

The Influences of The Modernization of Education toward Minang-Girls' life in *Sumatra's Westkust*¹(1900—1942)

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Abstract

This study was conducted aimed to discover the reality of Minang-women's life existences before and after the access of Dutch modern educational in the early 20th century. The modernization brings Minang's women in to the era called 'Emancipation' in which the women begin to ask the same liberties with the man for having formal education. In the next step, those actions of emancipation not only bring the access for education but it also brings the freedom for woman to have interactions outside the traditional house called '*rumahgadang*'.

Keywords: Emancipation, Minang-women's life, progress, modernization of education.

1. Introduction

The successful of Dutch colonial government in breaking *Padri*-people's fight in Bonjol at August 16th 1837 became the beginning of the real Dutch imperialism in Minangkabau² (Amran, 1985: 48). With jargon 'How to manage a colony for money?' as the basic of colonial system, Dutch colonial government was asked to make several rules upon the colonial areas that can make some economical benefit (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1992:11; Kartodirdjo, 1990:20). In this term, the

¹*Sumatras's Westkust* was a name of a government in The East Indies on 20th century. Nowadays, that area is mostly knows as West Sumatra province.

building of Dutch formal schools for the citizen in 19th century until 1942 was part of the goals of Dutch colonialism.

Modern education system was introduced by colonial government to public in *Sumatra's Westkust* did not bring any effect to Minang's women at the beginning. It was happened because the colonial government has priority to give the access only for Minang's men that would be hired to work in colonial *bearucration* structure (Nasution, 1987:46). Besides, the existence of social-culture and religion rules that did not allowed the girls or women to go studying to school had caused all 19th century women have no interaction with Dutch formal school.

The opposite fact was seen after the access of formal education was opened to Minang's woman in the early 20th century. Minang's women so appreciated, when the Dutch formal schools in *Sumatra's Westkust* and others school in The East Indies region, welcoming the women to study in Vocational Schools and Islamic modernist schools for female started opened in several areas in *Sumatra's Westkust*. Besides, women's newspaper and women's role in political actively proved women's life acceleration progress in Minangkabau on 20th century.

2. Introducing European Modern Education in *Sumatra's Westkust*

As one of the most precious one and benefit-full for Dutch's export-import commodity, coffee became one of the cultivation plants that people can grow it up in The East Indies on 19th century. In *Sumatra's Westkust*, the system which ask people to grow up coffee called forced cultivation system of coffee (*cultuurstelsel*). The colonial government started the system which pushed *Sumatra's Westkust* citizen to plant coffee since 1940 (Amran, 1985:94; Dobbin, 2008:359).

Coffee exploitation regulation created by Dutch colonial government in *Sumatra's Westkust* caused Dutch's coffee estate and warehouses were opened in several areas in The East Indies. This affected directly to the needed of local bureaucrat worker to be placed in coffee estates, warehouses, and others colonial bureaucracy offices in The East Indies. Therefore, the colonial government built local schools with low fee tuition special for the citizen which can make local bureaucrat to work for colonial government in order to run their exploitation in their territory areas that can give Dutch a lot of benefit as the main country (Djumhur & Danasuparta, 1981:122; Nasution, 1987:11—12; Dobbin, 2008:373).

The first opening Dutch secular school in *Sumatra's Westkust* was conducted by Resident Carel Philip Conrad Steinmetz at *Residentie Padangsche Bovenlanden*² on 1943. The Steinmetz action was becoming the starting point of education modernization process for the citizen in *Sumatra's Westkust*. The Dutch secular school was known as '*Sekolah Nagari*' or *Nagari school*. Its best purpose is only for making cultivation watcher, clerk, and some workers to be placed in several Dutch coffee warehouses. At the beginning, the school was only opened in the central area of administration, market, and others coffee producing areas such as Bukittinggi, Batu Sangkar, Payakumbuh, Solok, Sijunjung, Puar Datar, Rao, Bonjol, Matur, Buo, Singkarak, and Sungai Puar (Hadler, 2010:15—16; Graves, 2007:153—154; Dobbin, 2008:374—375).

The needed of educator staff affected the colonial government to built *Normal School* or *Kweekschool* in Bukittinggi on April 1st 1856. That education school was named *Kweekschool Fort*

²*Residentie Padangsche Bovenlanden* or *Padang Darat* Residence was located on hills area and Minangkabau village.

de Kock. The school was built to make local educator staff that will be placed in several schools at *GouvernementSumatra's Westkust* (Graves, 2007:161; Naldi, 2008:54).

Nagari School and *Kweekschool* were the most two reliable institutional of education by the colonial government in producing local bureaucrat staff in *Sumatra's Westkust*. Both of institutional were not only succeed to produce local educated administration staff and has skill but it also created a revolution in social life which is marked by new elite existence and functional group from middle class traders and artisans (Leirissa, 1985:24; Graves, 2007:205—206, 248).

Unfortunately, at that time the colonial formal schools were opened only for man. There is none Minang women were registered as students in Dutch schools until the end of 19th century in *GouvernementSumatra's Westkust*.

The activated of ethical politic system on 1901 and then the appearance of Islamic modernist activities on 1900 became momentum of the climax of modernism formal colonial education in The East Indies. It was marked by the completeness of Dutch formal institutional education structure started from primary until universities. The existence of Islamic modernist schools which was transformed from traditional education institute called *surau*, also cannot be ignored in giving a roles to improve modernization of education in *Sumatra's Westkust* at the early 20th century.

3. The Reality of Women's Minang Life in 19th Century.

A practice from matrilineal friendship system in social life community in Minangkabau gave an honor place for women. Beside they got descent authority and heirloom property, the matrilineal friendship system also gave full authority to Minang's women in take care internal family business on *rumahgadang*.³ These Minang women's roles were different from the men in which they should be responsible for all the things related to traditional citizen outside of *rumahgadang*. As a brother from mother side, the man (called *mamak*) has full responsible of their or sister's or niece safety. The culture gives *mamak* full authority to lead and guide nephew or niece from his lineage (*saparuik*) (Latief, 2012:83; Navis, 1986:222—223).

At fact, full authority of the decline and heirloom ownership has dualism. From one point of view, the women have some benefit through their existence that has culture legality. From the other side, that condition was make the women stay in their traditional house (*rumahgadang*). All their behavior and manner were controlled by social-cultural that has norm and tradition rules including in choosing their husband (Nuryanti, 2011:26—27; 29). Hadler (2010:181—182) said that if the women has through their '*akhirbaligh*' or mature enough for marriage, they have to be ready and prepare their self as wife and mother of their son or daughter. This situation made Minang's women social interaction was bounded. Besides, they were not allowed to go outside the house after married and have baby (Korn, 1914:18).

Heirloom inheritance to the women in Minang brought their existence in Minangkabau economics. They were not only a controller of field distribution but also were placed to be the main land-maker (Loeb, 2013:130). Beside work on their heirloom, their communal economic system in Minangkabau also gives a chance for women to be mixed up actively like men (Navis, 1986:161).

³*Rumahgadang* is a traditional house building of Minangkabau people which has rectangle shapes and the roof long and make like a thorn of a cow. It has a big space under the house.

Basically, the existence of women in economic activities not only happened in Minang's Women. Handayani&Novianto (2004:29) said that Malay' women in South East were traditionally involving actively in economic activities. They were allowed to do some economical activity such as trading in some markets or working in the field just like the men. According to those statements, Minang' women were taught by their parents since they were still young to estimate the value in the market (Dobbin, 2008:82).

The deep side of Minangkabau on 1925 had some internal markets, around 58 units markets, both big and small markets. Dobbin (2008) stated that:

“A market in *Lima Kaum* on 1838 which was not filled by local traders that sold some fruits, salt, coffee, tobacco, cigarette, iron and metal stuff, Europe textile, Chinese wool and silk, but also was filled by women sellers that sold handcraft such as local cotton, blue sarong with motion style like Bugis clothes” (p.82)

The same situation also described by Dobbin(2008:82) in a market at Payakumbuh on 1833. At that market, the women sellers was categorized into low traders that sells home-made in small numbers such as fruits, coffee branches, and the hand weaving use small bags. Besides, the women sellers also bring rice field and cattle to be sold in the market.

The actively existences of the women in trading activity at 19th century above was inversely proportional to women actively existences in education. The education that they get was only religion in *surau* (a prayer house, like mosque in a smaller size). It was a different reality with Minang's men that can go to study at Dutch secular school at that time. No education access for women was caused by 2 factors: external factor in which come from the Dutch colonial government, and internal factor in which come from Minangkabau citizen itself.

For Dutch colonial government, the opening of formal schools in 19th century aimed for only producing local administration staff which will be placed in several plantations, coffee warehouse and the others administration offices. Pragmatically, the purpose of the plan to affirmed the priority of education access only for men not for women. Otherwise, from Minang conservative citizen point of view send their daughters to school were like to send them to the end of the world (Alim, 1978:30).

As the most productive areas of producing intellectuals people in *Sumatra's Westkust* since 19th century, Koto Gadang yet has given no chance to the women to study at Dutch formal school. Therefore, it was not surprise that in the beginning of 20th century many Koto Gadang's men who work as a teacher, prosecutor, and doctor has illiterate wife that cannot read and write (Fitriyanti, 2001:11—12; Abdullah, 2009: 19).

Cultural norms and rules that were not allowing the women to study as well as the men in 19th century until the early of 20th century at Minangkabau also happened in another areas in The East Indies. According to Lakkerkerker (1914: 215), the main challenging of education access for a woman was an old belief and eastern culture that people believe. In people opinion who hasn't know the importance of education for women, their daughters only need to learn religion education/knowledge and some household skill that they think more important for them when their daughters become wife and mother for their children .

4. The Effect of Education Modernizations toward Minang's Women Life in Sumatra's Westkust (1900 – 1942)

For Minang women, the improvement in education on the early of 20th century brought some important revolution for their life. The revolution was marked by started giving chance for the women to study at Dutch formal school and some modernist Islamic schools. Syarifah Nawawi was the first Minang's woman which was registered as one of the student in *Kweekschool Fort the Kock* on 1907 (Hadler, 2010: 158; 275). At the next year, in the early of 20th century, many Dutch colonial government schools started have more women students in their school.

Besides allowed the women to study at Dutch formal school, religion school⁴ which was built by Islam modernist community at the early 20th century also has female students. Those Islam modernist school named *Adabijah* school and *Perguruan Dinijahor Dinijahschool* (Hadler, 2010: 275—276). In order to balance the formal school that has western style, on 1923, Rahmah el-Junusyah built Islam modernist school for female only named *Perguruan Dinijah Poetri (Dinijah Poetrischool)* at Padang Panjang (Stuers, 2008:102).

The existence of vocational school for women in the early 20th century in *Sumatra's Westkust* made education access for Minang women wider, besides they study in Dutch formal school and Islam modernist School. Some of women vocational school named *Amai Setia Vocational School*, *Roehana Vocational School* And *Kautamaan Istri Vocational School* (Stuers, 2008: 87; Fitriyanti, 2001: 58; 93). The existence of those women schools can be a proof of the greatest of emancipation activity in education for Minang's women in *Sumatra's Westkust* in the early of 20th century.

The focus of women emancipation fighting did not stop in education field but also happen in journalist field. On 1912, Roehana Koedoes published *Soenting Molajoe* that became the first women newspaper in *Sumatra's Westkust*. The others women newspaper such as *Al-Sjarq* published on 1925, and *Soeara Kaum Iboe Soematera* that published on the same year (Naldi, 2008:128—133; Hadler, 2010:250).

Any published of those newspapers with explicitly and consistent to fighter for progress Minang's women in various fields. Not solely in the education field but also political, economy, social, and cultural aspects covered which did not take sides and handcuff their life for themselves actualize in the wider society (public sphere).

Minang women existence in political field in the early 20th century can not ignored offhand. When the youth organization movement *Jong Sumatranen Bond* branch Padang established in 1918, Ainsjah Jahya elected as commissioner (Hatta, 2013: 61). She was only member of women in those organizations.

On 1911, Koto Gadang women established *Keradjinan Amai Setia* (KAS) which became the first women organization in *Sumatra's Westkust*. The main purpose of these organization was to advanced Koto Gadang women in various aspect for their life to achieved the glory of the whole nation (Fitriyanti, 2001: 57—58). Moreover, some of the radical Minang women had formed *Sarikat Kaoem Iboe Soematera* (SKIS) in 1924—1924 (Hadler, 2010: 278; Stuers, 2008: 87).

⁴Besides learn about Islam, Modernist Islam School also teaches how to write, read, math, science, healthy, and planetology and also education (Kahin, 2008:30).

The improvement of Islam modernist organizations activity in *Sumatra's Westkust* such as Muhammadiyah and Islam united were caused by the women existences inside. Abdullah (2009:209 – 2010) mentioned that on Januari 1933, 30% of 11.000 Minangkabau's communities that noted as actively members in *Permi* (*Persatuan Muslim Indonesia/Indonesian Muslim United*) party and PSII (the new PNI) were females. Rasuna Said is the pioneer figures of Minang's women existences in political Islam modernist at *Sumatra's Westkust*. She and Rasimah Ismail were two women leaders that have powerful impression in *Permi* Party (Abdullah, 2009:220).

Table 1: Female and Male Students at School 1st and 2nd Grades at *Residentie Sumatra's Westkust*⁵ On 31st December 1913.

School Location	Number of Students	
	Male	Female
2nd Grades School		
<i>Afdeeling</i> Padang	1047	61
<i>Afdeeling</i> Painan	1008	62
<i>Afdeeling</i> Batipuh dan Pariaman	608	101
<i>Afdeeling</i> Agam	1606	241
<i>Afdeeling</i> Lubuk Sikaping	961	154
<i>Afdeeling</i> Limapuluh Kota	633	78
<i>Afdeeling</i> Tanah Datar	1368	152
<i>Afdeeling</i> Solok	823	77
Total	8054	926
Grade I⁶ school		
Padang	189	19
Bukittinggi	159	31
Payakumbuh	140	29
Solok	169	19
Total	657	98

Source: Lekkerkerker (1914:222—223).

5. Conclusion

Education improvement era in *Sumatra's Westkust* in the 19th century until the early 20th century was not apart from Dutch colonial government roles. The exploitation of dependency area to fill Dutch's pocket through the opening of school that has low school fee for the indigenous people in The East Indies has brought some great improvement acceleration toward the local citizen's life, especially for the women.

⁵In the middle of 1942 *Sumatra's Westkust* roles was change from *gouvernement* or government levels to residence levels (Asnan, 2006: 69).

⁶1st grade school (special for the rich people) it is only built in capital area such as *Afdeeling*.

As the toehold to produce local administration staff that has lower fee in the 19th century, *Nagari School* and *Kwekkschool Fort Kock* in the beginning of development step was opened only for male. Besides the initiative to open women school for Minang women was not yet come from Dutch colonial government in *Sumatra's Westkust* before 20th century, culture and the religion rules and norms which really strict were also crystallize the situation of Minang's women without formal education. It was a usual phenomenon that happened at that time whereas one of local staff in *Sumatra's Westkust* has a wife which cannot have skills to read and write.

For Minang women, the modernization of education not only made an interaction with the current western style education but also follows to break the pattern of their lives that will only stay around *rumah gadang*. The improvement of acceleration progress of Minang women's life in the early 20th century was showed from women greatest feeling and excited to join and study in Dutch formal school and formal Islam modernist school. Besides, the opening of special vocational schools especially for women and the publishing of newspaper for female edition and the activity of women in politics field were becoming the most crucial element in build some improvement to Minang women contract in which the effect still exist until now.

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