ISSN:2356-0770
E-ISSN: 2685-2705
SEUNEUBOK LADA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sejarah, Sosial, Budaya dan Pendidikan
Vol. 13 No. 1 (2026): 29-40 ; DOI. https://doi.org/10.33059/jsnbl.v13i1.13730
Received: 12/29/2025 Revised: 02/08/2026 Accepted: 02/09/2026

MARIA WALANDA MARAMIS AND THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL IDEAS IN MINAHASA IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This article responds to the tendency of Indonesian intellectual historiography to remain textual, masculine, and Javanese-centric by highlighting Maria Walanda Maramis as a non-elitist female intellectual in early 20th-century Minahasa. Departing from a critique of the definition of intellectualism that limits the production of ideas to written texts and formal political arenas, this article offers an alternative reading of intellectualism that operates through social practices, community organizations, and the articulation of moral values. Using an expanded approach to intellectual history and a gender perspective, this article shows that Maria Walanda Maramis produced social ideas through organizational activities, women's education, and the formation of discourses on motherhood and social morality. Maria's intellectuality was not manifested in theoretical texts, but rather in continuous social practices that had a broad impact at the community level. This article argues that recognition of non-elitist forms of intellectuality not only enriches our understanding of the intellectual history of colonial Indonesia, but also challenges conceptual boundaries regarding who can be called an intellectual.

Keywords: *Maria Walanda Maramis, Female intellectuals, Minahasa, social history*

ABSTRACT

Artikel ini menjawab kecenderungan historiografi intelektual Indonesia yang masih bersifat tekstual, maskulin, dan Jawa-sentris dengan mengangkat Maria Walanda Maramis sebagai intelektual perempuan non-elitis di Minahasa awal abad ke-20. Berangkat dari kritik terhadap definisi intelektualitas yang membatasi produksi gagasan pada teks tertulis dan arena politik formal, artikel ini menawarkan pembacaan alternatif terhadap intelektualitas yang beroperasi melalui praktik sosial, organisasi komunitas, dan artikulasi nilai-nilai moral. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sejarah intelektual yang diperluas dan perspektif gender, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa Maria Walanda Maramis memproduksi gagasan sosial melalui aktivitas organisasi, pendidikan perempuan, serta pembentukan wacana keibuan dan moralitas sosial. Intelektualitas Maria tidak diwujudkan dalam bentuk teks teoritis, melainkan dalam praktik sosial yang berkelanjutan dan berdampak luas di tingkat komunitas. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa pengakuan terhadap bentuk intelektualitas non-elitis tidak hanya memperkaya pemahaman tentang sejarah intelektual Indonesia kolonial, tetapi juga menantang batasan konseptual mengenai siapa yang dapat disebut sebagai intelektual.

Keywords: Maria Walanda Maramis, female intellectuals, Minahasa, social history

INTRODUCTION

The intellectual history of Indonesia has been dominated by a narrow understanding of who can be called an intellectual and how that intellect works in the

colonial context. Intellectuals are generally defined as individuals who produce written texts, engage in ideological debates, and operate in formal public spaces such as the press, political organizations, or modern educational institutions. This framework implicitly focuses attention on educated male actors in the colonial central regions, especially Java, and ignores forms of idea production that operate outside the textual medium and the formal political arena (Kartodirdjo 1992; Kuntowijoyo 2003).

The consequence of this approach is the marginalization of the intellectual experience of certain social groups, especially women and communities outside Java. In Indonesian historiography, women are more often present as objects of educational policy, symbols of emancipation, or actors of social activities, but are rarely positioned as producers of social and moral ideas. The absence of women from intellectual history is not a reflection of the absence of intellectual activity, but rather the result of the conceptual limitations of historiography that places too much emphasis on text-based intellectualism and formal politics.

It is precisely because of these conceptual limitations, the study of social history and women's history offers an alternative lens in reading intellectuals. These studies show that intellectuality does not always manifest itself in the form of writing or open ideological debate. Intellectuals can also operate through social practices, community organizations, and the production of moral values that shape society's perceptions and behaviors (Blackburn 2004; Robinson 2009). In the colonial context, these spaces were often the main arena for women to formulate and transmit ideas, given their limited access to higher education, the press, and political institutions.

This article departs from the criticism of the exclusive definition of intellectual and proposes an alternative approach by expanding the notion of intellect as a practice of producing social meaning. With this approach, intellectuals are understood not solely as writers or theorists, but as actors who actively shape the discourse, values, and moral orientation of society through sustainable social practices. This approach allows for the recognition of non-elitist forms of intellectuality that have so far escaped the attention of mainstream historiography.

Within this framework, Maria Walanda Maramis is placed as an important case for understanding the intellectuality of non-elitist women in the colonial periphery. Operating in Minahasa in the early 20th century, a region of Eastern Indonesia that had

the dynamics of Christian education and social transformation typical of Mary, did not produce theoretical papers, but articulated social ideas about women, motherhood, education, and morality through organizational activities and non-formal educational practices. These ideas have a wide social reach and form patterns of social relations at the community level. The case of Maria Walanda Maramis, thus becomes a critical touchstone to test the validity and inclusiveness of the intellectual framework that has been dominant, as well as showing the loci of knowledge production on the "periphery".

This article argues that Maria Walanda Maramis is a female intellectual who produces social ideas through practice and institutions, not through text. This article aims to show that the recognition of non-elitist intellectuals not only enriches the understanding of women's role in the history of colonial Indonesia, but also challenges conceptual boundaries regarding who can be called an intellectual. Thus, this article contributes to the development of an intellectual historiography of Indonesia that is more inclusive, layered, and sensitive to regional and gender experiences, while at the same time dialogizing the global intellectual discourse with the colonial context of the Dutch East Indies

METHODS

To read Maria Walanda Maramis as a female intellectual, this article uses a theoretical framework that expands the notion of intellectuality beyond the production of written texts and formal political engagement. In classical intellectual history, intellectuals are often understood as an educated group that produces ideas through writing, ideological debate, and direct political intervention. This approach, while important, tends to ignore the forms of idea production that operate through social practices and non-formal institutions.

Antonio Gramsci offered a more inclusive intellectual concept through the idea of *organic intellectuals*. In Gramsci's view, intellectuals are not limited to a specific profession, but include social actors who play a role in shaping the consciousness, values, and moral orientation of a social group. Intellectuals work through organization, education, and daily practice, and function as mediators between social structures and collective consciousness (Gramsci 1971). This framework allows for the reading of non-elitist actors including women as intellectuals in a given social context. In this article, the

concept of organic intellectuals is operationalized by tracing how Maria (1) formed and led the organization (PIKAT) as an "apparatus" for spreading ideas, (2) formulated a "practical philosophy" on motherhood and education, and (3) functioned as a mediator between Christian-modern values and the needs of the Minahasa community.

This approach is reinforced by Edward Said's thought, which emphasizes the role of intellectuals as producers of meaning and moral criticism in society. Although Said discusses the public intellectuals extensively in the modern context, his ideas of the intellectual as figures that shape discourse and values remain relevant to reading intellectual practices outside the formal public space (Said 1994). In colonial contexts, the production of meaning often takes place in more limited but far-reaching social spaces.

The gender perspective is an important element in the theoretical framework of this article. Studies of women's history show that women's limited access to higher education, the press, and formal politics encouraged the development of alternative forms of intellectuality that operated through community organizations, non-formal education, and the domestic realm (Scott 1986; Blackburn 2004). Therefore, the absence of women from intellectual history is not an indication of the absence of intellectuality, but rather a reflection of a gender-biased definition of intellectualism.

In colonial contexts, women's intellectual practices were often articulated through what appeared to be social or moral activities. Maternal education, domestic development, and women's organizations are important mediums for the production and transmission of ideas about social order, gender relations, and public morality. The social history approach allows for a reading of these practices as a form of intellectual work that contributes to the formation of social consciousness (Burke 2005).

By combining the concept of organic intellectuals, an understanding of the production of social meaning, and a gender perspective, this article defines intellectuals as actors who actively shape and transmit ideas through social practices and institutions. This theoretical framework became the basis for analyzing Maria Walanda Maramis as a non-elitist female intellectual operating in Minahasa in the early 20th century, as well as opening up space for a more inclusive reading of the intellectual history of colonial Indonesia.

The study of women's history in Indonesia has developed along with the entry of social and feminist historical perspectives since the 1980s. The initial focus of this study was generally directed to issues of emancipation, women's education, and women's involvement in national movements. Figures such as R.A. Kartini occupy a central position in this historiography, mainly because of the existence of written texts in the form of letters that allow intellectual reading based on discourse (Kartini 1911; Blackburn 2004). Kartini is often positioned as a modern female intellectual who reflects a critical awareness of colonialism, customs, and education through the medium of writing.

In addition to Kartini, studies on other female figures such as Rohana Kudus in West Sumatra and women's organizations in the early 20th century also show the role of women as producers of public ideas. Rohana Kudus, for example, is read as a female press intellectual who uses print media to voice her views on women's education and advancement (Blackburn 2004). These studies affirm the importance of texts and the press as the main arena of women's intellectuality, while reinforcing historiographic tendencies that associate intellectuality with the production of written discourse.

Nevertheless, the strong focus on the figures who produced the written text also formed certain conceptual boundaries in the history of Indonesian women. Women who did not leave the textual archive, were not directly involved in the press, or were not in colonial centers tended to receive less attention as intellectual subjects. As a result, women's experiences outside Java and Sumatra, as well as forms of thought production through social practices and community organizations, are relatively marginalized from the study of intellectual history.

A number of studies then tried to expand the scope of women's history by highlighting women's organizations, non-formal education, and the domestic realm as arenas of social change. Research on colonial women's organizations shows that maternal education, domestic upbringing, and social activities have strong ideological and normative dimensions (Locher-Scholten 2000; Robinson 2009). Nevertheless, these studies often still position the practice as a complement to the colonial modernization process, rather than as an autonomous intellectual work.

In the context of Eastern Indonesia, the study of women's history is still relatively limited and rarely placed within the framework of intellectual history. Some articles

discuss the role of women in Christian missions and colonial education, but tend to emphasize aspects of domestication and social discipline. This approach has not fully opened up space for the reading of women as active and reflective producers of social ideas.

By comparing studies on Kartini, Rohana Kudus, colonial women's organizations, and studies on women in Eastern Indonesia, this article confirms the gap in the historiography of women's history and the intellectual history of Indonesia. Unlike Kartini, whose thoughts can be accessed through letters, or Rohana Kudus through journals, Maria Walanda Maramis actually shows that the production of transformative ideas can occur precisely when intellectuals are "silent" from written texts but "voiced" through massive social institutions and practices. This approach broadens the understanding of women's intellectuality by including the experiences of colonial periphery and non-textual forms of production of ideas as an integral part of Indonesia's intellectual history.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Intellectual Consciousness Formation of Maria Walanda Maramis

The formation of Maria Walanda Maramis's intellectual consciousness needs to be understood as a historical process that intertwines personal experience, Minahasa social structure, and colonial dynamics in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. This awareness was formed not only through the influence of the educational and Christian environment, but also through Mary's ability to read, interpret, and respond to the structural limitations faced by women in colonial societies.

Minahasa is one of the regions in Eastern Indonesia that was relatively early integrated into the colonial education system and Christian mission network. The presence of zending schools and churches not only introduced modern literacy and discipline, but also formed a new moral ethos that emphasized order, family responsibility, and children's education. In this context, Maria is not merely a product of this social transformation, but actively utilizes the available social spaces to formulate responses to the problems of women and families in Minahasa society (Gouda, 2008 pp. 112–130).

Maria Walanda Maramis grew up in a family and community that placed education as an important value, although women's access to formal education was still limited. This experience not only shaped awareness of gender inequality in access to education, but also encouraged Maria to articulate women's education as a strategy for social change. Thus, Mary's intellectual consciousness is rooted in her concrete experience of facing structural limitations, as well as in her ability to transform those limitations into spaces of social intervention (Scott, 1986, pp. 1054–1056; Blackburn, 2004, pp. 25–40).

Minahasa's social transformation in this period was also marked by changes in family structure, gender roles, and social expectations for women. Colonial modernity brought new values regarding cleanliness, health, and childcare, but their implementation was often not accompanied by adequate social support. Maria responded to this situation by formulating maternal education as a social strategy that was not only adaptive to colonial modernity, but also a means of women's empowerment in local communities (Locher-Scholten, 2000, pp. 87–95).

Maria's intellectual awareness is reflected in her ability to read social issues contextually and formulate responses that are both normative and practical. He did not express his thoughts through theoretical writings, but through ideas embodied in collective action and social institutions. This choice shows that Mary's intellect operates in the realm of praxis, where ideas are tested through direct application in social life.

Thus, the formation of Maria Walanda Maramis's intellectual consciousness was the result of the encounter between Christian education, Minahasa social dynamics, and personal experience in facing women's problems in colonial society. This awareness became the foundation for her intellectual practice through women's organization and education, and explained why Mary's ideas had such a powerful and far-reaching social influence. Early indications of attention to maternal and family education in Minahasa can also be traced in colonial educational and ecclesiastical reports published in the Dutch East Indies press in the early 20th century, which documented the role of Minahasa women in social activities and community education (*De Locomotief*, 1917; *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 1918).

2. Intellectual Practice of Maria Walanda Maramis

Maria Walanda Maramis's intellectual practice reached its most concrete form through her involvement in women's organizations and social activities oriented towards education and family development. The Mother's Romance Organization for Its Derivatives (PIKAT) not only functions as a forum for social activities, but also as the main medium for the production and transmission of social ideas (Locher-Scholten, 2000, pp. 102–118). Through PIKAT, Maria articulated her views on the role of women, motherhood, and moral responsibility in colonial society. The activities of Minahasa women's organizations, including PIKAT, also occasionally received attention in colonial press reports highlighting educational and family welfare initiatives in Eastern Indonesia (*De Locomotief*, 1920).

Unlike political organizations or national movements that place intellectual discourse in the formal public arena, PIKAT operates at the community and household levels. This choice reflects a contextual intellectual strategy, given women's limited access to colonial public spaces. Maternal education, household management, and child development are positioned as the main foundations for the formation of a civilized and moral society. Within this framework, the household is not understood as a passive private space, but rather as a strategic arena for the formation of values and social consciousness (Blackburn, 2004, pp. 33–38).

Through PIKAT's programs, Maria produces ideas about modernity that are selective and adaptive. Colonial modernity values such as cleanliness, discipline, and education were not accepted raw, but were negotiated with local norms and Christian ethics. This negotiation process demonstrates a reflective and critical capacity in Maria's intellectual practice, where ideas are not simply transmitted, but adapted according to the social needs of the Minahasa community (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 5–14).

Maria's intellectual practice is also reflected in her ability to build social networks and moral authority among women. Through organizational leadership and consistency of educational practices, Maria gained legitimacy as a reference figure in family issues and children's education. This authority is moral and social, not formal politics, but has a broad and lasting impact in shaping the orientation of societal values.

Thus, Maria Walanda Maramis's intellectual practice through organization and social life shows that the production of ideas does not necessarily require the medium of

texts or direct involvement in colonial politics. Intellectuals can operate through community institutions and everyday practices that form collective consciousness. This reading reaffirms the importance of expanding the definition of intellectual to include female actors and non-elitist forms of intellectual work in colonial Indonesian history.

The reading of Maria Walanda Maramis as a non-elitist female intellectual has important implications for Indonesian historiography. So far, Indonesian intellectual history has tended to identify intellectuals with figures who are directly involved in text production, ideological debates, and national politics. As a result, forms of intellectual work operating at the local and community levels are often marginalized. Maria's case shows that the production of social ideas can take place effectively outside of that arena.

Maria's intellectual legacy lies not in theoretical writings, but in the sustainability of the practices and institutions she built. PIKAT as a women's organization shows how ideas about maternal education, motherhood, and social morality are transmitted across generations. The sustainability of the organization and its influence on the social life of Minahasa is an important indicator of the durability of ideas produced through non-textual intellectual practices. Some administrative reports and colonial news indicate that the activities of Minahasa women in the field of family education were seen as part of a moral and social effort that was in line with the colonial agenda, although it was carried out through local initiatives (*Koloniaal Verslag*, 1921).

In addition, the marginalization of Maria Walanda Maramis in national intellectual history is also related to the politics of memory and the hierarchy of colonial knowledge. Women, areas outside Java, and non-formal intellectual practices are in subordinate positions in the construction of the national historical narrative. Thus, Maria's absence from the Indonesian intellectual canon reflects more of her exclusive historiographic structure than the limitations of her intellectual contribution.

By placing Maria's experience in the analysis of intellectual history, this article shows that Indonesian intellectual history needs to be read in a more layered and contextual way. The recognition of non-elitist women's intellectuals opens up space for a broader understanding of how social ideas were produced, negotiated, and inherited in colonial societies. This approach also allows for the integration of the Eastern Indonesian experience into the grand narrative of national intellectual history.

This awareness rooted in concrete experience then encourages Maria not to stop at reflection, but to transform it into a social-applied project that is institutionalized through the organization of PIKAT. Therefore, Maria Walanda Maramis is not only understood as a female figure or social activist, but as an intellectual who contributes to the formation of the values and moral orientation of the Minahasa community. His intellectual heritage confirms that social practices and community organizations were an important part of the intellectual dynamics of colonial Indonesia, which had not been fully accommodated in mainstream historiography.

CONCLUSION

This article shows that Maria Walanda Maramis deserves to be positioned as a non-elitist female intellectual in the context of colonial Indonesia in the early 20th century. By expanding the notion of intellectuality beyond the production of written texts and formal political involvement, this article asserts that social practice, community organization, and non-formal education are important arenas for the production of social ideas. Through an intellectual history approach combined with a gender and social history perspective, this study fills a historiographical void that has tended to be masculine, textual, and Java-centric. This process demonstrates the mechanism of organic intellectuality in practice: in which ideas born from specific local contexts can be institutionalized into social forces that shape collective norms, behaviors, and ideals, without the need to go through formal theoretical or political channeling. The formation of Maria Walanda Maramis's intellectual consciousness was formed through the encounter between Christian education, the social dynamics of Minahasa, and concrete experiences facing women's problems in colonial society. This awareness is then articulated through intellectual practices that are oriented towards maternal education, domestic development, and the formation of social morals. Through the PICAT organization, these ideas are not only produced, but also transmitted and institutionalized in a sustainable manner at the community level.

A similar study of figures such as Emmy Saelan in South Sulawesi or pioneering women's organizations in Bali and Kalimantan can reveal a much more complex and differentiated intellectual map of Indonesia. Thus, this article not only revises the past, but also offers a framework for writing a more plural Indonesian intellectual history in

the future. The reading of Maria Walanda Maramis as a female intellectual challenges conceptual boundaries regarding who can be called an intellectual in Indonesian history. This article shows that intellectuals can operate effectively outside the textual medium and colonial centers, as well as have a broad social impact even if they are not articulated in national political discourse. Thus, Indonesia's intellectual history needs to be read in a more layered, contextual, and inclusive manner to regional and gender experiences. Reading of Maria Walanda Maramis opens up opportunities for further exploration of the intellectual genealogy of non-elitist women in various other "peripheries" of the archipelago.

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