Arnita Budi Siswanti is an English teacher at Arts and Craft Vocational High School V (SMKN V) Yogyakarta since 1997. On March 8th until June 1, 1998, she was invited to pursue a Teacher Development Course at Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia. She received her Bachelor of Arts (BA) in English, Teacher Training and Education, Swabaya (1992) and gained Master of Arts in American Studies at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta (2000). Besides as an English Teacher, since 1997 she has been an English Teaching Training Supervisor at Yogyakarta State University (UGM) Yogyakarta and of Satara Shrama University, Yogyakarta.

This thesis specifically discusses the life of American Southern and Javanese women in the colonial era represented by Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson and RA Kartini. Their ways of life are interpreted as the life of women in two countries in that era. The colonial era was the era where the people tried to struggle for freedom from the colonizers, and to find out their identities. It was very hard, especially for the women in that era, because they faced double burden from one side they gained oppression from the men and another was from the society. They should struggle to obtain the equal rights as men to achieve higher education and chance to have the same position and opportunity to maximize their competences in any fields.

The study of women in American South and Javanese women in Indonesia is expected to enrich the area of women studies. It can support a wide range of American Studies which emphasizes the study on cultural interchange in the two different settings and historical period, especially in colonial era. This study analyzes the topic by using literary research methodology, using related information from books, articles, essays as well as electronic sources.

The research shows that the theme of women in the two countries is a universal phenomenon in women studies. It happens upon the submissive, subordinated and suppressed women in the colonial era. The two inspiring women in this study encouraged other women to raise their consciousness that they should have the equal rights and opportunities as men to achieve their ideas and position in their houses, among families and in their societies.
THE ROLE OF WOMEN
IN THE SOUTH AND CENTRAL JAVA
IN COLONIAL ERA

Arnita Budi Siswanti
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Editor: Dr. Dewi Haryani Susilastuti
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Email: ppsugm@idola.net.id
Website: http://pasca.ugm.ac.id


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iv
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Background of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Scope and Significant of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Theoretical Approach</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Methods of the Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN’S ROLES AND CONTRIBUTION IN COLONIAL ERA</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Women’s Roles in the American South in Colonial Era</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Plantation Mistress as a Wife</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Plantation Mistress as a mother</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plantation Mistress in Society</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Women’s Roles in Central Java in Colonial Era</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Javanese Women as a Wife</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Javanese Women as a Mother</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Javanese Women in Society</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER III</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO INSPIRING WOMEN IN COLONIAL SOUTH AND CENTRAL JAVA</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Birth Order and Siblings</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Marriage</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Education  46
4. Social Roles  46

B. Raden Ajeng Kartini  48
   1. Birth Order and Siblings  49
   2. Education  51
   3. Escaping Polygamy  54
4. Kartini’s Letters  55

CHAPTER IV
THE TWO WOMEN IN COMPARISON  57
A. Significant Similarities and Differences  57
   1. Duties and Social Roles  58
   2. Marriage and Social Condition  59
   3. Educational Background and Problem  62

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION  65

BIBLIOGRAPHY  67
INDEX  73
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This book places two women from what seemingly very different contexts side by side, and several similarities emerged. Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson represented life of a southern woman. The “plantation mistresses”, as they were called, were at the top of social hierarchy in American South. Yet, their life was not as privileged as it seems, since their status also carried heavy responsibility. Raden Ajeng Kartini came from a royal family in Central Java. Both women were products of patriarchal societies, yet both of them, albeit in different manners, were able to express their agency. Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson had a very public presence. She posed a major appeal for people of different backgrounds to explore Jefferson’s life. Raden Ajeng Kartini, on the other hand, occupied less public place. However, through her letters that she wrote while in seclusion, she was able to express her progressive thought about the status of women in Javanese society. Both women gained prominence, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson in her life, while Raden Ajeng Kartini in death.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In American history, the South has much contribution to build this country, for instance from the plantation area that there were many Southerners who have many large amount of land and many slaves to build and manage their plantations. It cannot be denied that the majority of food production was produced by Southerners, even today. The impact of the American Revolution, combine the developing of capitalism and the beginning of industrialization resulted to a tendency which would grow stronger to limit women and their labor to the household, progressively described as a nurturing home rather than a productive unit, and to connect them explicitly with motherhood and domesticity, viewed as specialized responsibilities (59). Under these conditions, women were excluded from political life but did gain in literacy and began on the development of a distinct female discourse.

The debate over the impact of capitalism on American women in general remains uncertain, and the subject has barely been raised for Southern women in particular. The basic issue concerns the possible improvement or decrease in women’s position with the changes in
social and economic relations engendered by the emergence of capitalism. Fox-Genovese (1988) also argues that allowing for variations; historians basically are divided between those who argue that women’s condition decreased with the spread of capitalism, and especially industrialization, and those who argue that it improved. Those who argue for a decrease state that women in colonial society enjoyed positions of respect within the colonial household, because of the necessarily of their labor; some opportunities for autonomy within the economy at large; and also some legal protections, notably dower rights that insured their independence as widows. Those who argue for improvement point out that the colonial household subjected women to the domination under the men’s superiorities, fastened them from literacy, and generally devalued them as sex.

The former group asserts that capitalism and especially industrialization kept women at home, spoiled them of productive labor, and generally reduced them to dependence upon men. The latter group claims that the American Revolution offered women exceptional opportunities to run farms and plantations in their husbands’ absences; to participate in the public sphere in association with other women, if only in sewing to support the Revolutionary effort; and to acquire access to literacy and develop their distinct discourses (Fox-Genovese, 1988).

Southern women differed in essential respects from other American women, although their experience has not figured prominently in the development of American women’s history. According to Fox-Genovese (1988) Southern women’s history should compel us to think seriously about the relation between the experiences that unite women as members of a gender and those that divide them as members of specific communities, classes, and races (Fox-Genovese, 1988). These
women’s communities in American South were known as the plantation mistress. The plantation mistress closely resembled slave women in being the victim of the double burden of patriarchy and slavery.

According to that view, Clinton (1982) in her book entitled *The Plantation Mistress: Women’s World in the Old South*, states that Southern ladies were isolated on plantations and expected to bear many children, coped with their husbands who had extramarital affairs with prostitutes in the slave locations and slaves who combined rudeness with indifference. The continuous force and various forms of male dominance in Southern society have led many people describe it as “patriarchal,” in a more restricted sense as the generalized use of the term. Wyatt-Brown (1982) in *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, describes that “patriarchy” was all forms of male dominance over women and children in the family and society. They hold power in all important institutions including that which continued in bourgeois society. Southern society completely proclaimed a strong commitment to male honor and domination, but that commitment alone does not define it as patriarchal (Wyatt-Brown, 1982).

The patriarchal society as elaborated above existed not only in Southern society but also in Java. Javanese women in the Dutch Colonial faced the same situation as their counterparts in the southern part of America where it was dominated by a strong patriarchal system. Ananta Toer (2003), in his book entitled *Panggil Aku Kartini Saja*, argues that the girls had no chance to obtain higher education as their brothers, and they should be secluded at the age of twelve and waiting for men who came to marry them without their agreements. When they lived with their husbands, sometimes they stayed with other wives, should obey their husbands and took charge of household
under their husbands’ superiorities (Anata Toer, 2003). This situation and condition forced Kartini to reform her society’s tradition. She tried to break the tradition which oppressed the women under men’s domination by writing letters to her pen pals in Holland. Through her letters, she expressed her feelings which could not deliver to other people in her own country.

The social condition in colonial era forced the women to reform it to be the better one. Such social reforms brought many women to a realization of their own unequal position in society. From colonial times, unmarried women had enjoyed many of the same legal rights as men, although custom required that they marry early. With matrimony, women virtually lost their separate identities in the eyes of the law. Young women in America in colonial era were not permitted to have the same subjects in education field with young men. Their scope of subjects was limited largely to reading, writing, music, dancing and needlework, while young men could study on politics, economy and law.

The unequal position between men and women was not limited in education system but also in marriage, one example in accordance to the social situation in colonial era is stated in a letter written by Sarah Gayle. She explains in her diary that in marriage, as in the world, the relations between men and women remained unequal.

She states as follows:

For the woman, in “her circumscribed sphere, fewer objects present themselves, by which her feelings may be momentarily won away, from the channel in which they naturally flow. She is scarcely placed in any situation that her weakness does not require his presence as her safeguard, or her tenderness yearn for it, to complete some pleasure, that is but half enjoyed,
if he be not there to participate in it” (Fox-Genovese, 1988: 9-10).

According to the passage from the diary above, the women’s world was limited by their societies and male domination that they should keep their feeling by themselves. They did not have any courage to express it even to their own husbands. It seems that they felt lonely; they need their husbands’ presence as their safeguards. They needed feeling of happiness. This condition was also faced by other women in colonial era that they were viewed as shapers in the world of marriage and child rising as well as household duties without any presence of their husbands at home. Women were found to be just as responsible as men in creating their societies and become a significant factor in the progression of American culture and history.

Ulrich (1980) in *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* points out that in this era, women had to overcome many more difficult obstacles than men did in order to prove themselves as being worthy. The obstacles varied between women of different backgrounds, including their status in class, as well as their race. They all had one thing in common it, was the fact that they were all bound together by certain laws. These laws considered them incapable of having numerous abilities due to the fact that their gender was female. Thus women’s roles were seen as being limited to wives, mother and household managers (Ulrich, 1980). The women did not have rights to have their own decision. Their roles in family and society were limited by law which was made and created by men.

In early America, the first colonists to arrive were men. After the arrival, however, it became obvious that in order for colonization to occur, women had to be present. So, women were encouraged to
venture out of America. Clinton (1982) states that the first women who arrived in America were sold as wives, the price to be the cost of transportation. The women, who were not sold as wives, were sold as indentured servants. Indentured servant was a type of contract in the past that forced a servant to work for their employers for a particular period of time. They promised to be a servant to their masters for anywhere between five to seven years (Clinton, 1982). In this era, women were sold as commodities; they were priceless that men could choose them as their wives or their servants depend on their appearances and skills. If they were lucky, the men could choose them as the wives and in vice-versa.

Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) in *A History of Women in America*, reveal that colonial society did not support the idea of equality between men and women. European men brought with them to America the tenet that woman was man’s inferior. This belief in female inferiority, however, was minimized by the condition of the New World. So long as the colonies remained relatively undeveloped, women enjoyed a limited kind of independence (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981). The women felt safer under men’s protection. At this time women were treated as an integral part of all permanent settlements in the New World. When men traveled alone in America, they came as fortune hunters, adventures looking for a pot of gold; such single men had to have any reason to establish communities. Spruill (1972) in *Women’s Life and Work in the Southern Colonies*, states that women acted as civilizers for men living alone in the wilderness. Where there were women; there were children who had to be taught. There was a future – a reason to establish laws, towns, churches, and schools. The organizers of Virginia understood as much when they
Introduction

sought to attract women to their colony so that the men who came might be faster tied to Virginia (Spruill, 1972). The role of being civilizers in their circumstances also emerged in Indonesia that the Javanese women’s conception as interfered by men’s domination and patriarchy system in colonial era can be seen as stated in Candrarini Letter (quoted from Suara Karya: June 12th 1988) in Susanto (1992:24) as follows

“Candrarini (moonlight) letter can be specified into nine items as: (1) loyal to the husband, (2) willing to be a co-wife, (3) love each other, (4) skilled in doing women’s chores, (5) capable in dress up and take care of body’s treatment, (6) modesty, (7) capable to adjust the husband’s wishes, (8) pay attention to the parents in law, (9) like to read advice books.”

From this letter, we can conclude that to be good Javanese women, they should obey their husbands, whatever their husbands’ said, they should do that, they had no choice to refuse, and when their husbands needed their services, they should adjust their husbands’ wishes and they should be ready anytime. The role of the women at that time was very under pressured, but few of them seemed enjoy their roles in families and societies.

B. The Scope and Significant of the Study

This study is limited to the roles and contributions given by the Southern and Javanese women represented by Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson and R.A. Kartini. The result of the study on American Southern women roles and contributions during the colonial era will be compared with the roles and the contributions of Javanese women in order to see the similarities and the differences existing in both kinds of roles. The study of women in American South and Javanese women in Indonesia is expected to enrich the area of women studies. It is
hoped that this study can support a wide range of American Studies which emphasizes the study on cultural interchange and historical period, especially in colonial era.

The study becomes more important since the theme of aristocratic women in two countries is a common phenomenon in women studies. It happened upon the submissive, subordinated and suppressed women in the colonial era. The result of the study hopefully will give better insight into women’s position in their houses, among families and societies.

C. The Objectives of the Study

This study is an attempt to reveal the life of American Southern women in America in the colonial era during 1650-1775, and the life of Javanese women in Indonesia in 1820-1944. Their ways of life is interpreted as the life of women in two countries in that era. It may enrich the knowledge about the colonial culture. The objectives of the study are (1) to find out the prominent female figures of the two countries and their actual actions and contributions to their societies, (2) to trace the similarities and differences of their roles toward the two societies in particular and the two nations in which they exist in general.

D. Theoretical Approach

This study applies the theory of Tremaine McDowell (1984). He says that American Studies moves towards the reconciliation of the academic disciplines, and a third-range goal, namely a reconciliation of region, nation, and world (McDowell, 1984). This study applies the
reconciliation of region which discusses American South and Central Java; and also delivers the reconciliation of tenses; means that the study needs to consider the concept of time sequences: past, present and future. Here the sequences of past, present and future are seen as a continuity and integration between the roles of women played before, during and after the colonial era.

This study uses socio-historical, and women studies approach. The socio-historical approach is used to understand the position and the roles of American Southern and Javanese women in the colonial era. It will be applied to trace back how men in the society treated the women. The women studies approach is also used in order to gain the objective result of the study. According to Sapiro (1986: 8-9), to study women, one should approach the topic with skepticism, being critical not only of others but also of ourselves and our reactions. One should place women as central to humanity. This statement shows that to study women, the people should use several perspective of critical thinking, not only from one angel of insight but also from different one in order to get better reaction because women are also central of humanity.

Nancy Chodorow argues that women are not only inferior but also “vulnerable.” Related to the different childhood development between male and female based on Freudian theory interpretation of the emergence of different gender perception that “core gender identity and masculinity are confliction for men, and are bound up with the masculine sense of self in a way that core gender identity and femininity are not for women” (Hollinger, 2001). “Core gender identity” refers to a cognitive sense of gendered self, the sense of being one whether he is a male or she is a female which is established in the first two
years development of child at the same time. Chodorow also states that “women in favorable circumstances gain psychological security and a firm sense of worth and importance. While guaranteeing to themselves, socio cultural superiority over women remains psychologically defensive and insecure” (Hollinger, 2001). This condition happens because of the position of women or mothers as the secondary social-class of people that force them to stay at home. The difference ways and attitudes of mothers in treating boys and girls combined with the absence of father figures give different psychological results for further psychological development of children.

De Beauvoir (1989: vii) suggests that “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.” Gender is “constructed,” but implied in her formulation is an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender. De Beauvoir’s (1989) explanation is clear that one become a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from sex. There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the one who becomes a woman is necessarily female.

In line with gender discussion, Fox-Genovese (1988) states that she variously refers to gender relations, gender roles, and gender identities. By gender relations, she means the relations between women and men within specific societies and communities. Gender relations constitute the foundation of any society and lie at the core of any individual’s sense of self, for gender relations map the most fundamental relations between any individual and the other members of society (Fox-Genovese, 1988). She argues that we do not experience our gender in the abstract, but in relation to others: To be a woman is to be a woman
in relation to men. Just as societies have characteristic social relations, so they have characteristic gender relations. Societies have also tended to promote distinct roles for women and men. Those gender roles constitute the activities through which women and men are encouraged to contribute to the collectivity and in which they are encouraged to find their identities – their deepest sense of who they are. Under stable social conditions, gender relations, gender roles, and gender identities tend to merge into a natural continuum may be shattered.

E. Methods of the Study

In order to support the analysis, the study is using library research method. The data are collected from books, articles, essays as well as electronic sources. The writer obtains the data from Gadjah Mada University library, Graduate Program of Gadjah Mada University library, Women Studies Graduate Program library and American Corner. The data are gathered, classified and analyzed. The theory and approaches are applied in analyzing the data. Since the object of the study is to find out how Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson’s and R.A. Kartini’s roles in their societies, this study applies the method of comparative studies.
CHAPTER II
WOMEN’S ROLES AND CONTRIBUTION IN COLONIAL ERA

We cannot ignore the role of women and their contribution in establishing the communities. They are always responsible for their families’ daily life, and their relationship among the members of the family at home or in their social relationship of their environments.

A. The Women’s Roles in the American South in Colonial Era

Unlike women from other parts of America, Southern plantation mistress did not only have the responsibilities to their husbands and children. They had other heavy tasks namely taking care of slaves. They supervised the detailed lives of the slaves and provide them with whatever comforts allowed.

1. Plantation Mistress as a Wife

Southern white women are usually termed as “Plantation Mistress”. Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) affirm that plantation
mistress frequently nurse their slaves, adjudicate disputes, teach religion, and train young slaves to be house servants. They expected to temper their husbands’ “justice” with mercy. Some of them bear their responsibilities as a burden. Plantation mistress often worked very hard, as written by one of South Carolina woman married to a wealthy planter in a diary recording to her daily activities:

A plantation life is a very active one. This morning I got up late having been disturbed in the night, hurried down to have something arranged for breakfast, Ham and Eggs...wrote a letter to Charles...had prayer, got the boys off to town. Had work to cut, gave orders about dinner, had the horse feed fixed in hot water, had the box filled with cork; went to see about the carpenters working at the Negro houses...and now I have cut out the fennel jackets (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981: 60).

The bravery and stamina of women in colonial times were famous. William Byrd in Smith (1970) describes one such woman living in a back settlement of Virginia in 1710, saying she was “a very civil” woman who showed “nothing of ruggedness, or immodesty in her carriage, yet she will carry a gun in the woods and kill deer, turkeys, etc., shoot down wild cattle, catch and tie hogs, knock down beeves with an axe and perform the most manful exercises as well as most men in these part” (Smith, 1970: 54). From the quotation, it can be drawn that the responsibility of Southern women in colonial era was very hard. They sometimes did the job to replace men if their husband were not at home.

The lives of women in colonial era tended to center around farm and family. For the most part a traditional division of labor was observed, whereby men did the outside work – planting and harvesting crops – while women worked inside, transforming the raw products into useable commodities. Boorstin (1958) in The Americans: The Colonial
Experience states that all of woman’s work on the farm came under the general heading of “housewifery.” What included varied somewhat from region (Boorstin, 1958). The women should make their own daily needed to fulfill their families’ daily needs and sometimes they did barter with their neighbors or sold the rest to other people.

The slavery system shapes the lives of Southern women. The mistress of Great Plantation commands a sizable household staff of mostly female slaves. She gives daily orders to cooks, maids, seamstresses, laundresses, and servants (Bailey, 1994). The plantation mistress was luckier than the ordinary women that they should do the homes’ chores with accompanied and helped by female slaves; while ordinary women should manage their homes’ chorus by themselves. For plantation mistress, the rural composition of the South means that the majority spent their lives in relative isolation, living on small farms or plantations.

McMillen (1990) in Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South informs that few towns or cities, the South lacks of social interaction, have fewer cultural offerings, fewer opportunities for the development of female bonding and sisterhood, fewer churches and charitable activities than are available in the Northeast (McMillen, 1990). In doing their domestic responsibilities, women tended to have their own herbal gardens and were expected to be expert at doctoring in the South. White southern women of means were often responsible for the health needs for their slaves as well as those of their own families (Boorstin, 1958). The Southern women tended to have their own herbal garden to provide for their family and slaves. It also happened for Javanese women in colonial era that they should have their own herbal
garden for their families, especially for priyayi that they should maintain their healthiness and beauties.

It seems probable that throughout most of colonial period more women practiced medicine than did men. As clarified by Boorstin (1958) that women were nurses, apothecaries, unlicensed physicians, and midwives. Only surgery – which at that time meant performing amputations – maws dominated by men. The kind of doctoring women did was often an extension of their work at home (Boorstin, 1958). A woman charged with the wellbeing of a family learned to care for the sick, to treat common illnesses, and to make the aged and the dying comfortable. A woman with particular skill in this area could earn money by caring not only for the members of her family but for others as well. In the same way a woman who kept an herb garden and had an interest in botany could earn a living making medicines, tonics and syrups. These women’s apothecaries varied in their level of sophistication. Though some lacked knowledge beyond folklore, many others were serious scientist who devoted much time to studying the healing properties of plants. Such skill was attested to buy a French visitor to Virginia who wrote of Mary Byrd as follow:

“She takes great care of her Negroes…and serves them herself as a doctor in times of sickness. She had made some interesting discoveries of the disorders incident to them and discovered a very salutary method of treating a sort of putrid fever which carries them off” (Boorstin, 1958: 217).

There is evidence to indicate that the women who practiced medicine in 1700s often did a better job than the male professionals of the 1800s. Boorstin (1958) affirms that medicine in the 1700s was very practical and down to earth. Doctoring women focused on relieving the patient’s symptoms, while male doctors of the next century were far more
Women's Roles and Contribution in Colonial Era

What Boorstin (1958) argues about doctoring women, is in accordance with what is stated by Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) that the effectiveness of the eighteenth-century brand of care was seen in the practice of midwifery, which was the only form of medicine women participated in that was often licensed. Midwifery had to serve lengthy apprenticeship before being certified. As apprentices they observed hundreds of deliveries and, for the most part, learned how to let nature take its course (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981). Midwives seem to have taken good care of their female patients and most certainly did less harm than male doctors, many of who routinely infected their patients with children fever by failing to wash their hands.

The women’s responsibilities in colonial era were not only in taking care of their children but also in spinning and weaving cloth, which reflected difficult jobs that involving more than a dozen operations from start to finish. Holliday (1960) explains that colonial women were expected to be expert at knitting, quilting, and all sorts of sewing and embroidery. There would be many tasks doing in this time that force their energies. It seems that they were very strong doing many activities during the day that they could manage and finish by themselves. It is virtually impossible for twentieth-century people to imagine the enormous job doing by the women that they also prepared the food for their families in colonial times. Cooking was done on an open area that had to be tended constantly. Kettles, made of iron, often weighted forty pounds. Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) point out that without refrigeration, meats had to be preserved by salting or pickling (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981). Rich and spicy sauces were the style, since they
were needed to preserve food or to cover the taste of food that had been badly preserved. Hymowitz and Weissman (1981: 6) also state that women keep their own gardens, every fall putting up vast amounts of home-grown vegetables and fruit.

It seems that the women always kept their families healthy by planting their own vegetables and fruit. They also ran home bakeries and dairies, did the milking and made butter. The history of domestic work reflects changes in domestic ideologies and household technologies. Colonial homes produced goods; neighborhood girls helped their mothers with unending work of cooking, spinning yarn, sewing clothes, making butter, bread and cheese. The girls were prepared doing home chorus well for being good wives.

In colonial time, marriage was inducement that encourages women to come to the New World. Throughout this time, men outnumbered women by three to one, or more. Women could be assured of finding husbands in America. One eager publicist for Carolina in Spruill wrote, “if any maid or single woman have desire to go over, they will think themselves in the Golden Age, when men paid a Dowry for their wives; for if they be but civil, and under 50 years of age, some honest man or other will purchase them for their wives” (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981: 81). If the women were lucky, they could choose wealthy and perfect husbands because the competition of getting wives was not balance, but in this time the women should keep their feeling silence of admiring young men because the society system did not give them chance.

The choice of a marriage partner was probably the most important decision in the life of a colonial woman. Colonial society put great pressure on people to wed. A woman who did not marry was pitied
and treated as less than an adult and, in several colonies, men who did not marry paid higher taxes than did family men. Rarely did single people run their own homes; instead, they were expected to align themselves with the family of a close relative (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981). Perhaps the Southern women worried, knowing that their choice of a husband was the most important decision they would make. A good man could lead a lifetime of happiness and fulfillment, a bad one, to violence and misery. Most marriages undoubtedly fell in between the extremes. Few women ever found the perfect men.

Divorce was a virtual impossibility for southern women, and because their life ahead would be consumed with homes and families, women knew that their choice of mates were critical. Parents played a limited role in the selection process. The characteristics they sought in a proper mate did not necessarily same with their daughter’s desires. From a father’s or mother’s perspective, wealth family and status helped determine a man’s eligibility. Young women would have included romantic love as well. Parents rarely influenced their daughter’s choice directly.

Marriage was treated as an important social institution rather than a purely private affair. As Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) argues that a man or woman who broke an engagement was often called to church or court and charged with breach to promise. If there was no satisfactory, explanation could be produced or to be paid to the injured party. Legal solutions to romantic difficulties were often sought. In New England, if a man “of good character” was refused permission to court by a young woman’s parents, he could sue. Often he won his case (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981). This custom was unique to the Southerners, however; in no other area there were legal procedures
for avoiding parental wishes. Nevertheless, throughout the colonies young people could and did elope.

The Southerners’ view of engagement as a legally binding state led to the practice of the “pre-contract.” Young people who were planning to marry went to church and swore their troth. As explained by Schlesinger Sr. (1968) that once the ceremony was completed, they were married for all practical purposes. The commitment was considered a very serious one. If the young woman became pregnant after she was pre-contracted but before she married, no one was scandalized; the wedding date was simply pushed forward. One historian has discovered that of two hundred persons admitted to the Congregationalist church in Groton, Massachusetts, between 1716 and 1775, about one-third confessed to having engaged in premarital sex. The confession was made by an equal number of men and women (Schlesinger Sr., 1968).

Throughout the colonies, sexual transgressions committed by people not planning to marry, or already married, were considered far more serious than such acts by engaged couples. Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) simplify that women who bore children outside of marriage could be taken into court and sentenced to public whipping, branding, or fines. If a woman could not support her child, the court might demand that she reveal the father’s name to force him to support his offspring. If she refused, there would be further punishment. If the woman did not know who the father was, or if she refused to say, the child was often taken from her and learned to a tradesperson until the age of twenty-one (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981). This description reveals the fact that women were blamed of the couple’s fault that did adultery. Their positions were never safe whether they would confess or deny the evidence.
In the view of most colonists, adultery was the worst crime a woman could perform. This attitude existed generally especially among families with property. Since men controlled nearly all property, it followed that no husband wanted a child fathered by another man to inherit his worldly goods. In strongly religious communities there was an attempt to treat male and female adulterers alike. Both were forced to go church and confess in public. In New England confession was the only punishment demanded from those of high rank, while those of less social distinction often were branded, whipped, or dunked in a river. Though divorce existed, for the most part social pressures against it were so extreme, and grounds so difficult to obtain, that in practice it was not a real option. An unhappy couple could be granted a legal separation, but it was a dangerous situation for the women.

In many areas, there were no laws forcing a man to support a wife with whom he was not living. Unless she had family money or skills by which she could support herself, or unless she was separating from a generous spouse, she would find it virtually impossible to leave her husband. In a separation the woman usually lost everything; even the children stayed with the father. Rather than endure the legal formality of separation, many women simply run away. Women on the run usually went to the West, where they could get a piece of land and often a new “husband.” In fact such women were bigamists, but outside the more populated centers no one really cared. Even in cities such legalities were sometimes shrugged off.

White marriages in the South were varied to the couple’s status and reflected customs. Engagements were usually brief, providing just enough time to gather a trousseau or belongings, plan the ceremony, and establish a household (although some couples lived with their
parents for a while). According to McMillen (1992) weddings could be extravagant affair for the elite, involving the hiring of a women “consultant” to take charge of every detail. Hand-delivered invitations might be distributed to more than two hundred guests. A sumptuous dinner and all-night party marked these nuptial celebrations (McMillen, 1992). More commonly, marriages were simple ceremonies, performed by a judge or minister for family members and a few close friends, followed by a simple supper.

As related to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1988) in her book entitled *Within the Plantation Household*, Sarah Haynsworth Gayle married her husband before her sixteenth birthday; he was twelve years older than her. Sarah’s writings express her adoration and respect for her mate. After seven years of marriage, she wrote him on their anniversary:

> It was our wedding day, and they are talismanic words, to wake up all that is precious and hallowed in memory. Dear, dear period - If I had been asked to single out from the whole earth, a being exempt from care, and in possession of perfect happiness, I would have laid my hand on my own bounding heart, and said, “she is here” (Fox-Genovese, 1988: 23).

Due to the letter above, as ill health and hardships aged Sarah remembered her young years, she feared losing her husband’s affection and dreaded the day when death would end their loving relationship. But she counted her blessings, pitying female friends who endured adulterous or alcoholic husbands. Unfortunately, Sarah’s feeling of death proved true, for she died suddenly when only thirty-one, contracting tetanus after a dentist operated on her teeth. Her last message, written on her deathbed to her absent husband, stated, “I testify with my dying breath that since first I laid my young heart upon his manly bosom I have known only love and happiness” (Fox-Genovese, 1988: 24).
Dealing with the suffering and loneliness condition in marriage relationship faced by Southern white women, divorce was also difficult and options few. Even in those Southern states where a husband or wife could petition for a divorce, few did so. According to McMillen (1992) that divorce carried a stigma and the process in many states of appearing before a legislature or male judge was intimidating. Also during a period when men and women were accustomed to accept dispassionately their choices in life and to complain little, few considered an alternative to the selection they had made. Most women counted their blessings if they had an honest, respectable, and unabusive husband (McMillen, 1992). It seems that marriage was not expected to bring romance, eternal devotion, and daily excitement into a woman’s life. In many cases, marriage was a practical response to offset loneliness, a means to create a family, and a way to gain a partner for protection or additional household or farm help.

Married women lost their status as independent beings, and based on the model of British common law became legally bound to their husbands. It was considered desirable and proper for a woman to be married, but the institution restricted them legally. McMillen (1992) states than women lost their “feme sole” status upon their marriage and became “femes covert.” The law stripped them of property rights; everything they owned automatically became the husband’s property, including slaves, land, and furnishings. Any wages a wife earned became her husband’s, and in the rare instances of separation or divorce, the children usually belonged to him. A married woman could not make independent contracts. By contrast, a single woman, whether spinsters or widows, retained their own property and earnings and could sign binding agreements (McMillen, 1992).
Common law precedents protected widows, insuring them an inheritance upon a husband’s death of at least a third of his estate. Generally inheritance was held only during a widow’s lifetime, but state laws varied, and sometimes a woman could use the property as her own and sell or will it upon her death. Such provisions were not intended to foster female independence or reward wives for their contributions to the marriage, but rather to insure against the family falling into poverty and depending on the public donation.

In Petersburg, Virginia, according to Lebsock (1984) in *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town*, the number of separate estates (the practice of legally separating a wife’s estate from her husband’s, thereby allowing a woman to keep control of her property) retained by women mushroomed. At first glance it might appear that husbands became more willing to release control of a wife’s property, a seeming contradiction to traditional male behavior. However, the allowance of separate estates in Petersburg was not a liberating or humanitarian gesture to aid women; it was a step taken to counter the uncertainties of fluctuating economy. If creditors closed in, demanding payment on debts during a period of declining fortunes, a separate estate guaranteed that a wife’s property could not be seized, only her husband’s (Lebsock, 1984). Thus, losses could be minimized and perhaps more risks taken without the family losing everything.

One of the most significant changes in women’s legal status was the movement of Southern states to pass laws giving wives greater control over their own estates and over property that they brought to their marriage. Rather than relying on individual appeals to an equity court for exceptions, states considered the possibility that all women with property should keep rights to it even when married. Such laws
to protect women also reflected male paternalism. Male legislators often saw some women as helpless and dependent. Perhaps some concluded that male wisdom was required to assist those women who were ignorant of financial and legal matters. Hence these laws were designed not so much to benefit women as to protect families. Because economic reversals could be disastrous and thereby threaten a family’s entire fortune, protecting a woman’s property was essential to prevent the family from falling into poverty.

McMillen (1984) argues that fathers worried about protecting a daughter’s property from an improper fortune hunter or waster son-in-law who might waste a family fortune. Under feme covert laws, nothing could prevent a husband from selling everything that his wife had brought into the marriage. Thus, in some southern states, married women gained control over their property, not to enhance their independence or uphold their rights, but to protect the estate their fathers or relatives had accumulated. Gaining such power, however limited, aided women in the long run.

According to historian Censer (1984) in *North Carolina Planters and Their Children*, that those wives who were most successful in pleading their cases for a divorce before state legislatures tended to be ladylike and wealthy, in part because these women had the self-confidence and financial resources necessary to seek a divorce. Strong-willed or poor women had less success. Judges sympathized with a virtuous, delicate, and refined woman, feeling that it would be best to remove her from a degenerate husband. Apparently the less ladylike woman could stand almost anything. However, few poor women could afford a divorce or had the time or energy to consider their legal options. Many unhappy couples were more likely to separate and live
apart, often without any legal decree (Censer, 84). The most intolerable situations sometimes had to be endured. Women had little choice but to remain dependent on their husbands, sometimes living under extraordinarily difficult marital circumstances. Many southern men tended to drink; some resorted to violence; and most maintained their patriarchal authority over the family. Women who were lacking of economic independence, political power, and sometimes living far from home or supportive relatives, had to cope on their own.

2. Plantation Mistress as a mother

For women marriage meant bearing children, lots of them. A popular colonial people celebrated “Our land free, our men honest, and our women fruitful”. Families with a dozen children were common. Martha Jefferson Randolph, daughter of Thomas Jefferson, was the mother of twelve. Another wealthy Virginia lady, Martha Laurens Ramsey, bore eleven children in sixteen years. The sister of George Washington, Betty Washington Lewis, added eleven children to the three her husband had by his first wife. Marry Healthy of South Carolina bore seven children to her first husband, seven to her second and three to her third- seventeen in all. Many of the very largest families, with sixteen, or more children, came from widowed men who married a second and sometimes a third or fourth wife (Spruill, 1972: 45).

Maternal and infant death rates were appallingly high. Giving birth every year was a terrible physical hardship. Infants born to mothers in weakened physical condition often did not survive their first year. At the table of the Lord (Schlesinger Sr., 1968) from the statement, it can be drawn that the women willing had many children in order to be served to the God. They sacrificed their health by bearing
many children, because if women bear so often would make their physical condition weaker. Colonial people lived closely with death. Women gave birth at home, and they died at home. Most families experienced the death of at least one or two children. Sometimes living so close to death added a gray pallor to daily life (Schlesinger Sr., 1968).

American parents valued children highly and placed their hopes for the future in them. Children benefited from living in more prosperous times and in more comfortable homes and from advances in health care and sanitation. Bremner (1988) argues that children in the colonial period were seen as beings who should adopt adult responsibilities as soon as possible. They were dressed as adults as early as age seven or eight. By the age of ten, children often lived with other families and worked for them as hired laborers or servants.

McMillen (1992) describes that there were many reasons why Southern women bore more children than women in the Northeast. While some northern middle-class couples apparently recognized the advisability of restricting of family size, they seemed had little reason to limit the number of children in Southern families, aside from the health concerns of the women who bore them. Instead, there were positive arguments for large families. For farmer women, each child became a potential worker to assist with agricultural production and contribute to family survival. Often living in isolated circumstances, children became the principal source of companionship and socializing.

Limited land and economic constrains often unconsciously induced a family to control its size. But these restrictions were hardly relevant in the booming south, where opportunities beckoned the bold and aggressive. Overcrowding, which also discouraged larger families,
especially in urban areas, was an alien notion to southerners, who had plentiful land, especially on the frontier. By marrying a few years earlier than northern women, southern women might bear two or more additional children. And, with the positive attention heaped on motherhood and the personal achievement associated with childrearing, there was little reason, other than enormous health risk and high maternal and infant mortality, to limit family size (McMillen, 1992). For a man, a large family reflected positively on his status, his masculinity, and his ability to support his dependents.

3. Plantation Mistress in Society

Colonial women also worked outside the home. In the villages, towns, and small cities of the eighteenth century they performed virtually every kind of job held by men. Women ran taverns, inns, and boarding houses. They were blacksmiths, silversmiths, wheelwrights, sail makers, tailors, teachers, printers, newspaper publishers, and shopkeepers of every sort. Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) clarify that many women learned their trades from their husbands. A blacksmith, for example, would teach his wife the skill. If a tradeswoman was widowed, she frequently assumed the full responsibility for the business she had built with her husband. Many women acted as their husbands’ business agents. Given the power of attorney by their mates, they were involved in all aspects of finance, including bringing debtors to court.

That colonial women often participated in several of legal proceedings such as making brooms and daily needs then sold to other neighbors; is indicative of the colonial society’s pragmatic approach toward women. Pre-revolutionary Americans often bent the Common
Women's Roles and Contribution in Colonial Era

Law System (which in England largely excluded women) to suit their needs. Boorstin (1958) has explained this anomaly by noting that colonial America had no learned monopolies. Or, as William Byrd put it in a letter discussing the attractions of the New World, America was free from “Those three scourges of mankind – priests, lawyers and physicians”.

In the early days there were no bar associations or medical associations establishing proficiency requirements. As a consequence, a woman with aptitude could learn a skill informally and practice a profession. Boorstin (1958) gives an example of a woman as a public leader in colonial era. He states that one of the most interesting women to lead a public life in colonial times was Margaret Brent, often referred to in seventeenth-century records as Mistress Margaret Brent, Spinster. Margaret, her sister Mary, and two brothers immigrated to Maryland from Great Britain in 1638. Lord Baltimore, the proprietor of Maryland, attracted the Brents – who were wealthy Catholics – to his colony with promises of large land grants and the chance to live free of anti-catholic discrimination (Boorstin, 1958).

Holliday has the same opinion as Boorstin (1958) about the bravery of Margaret Brent. He points out that the Brent sisters established their own plantations, which they ran without their brothers’ representative and business adviser. Collecting payment in those days often involved suing in court. Records show Mistress Brent participating in 134 separate court actions during the eight years between 1624 and 1650. She usually won her case. Brent’s close personal friendship with Lord Calvert, Maryland’s governor, eventually pushed her into the all-male world of politics. When Calvert lay dying in 1647, he called Brent to his bedside. In the presence of witnesses he made what has been called
“perhaps the briefest will in the history of law”: “I make you my soul executrix. Take all and pay all” (Holliday, 1960). As executrix, Brent assumed responsibility for Calvert’s estates.

Since Calvert had been granted the power of attorney for his brother, Lord Baltimore, the proprietor of Maryland, at Calvert’s death the power of attorney for Lord Baltimore, then in London, fell to Mistress Brent. Not only Boorstin (1958) and Holliday (1960) describe clearly about Margaret Brent, but also Spruill (1972). He clarifies that at the time Maryland was not a peaceful colony. Calvert’s enemies hoped to take advantage of the confusion following his death to seize control, and it seemed for a time that they might succeed. The man Calvert named to the governorship, Thomas Greene, was not equal to the job.

After Calvert’s death, the army was close to revolt. Brent appeased the military by paying the soldiers their long-overdue wages, raising the necessary funds by selling some of Lord Baltimore’s cattle. She took other steps as well to stabilize the situation in Maryland. Members of the Assembly later told Lord Baltimore that “all would have gone to ruin” were it not for her actions (Spruill, 1972). Brent had so far established herself as a major political figure that many in the colony believed that she, not Thomas Greene, ought to be governor. Brent, however, did not seek to unseat Greene. In January 1648 she appeared before the Maryland assembly and asked for two votes: one as Calvert’s executrix, the other as Lord Baltimore’s “attorney”.

It was the first time in parliamentary history that a woman had sought political recognition in a governing body. Governor Greene refused to have Brent seated, and the Assembly acceded to his wishes (Spruill, 1972). Subsequently Brent left Maryland and moved to
Women's Roles and Contribution in Colonial Era

Virginia, where she established a new plantation, which she called Peace. She continued throughout her life to be active in business, but she avoided politics (Spruill, 1972). It is paradox in America, especially in colonial time, on the other hand women did not have a chance to be a leader in a society which dominated by patriarchal system, although she had proved to the society of their strengths and braveries rather than men.

B. The Women’s Roles in Central Java in Colonial Era

Like other women in other part of Indonesian Javanese women have several tasks in homes and societies. They should manage their household duties and they should also act diligently around their societies especially when they have social gathering. It is quite different from American society that every part of the county has special characteristic of their women, on the other hand, in Indonesia, every woman has similar task in daily activities, although it has multicultural society.

1. Javanese Women as a Wife

It is Javanese ideal that husbands and wives should show affection and love to each other, although they cannot demonstrate their affection publicly (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). The wife must show respect to the husband, as the husband is assumed to be older than the wife. The husband is supposed to be the leader of the household, but is concerned primarily with external matters. Husbands and wives cooperate on significant financial decisions, but usually husbands take little interest in the day-to-day household management, including daily expenses, which are handled by the wife. Conflicts usually relate to
compatibility of individual character traits, to sexual infidelity, and to larger affinal conflicts (Geertz, 1961; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). Communication between husbands and wives varies, depending on their education (Hull, 1982; Williams, 1990). For example, over one half of lower class married women surveyed in Maguwoharjo, Central Java conducted by Hull (1982) that the women never discussed the number of children they wanted with their husbands. In contrast, most educated women claimed to have discussed this issue.

The economic self-reliance of Javanese women in the lower income group is also considered a “facilitating factor” to divorce (Geertz, 1961). This differs from the middle-class women who depend on their husbands for support (Hull, 1982). Hull found that divorced lower-class women were completely self-supporting, except at very young ages. The few upper-class women who were divorced or widowed were more likely to depend on their family members until they could remarry.

Few factors discourage divorce. Although a mother may feel that she needs to maintain her marriage to support her children or to prevent them from living with a stepmother, this is a weak opposing factor. “…children of a divorced couple are always easily added to the families of their siblings and the divorced girl always has a place in her parents’ family” (Geertz, 144). Children of divorced parents usually live with the mother or the grandparents. Often siblings take care of their siblings’ children. The custom of taking nephews and nieces into the household, or the so-called ngenger custom, according to Koentjaraningrat (1985), is very common among middle class households. Impoverished relatives who come to live with a prosperous uncle or aunt are usually given proper care, education, and even a wedding. In return, they help with household chores.
The presence of children can strengthen the tie between husband and wife. After the birth of a child, a husband will address his wife as “mother of his son/daughter’s name, for example mother of Jono” (Mbokne Jono) and the wife addresses her husband as “father of Jono” (Pakne Jono) (Geertz, 1961). A husband is required to try to satisfy his wife’s wishes, no matter how difficult, during her pregnancy. He also should share the pregnancy taboos, and supervise his wife’s eating behavior to avoid endangering the baby. He cannot hunt or kill animals.

2. Javanese Women as a Mother

In Java, big families traditionally have been desirable. Some studies argue that the high value placed on fertility is mainly due to expected economic returns, as clarified by White that parents receive in the form of traditional labor power and security in old age. In Javanese peasant families in economically poor villages, very young children are actively involved in housework, care of younger siblings, and some agricultural chores (White, 1975). Children’s direct contribution to income is limited until about the age of ten. According to Jay (1969), children are not forced to work. He observed that it is through appreciation and praise of their activities that children’s labor is encouraged. Poor families in Java have ideas that the value of children is related to economic reason that if they have more children, the more power energy in helping the parents’ jobs in the field and at homes that they should not pay the workers in the field.

Higher class Javanese families, who do not need their children’s economic contribution, have more children than peasant families. Koentjaraningrat (1985: 151) notes that having many children as he
can afford. The number of children a man has also increases his status at work. Javanese in white-collar occupations consider people with many children have higher in status than those with only a few. Also, in social etiquette, those with more children should be addressed in formal terms, even if their ages, educations, and experiences are the same.

Koentjaraningrat (1957) and Geertz (1961) describe that child in Javanese family as a source of family warmth, joy, and happiness. The Javanese believe that children bring luck and happiness and that if there is warmth in the family there will be calm and peace in the heart. Geertz (1961: 102) also wrote, “A woman with many children is envied; a barren woman is pitied.” Infertility may become a source of family problems that end in divorce. A childless couple usually adopts a child, usually from relatives either on the husband’s or the wife’s side.

Many Javanese families have children to provide security in old age. There is an expression for this in Javanese (Geertz, 1961: 104): “When you are old, your children will take care of you. Even if you are very rich, the kind of care your children give you cannot be bought.” Children are obligated to care for elderly parents. However, a shift in value of this kind of obligation may have occurred, as the most recent finding shows that only fifty three percent of Javanese parents agree with the statement, “Children can provide security in old age” (Megawangi, Sumarwan, and Hartoyo, 1994: 76). Parents traditionally endow their houses in their wills to the youngest child, especially the youngest daughter, who usually remains in the parents’ home even after her marriage and is later charges with the obligation to care for elderly parents, living with them until the parents die.
According to the Javanese' belief, the love given by biological parents to their children is incomparable and there is no substitute for it (Jay, 1969). Before the age of five or six, children are provided by their parents, especially the mother, with nurturance, unconditional emotional support, and love (Geertz, 1961). As the child ages, this kind of relationship with the father gradually disappears because the father should receive “respect” from his children. Young children always sleep with their mothers and usually also with their fathers, a practice that involves a good deal of physical intimacy (Geertz, 1961).

A bed time for Javanese children was described by Geertz (1961: 91) as a pleasant time, when “his mother lies down with him on his mat and puts her arms about him, cuddling him till he is a sleep”. He also observed that a crying baby is rarely heard because no Javanese can bear to hear the sound without trying to calm the baby, no matter whose baby it is. A baby is handled with great care and in a completely supportive manner. For if the baby were suddenly or severely disturbed by a loud noise, rough handling, or physical discomfort, he would be “shocked,” “startled,” or “upset,” his weak psychic defenses would fall and the evil spirits, which hover constantly around the mother and the child, could enter the infant and cause him to be ill (Geertz, 1961). The Javanese people never let the babies crying. It is why sometimes they are spoiled. It is usual that the children were always given advices by the older that makes them find quite difficult to give their own opinions or to have their own decisions.

According to Le Vine (1988), maternal behavior that emphasizes soothing, and overprotection of infants is typical in an agricultural society. This represents a historical adaptation of culturally constituted maternal behavior to high infant mortality rates. This also may be
away to keep the baby quiet and easily managed. Javanese babies spend most of their time carried in front of the mother’s body in a shawl where they can nurse on demand. Geertz (1961) observed that most infants under the age of three seem to prefer to be carried rather than to be left to run around. She also found that because infants were constantly carried, they had no opportunity to crawl. Out of fear of damage to the baby’s muscles and bones, which may result in a localized “fever”, infants are held in a horizontal position at least until they lift up their own heads and often until they pull themselves upright. Before the baby is seven months old, he is not supposed to set foot on the ground. The child is permitted to walk by himself only when the mother is certain his muscles are developed enough to support him.

The overprotection of the Javanese mothers may be related to Whiting and Whiting’s (1975) hypothesis that when a mother’s workload is not demanding, or she has little involvement in the production of foods, it is not essential to encourage children to be self-reliant (Whiting and Whiting, 1975). The general pattern of infant care in the Javanese society seems to have positive outcomes. Mothers who are concerned about reducing their children’s discomforts are more likely to give them more love when they grow older than are mothers who fail to attend to infantile needs as nurture.

Geertz (1961) argues that “strong” and “secure” mother and child relationships will last a lifetime. It is usually the mother with whom both boys and girls discuss private matters and from whom they seek emotional support. The mother also teaches social manners, makes important decisions for her children, and administers most punishment. Satoto (1990) states that although children respect their mothers,
they never address them in the formal *kromo* style of speech used in the Javanese language when speaking to an older or higher-status person, as they do to their fathers. It shows that the relationship between a mother and her children is closer than to the father.

A Javanese child does not have an intense relationship with the father until the child begins to walk. During the first year of life, the father may carry the child when the mother is busy, but he is not an important part of the child’s life. During the period when the child is being weaned and is learning to walk, the father begins to show a more active interest in the child. Geertz (1961) observed that during this period, fathers play with their children, feed and bathe them, and cuddle them to sleep; she described this relationship as a bound of warmth and affection. In their cross-cultural study, Whiting and Whiting (1975) observed that in societies where a father shares a bed with his wife and children (with a monogamous marriage and a nuclear household), he tends to be more involved in child care than are fathers with polygamous marriages, who sleep in a different room from their wives and young children. Coltrane (1988) found that fathers participate more in child care in cultures in which women have higher status than men. The relationship in Javanese families corresponds to these findings.

Young children remain close to their fathers only until they are about five years old. After that they are taught to approach him more formally and to stay respectfully away from him. Although a Javanese child is seldom punished by his father, the father is accorded much respect. This trend was confirmed by Koentjaraningrat (1985). The ideal Javanese father should be “patient and dignified with his wife and children; he should lead them with a gentle though firm hand,
not interfering with their petty quarrels, but being always available to give solemn sanction to his wife’s punishment of disobedient children” (Geertz, 1961: 107). Jay (1969) argued that because of these high expectations the father cannot be as free as his wife in expressing his emotions. According to Koentjaraningrat (1985), however, more educated fathers are less aloof and try to maintain closeness with their children. It seems that they realize being closer to the children is more secure in keeping the harmonious family.

Because parents want to protect young children from dangerous accidents and frustrations, older siblings are instructed to fulfill the wishes of the younger one. The older sibling is usually blamed for a quarrel with a younger sibling. A personal communication with a Javanese friend confirms Geertz’s (1961) observation. He told us that being the eldest brother during childhood was not easy: he always had to maintain minimal conflict with the younger siblings or he would be blamed, no matter how right he was. As younger siblings get older, they gradually learn that they are supposed to follow their elder sibling’s suggestions, and to some extent, to obey them (Koentjaraningrat, 1957). It is very hard to be an older sibling in Javanese family because he should be a leader of his younger siblings and it is hoped that he never make any mistakes. He must be a perfect person, an ideal model, and a good decision maker.

Geertz (1961) documented the close relationship between an elder sister and a younger brother. A boy’s elder sister is like a mother, showing tresna (unconditional love) to her younger brothers and sisters. The relationship between a female and her younger sisters however differs somewhat (Jay, 1969). Since the girls are expected to help with the household chores, a younger sister is usually under the supervision
of her elder sister as well as of her mother. Although the elder sister’s authority is only mildly exercises (Jay, 1969), conflicts between sisters are common. After marriage, the relationships between sisters are very intense, warm and cooperative.

3. Javanese Women in Society

Hull (1982) in his paper entitled *Women in Java’s Rural Middle Class: Progress or Regress?* states that membership of formal organizations did not promise improved opportunities for women to develop. Most formal women’s organizations were orientated towards skills relating to middle-class social status, such as cooking, flower arranging, and home decoration. These organizations did not improve at this time because the chance of women’s self-fulfillment were limited by patriarchal tradition that did not allow the women to have equal rights as men in public sphere such as law, economy and politics but they were only limited in women’s world related to the house keeping. The women were shaped as good girls and good wives that they should behave as the men’s desires.

The condition above also reflected in religion which was understood only apart which was taken from Holy Qur’an that the status of women still in domestic area. In Java which was mainly the people were Islam, strongly influenced by Islamic mysticism. The Javanese seek hardship and suffering deliberately for religious reasons (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). This practice, called *tirakatan*, usually involves fasting during the month of *Ramadhan* or every Monday and Thursday, or eating only rice with no side dishes, and eating only small amounts of food for one or two days.
The Javanese believe that experiencing suffering builds perseverance, making a person mentally strong and resistant to discomfort, dissatisfaction, and disappointment. The Javanese also perform *tirakat* fasting in any critical situation, such as facing a difficult task; experiencing a crisis in family life or in social relations; or when the entire community faces hard times Koentjaraningrat (1985: 461). In *tirakatan*, the women always prepare the food; they join together in one house start in the morning and finish in the dark. In *Ramadhan* month, the women also prepare the food for *takjilan* (the food is available in the mosque for the people and the children who want to break their fasting).
CHAPTER III
TWO INSPIRING WOMEN IN COLONIAL SOUTH
AND CENTRAL JAVA

This chapter explores two topics as the life of Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson and R.A. Kartini, their roles and contribution of powers to their countries.

A. Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson

Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson was the wife of Thomas Jefferson, who was the third President of the United States. She never became First Lady of the United States because she died eighteen years long before her husband was elected to the presidency. When Thomas Jefferson came courting, Martha Wayles Skelton was at the age of twenty two and was already a widow, an heiress, and a mother whose firstborn son would die in early childhood. Family tradition says that she was accomplished and beautiful—with slender figure, had hazel eyes, and auburn hair. Perhaps a mutual love of music cemented the romance; Jefferson played the violin, and one of the furnishings he ordered for the home he was building at Monticello was a “forte-piano” for his wife (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha_Wayles_Skelton_Jefferson). “Forte-
piano” means that he liked playing piano to entertain his wife and accompanied her in playing music. They enjoyed together their life by playing music in their spare time. It was why they should be a romantic couple that Thomas Jefferson felt his wife as an inspiration for him.

1. Birth Order and Siblings

Martha (Patty) was born to John Wayles and his first wife Martha Eppes, a wealthy plantation owner in Charles City County, Virginia. Her father was born in Lancaster, England, and immigrated alone to Virginia in 1734, at the age of nineteen, leaving family in England. He was a lawyer and was King’s Attorney for Virginia in 1750s and 60s. He was also a local agent for Lidderdale and Company, tobacco merchants. Martha’s mother was a daughter of Francis Eppes of Bermuda Hundred. She was a widow when Wayles married her. As part of her dowry, Martha Eppes brought a personal slave, Susanna, who had an eleven year old daughter named Elizabeth Hemings (Betty). John Wayles and Martha Eppes’ marriage contract made a point of that mother (Susanna) and her child (Betty) were to stay the belonging of Martha (Patsy) Eppes and her heirs forever, or should be returned to the Eppes family if there were no heirs. This was how Martha Jefferson came into custody of the Hemings. Patsy Eppes Wayles apparently was carried off by puerperal fever. She died when her child, Patty was three weeks old (http://www.multied.com/Bio/ladies/jefferson.html). In Southern society, the slave owned by the parents would be belonged to their children when the parents were died. Their children also would continue to manage their plantation whether a daughter or a son. They also took care of the slaves and slaves’ families.
Wayles married Mary Cocke of Malvern Hill, Charles City County, Virginia, two years later and they had four daughters: Sarah (died an infant), Elizabeth (afterward married Francis Eppes of Bermuda Hundred, Patty’s cousin), Tabitha (married Robert Skipwith and died young), and Nancy (married Henry Skipwith, brother of Robert). In 1759, Wayles was again widowed. In 1760, he married another widow, Elizabeth Lomax Skelton, whose brother in law, Bathurst Skelton, Patty afterwards married. Elizabeth died in 1761. John Wayles went to England briefly on family business and when he returned, he took up Betty Hemings, then later became his housekeeper, who was then 28 years old and the mother of three children already by another slave. Together, John and Betty had five children, the last of whom, Sally Hemings was born after her father’s death. Thus Patty was the half sister of all the Wayles-Hemingses. Sally has been affirmed to be the mother of several children with Thomas Jefferson (http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/firstladies/mj3.html).

It was usual condition in colonial era that women and men remarry when they lose their spouses caused of divorce or death and it was common that the couple had many children because there was no family planning. Sometimes, the plantation owner had special relation with their slave women; this was also happened in the Johns. Since Wayles-Hemingses were one-quarter African-American and three quarters white and also related by blood to Martha Jefferson, the five children (Robert, James, Sally, Critta and Thenia) occupied a unique role within the Jefferson family. None were called slaves, but always referred to as servants. They worked in the most personal and private servantile roles at Monticello. Robert Hemings bought his freedom and joined his wife and daughter in Richmond, where they
worked for a doctor. James Hemings was particularly close to Jefferson, working as his personal aide or “body servant,” traveling with him to Philadelphia during the Second Continental Congress and later to Europe.

While in Paris, James Hemings studied the culinary French arts; upon returning to Virginia, he trained his younger sister to oversee the detailed French cooking that Jefferson insisted on serving. Jefferson gave James Hemings his freedom. Sally Hemings helped to raise her half-nieces Patsy and Polly. Thenia Hemings was the only one of Martha Jefferson’s half-siblings who was sold as a slave to a family friend and future President James Monroe (http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/firstladies/mj3.html). Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson felt having responsible to her one-quarter siblings when her father was dead because she was the only daughter of John Wayles, so she managed her father’s heritages.

2. Marriage

Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson married at the first time with Bathurst Skelton in 1766; they had one son, John Wayles Skelton. Bathurst Skelton died in September 1768 in Williamsburg, Virginia after an accident. Their son, John, died suddenly of a fever on June 10, 1771, when Patty was already engaged to Jefferson. Martha married the future President (who was her distant cousin) on New Year’s Day, January 1, 1772 at Martha father’s plantation house “the Forest”, in Charles City County, near Williamsburg. The birth of their daughter, Martha (Martha Jefferson Randolph, Patsy) in September increased their happiness. Within ten years the family gained five more children, Jane Randolph, an unnamed son, Mary (Maria Jefferson
Eppes, Polly), Lucy Elizabeth, and Lucy Elizabeth. Among all of them, only two lived to grow up: Martha, called Patsy, and Mary, called Maria or Polly (http://www.explorer.monticello.org/text/index.php?id=2&type=7).

Martha and Jefferson were happy family but when she gave a birth almost in every two years had made her health became worse. She is believed to have suffered from diabetes, that cause of her childbearing problems. The physical strain of frequent pregnancies weakened Martha Jefferson so gravely that her husband lessened his political activities in order to stay near her. He served in Virginia’s House of Delegates and as Governor, but he refused an appointment by the Continental Congress as a Commissioner to France. Just after a New Year’s Day, 1781, a British invasion forced Martha to escape from the capital in Richmond with a baby girl a few weeks old – who died in April. In June, the family barely escaped an enemy raid at Monticello. She bore another daughter the following May, and never regained a fair measure of strength. Jefferson wrote on May 20 that her condition was dangerous. After months of tending her devotedly, he noted in his account book for September 6, “My dear wife died this day at 11.45 A.M.” Apparently he never brought himself to record their life together; in a memoir he referred to ten years “in untenured happiness.” Half a century later, her daughter Martha remembered his sorrow: “the violence of his emotion…to this day I do not describe to myself.” For three weeks he had shut himself in his room, pacing back and forth until exhausted. Slowly that first anguish spent itself. In November, he agreed to serve as commissioner to France, eventually taking “Patsy” with him in 1784 and send for “Polly” later (http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/firstladies/mj3.html).
3. Education

While there was little formal education available for females, through the reading, white southern women participated actively in the life of the mind of the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world (Kerrison, 2003). Education of any kind was a rather disorganized affair in the eighteenth-century in the South, even for boys. Girls’ education differed substantially from the boys. For girls, learning consisted mostly of those housewifery skills they would need in marriage, such as needlework, music, dancing, reading and perhaps writing. Even in gently families, private tutors hired to teach both boys and girls divided the curriculum along gender lines.

There was no record of Martha’s formal education. Considering the domestic skills and intelligence, many contemporary observers made of her, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson was likely educated at home by traveling tutors in literature, poetry, French, and Bible study; with notable accomplishment on the pianoforte and harpsichord, she likely received considerable length of training in music (http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.hml). Certainly a young woman of Martha’s region, era and wealth would also be trained in sewing and medical preparations in order to be skilled when the member of the family needed medical treatment at home.

4. Social Roles

Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson played a social role in her society although she had weak stamina because of her frequent pregnancies. For the first three years of her marriage, while Jefferson was still a member of the House of Burgesses, Martha Jefferson would likely have
accompanied him to the colonial capital of Williamsburg when the Burgesses was in session, and taken apart in the social life there, that she had known from her own early years. Martha Jefferson was separated from her husband during his tenure as a Virginia delegate to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1776, at which time he authored the Declaration of Independence. During the American Revolution, however, Martha Jefferson briefly joined him in Richmond, to where he moved the capital city from Williamsburg, then more vulnerable to British attack by sea. Jefferson shortly thereafter resigned his position as governor and promised his wife that he would refuse any more political posts because of her physical strain. Thus Jefferson turned down an important diplomatic mission to Europe. (http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=3).

As the Governor of Virginia’s wife during the Revolution, Martha Jefferson assumed one large public role, albeit more symbolic than active; in response to a request from Martha Washington, she agreed to head a list of prominent Virginia women donating necessities and financial support and making other voluntary efforts on behalf of the Continental Army. Martha Jefferson, however, was also to leave an unwitting legacy to her husband on two accounts. With the death of her father in 1772, she inherited substantial property, including approximately 11,000 acres of land, and slaves, including her half-siblings. By law, Jefferson’s wife property became his own upon marriage, and so he came into ownership of his slave half sister-in-laws Thenia, Critta and Sally and brother-in-laws Robert and James Hemings (http://www.monticello.org/reports/people/marthawj.html). Martha’s health was not good at that time, but she always tried to be
useful for other people in her society. She asked other women in her society to manage the charity and donate the financial support for the army who struggled for the freedom of her country.

B. Raden Ajeng Kartini

In colonial era, traditionally, an Indonesian acquired the education in the pesantren (Islamic School), which focused on religious instruction. Women did not attend the pesantren, and received little or no formal education before the turn of the twentieth century. In terms of European education, although there were missionary schools established not long after the arrival of the Dutch. VOC (the Vereenigde Oost Indische Campagnie) did not provide support for ‘native education’ (Stuers 1). The Ethical Policy was to transform the education system in Indonesia. Adopted by Netherlands in 1901, its program proclaimed that the Netherlands had a ‘moral duty’ to ‘uplift’ the Indonesian people through education and closer cultural association was almost exclusively socio-economic, being regarded as the gateway to economically rewarding positions (Stuers). As all the government or commercial positions available for Indonesian people were for men of the priyayi (upper class), it was not deemed necessary to educate women. That is until the women themselves spoke up.

Any discussion of the history of women and education in Indonesia must begin with Raden Ajeng Kartini. She is not only the most visible female figure of Indonesian history, but also one of the most passionate. She was a prominent Javanese and an Indonesian national heroine. She is known as a pioneer in the area of women’s rights for native Indonesians. Cotê describes that the emotional intimacy of Kartini’s letters may present difficulties for the reader in the letter
Two Inspiring Women in Colonial South and Central Java

part of the twentieth century who cannot readily cope with such effusion and sentimentality (Côté v). Not only the Indonesian women but also the Indonesian hero as Boedi Oetomo was inspired by Raden Ajeng Kartini’s letters and ideas to struggle for freedom. He and his friends built organization that was against colonizer. He realized that to be colonized had made his country became underdeveloped.

Kartini’s letters also got the attention of J.H. Abendanon, minister of Instruction, Religion and Labor. In 1911 after Kartini’s death, he would publish her letters that would have a huge impact on women’s movements in Indonesia, the education system and introduce the West to Kartini’s world (vi). Sometimes someone will be appreciated when she was passed away. The people realized that someone has rendered her country in services from the work or artifact left by her. In this case, J.H. Abendanon did the same thing that his writings about Raden Ajeng Kartini’s letters were read by many people in the world.

1. Birth Order and Siblings

Kartini was born on April 21, 1879 into an aristocratic Javanese family (the priyayi) in a time when Java Still part of the Dutch Colony, the Dutch East Indies. Kartini’s father, Raden Mas Sosroningrat, became Regency Chief of Jepara, and her mother was Raden Mas’ first wife, but not the most important one. At that time, polygamy was a common practice among the mobility. RMAA (Raden Mas Adipati Ario) Sosroningrat was originally the district chief of Mayong. Kartini’s mother was MA (Mas Ayu) Ngasirah, the daughter of Kyai Haji Madirono, a teacher of religion in Teluwakur, Jepara, and Nyai Haji Siti Aminah (Côté iii). At that time, colonial regulations specified that a Regency Chief must marry a member of the nobility and because
MA Ngasirah was not of sufficiently high nobility, Kartini’s father married a second time to Raden Ajeng Moerjam, a direct descendent of the Raja of Madura. After this second marriage, her father was elevated to Regency Chief of Jepara, replacing his second wife’s own father, RAA (Raden Adipati Ario) Tjitrowikromo.

Kartini was born into a family with a strong intellectual tradition. Her grandfather, Pangeran Ario Tjondronegoro IV, became a Regency Chief at the age of 25 while her older brother was an accomplished linguist. As a child, Kartini benefited from her father’s status and progressive views toward education when she was enrolled in the local Dutch primary school, along with her brothers and sisters (Cotê, 1992 xxxi). This was a highly unusual opportunity for a Javanese female for although many Javanese elite endeavored to enroll sons in local Western-style schools, little consideration was given to formally educating their daughters.

Kartini’s family allowed her to attend school until she was 12 years old. Here, among other subjects, she learnt to speak fluent Dutch, an unusual accomplishment for Javanese women at that time. After she turned 12, she was ‘secluded’ at home, a common practice among Javanese nobility, to prepare young girls for their marriage (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kartini). During the seclusion girls were not allowed to leave their parents house until they were married, at which point authority over them was transferred to their husbands. Kartini’s father was more tolerant than other fathers that during his daughter’s seclusion, he was giving her such privileges as embroidery lessons and occasional appearances in public for special events.

During her seclusion, Kartini continued to educate herself on her own. Because she could speak Dutch, she acquires several Dutch pen friends.
One of them, a girl named Rosa Abendanon, became her very close friend (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kartini). Books, newspapers and European magazines fed Kartini’s interest in European feminist thinking, and fostered the desire to improve the conditions of indigenous women, who had a very low social status at that time. Nevertheless, she continued to educate herself, and began to publish articles.

2. Education

Influenced by Dutch feminists, Kartini wrote passionately for the improvement of education, public health, economic welfare, and traditional arts in her country. The following source is a quotation from a memorandum she wrote in January 1903 in response to a request from an official of the Dutch Ministry of Justice during her visit to Batavia. In it, Kartini made two points.

First, Kartini argues that women should be educated because they are the mothers of the future nation’s leaders. She wanted Westernization and instruction in the Dutch language, something which in today’s parlance is seen as “un-nationalistic.” “Modernization” at that time, however, was associated with “Westernization.” Thus, the desire to modernize her country and access the language of knowledge could be interpreted as a “nationalist” movement.

Second, in Kartini’s view, given the resources and the Javanese population of 27 million, educational policy should first be directed to elite women who could then open schools for the rest of the “masses.” She did not believe grass cutters should be taught Dutch, but she did criticize the Javanese culture’s hierarchical nature, where younger siblings had to grovel to older ones and where norms dictate elaborated
rituals of hierarchy (Cotê, 1992). Overall, Kartini wanted to alter relationship between Indonesians and the Dutch a decade before the flowering of the nationalist movement.

Kartini’s desire to continue her studies in Europe was expressed in her letters. Several of her pen friends worked on her behalf to support Kartini in this endeavor. When finally her ambition was defeated, many of her friends expressed their disappointment (Arbaningsih, 2005). In the end, her plans to study in the Netherlands were changed into plans to journey to Batavia on the advice of Mr. Abendanon that this would be best for Kartini and her younger sister, Rukmini. Nevertheless, in 1903 at the age of 24, her plans to study to become a teacher in Batavia came to nothing. In a letter to Mrs. Abendanon, Kartini wrote that the plan had been abandoned because she was going to be married…”In short, I no longer desire to take advantage of this opportunity, because I am to be married…” (Arbaningsih, 2005:53). This was despite the fact that for its part, the Dutch Education Department had finally given permission for Kartini and Rukmini to study in Batavia.

For Kartini, the education of women was important, for women ‘have a great task in the development of society’ (Taylor, 1974: 87). She writes in her essay, educate the Javanese, as a first step, educate the daughters of the nobility; from this, refinement will certainly be diffused to the masses. Make them into capable, wise, good mothers and they will actively spread enlightenment among their people. She advocates for the development of vocational schools, in particular, as a way for women to gain employment and possibly avoid unwanted marriage. In June 1903, Kartini and her sister Roekmini began a small school in the kabupaten for children eight to ten years (Zainu’ddin,
Her working life, however, changed when the Bupati of Rembang approached her father with a proposal of marriage with Kartini. In an unusual move, she was given three days in which to decide. Having expressed numerous times in her letters, her thoughts on marriage, it is surprising that she accepted the proposal. However, as Zainu’ddin (1980) points out, ‘she had been told so often that, as a married woman, she might hope for more freedom of action than she could ever hope to attain as a single woman’ (Zainu’ddin, 1980). Her acceptances of the proposal was also conditional upon a promise from her future husband that he would agree to her ideas and allowed her to open a school for girls similar to that of Jepara. He agreed, and she accepted.

Abendanon strongly advocated for more schools for Indonesian women. He wrote in a letter to the Governor General in 1901 while Native boys are obtaining more and more opportunity for further education at elementary schools training for Native officials, the Doctor-Java school, and in institutions of secondary education, girls must in consequence be left behind; it is an undeniable fact that in these circumstances Native society cannot march forcefully ahead (Cotè1992). The government, however, disagreed with him at this stage. The Governor General wrote in response: The position of the girl and the woman in that society indeed means that at the moment there exists no need for her to receive a European education and development, at least not on such a scale that the Government would need to extend the opportunities beyond that provided by existing schools.

It is little wonder, that Abendanon endorsed private initiatives such as the Kartini Fonds schools. Missionary of their students being
girls in the early 1900s (Vreede-De Stuers, 1960). These schools had much in common. They all provided conservative vocational education, were provided mostly for the upper-class, and prepared students to live in the Dutch colonial world.

3. Escaping Polygamy

What is doubly interesting about the acceptance of Kartini’s marriage is that she was not the only wife of the Bupati. In her letters, Kartini is determined about the ‘evils’ of polygamy. Indeed, one could argue that education was only idealized by Kartini as way of escaping polygamy (Symmers, 1983). The public must not know we are really fighting, the name of the enemy against which we take the field must never be cried aloud - it is polygamy. Kartini had struggle against polygamy.

It must also be remembered that Kartini’s mother was not the first wife of her father. The woman she refers to as ‘mother’ in her letters is not her birth mother, but the first wife. This may explain not only her dislike of polygamy, but her eventual ‘acceptance’ of it. Then again, Kartini was attempting to establish her identity, and champion the cause of education for women within not only the constructs and constraints of Dutch colonial society, but also the rules and restrictions of being Javanese priyayi. Perhaps it is true that she believed she would have more ‘freedom of action’ as a married woman and working within the structure of society to eventually change, it would be more productive than working outside of it (Zainu’ddin, 1980). We will never know whether Kartini succeed or not because she died not long after giving birth to a son in 1904, some say of a broken hearth.
4. Kartini’s Letters

After Kartini died, Mr. JH Abendanon, the Minister for Culture, Religion and Industry in the East Indies, collected and published the letters that Kartini had sent to her friends in Europe. The book was titled *Door Duisternis tot Licht* (Out of dark Comes Light) and was published in 1911. It went through five editions, with some additional letters included in the final edition, and was translated into English by Agnes L. Symmers and published under the title *Letter of a Javanese Princess*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Raden_Ayu_Kartini&action=edit&section=2). Abendanon’s wife became a regular correspondent with Kartini, and affection between the two grew.

Stella who responded to Kartini’s ad for a penfriend in a feminist magazine also exchanged letters with Kartini on a regular basis. It is primarily through the letters written to Stella and Mrs. Abendanon that we know Kartini, published by Mr. Abendanon after her death. A central theme of these letters is Kartini’s interest and concern for education, both in the forms of the education which she received and still desired for herself and that which she considered essential for Javanese society at the time.

The publication of Kartini’s letters, written by a native Javanese woman, attracted great interest in the Netherlands, and Kartini’s ideas began to change the way the Dutch viewed native women in Java. Her ideas also provided inspiration for prominent figures in the fight for independence. (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Raden_Ayu_Kartini&action=edit&section=2). The publication of Kartini’s letters made her famous worldwide. More importantly, she became famous within Indonesia, and became a model for her contemporary feminists.

Although it can be argued Kartini was simply a product or construct of the Ethical policy, and her letters were published as proof that the
policy worked, there is no doubt that she became a catalyst for change. There are some grounds for doubting the veracity of Kartini’s letters. There are allegations that Abendanon made up Kartini’s letters. These suspicions arose because Kartini’s book was published at the time when the Dutch Colonial Government were implementing ‘Ethical Policies’ in the Dutch Each Indies, and Abendanon was one of the most prominent supporters of this policy. The current whereabouts of the vast majority of Kartini’s letters is unknown. According to the late Sulastin Sutrisno, the Dutch Government has been unable to track down Abendanon’s descendants.

In 1964, Kartini was declared to be a ‘Pioneer of National Independence’, her sister Kardinah accepting an award on her behalf (Zainu’d-din, 1980). However, Kartini expresses no theory of nationalism in her letters, and she is extremely deferential to her Dutch friends, envisioning a continuing association in which they led the way (Zainu’ddin, 1980). On the other hand, in this connection, it should be remembered that she was writing to friends, most of them considerably older than she was, and that her letters were edited by Abendanon. In any case, the significance of Kartini in eliciting change in Indonesia’s education system, particularly for woman and her role as an Indonesian feminist cannot be denied.

Although many of the ideas she expressed were also being voiced by other women both outside of Indonesia and within, she was the first Indonesian woman to be taken seriously by the Dutch colonial government. Perhaps she was a bit of a novelty. Letters from a true daughter of the orient, from a real Javanese girl, thought from such a half-wild creature, written by herself in a European language. It was very interesting indeed. But from Kartini’s example, numerous women followed in her footsteps, actively playing a role in the creation of Indonesia.
CHAPTER IV
THE TWO WOMEN IN COMPARISON

In doing comparison, there are similarities and differences in the things to be compared, mostly in similarities rather than in differences.

A. Significant Similarities and Differences

In this study, there are similarities between the women in American South and in Central Java. In doing her duties, the plantation mistress is physically strong as well as psychologically. She should manage the plantations and the slaves as well as possible so that they could give good production to their master. And the most important was that she could take care of her children, teach them the discipline so that they could became honorable off springs. The Javanese woman in colonial era also had the similar duties, especially in upper class (priyayi). She should manage the household chores at home. Although she had servants, she should take care of the family’s and the servants’ health. She prepares the herbs for the whole member of family. When the member of the family was sick, she must be ready to take care and treat them well at home using the herbal she had planted surrounding her home.
1. Duties and Social Roles

This is the social controversial issue in the American South. On the one hand, plantation mistress should be brave and strong to steer the family life, but on the other hand she could not be a decision maker, because she should subordinate herself. She had no rights to make a decision in her own home. Women felt that this was unfair and this leads to be abolitionists. It is why the era after colonial; the women were braver to achieve their rights to be equal as men. One of the women who lived in colonial era was Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson. She loved her husband very much. They were a wonderful balancing act and Jefferson absolutely needed her. Without question that she was one of the exceptional Americans of all time. She was infinitely interesting and could hold her own intellectuality with any of her contemporaries. She was brave and wise. Without any doubt Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson was a major part of the appeal in exploring Jefferson’s life. She also played a social role at her plantation; later skills at Monticello would also suggest she received basic training on running a plantation, making household daily needs; she also assisted her father with management of crop business accounting.

She was more intelligence than her counterpart in the region. She had considerable responsibilities: reading recipes to slaves, overseeing food preparation in the kitchens, food preservation, clothing needs for the family and slaves, managing the house slaves and their responsibilities. She was more intelligence than her counterpart in the region. She had considerable responsibilities: reading recipes to slaves, overseeing food preparation in the kitchens, food preservation, clothing needs for the family and slaves, managing the house slaves and their responsibilities. (http://www.electriceggplant.com/davidmccullough/jefferson_inter view1.htm). The role of women in colonial time was many that they should do many things in the same time, for example the plantation mistress should prepare the food for the whole family while she should manage the duties of her slaves in plantation area. That is also
The Two Women in Comparison

happened in Central Java that the women should tackle many things at once. As the wedding approached, Kartini’s attitude towards Javanese traditional customs began to change. She became more tolerant and felt that her marriage would bring good fortune for her ambition to develop a school for native women. In her letters, Kartini mentioned that not only did her esteemed husband support her desire to develop the woodcarving industry in Jepara and the school for native women, but she also mentioned that she was going to write a book. Sadly, her ambition was unrealized as a result of her premature death in 1904 at the age of 25.

2. Marriage and Social Condition

If we compare the lives of American South women in America and Javanese women in Indonesia in colonial era that they have almost similar condition and situation that they should face in their lives. Several burdens such as male dominance, had no rights to obtain higher education, had no choice to decide their own future husbands, and so forth should be released and the oppression by men often happened in the family, especially in aristocracy ones. They should be submissive wives for married women. For American South women, although their husbands only had one wife, but sometimes their husbands committed adulteries with their slaves women. In Central Java, some of the husbands had more than one wife that was made women suffer, and felt jealousy among the wives because they live in one home.

In America, according to Hymowitz and Weissman (1981) in their book entitled *A History of Women in America*, say that the women could not have their own properties although it came from their parents. When they divorced, the women were not allowed to bring anything
even their own dresses; they should leave all the things although they came from the wealthy families before their marriages. They should accepted whatever conducted by men in their surroundings. They did not have and were not given equal rights as men. For unmarried women in America, they still had rights of their own properties, and they were freer than married women (Hymowitz and Weissman, 1981).

Both men and women had great social pressure on them to marry. Young girls were often married by the age of 13 or 14 and if a woman were not married by the age of 25, it was socially humiliating. Marriage was mostly for economic benefits, not romantic situations. Widows were also pressured to get married as soon as possible. Even in some states, laws were proposed that would force widows to marry within 7 years after their husbands’ death. Widows, however, were often married within a year if not sooner. Women were considered legally dead once they were married under common. Once married, the legally became one with their husbands. Married women had no control of their earnings, inheritance, property, and also could not appear in court as a witness nor vote. Their husbands, therefore, were responsible for all aspects of their wives including discipline. Widows were better off. They had control over their property, but could only receive up to one-third of their late husbands’ properties. Husbands could legally beat their wives (http://www.angelfire.com/ca/HistoryGals/Chloe.html). If a woman ran away from her husband, she was considered a thief because she was stealing the clothes she was wearing and herself. If a man murdered his wife, he would be hung. If a woman murdered her husband, she would be burned alive. The punishment for the men and women were different. It was not fair when the people in the society gave punishment for women were crueler and more inhumanity.
Raden Ajeng Kartini is recognized in Indonesia as the first feminist. She was born in April 21, 1879 in North Central Java, the daughter of a Javanese official serving the Dutch colonial government. During this time, women were secluded from the age of 12 until their marriages. This condition did not stop Kartini from aspiring for higher education. She received a scholarship to study, but surrendered to family pressure not to continue her education. And despite her written pronouncements that she would never marry, she agreed to be the spouse (fourth wife) of a man 25 years older than her (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kartini). A year after her marriage, shortly after the birth of her son, Kartini passed away at the age of 25. Prior her marriage, Kartini founded a school for young girls. Before she passed away, she had realized her dream and idea to built a school for girls and women.

Kartini expressed criticisms about religion. She questioned why the Holy Qur’an must be memorized and recited without an obligation to actually understand it. She also expressed the view that the world would be more peaceful if there was no religion to provide reasons for disagreements, conflict and displeasure. She wrote “Religion must guard us against committing sins, but more often, sins are committed in the name of religion” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kartini). Kartini raised questions with the way in which religion provided a justification for men to pursue polygamy.

For Kartini, the suffering of Javanese women reached a peak when the world was reduced to the walls of their houses and they were prepared for a polygamous marriage. The Holy Qur’an should not only be memorized but also should be understood and practiced in daily life. The understanding of Holy Qur’an should be done not only in a part but also in the whole verses. Actually the guideline in such a verse, support the women as the equal creature as men, but the men
in the patriarchal society understand it only as a part. The polygamous is also understood only in the beginning, the men do not read and understand the next verse that if someone will apply polygamous should be fair to his wives and the only fair person is Prophet Muhammad as a chosen person.

3. Educational Background and Problem

Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson and R.A Kartini expressed their ideas about the women’s rights to have the average status with men through letters and actions. They felt that the women should have the same change as men to get higher education, because the destiny of the nation would be as in women’s backbones. The nation should educate their women better because as mother they should educate their children well as the young generation of the country. The women were the closest people to their children from where they get the good and bad things.

In her letters, Kartini wrote about her views of the social conditions prevailing at that time, particularly the condition of native Indonesian women. The majority of her letters protest the tendency of Javanese Culture to impose obstacles for the development of women. She wanted women to have the freedom to learn and study. She also expressed her ideas and ambitions that all based on religious that is believe in God, wisdom and beauty along with humanitarianism and nationalism. Her letters also expressed her hopes for support from overseas. In her correspondence with Stella Zeehandelaar, Kartini expressed her desire to be like a European youth who have chance to achieve higher education. She described the sufferings of Javanese women fettered by tradition, unable to study, secluded, and who must
be prepared to participate in polygamous marriages with men they did not know.

Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson, according to her daughter and to eyewitness accounts (the French delegation), was a musical and highly educated, a constant reader with the greatest fund of good nature, a cheerful temper which might sometimes bound on bitter but which was completely subdued with her husband by her affection for him. She played the keyboard and the guitar, and was accomplished needlewoman. Her music book and several examples of her embroidery survive. It was she who instituted the brewing of beer at Monticello, which continued until her first husband’s death. She was much beloved by her neighbors, and a great patriot, raising funds for the cause before and after her tenure as First Lady of Virginia.

Raden Ajeng Kartini was the daughter of a Javanese civil servant. Indonesian women confess her struggle to educate herself and break out of the structures of Dutch colonial and Javanese cultural norms. She had been permitted the unusual privilege of a Dutch education and learned to express herself in writing with a charming simplicity and insight. In her letters, she writes her impressions of her Dutch colonial masters and of her understanding of Javanese culture and religion. Kartini stressed that education was a precious good, also from a moral point of view, to which every person, women included, was entitled. Her book is a cry for justice for women among the cultural restrictions found in traditional Javanese society. She considered being a torchbearer for progressive ideas and educations by Indonesian nationalists and feminists. While acknowledging that the Javanese had a lot to learn from the enlightened side of western culture, she was critical of the crude, materialistic side of it, which predominated in colonial society. Kartini died at the age of 25, when was giving birth to her first child.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

This study on women’s roles in the American South and Central Java in colonial era reveals that the role of women in both countries has more similarities rather than differences that they were oppressed by male domination in colonial era. The colonial era was the era where the people tried to struggle for freedom from the colonizers and to find out their identities. It was very hard especially for the women in that era, because they faced double burden, from one side they got oppression from the men and another was from the society. They should struggle to obtain the same rights as men to get higher education and chance to have the same position and opportunity to maximize their competences in any fields.

Although the Javanese women faced more tragic condition than American South women in colonial era that they could not choose their own future husbands who would live with them forever, but they could do nothing. The chance to achieve higher education was also the situation should be faced by the women in both countries in colonial era. While women in American South learned how to be skilled women at homes and how to learn music to entertain their husbands
the member of the families, the Javanese women only had chance to learn women’s skills to be good wives, they never had chance to play music because music was the men’s world.

From Kartini’s life, it can be seen that her self-fulfillment could be used for other women in Central Java in assessing their places in Javanese society. More than ten years after Kartini’s death, her reputation had emerged, either directly or indirectly, the Dutch made an agreement to support and enhance the Indonesians’ intellectual status as long as they were the group of priyayi. On the other hand, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson’s reputation did not optimally realized because of her health condition and physical strain of childbirth frequency, but she had given her great love to her husband that made him placed her in the foreground of the picture as the principal figure. She was always being ready helping to solve her husband’s problems and she was also a good adviser while Kartini regretted the evils carried out upon women in traditional Javanese society. She complained the illiteracy that overcome among women that the girls were lack of any educational opportunities. Finally Kartini agreed to marry with the appropriate man chosen by her parents, but she confided that she wanted a husband who would be an equal as a friend and a colleague, and she was certain that her husband to be would play all those roles.

Kartini’s physical body may have been imprisoned behind the walls of Jepara regency, but her spirit and thoughts broke through the limit of space and time. Her intellect, social sensitivity and perceptions became more fertile with the new knowledge and experiences she gained through her correspondence with the Dutch close friends, and also the literature supplied by her father and her brother as well as her discussions with her sisters Rukmini and Kardinah.
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## INDEX

**A**  
A History of Women in America 6  
a strong patriarchal system  3  
a very civil 14  
act diligently  31

**B**  
bigamists  21  
Boorstin  16

**C**  
Candrarini  7  
capitalism on American women  1  
Children can provide security in old age  34  
Clinton  3  
colonial era  4  
core gender identity  9

**D**  
daily activities  14  
De Beauvoir  10  
Divorce  19  
Door Duisternis tot Licth  55

**E**  
European language  56

**F**  
father of Jono  33  
Forte  41  
Fox-Genovese  2, 10

**G**  
Geertz  32, 36, 38

**H**  
Higher class Javanese families  33
The Role of Women in the American South and Central Java

Hollinger 9
household 23
housewifery 15
humanitarianism and nationalism 62
Hymowitz and Weissman 17

I
Indentured servant 6

J
Jay 38

K
Kartini expressed criticisms about religion 61
Koentjaraningrat 31
kromo 37

M
masculinity 9
McDowell 8
McMillen 22
midwives 16
Modernization 51
multicultural society 31

N
nationalist 51

North Central Java 61

P
Panggil Aku Kartini Saja 3
patriarchal society 62
pesantren 48
physical condition weaker 27
polygamy 54
priyayi 16, 48, 57

S
social role 46

takjilan 40
Teluwakur, Jepara, and Nyai Haji Siti Aminah 49
The Americans: The Colonial Experience 14
The objectives of the study are 8
tirakat 40
tirakatan 40
Tjitrowikromo 50

U
Ulrich 5
un-nationalistic 51

V
Index

vulnerable  9

W

Women in Java’s Rural Middle Class: Progress or Re  39

women’s communities in American South  3

Women’s Life and Work in the Southern Colonies  6

Wyatt-Brown  3

Y

Young women in America in colonial era  4