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"R.A. Kartini" (1982) and "Kartini" (2017); Anguish and silent struggles in the narratives of Indonesian women's empowerment role model

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R.A. Kartini (1982) and Kartini (2017)

Anguish and silent struggles in the narratives of Indonesian women's empowerment role model

INDAH S. PRATIDINA AND ROULI ESTHER PASARIBU

ABSTRACT

This study compares the portrayal of R.A. Kartini, an Indonesian female national heroine, in the biopics Sjumandjaya's *R.A. Kartini* (1982) and Bramantyo's *Kartini* (2017). The films were produced in the New Order and post-Reformation eras respectively, with social and cultural values translating into context-shaped standpoints in interpreting the figure of Kartini's. Kartini is a role model associated with empowered Indonesian women and equality in education; therefore, films produced in different social and political contexts retelling her story give insights into how these issues were framed during these eras. This study uses film discourse interpretation analysis referencing dialogues and gestures from the films to discuss power relations between male-female characters, the issue of silence and women's voice, and sisterhood. The study finds that, although both films reconfirm the already imprinted patriarchal society's images of Kartini in particular and women in general, there are collective efforts to rethink and question the status quo.

KEYWORDS

Kartini, film, patriarchy, women's empowerment, sisterhood.

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INTRODUCTION

R.A. Kartini (henceforth, Kartini) is arguably Indonesia's best-known female national heroine. She was proclaimed a national hero by Presidential Decree No. 108/1964 under Indonesia's first president, Sukarno. Younger generations have continued to acknowledge her role and importance, although with various levels of familiarity, because of the annual celebrations commemorating her birthday on April 21 as "Kartini Day". On Kartini Day, most of the country's educational institutions, from kindergartens to universities, feature nationalist symbols, such as cultural festivals, ethnic costumes, fashion shows, and women wearing the traditional *kebaya*. R.A. Kartini's portrait was also featured on the old 10,000 Indonesian rupiah note issued in 1985, with an illustration of a woman wearing academic dress on the other side of the banknote. Indonesians still consider Kartini a relevant figure associated with women's empowerment and equality in education. As a writer, she left a written legacy of her ideas and experiences which others have been able to read and draw upon. Her correspondence with her Dutch friends or notes of interviews with people who knew Kartini reveal not only about Kartini herself but also about the Netherlands East Indies, when Indonesia was a Dutch colony. Kartini has also been extensively studied by scholars from various disciplines (Joost Coté 1992; Armijn Pane 1987; Danilyn Rutherford 1993; Daniel F. Schultz 2017; Haryati Soebadio-Noto Soebagio and Saparinah Sadli 1990; Jean Gelman Taylor 1989) and has been the inspiration for fictional works, including novels and films.

Kartini is not the only female national heroine. Other well-known heroines are a leader of the Acehese guerrilla forces, Cut Nyak Dhien (1848-1908), and a Malukan freedom-fighter against the Dutch colonials, Martha Christina Tiahahu (1800-1818); also, just like Kartini, an advocate of women education in the Netherlands East Indies from West Java, Dewi Sartika (1884-1947). However, Kartini's life story has been the most explored in film narratives. Three films, excluding television films or similar works using the name "Kartini", depict Kartini as a character. They are biopics *R.A. Kartini* (1982, Sjumandjaya), *Kartini* (2017, Hanung Bramantyo), and *Surat cinta untuk Kartini* (2016, Azhar Koini Lubis). Although Kartini appears in the title, *Surat cinta untuk Kartini* is a historical drama in which a postman falls in love with a woman named Kartini with traits similar to R.A. Kartini. Indonesian films are not short of Indonesian female main characters who aspire to strength, empowerment, and involvement in nation-building. These range from as early as *Gadis olahraga* (1951, Dr Huyung) to the recent *Marlina si pembunuh dalam empat babak* (2017, Mouly Surya) and *Susi Susanti: love all* (2019, Sim F.). However, biopics which depict female national heroines are rare. Other than the life of Kartini, there was only one other well-known film *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (1986, Eros Djarot), a biographical take on the life of widowed Acehese warrior, Cut Nyak Dhien, fighting the Dutch colonialists. *Tjoet Nja Dhien* gained international recognition when it was screened at the Directors' Fortnight session of the Cannes Film Festival in 1989 (Garin Nugroho and Dyna Herlina 2013).

By comparison, the list of male national heroes is much longer than that of

their female counterparts. Therefore, there are more films made featuring male national heroes throughout the history of Indonesian film. A select list includes films featuring K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (*Sang Pencerah*, 2010, Hanung Bramantyo), former president B.J. Habibie (*Habibie and Ainun*, 2012, Faozan Rizal; *Rudy Habibie: Habibie and Ainun 2*, 2016; and *Habibie and Ainun 3*, 2019, Hanung Bramantyo), Sukarno, the first Indonesia president (*Soekarno: Indonesia Merdeka*, 2013, Hanung Bramantyo), the founder of Boedi Oetomo, HOS Tjokroaminoto (*Guru Bangsa Tjokroaminoto*, 2015, Garin Nugroho), and Sudirman (*Jendral Soedirman*, 2015, Viva Westi), among others. The fact that these national heroes' biopics overwhelmingly feature men represents the patriarchal status quo which idealizes strong nationalistic leaders, and the upshot is that dedicated, intelligent role models in Indonesia are predominantly males.

Despite this context, *Kartini* has become an icon of the Indonesian women's movement, particularly of fundamental women's rights, especially in education and legal standing in a marriage. We believe that Indonesians are still receptive to *Kartini's* story and less aware of other national female heroines, because she was royalty in Java, Central Java to be exact, from whose ranks many of the country's leaders with long, solid political presence, such as Suharto (the second president), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (the sixth president), and Joko Widodo (the seventh president) originated. However, we argue that in the *Kartini* biopics of 1982 and 2017, *Kartini's* figure tends to be depicted one-dimensionally, ironically rewinding the same old stories about patriarchy in Javanese society and rechannelling the dominant perspective of patriarchy, which results in preserving old patriarchal norms still fought against by modern Indonesian women today.

This paper addresses the issue of the latent rewinding and preservation of patriarchal values in popular culture. It investigates whether the practice and values of patriarchy can be observed in how *Kartini* is depicted in the films. The background to the argument is that films are the most immediate and popular means through which the general public (the audience) comes to know about *Kartini*, and, therefore, particular scrutiny is needed. Though labelled fiction, films about *Kartini*, celebrated as a role model for the women's movement and equal rights to education, can be treated as a teaching tool in media and gender studies. If researched and appropriately implemented, *Kartini's* life story potentially provides us with gender and history educational tools which speak eloquently to the younger generation.

This study uses *R.A. Kartini (1982)* and *Kartini (2017)* as case studies. *R.A. Kartini (1982)* was directed by Sjumandjaya, a notable director from the early 1970s to the late 1980s. His films, such as *Lewat tengah malam* (Pas midnight, 1971) and *Si Doel anak modern* (Doel the modern boy, 1976), are especially noted because of their social criticism. *Kartini (2017)* was directed by Hanung Bramantyo, who began his career as a director in the 2000s with a romantic comedy, *Brownies* (2005). He gained popularity with *Ayat-ayat cinta* (Verses of love, 2008), a romantic religious drama which features polygyny in Islamic marriage. He has continued producing films with religious themes as well as others, such as the afore-mentioned national heroes' biopics.

We chose these two films because they depict Kartini through the lenses of the New Order and the post-Reformation era. Are there any differences in the depiction of Kartini? If there are, what kind of differences are evident? What has changed and what has not changed in the portrayal of Kartini? How do the films show her thoughts, opinions, and ideas about female emancipation and social criticism? Or, do these films characterize Kartini as a fragile, tragic Javanese princess? This paper attempts to answer these questions by observing some scenes and analysing the Kartini character. The main arguments are that films produced in a particular era portray female national heroines in their political and socio-cultural contexts and that, to a certain degree, give a glimpse of how these contexts interplay as an interpretation of history in Indonesian popular culture. By comparing the depiction of Kartini in these two films, we explore how the depiction of Kartini reflects what society in these two eras expected of women and link this to how the patriarchy ideology operated in these two eras.

KARTINI AS SUBJECT OF STUDY

Previous research on Kartini has focused on exploring her thoughts by studying her and her sisters' letters (Coté 1992, 2022; M. Muthoifin, M. Ali, and N. Wachidah 2017; Misana T. Sundari 2019; Agnes Widyaningrum and Yulistiyanti 2019). Coté (1992, 2022) discusses Kartini's letters to her friends and argues how this correspondence strongly influenced Kartini's perspectives on education, women's role in society, and social issues in general. Muthoifin, Ali, and Wachidah (2017) focus on Kartini's thinking about women's education reflected in her writings and how this is relevant to Islamic education. Sundari (2019) elaborates on discussions about education and feminism in Kartini's letters. Widyaningrum and Yulistiyanti (2019) discuss the efforts to implement national values for children in their early years through narratives of Kartini as one of the female national heroines.

Several studies have also read *Kartini* (2017) closely, particularly Karen Wulan Sari and Cosmas Gatot Haryono (2018), who argue that it reveals a patriarchal hegemony in its representation. On the other hand, Gita Anita and Yulianti (2019) argue that *Kartini* (2017) suggests feminism ideology by portraying Kartini's and her sisters' ranges of emotions from awe and happiness to anger and sadness as reactions to their social surroundings as personal knowledge and experience, formulation of self, and display of personal power. Dina R. Triana (2019) explores *Kartini* (2017) from a socio-pragmatic perspective. She argues that politeness in use of language by characters in *Kartini* is determined by social status, distance, age difference, and palace environment. Rutherford (1993) compares the Kartini figures depicted in *Panggil aku Kartini saja* (Call me Kartini, 1962) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and *Kartini sebuah biografi* (Kartini a biography, 1977) by Sitisomandri Soeroto. Rutherford (1993: 25) shows how "Pramoedya locates his Kartini and her people in a history of struggle [whereas] Soeroto locates hers in the naturalized categories and boundaries of the State." He argues that, by reading the two texts, the audience can observe two different

Kartinis: Old Order Kartini from Toer's book and New Order Kartini from Soeroto's, as each era strove to legitimize its dominant ideologies.

As did Rutherford, this paper compares two representations of Kartini from two political eras. However, this study contributes to the comparison by observing films produced in 1982 and 2017 and linking them to the dynamic of changing society in the New Order and post-Reformation eras. This study also suggests that media practitioners, educators, historians, and people in general, might want pay more attention to films which depict national heroes as they have the potential to blur between history and fiction.

FILM DISCOURSE INTERPRETATION

This study applies film discourse interpretation, which views discourse within a film as "an active process of relational meaning-making and inferring its propositional content in terms of assumptions and hypotheses, which the recipient makes according to concrete cues within the text" (Janina Wildfeuer 2014: 1). Wildfeuer (2014: 1) says that the "concrete cues" are "modalities within the film, such as images, music, sounds, gestures, dialogues, and other elements, whose multiple interactions with each other create meanings; the comprehension and interpretation of these meanings, however, requires the spectator's active participation". Therefore, as researcher-spectators, we purposively list selected dialogues and gestures and then relate them with themes presented in the two Kartini films.

This study observes the depictions of Kartini as the protagonist in her biopics qualitatively to explore how the two film-makers from the New Order and post-Reformation eras present their views and interpretations of the character and her life story. The themes explored in both films are: 1) power relations between men and women; 2) the issues of women's anger and silence, which we break down into the matter of separation between private-public sphere relations and the muting of female voices; and 3) women as a collective presence which explores the sisterhood theme. The following elaborates on how we observe each theme according to previous the concepts used in the studies.

For theme number one, the study draws on the work of Allan G. Johnson (2004) in which he describes patriarchy as an extensive system which encompasses social institutions of family, religion, and the economy and how they shape people's lives. Patriarchy's defining elements are

its male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centred character [...]. At its core, patriarchy is a set of symbols and ideas that make up a culture embodied by everything from the content of everyday conversation to literature and film. Patriarchal culture includes ideas about the nature of things, including men, women, and humanity, with manhood and masculinity most closely associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of "other" (Johnson 2004: 29).

Johnson importantly notes that patriarchy as a system can thrive without

oppression when all members in it participate, adopt, and identify the values as “normal” and part of everyday lives (2004: 26). The study observes the power relations between female and male characters in both films to problematize the dominant perspectives of the men in the narratives which, in turn, gives insights into the men behind the camera who directed the narratives.

For theme number two, the study notes that, in a patriarchal culture, anger is one of the emotions which is considered inappropriate to women. Susi Kaplow (1973: 38) defines anger as “self-confident, willing to fight for itself even at the jeopardy of the status quo, capable of taking a risk, and, if necessary, accepting defeat without total demise”. For women, Carolyn G. Heilbrun (1988: 13) argues that, “above all other prohibitions, what has been forbidden to women is anger, together with the open admission of the desire for power and control over one’s life.” Anger is constructed as improper and unfeminine and, therefore, an emotion prohibited from being directly expressed by women. It is because angry women articulate their power by expressing their thoughts, dissatisfactions, and complaints, and their actions challenge patriarchal norms. Being angry means women are confident enough to speak up and elevate issues from personal space to public attention. As Kaplow (1973: 41) concludes, “controlled, directed, but nonetheless passionate, anger moves from the personal to the political and becomes a force for shaping our new destiny.”

Female anger is a female expression of the protest against patriarchal oppression, an effort to talk back and make one’s voice heard. Olsen in Maggie Humm (1995: 267) argues that “silence is a central condition of women’s culture.” Women’s culture here can be interpreted as a culture in which patriarchal norms define women. Silence is constructed as natural to women, since being outspoken threatens the perpetuity of patriarchal culture. If a woman speaks out and makes her voice heard, she is perceived as trying to challenge and undermine patriarchal power. From a patriarchal perspective, being silent and submissive is a female virtue, while rebellion is constructed as improper for women. Women’s silence is a condition of the perpetuation of patriarchal norms. This study observes the dialogues and gestures of the female characters in the films to draw upon the voiced or silenced anger and anguish portrayed.

Theme three explores women handling conflicts as a collective presence through the bond of sisterhood; in opposed to a single angry woman. This theme is strongly related to the above elaborations on the normalization of patriarchal values and the idea of silencing women’s anger. Within a patriarchal social system, speaking out against the majority’s widely accepted patriarchal values is perceived as challenging the status quo. Women often find themselves consciously or unconsciously participating or this status quo preservation. Johnson (2004: 31-32), however, points out that, just like other social systems, patriarchy is not static; it is an ongoing process which continuously shapes and reshapes; a process which we as a collective can change or perpetuate while participating in it. This study tries to observe the

similarities and differences in portrayals of conflicts when patriarchal values are being questioned and how they are faced if not resolved in the two films.

We acknowledge that both films have never claimed to be historically accurate biographies of Kartini; they are works of fiction, and we adopt this same position. Therefore, in this study, our focus will not be on the accuracy of historical details, as in Kartini's true-life story or the elements of *mise-en-scène*. We have no confirmed information on the basis for Sjumandjaya's interpretation of his Kartini; however, we have observed that several wordings in the film's dialogue do resemble those in Kartini's letters.

Bramantyo has admitted several times in his interviews with the media that the main inspiration for his Kartini is Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Panggil aku Kartini saja*, a book which was first published by Nusantara in 1962.¹ Nevertheless, we argue that commercial films, regardless of being branded fictional works and a product of popular culture, can be treated as a cultural artefact of the society which produced them at a particular time.

Jeremy D. Stoddard and Alan S. Marcus (2006) point out how Hollywood-produced historical-themed films have also been discussed as having "the burden of historical representation". They explain how using historical films based on the story of non-fictional persons as an educational tool in classrooms presents both problematic and beneficial sides. Films can provide a venue for the representation of the "marginalized and underrepresented groups" with continuous impact on the spectators' point of view on a certain race, religion, gender, and the world in general, even if they understand the portrayals are not precisely accurate (Stoddard and Marcus 2006: 27). While they agree that films could "establish or reinforce racist notions of race, freedom, and citizenships", the burdens are acknowledged through the challenges of delivering complex characters and narratives within the limited time constraint of a film and the pressure of succeeding financially (Stoddard and Marcus 2006: 27).

Despite the above cautions, we agree with Stoddard and Marcus's recommendations (2006) in that films still have the power to induce exploration of marginalized groups' points of view and challenge dominant historical narratives if accompanied by media literacy. We, therefore, offer this study as an effort in film discourse interpretation by us as women researchers who were born, nurtured, and educated during the era of the New Order and post-Reformation. The study aims to unravel the values consciously or unconsciously presented and preserved by observing a role model of Indonesian women's empowerment within the films' scenes. Our observations and analysis are based on theories and concepts in media and gender studies.

THE LIFE OF KARTINI

This section focuses on Kartini's life (1879-1904), especially its cultural and social context, drawing on her letters, thoughts, and relationships with family and correspondents. The references in this section are biographies

¹ CNN Indonesia in 2017 and MetrotvNews in 2017.

which feature her life from different perspectives (Coté 1992, 2002; Pane 1987; Soebadia and Sadli 1990; Sitisoesmandari Soeroto and Myrtha Soeroto 2012; and Tempo 2019). We hope to provide more solid ground for reading Kartini's films by pointing out Kartini's interaction with various influential people in her social circle.

Kartini was born in Jepara on 21 April, 1879, and died on 17 September, 1904, at the age of twenty-five after giving birth to her first child. She was the fifth child and the second daughter of the Regent of Jepara, Raden Mas Adipati Ario Samingun Sosroningrat, and his second wife (*garwa ampil*), Ngasirah. As a regent and a member of the Javanese aristocracy, Sosroningrat held a vital position in the Javanese government under the Netherlands East Indies colonial government. Sosroningrat had two wives (*garwa padmi*: R.A. Muryam, chief wife married in 1875, and *garwa ampil*: Ngasirah, second wife married in 1872) and eleven children. Ngasirah was the first to be married to Sosroningrat; however, since she was not nobly born, her status was relegated to that of second wife. Scholars note how the social status of her mother and her standing in the family affected Kartini's point of view on polygyny, marriage, and equality even in the early years of her life (Soebadia and Sadli 1990; S. Soeroto and M. Soeroto 2012).

Sosroningrat was the third son of Pangeran Ario Tjondronegoro, a regent in Central Java (first Kudus, then Demak), famous for his view on the region's development in general. In 1846, he was the first Javanese aristocrat to consider Western education essential to the native people and assigned his children a Dutch tutor (Pane 1987). Four of his sons became regents, including Kartini's father. Soebadia and Sadli (1990) note that Kartini's grandfather inherited many liberal notions but maintained a traditional Indonesian household. Biographies note that Kartini had a solid and loving relationship with her father. S. Soeroto and M. Soeroto (2012) point to Kartini's letters which show that Kartini and her sisters absorbed their love for the people and sense of social justice from him. He often took his daughters to meet with working people and farmers, and later, when Kartini was older, he would tell her about their problems with government taxes, crops, failed harvests, and droughts, among other disasters. She looked up to her father, which was why she also felt torn when growing up; she gradually understood that she had two mothers with different social standings and privileges, which meant that her father was practicing polygyny, a marriage system which she condemned (S. Soeroto and M. Soeroto 2012).

Sosroningrat was considered progressive in providing education for all his children, both sons and daughters. Biographies mention that he supported Kartini's hopes and dreams of higher education. However, he could not escape the pressure of the traditional norms for Javanese aristocrats of that time. In 1892, when Kartini was twelve years old, she was considered old enough to enter *pingitan*, a confinement in preparation for marriage which included keeping girls at home until a suitor proposed. Her father's decision devastated Kartini; nevertheless, she wrote that she understood her father's position in the family and as a respected regent in Javanese society (Soebadia and Sadli

1990: 83-84). She fulfilled her hunger for knowledge by reading voraciously. She used her father's subscriptions (*leestrommel*) to Dutch newspapers, books, and magazines from inside and outside the country (Tempo 2019). During her confinement, Kartini also consoled herself with modern books sent by her beloved brother, Raden Mas Panji Kartono (henceforth Kartono).

Kartono, born on 10 April, 1877, was two years older than Kartini. He was the fourth child of Sostroningrat-NGasirah and, therefore, Kartini's full sibling. Kartini's biographies depict him as one of the early influencers and sources of admiration within her family circle. Kartono was privileged to study at Leiden University and travelled the world after graduating from Hoogere Burgerschool (HBS) secondary school in 1897. His extraordinary talent for languages made him one of the organizing members of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde in Leiden, a great honour for a colonial subject at the time (S. Soeroto and M. Soeroto 2012: 127). He became famous for his speech at the 25th Dutch Language and Literature Congress in Gent in which he used the Dutch language in front of prestigious scholars of the country (September 1899). After graduation, he mastered twenty-six languages, which S. Soeroto and M. Soeroto (2012) note include seventeen eastern and nine western languages. He became a journalist for *The New York Herald Tribune* in 1917 and took other occupations abroad on the strength of his language ability. After twenty-nine years of living abroad, Kartono returned to his motherland in 1925 to reside in Bandung and worked at the Nationale Middelbare School and the Perguruan Taman Siswa with Ki Hajar Dewantara's brother. Ki Hajar Dewantara (1889-1959) advocated education for Indonesian commoners in Dutch colonial times. He founded the Taman Siswa, an institution which provided education for all and was not limited to the Javanese aristocracy.

Kartono was not the only sibling with whom Kartini shared her passion for education and, most importantly, mentioned in her writings. Kardinah and Rukmini were Kartini's younger sisters. Kardinah was born from the same mother as Kartini on 1 March, 1881, while Rukmini was born from Muryam (Sosroningrat's chief wife) on 4 July, 1880. S. Soeroto and M. Soeroto (2012: 68) describe Kartini as "revolutionary" when she was adamant about abolishing the strict protocols between sisters by insisting that her sisters stop bowing their bodies as a symbol of subjugation and using the polite Javanese *kromo inggil* when they were with her. Like Kartini, both sisters agreed with their father's views on the need to defend the commoners' struggle in the country, to struggle for women's rights, and the nation's welfare in general. During the six years of *pingitan* (1892-1898), the three girls built their own world by sharing readings, drawings, and paintings, creating *batik*, and practising the Dutch language (Tempo 2019). A good family friend, Marie Ovink-Soer, called the three sisters *Het Klaverblad* (the Cloverleaf) because of their strong bond. This strong bond was disrupted when Rukmini was sent to marry.

Marie Ovink-Soer was one of Kartini's beloved correspondents who played an essential role in shaping Kartini's mind. Other significant

correspondents included Stella Zeehandelaar, Hilda de Booi, Jacques Abendanon and his wife, Rosa Mandri, the Abendanons' second son, Eduard C. Abendanon, Marie Ovink-Soer, Nellie van Kol and her husband, Henri van Kol, Dr Nicolaus Adriani, and Professor GK Anton (Coté 2022; Tempo 2019). Biographies note ten names who corresponded with Kartini, although maybe more were present in the book of the compilation of Kartini's letters *Door duisternis tot licht* (Out of dark comes light, Coté 2022: 18). Some of these figures appear as characters in the two films.

Stella Zeehandelaar (1874-1936) was an active member of various socialist feminist organizations in the Netherlands. In her correspondence with Kartini, she discussed the contemporary feminist novel of the time, *Hilda van Suylenburg*, published in 1897. Stella's acquaintance with Kartini began when she responded to a request by Kartini for a pen-pal, published in *De Hollandsche Lelie*, a women's magazine in the Netherlands. Stella was not the only one. Another woman who became Kartini's pen-pal was Hilda de Booi (1877-1975). Hilda was a highly educated modern woman whose husband was Hendrik de Booi (1867-1964), a naval officer seconded to Governor-General Willem Rooseboom (1899-1904). Hilda's husband was a member of the Dutch Liberale Unie, a "progressive liberal group that supports colonial reforms in the Dutch parliament" (Coté 2022: 20).

The Abendanon family were also crucial figures in Kartini's life. The three sisters met Jacques Henri Abendanon (1852-1925) in 1900. They found him inspiring because of his support for the *Ethische politiek* (Ethical Policy), which pursued the idea that the Netherlands had an ethical responsibility for the welfare of its colonial subjects, including the right to education. The three sisters developed strong relationships with the Abendanon family, going so far as to consider him their foster father. With his wife, Rosa Mandri, Abendanon settled in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1886. Rosa Mandri (1857-1944) also became Kartini's correspondent. Kartini also wrote to Abendanon's second son, Eduard C. Abendanon (1878-1962). Kartini saw Eduard as a brother because he also knew Kartini's older brother, Kartono, in the Netherlands. J.H. Abendanon was the person responsible for the publishing of Kartini's letters in Dutch under the title *Door duisternis tot licht: gedachten over en voor het Javaansche volk van Raden Adjeng Kartini* (Out of dark comes light: thoughts on and for the Javanese by Raden Adjeng Kartini) in 1911 by G.C.T van Dorp and Co. Publisher.

Three other persons considered critical to the development of Kartini's thinking are Marie Ovink-Soer (1860-1937) and Nellie and Henri van Kol. Marie Ovink-Soer (1860-1937) was the wife of the Assistant-Resident of Jepara from 1891 to 1899. She was a liberal feminist, contributor to a Dutch women's journal, and writer of children's literature. As they lived in the same area, Kartini and Marie Ovink-Soer had many direct contacts. Marie Ovink-Soer visited Kartini's home and lent Kartini Dutch language literature during her *pingitan*, which introduced ideas of the Dutch feminist movement. Nellie van Kol (1851-1930) and Henri van Kol supported Ethical Politics. Henri van Kol was a leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party and a member of parliament. Nellie was the editor of the influential women's journal *De Vrouw* (The Woman), and was also known as an influential writer on children's education and books.

As progressive, modern, educated individuals who were often active in the feminist movement or were colonial officials who had significant influence, Kartini's correspondence friends shared common traits. For Kartini, correspondence became a space in which to hone and shape her thoughts, build relationships with progressive, influential people, and a place for her to articulate her ideas, opinions, and feelings. At that time, publicly expressing ideas about women's emancipation, polygyny, and arranged marriages was unacceptable, especially if you were an unmarried woman. Kartini chose letters, a form of personal writing, as a strategy through which she could connect with the outside world and for her thoughts to be heard (Coté 2022).

Kartini's life is inextricably bound up with the discourse on feminism. Kartini's correspondents, especially the women, were all affiliated with the feminist movement. Coté (2022: 37) argues that Kartini can be called a feminist because "she read and embraced the ideals that are universally recognized as the first wave of the feminist movement in Europe". The feminist movement in the Netherlands focused on "the conditions of working families, women's right to work and education, and gradually, on-demand for political representation" (Bosch in Coté 2022: 37). However, even though these feminist ideals resonated with Kartini's wishes for access to education and equality in society, the colonial context did not allow the spirit of feminism to penetrate its colonial territories, including the Netherlands East Indies. Kartini revealed that, in her experience, the feminist Dutch women began establishing relationships with Indonesian women. However, the nature of the association was personal, not structural, which would have enabled it to change policies regarding women in colonial areas, including Java (Coté 2022).

Chatterjeen states that the ambiguity between modernity and tradition is "common in the characteristic period of cultural nationalism in the colonial world" (Chatterjeen in Coté 2022: 14). The inner conflict between modernity and tradition is also seen in Kartini's letters. In the early days, Kartini strongly supported the ideals of women's equality. Later, there were changes in her correspondence, in which Kartini showed more appreciation of Javanese culture: "Throughout 1902, her letters show a gradual re-engagement with the Javanese traditions, symbolized by her reconciliation with his mother and what appears to be an appreciative rediscovery of Java" (Coté 2022: 39). Kartini began to discuss her love of the traditional Javanese arts like *batik* and *gamelan*, and her appreciation of Javanese poetry.

Kartini finally did return to tradition but in a modernized form. She ultimately chose the path of negotiation to realize her ideals of advancing women's rights. Kartini's plan to continue her education in Europe was too progressive for the time. Even Kartini's correspondence friends did not support the idea. J.H. Abendanon and Marie Ovink-Soer personally tried to convince Kartini to change her plans. Nellie van Kol and Stella Zeehandelaar also "disapproved and pointed at the 'inevitability' of Kartini's future: that she was destined to marry a polygamous Javanese aristocrat" (Coté 2022: 31). Kartini's identity as a woman of the colonial area caused her to experience two layers of marginalization; as a Javanese and as a woman. Even in her correspondence

friends with whom she had strong relationships, power relations were still visible between Kartini as a Javanese woman and her Dutch correspondence friends; thinking about women's equality continued to meet its limits when colonial discourse entered (Coté 2022).

Reading Kartini's life at first sight might make us think how a woman who was so passionate about fighting against arranged marriages and polygyny which she thought of degrading women, in the end, accepted an arranged proposal of a polygynous marriage. In November 1903, Kartini married the Regent of Rembang, Raden Mas Ario Djojoadingrat, a Dutch-educated widower and father of seven children who already had three *garwa ampil* wives when he proposed to Kartini (Coté 2022). Kartini was puzzled why Djojoadingrat considered her becoming his wife (Tempo 2019). She was twenty-four years old and considered an old maid. She was well-known for her reputation as a modern woman whose unconventional thinking had led her to efforts to abolish tradition. However, Kartini wanted to make her father happy but nevertheless demanded several terms be met before she would accept the proposal. Her husband would not interfere with her pursuit of advancing women's education and opening a school for regents' daughters. Scholars note this as an effort to negotiate with the social pressure from her surroundings.

R.A. KARTINI (1982) AND THE NEW ORDER

Nugroho and Herlina (2013) state that the political context strongly affected the cinema industry during President Suharto's New Order from 1966 to 1998. They note that this era presented a paradox in which the film industry and other popular culture industries thrived thanks to economic development and foreign investment across the country. On the other hand, Indonesia was also experiencing "pseudo-globalism" because of Suharto's tight control over the media and censorship (Nugroho and Herlina 2013: 129).

Alongside its developmentalist ideology, the New Order era is known for its "state ibuism" (Julia I. Suryakusuma 2011; Saskia E. Wieringa 2015). The state constructed the ideal woman discourse of a wife and a mother in a very structured way, implemented from the elite to the grassroots level. Suryakusuma (2011) coined the term "state ibuism". The word *ibuism* was first used by Madelon Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis (1987) in her article "Ibuisim and priyayization; Path to power?" In the Indonesian language, *ibu* means 'mother'; therefore, "ibuism" can be said to be an ideology of motherhood. Suryakusuma (2011: 3) states, "for current-day ibuism, it is more apt to say that it is an ideology which does not merely sanction, but defines women in that capacity. Thus, women do not exist in their own right, but about something or somebody." Women's role was defined within the domestic sphere as a wife and a mother, responsible for caring for all family members and raising and educating children for the future.

One of the slogans often used to articulate women's role in New Order's Indonesia was "participate in the development process, but never forget their

kodrat (true nature) as wives and mothers” (Suryakusuma 2011: 9). In other words, women are allowed to take part in developing the state but in a limited way defined by the state. This is an act glorifying a woman’s *kodrat* as wife and mother, and the show puts women in the domestic sphere. For Indonesian women in the New Order era being a wife and a mother was constructed as natural; therefore, being a career woman or single independent woman was considered “abnormal”.

R.A. Kartini (1982) was produced and released during this period. *R.A. Kartini* (Figure 1) was directed by Sjumandjaya, born in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1934 and died in 1985. He began his filmography in 1956 as a script-writer (filmindonesia.or.id). The government sent him to take a preparatory course at Moscow State University. He continued his studies at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow from 1960 to 1964. S.M. Ardan (1985) notes that Sjumandjaya often fell under suspicion because of his study in this country in which socialist ideology and communism had been adopted as the nation’s principles. Sjumandjaya himself stated that he was a nationalist who sided with the people (Ardan 1985). He returned to Indonesia in 1965 and was appointed Director of the Film Directorate at the Ministry of Information from 1966 until 1968. Ardan (1985: 124-125) describes Sjumandjaya’s directing style as “indeed late ‘50s and early ‘60s Russian which very poetic and therefore romantic”. His works are well-known for staging social criticism in a transforming Indonesia, questioning shifts in values as an effect of globalization (Nugroho and Herlina 2013).

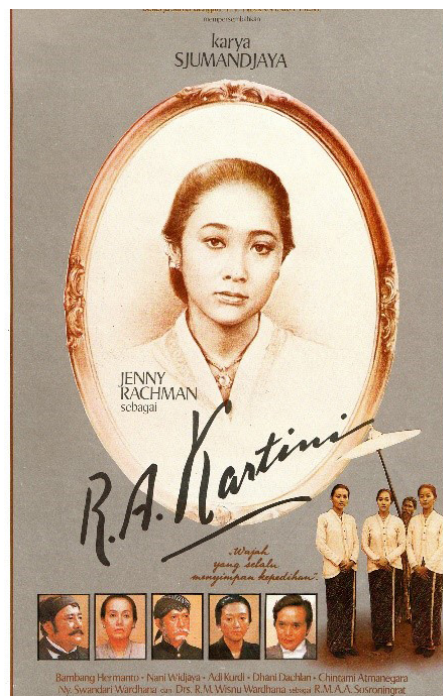


Figure 1. Film Poster of *R.A. Kartini* (Sjumandjaya 1982).

Jenny Rachman played the leading role of Kartini in the 1982 film. She was born on 18 January, 1959, and began her career as an actress, commercial star, and model in 1973. She has acted in thirty-three films and has been nominated for numerous awards. She won two Piala Citra for Best Actress at the Indonesia Film Festival (FFI), the highest award event in the world of cinema in Indonesia. *R.A. Kartini* (1982) was her twenty-eighth film and the fourth she had done with Sjumandjaya (filmindonesia.or.id, n.d.).

R.A. Kartini (1982) was nominated for Best Director, Best Original Script, Best Cinematography, and Best Female Supporting Role at the FFI 1983 (filmindonesia.or.id, n.d.). The combined stardoms of Sjumandjaya and Jenny Rachman undoubtedly contributed to the surge in interest which led to these prestigious nominations. It can also be argued that the director and the actor had a certain amount of influence in disseminating the values portrayed in the film to their audience. Here we point out the choice of casting Rachman as Kartini. Rachman has delicate features, a melancholic countenance, and a strong-willed image which enhanced her interpretations of the female roles she took in most of her films. She played a wife who survived after her husband died in a plane crash in *Kabut sutra ungu* (1979, Sjumandjaya). She was a country girl striving to become a runner in the film *Gadis marathon* (1981, Chaerul Umam). The images of tenacity stayed with her in her version of Kartini. Rachman's Kartini is modern and advanced in her thinking, revealed in her often lecture-like monologues, having discussions with her Dutch friends in fluent spoken Dutch, and passionate about the welfare and education of her people. She is also a soft-spoken princess with an air of royalty when conversing with her subjects. The camera often captures her slow, graceful movements. She is an obedient daughter who looks up to her father and loves her mother, which is revealed in the scenes in which she excitedly discusses matters concerning the people with her father and hugs her mother. As a sister, Rachman's Kartini seems to admire Kartono greatly and is distanced from her younger sisters. She is rarely pictured having conversations with them; many of the scenes in which they are together are her monologues; when anger and sadness overtake her, she faces her troubles and emotion, often alone in her confinement.

This study finds similar observations in Rutherford's New Order Kartini in Sjumandjaya's *Kartini*, particularly her stance on nationalism. Rutherford (1993: 35) writes:

Kartini did not need to choose between *rakyat* or *ningrat*; all Indonesians, whether common or noble, could find their true identity in her family's virtues, the legacy of Majapahit [...]. With these virtues to guide her, New Order Kartini proceeded with her social program. She fought colonial temptations and criticized those who gave in. She revealed those whose desire and inauthenticity upset the natural order [...]. Unlike modern Indonesian girls, New Order Kartini was never tempted to imitate the West.

This quotation resonates strongly with a scene in which Kartini reads her most admired brother's famous speech in front of the 25th Dutch Language

and Literature Congress in Gent (1899), which sounds very much like the New Order's opinion on westernization and foreign rulers, out loud to her sisters and mother.

Kartini: [...] *bangunlah untuk hak-hakmu. Hakmu untuk bersaing dengan penguasa-penguasa asing, di dalam budaya, ilmu pengetahuan dan keuletan agar demikian kamu menjadi berguna bagi negerimu sendiri dan rakyatmu [...] belajar bahasa-bahasa ilmu pengetahuan Eropa tapi dengan TEGAS saya menyatakan diri sebagai musuh bagi siapa saja yang ingin menjadikan kami orang Eropa atau setengah Eropa sekalipun.*

(R.A. Kartini 1982, 55:53-57:08)

Kartini: [...] *rise up for your rights. You have the right to compete with foreign rulers in culture, knowledge, and tenacity so that you can become useful to your country and your people [...] learn the languages of European science. Nevertheless, I STRONGLY declare myself the enemy of anyone who wants to make us Europeans or even half Europeans.*

Similar sentiments of detachment from the foreign world are also apparent in a scene in which Kartini is on a coach ride with her father, discussing the blessing in disguise of her cancelled trip to the Netherlands. The conversation continues with the topic of Kartini's dream of building a school in Indonesia, which again uses the term strongly associated with the New Order education program *Tutwuri Handayani*.

Kartini: [...] *bukan anjuran Bapak Abendanon yang dipakai... sebuah sekolah milik kita sendiri, tidak terikat pada subsidi gouvernement dan karenanya jadi bebas dari segala aturan kurikulum atau sistem gouverneur... kita menciptakan sistem sendiri yang benar-benar miliki kita, kurikulum sendiri yang menjawab kebutuhan kita akan ilmu pengetahuan... tapi lebih dari itu juga kebutuhan kita akan pendidikan watak sosial, budaya bangsa sendiri.*

[...] *bukan hanya sistem yang mengajari... rakyat yang masih berada dalam kegelapan jangan langsung diajari tapi diemong untuk menjadi pandai, diemong sistem, Romo, dengan cara Tutwuri Handayani.*

(R.A. Kartini 1982, 1:26:53-1:27:37)

Kartini: [...] *do not follow Mr Abendanon's recommendation... a school that is our own, not tied to government subsidies and therefore free of all curricular rules or the government system... We shall create the system which belongs wholly to us, our own curriculum which answers our need for science... but more than that, our need is for education about our nation's social character and culture.*

[...] *not a system which merely teaches... we cannot teach people who are still in the dark immediately. They must be embraced to become clever, embraced by the system, Romo, in the Tutwuri Handayani way.*

Kartini in *R.A. Kartini* is the embodiment of a New Order heroine. Her ideals of equal rights regardless of birth status as a member of an aristocratic family lent her the image of a hero of the people, a trait also mentioned by Rutherford in her study (1993). Her writings were acknowledged by the Dutch and scholars from other countries in the era in which Indonesia was seeking western approval for economic development. She is a Javanese when Javanese

patriarchy was considered one of Suharto's legacies to the governmental system of Indonesia (Andi Misbahul Pratiwi 2015).

The first theme to discuss is the power relations between male and female characters in *R.A. Kartini* (1982). Although it has "Kartini" in the title, the film is made from the perspective of the dominant males. We explore this argument by pinpointing Kartini's relationship with two dominating male figures in real life: her father, Raden Mas Adipati Ario Sosroningrat, and her elder brother, Raden Mas Sostrokartono. Both men seem to use marriage as a tool to exercise men's domination over women.

The 1982 film begins and ends with Kartini's father dominating the screen and its narration. Kartini is the female protagonist and leading character; however, she is often overshadowed by the male characters around her, which depletes her role and places her in a subjugated position (Ade Kusuma, Adiasri Putri Purbantina, and Praja Firdaus Nuryananda 2015). Kartini's father is depicted in the film as an ideal male figure: a patriarch well-respected by the Dutch colonizers, Jepara's citizens, and his wives and children. Several scenes depict him as open-minded, caring deeply for his people, and a devout believer in his religion. Sosroningrat also has a close relationship with his daughters, particularly with Kartini, whom he affectionately called "Trinil" (sandpiper, a bird well-known for its image of being constantly active and seldom standing still). While her father is the most respected figure in the region, loved by his subjects and family members, Kartini is often portrayed as struggling to be the obedient daughter.

Kartono is depicted as modern, intelligent, and a good son, his eloquence shown in scenes in which he converses with their father, mother, and Kartini. Her elder brother is someone with whom Kartini can discuss anything, including her dreams. He is the source of her knowledge as he is the one who sends her books to read from his travels and gives guidance in making hard decisions. Below is an example of a dialogue in the film between Kartini and her brother, Kartono, talking about Kartini's reluctance to change her status to "Raden Ayu", a title given to married Javanese noblewomen.

Kartini *Kangmas, Ni tidak akan jadi Raden Ayu.*

Kartono [sigh] *Kira-kira Kangmas bisa mengerti, apa yang sedang diajeng ratapi. Menjemukan memang bumi ini. Terjajah dan terbelakang. Untuk kaummu, bahkan kelihatannya kelam sama sekali. **Peteng...** Namun betapa pun bumi ini adalah milik kita. Jadi selagi kita belum mampu berbuat apa-apa, sebaiknya kita harus pandai menemukan hal-hal yang masih mempunyai nilai lebih untuk diri kita sendiri dan masa depan kita. Seperti Kangmas misalnya, masih bisa menemukan hal-hal semacam itu. Apa itu? Sifat ksatria dan perwira, yang sering tampil pada kakek dan nenek kita.*

Kartini *Iya. Kangmas lelaki, Kangmas masih dapat menemukan nilai-nilai ksatria itu. Tapi tidak untuk perempuan, Kangmas [moves to distance herself].*

- Kartono *Kenapa tidak? Kenapa? (Encouraging Kartini). Apa yang sedang diajeng pikirkan sekarang, sudah ksatria. Artinya, diajeng sudah mulai berpikir tentang apa-apa yang dianggap benar dan mencoba menolak apa-apa yang Diajeng anggap tidak baik dan tidak benar. Cuma... untuk menolak jadi Raden Ayu, Kangmas pikir, tidak pada tempatnya. Terlampau radikal [smile]. Betapapun juga, Kangmas sudah gembira sekali pulang ke Jepara kali ini dan menemukan diajengku sudah dewasa.*
- Kartini *Yang paling Ni takutkan saat ini justru menjadi dewasa, Kangmas. Alangkah ngerinya dan hal yang seperti itu pasti sebentar lagi akan datang. Kangmas tahu kamar di belakang, di sebelah kamar Mbakyu Lastru. Pintu kamar itu setiap kali terbuka sedikit seolah kamar itu siap menerima Ni untuk dipingit, dikunci di dalamnya bertahun-tahun sampai harinya datang. Orang tua kita membawa seorang laki-laki yang belum pernah kita kenal untuk menjadi seorang suami.*
- (R.A. Kartini 1982, 36:34-39:59)
- Kartini *Kangmas ['big brother'], I won't be a Raden Ayu.*
- Kartono *[sigh]. I think Kangmas understands what is troubling you, Diajeng ['little sister']. This land is colonized and backward, to you but even darker for your people. Peteng ['pitch black'] ... but it is our country. Although we have been unable to achieve anything yet, we must be clever and discover what could improve ourselves and our future. Like Kangmas, for example, I can still find such things. What are they? The nature of the ksatria and chivalry, often displayed by our grandparents.*
- Kartini *Yes. [But] Kangmas is a man. Kangmas can still find those ksatria values. But not a woman, Kangmas [moves to distance herself]*
- Kartono *Why not? Why? [Encouraging Kartini]. The way you are thinking now can already be considered having ksatria values. That is, Diajeng has begun to think about what is considered right and is trying to reject what is considered unreasonable and untrue. It's just ... to refuse to become a Raden Ayu, Kangmas think, it's not the time nor the place. Too radical [smile]. But either way, Kangmas is very happy to return to Jepara this time and find that my Diajeng is already so mature.*
- Kartini *The most frightening thing for me now is becoming an adult, Kangmas. So scary, but it's coming soon. Kangmas knows about the back room, next to Mbakyu ['big sister'] Lastru's room. The door to that room seems to open little by little each time as if it is ready to accept me to be curled inside, locked in it for years until the day comes. Our parents will bring a man we have never met before to be a husband.*

This dialogue occurs in the open space on a beach, with Kartini's older brother standing inside the stone lighthouse while Kartini stands outside. Kartono is positioned on a podium so that he seems taller than Kartini. He is also inside a lighthouse (with Kartini outside), which suggests he is her beacon and guide. This implicitly shows that Kartono's position is higher than Kartini's and that he has the moral authority to decide what is correct and what is not. In the dialogue, Kartono begins the conversation by voicing his appreciation of

Kartini's efforts to begin thinking about the people of their region. However, later in the dialogue, Kartono defends traditions, indicating Kartini's wish not to accept her fate to marry and become a Raden Ayu is "not in its place" and "too radical". In this dialogue he subtly suggests that Kartini rediscover her nature as a woman, which is to be a wife and an excellent, obedient daughter. The four-minute scene shows Kartini standing to the left, looking small and timid; her brother dominates the screen with his gestures, brimming with confidence, standing higher in the stone lighthouse. Standing inside this ruined lighthouse, Kartono looks bigger, stronger, and taller than Kartini, indicating that patriarchy never allowed women to be more than men, physically, mentally, or intellectually (Johnson 2004).

The word *ksatria* is used several times to hint at what was coming at the end of the film. Sjumandjaya intentionally made the word linger and become the keyword of the entire film. According to the Indonesian dictionary, *ksatria* is defined as 1) a person (soldier, officer) who is valiant; daredevil; 2) the second caste in Hindu society, noble or warrior caste. The first and second definitions contain the meaning of 'warrior, brave, valiant'. This word is very masculine and is used to express appreciation of the personality of brave, unafraid, stalwart men.

Another contrast in the film is the story of how normal it seems to Kartono to study abroad in the Netherlands while this is impossible for Kartini as a contemporary Javanese woman. The scene in minutes 1:17:41-1:22:00 shows Abendanon taking Kartini out for a walk on the beach while giving her all the "logical" reasons she should remain in Java instead of pursuing her dream of continuing her study abroad. Some of the reasons mentioned are that she will forsake her school which is gaining a name for itself if she leaves it now; her school will develop more fruitfully if she remains; her physical ability to live in the four-season climate of the Netherlands; the risk of tarnishing her respectable Javanese princess status by absorbing too much western education (she will attain a *noni-noni Belanda* reputation plus all the prejudice surrounding it); her marriage prospects; and her father's age and precarious health.

While facing the same dilemma between wanting to study abroad and her responsibility as the daughter of her father and country, in *R.A. Kartini*, Kartini's emotions are less visible than in the 2017 version. In the 1982 version, Kartini is depicted as more submissive, meek, and obedient. Therefore, in this scene, Kartini's facial expression is one of sadness and powerlessness on hearing she must abandon her dream to study in the Netherlands. She observes silence by not voicing her disappointment, only pulling at the hem of her *kebaya* frustratedly while listening to the "reasonable logic" propounded by Mr Abendanon. The scene concludes with images of waves washing onto the shore and the sound of melancholic music, which the audience can imagine as a metaphorical replacement for Kartini's silence (1:17:41-1:22:00).

The interpretation of power relations between the male and female characters can be seen most significantly in the scenes about marriage.

This brings us to the following issue: silence and the female voice. In R.A. *Kartini* 1982 film, we see that Kartini initially depicted as passionate, intelligent, and opinionated. However, as the film draws to a close, Kartini transforms into a submissive, browbeaten woman. Kartini's voice as a progressive woman is silenced in the final scene when she passes away after she gives birth to her son. Before Kartini dies (from minutes 2.33:12 until the film ends), there is a long stretch depicting the last moments of Kartini's life. The scene consists of Kartini's conversation with her husband, her father, and then with her biological mother, reminding us of a final confession and near-last-breath apologies. Below is the dialogue between Kartini and her husband as she lies weak in bed and her husband sits beside her.

Kartini's husband *Diajeng...*

Kartini *Kangmas...jangan terkejut. Hari ini barangkali sudah saatnya... saya ingin memohon maaf dan terima kasih saya yang dalam pada Kangmas...*

Kartini's husband *Kenapa musti begitu, Diajeng? Sesungguhnya Kangmas yang mohon maaf dan mengucapkan terima kasih pada diajeng.*

Kartini *Saya kira...banyak hal yang saya tentang selama ini, cuma karena sesuatu yang diciptakan orang untuk meninabobokan para ksatria Jawa. Kangmas, saya bahagia sekali Kangmas telah memberikan keturunan pada saya. Seorang anak laki-laki seperti Kangmas dan lelaki yang memang Kangmas inginkan, bukan?*

Kartini's husband *Ya...anak kita itu. Diajeng tahu kami bahkan barusan bersama dokter mengangkat gelas untuk keselamatan anak kita dan untuk kesehatan Diajeng sendiri. Dokter Ravestine itu bilang juga kesehatan Diajeng tidak perlu dikhawatirkan.*

Kartini *Tapi ada yang ingin saya pesan.*

Kartini's husband *Ya, apalagi itu Diajeng?*

Kartini *[Voice weakens, fraught with pain.] Kangmas, Kangmas telah berlaku baik terhadap saya. Sesungguhnya, Kangmas seorang ksatria. Kangmas, kalau nanti saya sudah tidak ada, titip anak saya, Kangmas. Didiklah dia, biarlah dia tumbuh sebagai ksatria yang sebenarnya. [Kartini's husband cries and leaves the bed.]*

(R.A. *Kartini* 1982, 2:33:12-2:37:18)

Kartini's husband *Diajeng...*

Kartini *Kangmas...don't be alarmed. Today perhaps the time has come.... I want to apologize and give Kangmas my profound thanks ...*

Kartini's husband *Why, Diajeng? Indeed, it is Kangmas who needs to apologize and thank Diajeng.*

- Kartini I think...many things I've been fighting against all this time, just because of something people created to lull the Javanese *ksatria* to sleep. *Kangmas*, I am thrilled that *Kangmas* has given me a child. A boy like *Kangmas* and the future man *Kangmas* wants, right?
- Kartini's husband Yes... our child. *Diajeng*, we have just raised glasses with the doctor to our child's safety and *Diajeng's* health. Doctor Ravestine has also said that *Diajeng's* health is nothing to worry about.
- Kartini But I have a request.
- Kartini's husband Yes, what is it, *Diajeng*?
- Kartini [Voice weakens, fraught with pain.] *Kangmas*, *Kangmas* has been good to me. Truly, *Kangmas* is a *ksatria*. *Kangmas*, when I'm gone, please take care of my son, *Kangmas*. Educate him, and let him grow up as a true *ksatria*. [Kartini's husband cries and leaves the bed.]

Kartini's final conversation with her husband in the 1982 film affirms Kartini as a wife and mother, not an advocate of women's empowerment. Kartini mentions that she is sorry that she has been fighting against ideas that "people created to lull the Javanese *ksatria* to sleep". She is grateful for her husband's understanding and that he has given her a child. Kartini is depicted as "admitting" her "erroneous thinking"; what she has been talking about all this time is nothing but a myth, and she realizes this after becoming a mother. The word *ksatria* or "knight" again seems to be used as a keyword; it is mentioned in Kartini's conversation with her older brother before her marriage and with her husband in the last moments of her life. In other parts of the 1982 film, Kartini associates *ksatria* with "justice", especially the treatment of women. Kartini objected when her husband treated his concubines unequally and said that the Javanese system of society had to be improved. But now, in her final dialogue with her husband, she has changed her tune. In her last words on her deathbed, she asks him to educate his son to become a "true *ksatria*".

Kartini covers a significant portion of Kartini's life after marriage and her life with her husband, even to the point of giving birth and dying in childbed. We interpret the contradiction in the portrayals of Kartini at the beginning with the last part of the film as Kartini's submission and her acceptance of the "true" role of women as mothers and wives as an endorsement of the New Order propaganda, not as a role model of women's empowerment. Kartini falls asleep forever after asking for her husband's forgiveness for her mistake in judging her husband unchivalrous, namely having three mistresses. She expresses her gratitude and realizes how chivalrous her husband is for giving her a son. The last scene portrays Kartini more as a princess who sleeps eternally and peacefully with a glowing saint-like halo around her head, a halo she deserves because she died performing her duty as a woman should.

Superficially, *Kartini's* final scene portrays Kartini as the eternal sleeping princess. But, on a deeper level, it can be read as an act of silencing this female heroine of women's emancipation. As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2020: 38-39) put it, "An angel in the house of myth, Snow White is not only

a child but (as female angels always are) childlike, docile, submissive, the heroine of a life that has no story. But the Queen, adult and demonic, plainly wants a life of 'significant' action, by definition an 'unfeminine' life of stories and story-telling." Here Gilbert and Gubar (2020) compare Snow White and the Queen. Snow White, portrayed as a docile, pure, innocent princess, is a female who never voices her thoughts or feelings. On the other hand, although depicted as a flawed, ugly, evil character, the Queen in the Snow White fairy tale consistently expresses her inner thoughts and actions to achieve her goals. She is an independent woman with a strong will and an independent woman who knows her own will, which is ugly in a patriarchal society.

Therefore, in the 1982 film, *Kartini* is portrayed according to the dominant discourse of the ideal woman as a wife and mother. She can have dreams and a free will in her youth, but she must be selfless once she enters the institution of marriage. She must live a life of self-sacrifice and dedicate herself to others. The last scene of *Kartini* in her eternal sleep can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be construed as glorifying a princess-like character, a princess who is submissive, docile, and passive. The kind of character who will not threaten patriarchal society; this princess's character will eternalize patriarchal norms and support the discourse of the ideal woman. Second, from a feminist perspective, the sleeping *Kartini* can be interpreted as the silencing of a rebel woman. On a deeper level, portraying a female as a Sleeping Beauty princess simultaneously represses her anger and her own will. *Kartini* gives us a final message: rebel women must be silenced through marriage, motherhood, and finally, death.

KARTINI (2017) AND THE POST-REFORMATION ERA

Nugroho and Herlina (2013) note that the Indonesian film industry gained momentum in the Reformation era, which began after the resignation of Suharto in 1998. When precisely the period ends is still the subject of a debate; however, Tim Lindsey (2018) notes that most civil society champions believe this happened around 2008. Scholars do agree that the era was characterized by political and social efforts to reform Indonesia into a more open and liberal nation, leaving behind the authoritarian Indonesia of the Suharto era (Tito Imanda 2014; Nugroho and Herlina 2013). The efforts included more transparency in government, more open political debates, and more space for freedom of speech in the media and arts. Indeed, since 2006, film producers have become more productive in quantity and quality (Nugroho and Herlina 2013). Film genres have experienced a fast development in introducing their target audiences to specific themes. Imanda (2014) notes that, in the Reformation era, after tight censorship was lifted, more films with strong social, political, or ideological messages have been produced and interestingly been box-office successes. Hanung Bramantyo seems to have seized on this moment to make films with religious themes, such as *Ayat-ayat cinta* (2008), which romanticizes polygyny, and *Wanita berkalung sorban* (2009), which critiques the religious establishment. He has also made several

biopics of national heroes, including *Kartini* (2017), which serve as venues for his generation's perspectives on heroes compared to the established images of the New Order era (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Film poster of *Kartini* (Bramantyo 2017).

Born on 1 October, 1975, and educated at the Institut Kesenian Jakarta (IKJ), in his work Bramantyo has created a self-trademark for the themes of teen romance, historical figures, and controversial religious issues. Bramantyo is the age of the generation which overthrew Suharto in 1998 and has thrived in the era in which the freedom of expression bubble burst in the post-Reformation era. Nugroho and Herlina (2013) have named Bramantyo one of the young productive film directors of Indonesia's post-Reformation era (2005-2010). Hanung Bramantyo decided to cast Dian Sastrowardoyo to play Kartini. Sastrowardoyo was born on March 16, 1982, and began her career as an actress in 2000. Up to 2021, she has appeared in twenty-two films (filmindonesia.or.id, n.d.). Sastrowardoyo attended the University of Indonesia, where she briefly studied in the Faculty of Law before moving to the Faculty of Literature, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Philosophy in July 2007. She is a famous actress with a strong fanbase of younger filmgoers thanks to her role as Cinta, the female lead in *Ada apa dengan Cinta* (2002, Rudi Soedjarwo) and the many years later highly anticipated *Ada apa dengan Cinta? 2* (2016, Riri Reza). This film has ingrained Sastrowardoyo's image with this character as a young, intelligent, loyal, and strong-willed Javanese woman. She has been nominated for several film awards in FFI, including Best Actress, although

she has yet to win. She has played other roles since *Cinta*, including in the critically acclaimed *Pasir berbisik* (2001, Nan Triveni Achnas), which won her many awards, Dian Sastrowardoyo's off-screen image is strongly tied to her character in *Ada apa dengan Cinta* (2002) and we argue, she brings this image to her *Kartini*.

Sastrowardoyo's *Kartini* is young, cheerful, and active when she is with her sisters; there are many scenes in which she runs, laughing out loud when she is at their favourite beach; there is also physical contact of hugging and grasping hands in support, as well as exchanging eye to eye contact between the three sisters in this film. Traits which were mostly absent from the 1982 film; Rachman's *Kartini* is darker in countenance and wears a more melancholy expression. Although there are similarities to the previous film, *Kartini (2017)* can also converse fluently in Dutch when talking to Abendanon and her other Dutch friends, she is passionate about education, and warm towards ordinary people.

Studies point out how female portrayal in the Indonesian media has been the subject of discussion about gender bias narratives in the country (Meike L. Karolus 2018; Luviana 2007). Even in post-Reformation Indonesia, we can still have to deal with themes representing patriarchal norms and their preservation which are spectres from an older time, even before the New Order. While the 2017 production, to a certain degree, gives audience the perspectives of the female characters in the film, we have also found a similar male-dominated storyline. Although close shots of *Kartini* engaging with her surroundings are in the film, the powerful men around her are shown as having the power to guide and change her mind, to claim the role of liberators and problem solvers. Both films depict *Kartini's* father and older brother as strong male characters. They are awe-inspiring, wise, noble, and open-minded men. This resonates with Johnson's (2004) views about why patriarchy can be preserved through dominant men who are not depicted as villains who abuse their power. The audience will be led to think that it is natural for *Kartini* to accept their leadership, guidance, and standards.

The 2017 film begins with *Kartini* crouching-walk slowly in answer her father's request to for her to have an audience with him. The first dialogue between them is her father reminding her that the time has come for *Kartini* to become a Raden Ayu now that her parents have nurtured her for sixteen years. In answer to this, *Kartini* silently lifts her head to show the audience her gloomy face (1:34-3:03). As in the 1982 film, *Kartini's* older brother, *Kartono*, is also given several significant camera focuses and narrates as a role model for *Kartini*. He gives *Kartini* the key to a cabinet containing books to read before he leaves the palace to study abroad, to offer her solace after their father has decided that she should enter *pingitan*. He also gives her secret information to help alleviate her misery:

Masuklah ke kamarku. Di sana ada pintu untuk keluar dari kamar pingitan... jangan biarkan pikiranmu terpenjara, Ni.

(*Kartini* 2017, 13:07-13:32)

Go to my room. There's a door which will help you escape your *pingitan*... don't let your mind be caged.

Giving the key can be interpreted as a symbol that Kartono is opening the way, guiding her with helpful information and offering solutions to Kartini's seclusion, a liberator. Furthermore, Kartini's mind will be even more enlightened by reading the books by Dutch authors in her brother's closet. After Kartini sends a letter to Kartono, the film shows the scene of Kartini reading his reply by presenting her older brother directly in front of Kartini to illustrate a direct and close conversation between him and Kartini.

Kartono *Adikku Trinil, tidak ada yang lebih membahagiakan selain mendengar kabar darimu. Aku senang, akhirnya kamu menemukan kebebasanmu.*

Kartini *Itu semua berkat Kangmas.*

Kartono *Aku tak akan memberikan kalau kamu tak memintanya.*

Kartini *Kangmas yang paling mengerti isi hatiku.*

Kartono *Begini, Nil. Apa yang kamu miliki saat ini tidak akan ada artinya jika hanya untuk dirimu sendiri. Kamu harus berbagi.*

Kartini [nodding.]

Kartono *Perubahan tidak bisa berjalan sendirian. Ya?*

Kartini *Iya, Mas.* [looking up.]

(Kartini 2017, 18:40-19:41)

Kartono *My dear little sister, Trinil, I'm happy to hear you are doing well. And I'm pleased that you have found your freedom.*

Kartini *It is all thanks to Kangmas.*

Kartono *I would not have given you it if you hadn't asked.*

Kartini *Kangmas is the one who understands my innermost thoughts.*

Kartono *Trinil, what you have right now will be meaningless if you keep it to yourself. You have to share it with others.*

Kartini [nodding.]

Kartono *Change does not happen on its own. Do you realize?*

Kartini *Yes, Mas.* [looking up]

In this dialogue, Kartini's brother has encouraged her and given essential advice. Kartini is also in awe of and indebted to him because of the support and solutions he has offered. This can be seen from the affirmational phrases "It's all thanks to *Kangmas*", "*Kangmas* is the one who understands my heart best", and "Yes, *Mas*".

In *Kartini* (2017), this scene is shot as if Kartini is conversing while strolling physically with Kartono. Kartini's gestures portray her submissive position to Kartono; she is holding Kartono's letter written in Javanese, and her expression is happy and filled with awe. She nods several times during the conversation and looks up at her brother. Indeed, the actor who plays Kartono is physically taller than Sastrowardoyo's Kartini, but the affirmations and gestures confirm

the position of Kartini's older brother as a guide. His eyes invariably look down at Kartini, and she must look up to make eye contact. Although this might seem natural because of height differences between the two, it is also can be read as woman's nature is lower than that of a man. In a subtle way, the film indicates the power relationship between men and women, with men in superior positions and women in subordinate positions.

We explore the concept of *pingitan* for a discussion about the theme of silence and the female voice. Compared to *R.A. Kartini (1982)*, the 2017 version gives its female characters (Kartini as lead and also Kardinah and Rukmini to a certain extent) more screen time to express their inner thoughts in private, either inside their rooms or when they are together. However, once the scenes change to outside, they are again portrayed as silent. In *R.A. Kartini (1982)*, Kartini cries and pleads with her father, objecting to the decision to enter her into *pingitan*. Nevertheless, the scene continues with Kartini unable to resist and must submissively follow her father, who is holding her hand to lead her to the room where she will remain during the *pingitan*. Muryam and other members of the family stand by expressionlessly as they watch the process. In *Kartini (2017)*, Kartini is dragged by Muryam, her stepmother, to the room and struggles to free herself. Muryam is also often portrayed as cold towards Kartini and jealous of Ngasirah, Kartini's biological mother. In the 1982 version, Muryam's emotions are rarely given screen time; when they are, this is to show that she agrees with her husband, sending the message that she does not have a voice. The stories being told by both films directly through characters' dialogues or indirectly through scenes in which speaking out and rebelling are considered abnormal and inappropriate for a Javanese princess. Javanese princesses must be elegant, feminine, passive, and submissive and aspire to become a Raden Ayu. This silences women's voices by creating a myth that anger is not a proper emotion for women (Kaplou 1973; Heilbrun 1988).

On the theme of silence and female voice, the scenes leading up to Kardinah's marriage are instructive. Kardinah is told to marry a Javanese nobleman – “a good man” who is in line to be the next *Bupati* of Pemalang and already has a wife. Minutes after her father has announced that she has no choice but to marry, Kardinah runs into the forest, followed by her sisters. She exclaims, “I want to die... I'd rather die...” while her sisters hug her (1:09:24-1:09:27). The scene is followed by Kardinah's wedding, in which the camera clearly shows us the contrast between the bride and her surroundings (1:09:28-1:10:50). It is evident from this scene that Kardinah is trying very hard to hold back her tears. The audience understands that marriage is not something she wants. Still, she cannot refuse the arrangement – a promise made by their father, and as a nobleman, he cannot break his word (1:08:34-1:08:38). It is considered natural for her to marry a man chosen by her father, the man of the house. Her voice is not essential; the Javanese patriarchal system mutes her. Her sisters, Kartini and Rukmini, must attend their sister's wedding, unable to stop it.

Even so, compared to the 1982 film, the 2017 version provides space for women to express their emotions about the oppression which their lot and that

of other women. This is shown in the scene centred on Rukmini, displaying her frustration on seeing Kardinah forced to consent to a marriage. Rukmini runs out of the wedding pavilion and then stops to be held by Kartini. In a separate room, although still close enough for the loud, festive *gamelan* music to be audible, Rukmini and Kartini share an emotional conversation:

- Rukmini [crying]
 Kartini *Sabar, ya.* [hugging Rukmini]
 Rukmini [crying and angry] *Kita dibuat pincang, Nil.*
 Kartini *Sabar, kita harus kuat. Apa pun rintangannya.*
 Rukmini *Aku tidak mau nikah, Nil! Kamu saksiku! Aku tidak akan menikah. Ini sengaja dibuat...* [Emotional, crying, and hugged by Kartini.]
(Kartini 2017, 1:11:04-1:11:39)
- Rukmini [crying]
 Kartini Calm down, my dear. [hugging Rukmini]
 Rukmini [crying and angry] They have crippled us, Nil.
 Kartini Be patient. We need to be strong. Whatever the obstacles.
 Rukmini I am never going to marry Nil. You are my witness! I will never marry anyone. They have done this on purpose. [Emotional, crying, and hugged by Kartini.]

In this dialogue, viewers see how desperate Rukmini is. Rukmini expresses her anger to Kartini saying she would never marry a man. She uses the phrase “they have crippled us” to describe her feeling of being mistreated by society. In this scene, we can see that Rukmini does express her feelings at one point, but it can only be done in a private space with her sister, and not in front of many people. From this scene, we can conclude that *Kartini* does allow the expression of emotion by Kartini and her sisters, albeit limited and without closure. There is no resolution to Rukmini’s anger and frustration. After she states that she does not want to get married and cries in Kartini’s arms, the film immediately moves to the scene in which Muryam is forcing Rukmini to have a separate room from Kartini. Kartini is then locked in her room alone.

We interpret these scenes as depicting how contemporary Javanese women were powerless to reach their desired solutions through desperation and anger. In a patriarchal system, women cannot express their inner feelings freely and publicly. It was considered the normative, even a norm, for women in Javanese culture in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century to repress their feelings and keep them private. The marriage institution is an arena in which men wield the most power. Kardinah is shown crying in front of her sisters, Kartini and Rukmini, because she does not have the privilege to speak her mind publicly to her father raising her objections to the marriage. In the scene of wedding reception, Kardinah’s husband’s first wife tries hard to hold back her tears and not show her sadness in public at the wedding reception. This scene is contrasted with male guests openly expressing their happiness when

dancing with women dancers. It aligns with Heilbrun's (1988: 18) definition of power, "The true representation of power is not of a big man beating a smaller man or woman. Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter."

The study observes mentally stronger females, and a more significant portion of the exploration of their emotions is invested on the screen in the 2017 version. The voices are also those of other women, not solely of Kartini. Giving more screen time equals more space for other females to develop their characters and channel their voices through emotions and experiences. Even though once the scenes are outside this room, they are again portrayed as being forced to preserve their silence, it is still more prominent when the audience is shown the actual scenes of what is happening behind the closed doors of private space.

In the 1982 film, the news of Kardinah's marriage is conveyed to Kartini by Ngasirah. Kartini exclaims her happiness for her sister's new life as a Raden Ayu, but her expression gradually changes to concern and sadness. The line "Is becoming a Raden Ayu a blessing? Is this really what my sister wanted?" is heard as an internal monologue throughout the scene. The film does not invest in exploring Kardinah's feelings and experiences; it is limited and presented through Kartini's gaze.

Continuing the discussion of marriage as a systematic tool for silencing the female voice, the 2017 film offers scenes in which Kartini receives a marriage proposal from the Regent of Rembang, who already has three wives. She is expected to give her answer in three days. At first, Kartini tries to reject this fate because she is still waiting for the results of her proposal to study in the Netherlands. The conflict between two women with different points of view on marriage can be seen in Kartini's dialogue with Muryam, her stepmother, and one of her brothers, as illustrated in the dialogue below.

Kartini *Apa yang harus saya syukuri dari seorang laki-laki yang sudah memiliki tiga istri?*

Muryam *Sudah bagus bupati yang melamarmu, bukan wedono!*

Kartini *Saya akan tetap menunggu jawaban proposal dari negeri Belanda.*

Muryam *Proposalmu itu belum tentu disetujui. Bahkan mungkin ditolak. Lamaranmu ini...harus kamu jawab dalam waktu tiga hari. Harusnya kamu...*

Kartini *Saya tidak mau membuat kecewa Romo. Pangapunten, Ibu. [Leaves the room.]*

Muryam *Kartini, Kartini!*

Kartini's brother *Tunggu, Bu. Nuhun sewu. Izinkan saya yang bicara pada adik saya.*

[Pushes Kartini against the wall.] *Kamu bisa minta Ayah membatalkan proposal itu, kan?*

Kartini *Aku tidak mau.*

Muryam *Sekarang semua sudah jelas. Kamu cuma memikirkan dirimu sendiri. [Grabs Kartini and pushes her into her room.] Kamu di sini sampai bupati Rembang itu memboyongmu!*

(Kartini 2017, 1:23:21-1:25:03)

- Kartini What should I be grateful for in a man who already has three wives?
- Muryam You should be grateful he's a regent, not just a district head.
- Kartini I am still awaiting news about my [scholarship] proposal from the Netherlands.
- Muryam Don't count on it. It's not certain. They're probably going to reject it. But your marriage proposal must receive a response within three days. You should have...
- Kartini I shall not disappoint my father. Pardon me, Mother. [Leaves the room]
- Muryam Kartini, come back here!
- Kartini's brother Wait, Mother. Pardon me. Let me talk some sense into her. [Pushes Kartini against the wall.] You could ask Father to cancel the (scholarship) proposal...
- Kartini I don't intend to do that.
- Muryam I see what the problem is here. You're thinking only about yourself. [Grabs Kartini and pushes her into her room.] You'll stay here until the Regent of Rembang comes to pick you up!

This conversation shows how Kartini tries to deflect the marriage proposal. She uses the reasons "a man who already has three wives", "I am still awaiting news about my (scholarship) proposal from the Netherlands". Finally, to borrow her patriarch's power, "I shall not disappoint my father", because she already has permission from her father to continue her education abroad. Kartini does not reject the marriage proposal directly; it is as if she feels that it is an inappropriate way to talk to her stepmother. However, two ideas are contested in this conversation: "marrying the Regent of Rembang" and "continuing her study in the Netherlands". Studying abroad is what Kartini desires; her will to determine her own life. A Javanese woman at that time should have been privileged to marry a suitable nobleman and government official. For a Javanese woman, in this case, Kartini, to reject a marriage proposal for the sake of one's own desires meant she was being selfish and thoughtless when the family's reputation was on the line. The latter idea is owned by Muryam and one of Kartini's brothers.

The presence of Muryam as a character shows the complexity of the patriarchal system in Javanese society at that time. The system was not just applied by men but also supported as normative by the women in society. There is a conflict between maintaining feudal ideology which harms women and internalizing progressive ideology which focuses on individual progress. In the end, the emotional dialogue between Muryam and Kartini is ended by closing the door on any further conversation. After the scene of Kartini being locked in her room, the camera shifts to the focus of the bird in a cage in the courtyard of Kartini's house, which we can read as a symbol of the life of a Javanese woman who is locked up in her house without the freedom to determine her path in life. Even so, in the 2017 *Kartini*, we still see that, in the ending scene (1:52:38-1:53:27), Kartini takes a pen and a paper, which can be

read as a symbol of her will to remember who she is even though she will become a wife of the Regent of Rembang.

Although similar themes are preserved, as elaborated above, we argue that significant differences between the two films are more space for the female character's inner thoughts in *Kartini (2017)* and a very prominent theme of sisterhood. The 2017 film acknowledges women as a collective presence and not just as individually troubled women as in the 1982 film. As a marginalized group in society, sisterhood is one of the women's ways to survive (Morgan in Nungky Heriyati 2019). Sharing the experience and emotions and empowering each other can be read as a strategy to strengthen self and other women. In *Kartini (2017)*, sisterly relations between Kartini and her siblings, Rukmini and Kardinah, are clearly defined and with writers and characters in books by Kartini.

One of the exciting points in *Kartini (2017)* is the portrayal of transnational sisterhood. It is symbolized by the scene between Kartini and Dutch women writers who wrote the books which Kartini and her sisters read, as expressed in the dialogue below.

- Cecile [The dialogue is in Dutch. Here is the English translation.] That is Hilda van Suylenberg. A fictional character in my novel. She's a lawyer and an activist for the poor and women's rights. Highly intelligent and respected. I'm Cecile de Jong. What's wrong, Kartini?
- Kartini She's so intelligent. She must be highly educated.
- Cecile Exactly. And she is also a wife and a mother of a child.
- Kartini She's married?

(*Kartini 2017*, 16:12-16:53)

This dialogue is Kartini's imaginary conversations with Cecil de Jong, the author of the novel *Hilda van Suylenberg*, read by Kartini. The book introduced Kartini to western thoughts about feminism (Coté 2022: 19). The scenes are set as if they are in the same room, looking through a glass window which reveals episodes of the novel. Cecil introduces the main character, Hilda, to Kartini, and from behind the window they both witness Hilda as a lawyer defending a woman. In this dialogue, Kartini comes across the new insight that a woman who goes to high school and has a brilliant career can also be a wife and mother. The scene suggests that Kartini is not only reading the book passively, but she has an actual intellectual dialogue with the writer.

The appearance of the European woman writer and Javanese Kartini in one and the same scene can be interpreted as an international sisterhood scene. But, even though there is a transnational sisterhood bonding between Kartini and the writer, they still have a power relationship. The writer guides the conversation as a mentor who is enlightening Kartini and inspiring her to rethink her position as a woman in Javanese society. Kartini is a pupil enlightened by new knowledge and experiences about women's equality shared in the books she has read, or, in other words, the knowledge from the

West inspires her. Here we see the colonial gaze in this film which portrays the Javanese position in society at that time as lower than that of the Europeans, represented by the Dutch colonizer. Putting Kartini and the Dutch writer in one scene which depicts a direct dialogue between them could suggest that these two characters are equal. Still, it also portrays a subtle power relationship between colonizers and colonies.

In addition to the transnational sisterhood shown in Kartini's dialogue with female authors from the Netherlands, the most prominent sisterhood demonstrated in the 2017 film is between Kartini and her two sisters, Kardinah and Rukmini. The sisterhood shows the audience how close the sisters are by sharing their happiness and sadness. At the beginning, the screen is dedicated to the happy, warm depiction of the three sisters laughing and playing together as carefree young girls, teaching children around their residence how to read and write, and reading a book together. Grief can be seen, for example, in the previously elaborated section, in which Rukmini could not contain her anger at seeing Kardinah's marriage and how Kartini tries to console her. The film also depicts how the sisters had to be physically separated because first Kardinah is married, then, at the end of the story, by Kartini's arranged marriage.

The 2017 film already hints at the shift in focus to the three sisters rather than Kartini alone in the choice of its film poster (Figure 2). The 1982 film poster (Figure 1) has Kartini's face at the centre, featured more significantly than the pictures of her sisters, while the 2017 film poster, even though Kartini is still in the middle, shows the three sisters' faces in one scene. Bramantyo also confirmed this in an interview on a talk show hosted by Desi Anwar.² Although this portrayal of sisterhood does not mean that together they can conquer the patriarchal society more easily, the sisterhood bond is a source of strength to cope with daily oppression.

By portraying the close relationship between Kartini and her sisters, *Kartini* (2017) can be interpreted as wanting to shift the idea of Kartini's pursuit of education and empowerment from the passionate drive of one woman into collective endeavours. Her frustrations caused by the patriarchal rules and system are shared with other women; the conflicts are problems of women as a collective, not only those of an individual troublemaker. *R.A. Kartini* (1982) seems to focus on Kartini's image as a single superheroine who can cope with any circumstance, but ironically, contradicts her struggles at the end of her life.

Both films end with unsettling conclusions but showing different stages in Kartini's life. The 1982 film ends with Kartini's death after giving birth to her first son, while the 2017 film ends with Kartini agreeing to accept the Regent of Rembang's marriage proposal to become his fourth wife. Both films depict Kartini as a female role model who accepts her confinement in the domestic sphere. Kartini is silenced and is not allowed to raise her voice. In the last scene of the 2017 film, the audience sees Kartini standing with a pen and a piece of paper; she can see the Netherlands in the same frame depicted by a windmill and blue sky in front of her; she feels so close but yet so far.

² CNN Indonesia 2017.

Kartini's face is not happy; she is unfulfilled. Her expression can be read as dissatisfaction and disappointment at not being able to go to the Netherlands because she must fulfil her obligation as a woman to marry and become a wife and a mother. Here in *Kartini*, the depiction of the conflict between self and society's expectations plays a vital role in portraying how the Javanese patriarchal society eternalized a culture of silence in women's life.

Interestingly, unlike the 1982 version, *Kartini* does not give the character Abendanon a significant portion as a mentor. In the 1982 film, it can be said that Abendanon was the key figure in discouraging Kartini from achieving the dream of studying in the Netherlands. In the 2017 film, Kartini's decision not to study in the Netherlands is described as a decision made by Kartini and as part of Kartini's attempt to reconcile with her culture. According to the biographies elaborated in the previous section, Abendanon's disagreement and Kartini's compromise with her traditions are two things which worked in tandem leading to the decision. The 2017 film gives proportionately more time to Kartini's contemplation and decision to marry. This implicitly shows that the 2017 film captures Kartini as an independent woman who can make her own decisions.

ANGUISH AND SILENT STRUGGLES: A CONCLUSION

The 1982 film *Kartini* depicts the patriarchal perspective of a woman's natural role cycle of dying as a good wife and mother, gaining a saintly halo, sacrificing herself by giving her life after giving birth to her son. Instead of portraying Kartini as a strong-willed female who fights for women's emancipation, it represents her as a submissive, silent princess who sleeps forever after fighting a good fight. The film begins with her father's voice telling the story of a devoted but troubled daughter and ends with Kartini fulfilling her circle as a "complete" woman by ending her life as a wife and a mother, making her a saint-like figure. This study has found more similarities in both films, for instance, how dominant, strong male characters were central to Kartini's life. However, if compared to differences in exploring female voices, the 2017 film gives the audience more screen time to explore female emotions and expressions through sisterhood. It provides more space to channel female agencies and acknowledges that women's empowerment and educational issues are a collective pursuit which should involve many if inclusive solutions are to be found.

These differences in portraying Kartini can be traced by contextualizing these films in the era in which they were produced. *RA Kartini (1982)* was made in the New Order era when the Suharto regime had full power to control media representation, including the ideal image of women. The state had substantial influence in censoring what could be seen and what could be read by its citizens, including which films were suitable for audiences to consume. *R.A. Kartini (1982)* was produced at this time, making the portrayal of Kartini tie in with what the New Order regime expected women to be: submissive, passive, and glorifying the role of women as a mother and a wife, namely Suryakusuma's (2011) "state ibuisism". This idea is shown significantly in the framing of Kartini's story as a mother who sacrifices her life to give her child life. In the end, the audience is

left with the image of mother and wife sacrificed, not an advocate of women's emancipation, an anguished and angry woman being silenced.

Kartini (2017) was made in the post-Reformation era of Indonesia after the Suharto regime ended. Compared to the saint-like Kartini in *R.A. Kartini* (1982), *Kartini* (2017) portrays a more human Kartini without glorifying the role of a mother and a wife. Kartini's inner conflict because of the pressure of society is explored in more depth, and the depiction is focused not only on Kartini but also on her sisters. Women do voice their anguish and anger through tears and words shouted in frustration. As well as the three sisters' strong bond of sisterhood, there is also a depiction of transnational sisterhood between Kartini and the Dutch woman writer in the books she read. The kind of scene which portrays open, voiced questioning of the patriarchal system and normative tradition which caged women by the women themselves, is absent from *R.A. Kartini* (1982). But, given this more progressive portrayal of Kartini in the 2017 version, we cannot simply argue that the 2017 version has successfully portrayed Kartini as a heroine of women's emancipation. As in the 1982 version, Kartini is still dependent on strong male figures, and, in the end, she must submit to the strictures of patriarchal norms. She had to marry and give up on her dream of studying abroad.

Although with limitations, historical films, with their broad appeal to the general population, are a vehicle to disseminate knowledge about historical and national hero figures. These figures can be taken as a teaching tool, particularly as a trigger for discussing women's empowerment and education role models. Kartini is a national heroine who many Indonesians still consider relevant to empowered Indonesian women and to equality in education. When Kartini – the empowered women role model – continues to be portrayed as emancipated but within allowed boundaries, this hints at a petrified stance on how Indonesian society normatively views women's roles which could hinder the movement towards gender equality. Having acknowledged this, we can still draw on a positive notion as conclusions. Even though the end of *Kartini* portrays Kartini as a woman who submits to societal pressure, the exploration of Kartini and her sisters' unsatisfied, sad, and angry faces and their voiced frustrations can be a starting point for the audience to question and rethink the status quo of patriarchal norms.

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