

## ***From Formalization to Civilizing Discourse: Indigenous Women in Colonial Javanese Education (1935–1940)***

### **Dari Formalisasi ke Wacana Peradaban: Perempuan Adat dalam Pendidikan Jawa Kolonial (1935–1940)**

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#### **Abstract**

This research will discuss the position of Javanese women in the emergence of the colonial *huishoudschool* education policy in Java. This education, which was also intended for Indigenous women, included subjects related to domestic skills, such as washing, cooking, ironing, and house maintenance. This research uses the historical method, which provides heuristics, verification, interpretation, and writing. The sources used are contemporary magazines and newspapers, including *De Locomotief*, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, *De Indische Courant*, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, *Serat Centini*, and other supporting literature. The theoretical approach in this research is based on Gayle Rubin's social construction of gender. The result of this study is that the formalization of domestic activity education for Javanese women is a process of perpetuating domestic interests inherent to women. The effort is a way of civilizing, training the use of Dutch industrial products in Java, and stabilizing the appearance of women in the public sphere. There is an imbalance in domestic traditions between women's space and Javanese women, as shaped by this education policy. Education, one of which targets women, involves the reconstruction of women's skills through culture and social construction in formalized education.

#### **Keywords:**

Women, Javanese  
Huishoudschool,  
Education, Colonial.

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#### **Introduction**

Historians and other academics have generally written the historiography of education in the colonial period, particularly its relevance to the spirit of awakening nationalism in Indonesia. Unlike the historiography of

education in general, the Household School (*Huishoudschool*) is also related to Education and Women. The *Huishoudschool* in Java is significant in marking Dutch East Indies Government reactions to the growing emancipation movement in the 20th century.

In 1931, the Dutch East Indies government, with a curriculum focused on daily life skills, became part of the initiative to educate women in Java. The inauguration was a form of government reaction to the decline of the function of Ethical Politics.

The failure of the Dutch East Indies government's Ethical Policy in its implementation provided pragmatic procedures by offering rewards, support, and formalization by involving Dutch people in education that was born from community organizations and progressive individuals. At the Household School (*Huishoudschool*), daily subjects that were formalized and used in school, determined by the Dutch East Indies Government, were studied alongside the process of formation and implementation.

The reactions of the Dutch East Indies government from within are an essential part of the effort to civilize and formalize the daily life and cultural wisdom of the people of the Dutch East Indies. One of the goals was to be bound by government power. Not only that, it can reproduce data and historiography that is prevalent and applies the view of the good values of colonialization in Indonesia. Moreover, by contributing to civilization, the Dutch East Indies Government and Europeans could help make the Dutch East Indies a market for European products.

In the practice of colonization, the colonizing country has an interest in providing a new understanding by regulating and restraining the implementation of customary ideas. This is a way of softening the practice of colonialism.

As a means of transferring knowledge, technology, and a better way of life to the colonizer, this is in line with the thoughts of Woolmington, who contributed thoughts related to "civilizing", which is used as a way of changing the perspective and habits that are important in a society from things that are considered primitive to a more modern culture.<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore, it is essential to study the Household School to answer the question of how it functioned during the colonial period, from its establishment in 1935 to the end of Dutch colonial rule in 1940.

Alden Speare et al.'s article, entitled "Education, Earnings, and Migration in Indonesia," discusses the interplay between education, earnings, and the mobilization of Indonesian society caused by economic factors, geography, and social sectors such as labor unions. Alden's paper fully translates the socio-economic conditions and perspectives of the impact of

education in the 1970s (2) Until this paper was made in the 1980s. Another journal by Andrew Rosser and Priyambudi Sulistiyanto.(3) The article entitled "The Politics of Universal Free Basic Education in Decentralized Indonesia: Insights from Yogyakarta" describes the decentralization policy in Yogyakarta that affects the education sector. The periodization of this article is Indonesia's reform period.

Leo Suryadinata's article Indonesian Chinese Education: Past and Present (4) discusses the dynamics of education for Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies until 1965. Of course, the experiences of these Peranakan and Totok Chinese people influenced their educational choices during the colonial period and into the post-independence period. The restrictions on the freedom of the Chinese people meant that they became an alienated minority during certain times, especially during the killings, looting, and so on, so that the choice of education colored the cautious and inclusive attitude of this group. A short article by A. Van den Bosch (5), written a long time ago but now a symbol of the thinking of his time, with the title "The Effect of Dutch Rule on the Civilization of the East Indies", illustrates the author's thoughts in seeing orientalism in his thinking. He demonstrates that education in the Dutch East Indies has not fully penetrated the socio-political society. However, colonial policies have changed various things in the world of education, for example medical science, although this author still gives the view that Javanese people are less active in practicing but still pay more attention to education with the emergence of Javanese doctors, sanitation that is starting to be better and other assumptions that the Dutch bring goodness to the Dutch East Indies.

The writing of W. F. Whertheim and The Siauw Giap with the title "Social Change in Java, 1900-1930" (6). It discusses the power of education that has altered the social structure and thinking in Java. Some ethics were created to combat colonialism, with ideologies put forward by various actors, including educated individuals, who associated with and fought against forms of colonialism in the Dutch East Indies colonial policy. This effort aimed to give education a critical function, moving in the direction of freedom, without oppression. Elisabeth Wesseling and Jacques Dane's(7), Article entitled, "The Natives" Educable? Discusses the role of Dutch geography textbooks for Dutch children in the construction of their understanding of the Dutch East Indies, work on adventures to the Dutch East Indies. This journal aims to provide an educational experience from outside the Dutch East Indies, thereby highlighting the relevance of the colonizers' intentions and ideals to the colonized country and their connection to the ethics and morals formed by the Church. In this case, education plays a key role in the spirit of colonization.

Rupert Emerson's journal entitled "Education in the Netherlands East Indies".(8) Provides a general understanding of education in the Dutch East Indies period by explaining that, in the 1930s, modernization in all respects changed the orientation of education in the Dutch East Indies, starting from systematic and significant developments that accompanied industrialization. Politics in Dutch East Indies policy is also discussed as a determining factor in the general course of education in the Dutch East Indies. Other community data from the 1930s highlights the progressivity of the groups of people who received education, as indicated by census and other community data from that decade.

An article on education written by Abdul Wahid in the "Jurnal Kewarganegaraan" (9) with the title *Eksistensi dan Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam pada Masa Kolonial Belanda*, which discusses the influence of Dutch East Indies policies in limiting and narrowing Islamic education in the Dutch East Indies. Besides that, the role of pesantren is essential in building and gathering the masses, which inspires the resistance of Islamic figures against Dutch colonialism. The writings of Gusti Muhammad Prayudi and Dewi (1-30) with the title *Pendidikan pada Masa Pemerintahan Kolonial Belanda di Surabaya tahun 1901-1942*. Then the work of Alifia Nurhusna Afandi, et al.(16) entitled *Pendidikan pada Masa Pemerintahan Kolonial di Hindia Belanda tahun 1900-1930*. Zofrano Ibrahimsyah Maghribi et al.(10) entitled *Perkembangan dan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Zaman Kolonial Belanda di Indonesia abad 19-20*. A journal written by "Karsiawan" with the title *Education Policy of the Dutch Colonial Government during the Ethical Politics in Lampung*. The three writings both discuss changes in Dutch East Indies policy and have an impact on the opportunities available to the people of *Bumiputera*.

This policy encompasses the ethical and political aspects of the emergence of education in the Dutch East Indies. Education that the European population can finally enjoy is now accessible to *Bumiputera*, even though it is conditional on their parents' and priyayian. But what distinguishes it is its local and comprehensive spatial limitation. From the literature review above, it is evident that no one has discussed the education of the Household School (*Huishoudschool*), which offers a unique perspective on efforts to formalize everyday activities and to civilize the *Bumiputera* community, focusing on formalization and forms of civilization for this community and other Dutch East Indies residents.

## Method

This article uses the historical method.(11) This includes topic selection, source collection (heuristic) from [www.delpher.nl](http://www.delpher.nl), the University of

Indonesia Library, and other relevant sources, verification (historical criticism), interpretation, and historiography. The details of these stages include topic selection, and the author employs an intellectual approach, ensuring that the chosen source has novelty in historiography.

In writing this article, the methodology employed is Gayle Rubin's social-gender construction theory approach, which emphasizes that gender structures can be linked through the availability of political, environmental, social, and cultural information. Gayle's reconstruction can be formed through the first, the position of women, as well as the pattern of school habits evident in the curriculum taught, as seen from the subjects taught. Second, educational institutions shape gender-based identities through the norms that schools adhere to. Third, the analysis of colonial gender construction in the school is described in terms of its social interaction, because colonial Dutch education usually has elitist and ideological characteristics. (17) In the reality of the 20th century, the reconstruction of information from texts and the spread of patriarchal cultural information that connects the position of biological and gender factors. From this, it becomes clear that what is learned in the *Huishoudschool* is influenced by supporting factors. Despite the existence of the Ethical Policy, how did it regulate women in education in the Colonial Period? A reconstruction of the customs and choices used by the school.

In addition, the concepts of formalization and civilization are also used to analyze the education system in home schools (*Huishoudschool*). Formalization is a form of measurement that follows specific rules and universal indicator values, thereby establishing a normative habit. In contrast to civilizing, by Woolmington's (1) The concept above involves incorporating normative ideas based on what is believed by a person or group that has power over other groups.

## **Result and Discussion**

Home School (*Huishoudschool*) was initially initiated in the women's emancipation movement, such as the *Pasoenda-Istri. Wanito Sedjati* in Bandung. *Petro Oetomo* in Kediri, *Ardjoena Vakschool* in Purwokerto. These schools prepared women for family independence, but the I.E.V. established several schools.

The existence of Household Schools in Java included Jepara, founded in October 1919(14). In 1935, various Household Schools were established, with 1 to 2 teachers. At that time, the appointment of Principals was made by these teachers, as for those who have a principal, namely in Semarang, which opened on August 29, 1935, supported by the Women's Organization I.E.V. (*Indo-Europeesch Verbond*). At the beginning of the opening, 18 students enrolled,

and it was headed by a Dutch woman, J.J. Swensen.(13) Other Household Schools, such as in Jember, opened on September 1, 1935. (12) While in Kebumen, it was established on August 23, 1935.(13) The teachers who taught at this school were Dutch.

In the newspaper *De Locomotief* in Yogyakarta, the Household School (*huishoudschool*) experienced its peak of popularity. At its opening in June 1927, the class was whole. The newspaper explained that there were so many students enrolled in the first class that the Household school refused admission to Yogyakarta and suggested admission to the Madiun area, which opened a month after Yogyakarta, opening on July 1, 1927(15)

This article examines Gayle Rubin's social construction theory, which analyzes the gender structure in *Huishoudschool* in Java, which was established in various regions starting in 1935. The existence of this school has social, economic, and political interests. The interest in politics was based on ethical politics, which attracted the sympathy of Javanese and Chinese women elites to be actively involved in the activities of the *Indo-European Verbond* school. This organization was related to the Dutch and other Europeans, because Indo-Europeans were mostly recognized as a European population group in the Dutch East Indies. The opening of these schools, in addition to attracting the sympathy of the Javanese and Chinese women's elite, was also closely related in the socio-economic field, as the women's elite involved in the mission of spreading Catholicism were consuming products sold by Indo-Europeans, such as kitchen utensils imported from Europe.

Gayle also views the gender construction of an event in terms of the position of women from activities, so that the learning process at *Huishoudschool* also describes the activities of the women who attend school there. The activities in the school were three years, two years, and one year. The one-year school was a new alternative to address some of the students' economic problems. After the students had completed their studies, they were required to take a final examination to test their ability to complete the subjects. They are required to take a final exam to assess their skills in the various subjects taken. In one Household School.(22) There were usually only 1 to 2 Dutch teachers available to educate the students. This was because the teaching staff was drawn from Dutch teachers in the Dutch East Indies

The system at the Household School included a daily morning routine that was repeated each day. The starting time was from 6:30 to 12:00. The subjects taught were as follows:

No.	Subjects
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1.	Cooking
2.	Sewing
3.	Cutting
4.	Washing
5.	Ironing
6.	Cleanliness
7.	Childcare

**Source:** "I.E.V.V.O. HUISHOUDSCHOOL: Semarang en Omstreken",  
Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie, July 9, 1935.

The subjects taught in the school are necessities in the daily life of the people of the Dutch East Indies, especially Java, because they are basic human needs. The activities and subjects at the Huishoudschool were basic lessons for elite Javanese, Chinese, Indo-European, and European women. These basic skills were considered essential by the school to give elite women the skills to manage their households. However, a closer look at the seven subjects can be obtained in the household or home learning of each of these women. The subjects taught in Javanese and Chinese culture were also taught by their mothers. The subjects taught in Javanese and Chinese culture include cooking, sewing, cutting, washing, ironing, hygiene, and childcare. The branding and values introduced by this school were European forms of modernization, as the teachers were partly European and the head was too. The position of European (Dutch) culture from 1930 to 1940 was superior, so women were willing to pay to go to these schools.

The acceptance of the Dutch curriculum for basic skills also supports Gayle's view that schools are part of the production of Western conformity, civilization, and norms that differ from Eastern cultures. The existence of this school also became a Western identity recognized as superior by the schoolgirls who attended, which was also based on Catholicism. In addition, the empowerment of Western perspectives on basic skills contributed to the development of a Western, standardized culture of women.

Several sources related to the habit of mixing Javanese food have been written by Ikhsan Rosyid in an article entitled "Narasi Historis Warisan Budaya Kuliner Populer Masyarakat Urban Surabaya", discussing how to cook and use dishes in rujak as a symbol of Surabaya society. This cooking culture underlies the fact that cooking traditions are also prevalent in every civilization. The Javanese have specialties with various processing techniques. However, the

Huishoudschool has an interest in introducing Western traditions through the subject activities taught by its teachers. Food traditions are also diverse, as evidenced by the gastronomy of *Serat Centini*. This gastronomy has a long history, rooted in the folklore tradition. In *Serat Centhini*, it is also explained how to mince, a traditional method of processing dishes in the local culture in Java. (23) In the variety of clothing, the community also has local wisdom, which encompasses various ways of dressing and making clothes within the Javanese social and cultural structure, for example, as contained in *Serat Chentini* Volume 1.

...busana maneka warna  
Pinarengken dhateng ing Punggawa Mantri(24)

In that, Javanese people already know how to dress appropriately. However, the existence of Household School suggests that there is a cultural mission from Europe, starting from how to cook, serve food, behave, and make choices. This is related to the Household School (*Huishoudschool*) in the Netherlands, which helped drive a cooking trend by modernizing cooking utensils and other kitchen items. This tool was then introduced in the Dutch East Indies. One practical way to share information about fashion trends, cooking, and cooking tools can be directly practiced by Home School Teachers. In this case, it altered the behavior patterns and lifestyles of the students who took this education, which was initially from the social elite of society.

This Household School (*Huishoudschool*) was attended for two years, but the entrance examination was stricter than that of schools with a one-year school period. The year-long Domestic School then emerged to shorten the time to provide skills to women in Java and became the forerunner of Domestic Worker skills. An existing school in Semarang, with a one-year term, includes information regarding the establishment of a short one-year school for the following reasons:

1. It was intended for women who had not completed elementary school.
2. Have been out of school for too long
3. The 2-year Home School is too expensive to afford 4.
4. A 2-year homeschool is too long (25)

In teaching its students, Surabaya Household School also organized visits to nearby home factories. For example, in 1936, the students went to the *Van Drongelen* mineral water factory. The aim was to provide additional insight into how to package and serve it. During the visit, the students were thrilled because they were treated to lemon syrup. (26)

In 1934, the colonial newspaper *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* reported that the students at the Household School in Malang and Surabaya took their final exams at the school and all passed. The number of students from Surabaya was six girls, and eight girls from Malang. The students included:

No.	Name
1.	M.L. Daniel
2.	E. M. van Est
3.	R. Fichtel
4.	Th. E. van Gessel
5.	Fl. Hanssens
6.	J.P. de Kat
7.	G.L. de Krieger
8.	M. Lasminingroe
9.	D.O. Pijpers
10.	L.E. v.d. Riviere
11.	A.H.F. Roentowene
12.	R.A. Sitiamini
13.	M. Soedjikarti
14.	E. Tjioe

Source: "Huishoudschool", *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, June 22, 1934

Unfortunately, the information from the newspaper above does not provide details on the students from Malang and Surabaya, making it challenging to identify from the names which social class structure is getting an education in Malang and Surabaya, to facilitate comparison. However, this information can still be analyzed, at least it has described the social conditions in 1934 for women who were educated in household schools (*huishoudschool*) in East Java. The European and Indo-European groups enjoyed the school the most. The *Bumiputera* group was appreciated by women from the upper class, as indicated by data from 14 students, who had two Javanese names, namely R. A. Sitiamini and Soedjikarti, and 1 Chinese name, E. Tjioe.

The position of the Household School for Women in Java can be assessed from the following newspaper *De Indische Courant*:

*...In de maand September zal in het gehouwen-complex, waar de*

*Bizondere Europeesche school is ondergebracht, ook een huishoudschool en een handelsleergang worden geopend. (27)*

*(In September, a home school and a trade school will also open in the complex, which will house the European Special School)*

The Household School was intended for the European class in Java. The moment also explained that education was introduced in Blitar, East Java, because the I.E.V. Women's Organization could not establish itself in the region, due to the limited reach. The Catholic Church continued to prove itself through the management of the sisters.

The identity of the school's students has a high social structure, elite, and ideological. The social construction is that students from the elite population in Java possess household skills with Western culture. In line with Gayle's theory, this educational institution, in addition to building awareness of skills formed to fill the free time of women from Javanese, Chinese, Indo-European, and European elites. This school was also only for women, with a large fee. This aligns with the capacity of students who entered Huishoudschool.

One of the advertisements to provide information and persuasion to the public is the following advertisement:



**Figure 1:** An ad for one of the Home Schools

**Source:** De Locomotief, June 15, 1935

The advertisement above contains information about one of the Household Schools in Solo, which is intended for non-European descendants and was initiated by Mrs. T. Andree. The school advertisement explained that the subjects offered were sewing, general development, household subjects, childcare, and hygiene lessons. The cost of this education was f12.50 to f25. This price was comparable to the cost of buying rice in the 1930s, where the price of a tenth of a bushel of rice, equivalent to 3.25 kg, ranged from 2.90 to 3.75. The

rice product was part of the low-variety rice.(28) So, per month, the Household School was equivalent to buying 4-5 bushels of rice.(21) Keep in mind that women and families from the lower class could not afford to consume rice daily, as the rice crop in Java was still not diverse, with food sources derived from cassava and so on.

As a result of the school's creativity, exhibitions were often held to showcase the students' work and to sell their trade skills. For example, in 1938, Salatiga held an exhibition of students' work. (20) In 1940, at Pasar Oro-oro Dowo, Malang, a two-day sale and exhibition was organized, the first day being relatively short, lasting only two hours and being held from 5 to 7 in the morning. However, the second day was an hour longer, from 8:30 to 11:30. Exhibition products included handicrafts, children's clothing and underwear, dresses, and other clothing. The products from the Home School's two-year and one-year programs were combined into one event. On the second day, cooking, homework, and ironing demonstrations were also held. (19) The aim was to attract people's attention to send their children to Household School, as it was essential to be implemented in everyday life.



**Figure 2:** Advertisement for the Household School (Huishoudschool) and several other schools in 1938

**Source:** *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, April 29, 1938.

Advertisements for school openings in the 1930s had already appeared in the newspaper's advertisement section. The advertisements informed that schools such as the Household School (*Huishoudschool*), *Opleidingschool*, *Vak-Onderwijzeressen* (*Middelbare Nijverheidsschool*), as secondary industrial schools, had been established. It is also important to note that forms for these schools are available at the respective schools to support prospective students' classes.

The schools established were used to provide workers in the various

industries that already existed in Java. However, the Household School, which was initiated by several non-*Bumiputera* organizations but intended for *Bumiputera*, was initially distinct, as it was not a school designed to produce workers in the domestic sphere, as evidenced by the graduates who were *Bumiputera* elites and residents of other groups. These schools were a way of formalizing skills used in everyday life. This was part of civilizing the culture of the people from a Western perspective, activities with specific values and specific tools as a form of modernization. Families are ultimately crucial as the key to establishing a modern life. However, these skills could have been acquired informally. However, the emergence of the Home School provided a new medium for women's spaces in the public sphere, and the government responded by attempting to address the failed educational provision of Ethical Politics.

Contemporaneous writings by Kluiver, as former head of the student information office of the Department of Education and Honors in Batavia, provide additional literature that the Household School, embodied by *Bumiputera*, ensured full attendance and had a more positive impact on reaching other *Bumiputera*. However, this school was important for all classes of women in the Dutch East Indies as it prepared them to support women's creativity in their families. However, the classes were domestic development, and not the same introductory courses taken by men.

The phenomenon of the popularity of Household Schools in the 20th century, covering household skills. The emancipation movement of *Bumiputera* women helped popularize the Household School. Notably, R.A. Kartini and Dewi Sartika, who contributed to the idea of women's equality in education and the public sphere, so that *Bumiputera* women attended Household School en masse, initiated by *Bumiputera* schools. *Bumiputera* women organized themselves through these schools with terms and conditions adapted to the community's customs. However, the rise became interesting when an exam was administered by the Dutch East Indies in 1931. This exam was tested in 1926, namely the "Costume Sewing" exam. During this period, homeschooling was formalized. This led to the establishment of a one-year school for domestic and industrial workers.

However, it must be understood that the Household School initially offered certain classes to attract students, as it was said that only upper-class people could enjoy it, provided that each student's father had a certain income. The Women's School that some women attained was at the year level. And a few others attended classes for two to three years. After that, they received a diploma. Children who reached the Household School in four to five years could be hired in some sectors of the handicraft industry, in the few jobs

available in the Dutch East Indies. (18)

However, due to the I.E.V. establishment of Huishoudschool, elite women were directed to stay within Western domestic interests. The gender norms supported craft work on a small scale. In this school, women were not allowed to reach the knowledge needed by the Dutch as educated workers, so that women in 1935 to 1940 were still confined as an institution that accommodated women to the norms of the family and school environment who realized that the norms and gender of women were still limited and the condition of women was still controlled by patriarchal culture and exchanged with the interests of family and marriage, so they were required to be proficient in skills that dealt with the household.

### **Conclusion**

The formalization of education, overseen by the Dutch East Indies Government, with domestic activity subjects for Javanese women, served as a process of perpetuating the domestic interests of women. They aimed to civilize, training the use of Dutch industrial products in Java, and stabilizing the appearance of women in the public sphere. There is an imbalance between domestic traditions, and this education policy shaped Javanese women. Education, one of which targets women, involves the reconstruction of women's skills through culture and social construction in formalized education. In contrast to the emergence of the *Bumiputera* Women's Schools, although there was learning about women's empowerment in the domestic sphere, women gathered to develop and create a collective of thought about nationalist ideas through magazines and other means. Nevertheless, women in the 20th century had succeeded in gaining basic education in the public sphere, which was the beginning of the development of school opportunities for women in Java.

### ***Pernyataan Kontribusi Penulis***

Penulis setuju bertanggung jawab atas semua aspek dalam artikel ini.

### ***Pernyataan Konflik Kepentingan***

Penulis menyatakan tidak memiliki konflik kepentingan.

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