ideal, subordinate roles of wife and mother” (Chin, 2018, p. 1). In consequence, any attributes related to the motherly figures is reproduced in many ways and media, including films.

In this regime, patriarchal culture became very dominant, until the late 1970s the issue of gender equality began to emerge, which was influenced by the rise of women’s movements abroad. In the early 1980s, women’s organizations such as the Annisa Swasti Foundation (Yasanti) were formed in Yogyakarta and the Kalyanamitra Foundation in Jakarta. This foundation even has a network to NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), namely the Women’s Solidarity NGO and the Rifka Annisa NGO. The general agenda of these organizations is the mindset of women towards gender equality. However, this is not easy, because they also have to deal with countries that have different formulations on the role of women (Amalia, 2010). Kartini’s character in the film *R.A. Kartini* (1982) is a representation of the hard struggle of women activists at that time against the patriarchal culture perpetuated by the state. Behind her gentleness, as played by Jenni Rachman, the Kartini figure in this film also struggles hard against gender inequality in the family. On the other hand, Kartini figure in *Kartini* (2017) is no longer a representation of this kind of struggle but it seemingly tends to portray the ‘new’ women who are very open to a lot of opportunities and many choices in life.

Apart from the main narrative of Kartini’s story, namely matchmaking and educational opportunities for women, the figure of Kartini in the 2017 film can be said to be more ‘modern’. In one of her letters to Stella Zehandellaar, Kartini describes what she called as modern woman:

“I have longed to make the acquaintance of a “modern girl,” that proud, independent girl who has all my sympathy! She who, happy and self-reliant, lightly and alertly steps on her way through life, full of enthusiasm and warm feeling; working not only for her own well-being and happiness, but for the greater good of humanity as a whole” (Kartini & Coté, 2021, p. 67)

The depiction of Kartini who is more energetic, playful, and full of optimism is a representation of young women in the post-reform era. The collapse of the New Order regime gave new space for the women’s movement to fight for women’s rights. With the growth of women’s NGOs, in the form of women’s crises and hotlines, to the inclusion of women in various political party organizations (Kartini & Coté, 2021). However, the initial optimism of this reform does not necessarily mean that gender equality has been achieved.

The young Kartini figure depicted in the 2017 film is very close to the character of the current millennial generation. Living in the era of globalization, the millennial generation has a dynamic, optimistic, creative and productive character to which the figure of young Kartini is attached. By still referring to the main plot, the figure of Kartini in this film also has the character of a young woman who is independent and able to make choices and decisions in achieving her goals. Such image of women was difficult to find in the era of the 1980s, where the image of women was constructed under the control of a very strong patriarchal ideology—this otherwise shows the strength of Kartini’s character who was able to appropriate the discourse of western feminist discourse in the 19th century Indonesia (Kartini & Coté, 2021). Most importantly, it is remarkably shown at the end of the film that the figure of a woman still has power over this patriarchal society with the scene of the regent’s willingness to accept Kartini’s terms and conditions. In short, the construction of women in an era will change along with the dynamics of life that occurred in that era.

CONCLUSION

R. A. Kartini (1982) and *Kartini* (2017) are biopic films featuring the life of Indonesian hero Kartini. The films tell about Kartini’s struggle against tradition which constrained women and for women’s equity especially on education. Kartini becomes a model of an ideal woman. Both films concern on those similar messages, yet

they see Kartini figure differently. It is seen through the different personalities selected and predominantly presented to describe Kartini. The differences in Kartini's character in the film indicate a change in the ideal woman's image.

It is undeniable that political, social and cultural dynamics - especially the Indonesian women's movement from the New Order era to the Post reformation era, have had a major influence on the changing image of the ideal woman in society. The figure of Kartini constructed in the two films shows the different representations of women's images in the two eras.

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