



FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT: KYAI SOLEH DARAT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORMATION OF KARTINI'S ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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ABSTRAK

Kiai Soleh Darat adalah seorang ulama Nusantara yang memiliki pengaruh besar terhadap transformasi pemikiran Kartini. Melalui pengajaran tafsir al-Qur'an oleh Kiai Soleh Darat, Kartini semakin tertarik untuk memahami isi al-Qur'an yang selama ini penerjemahannya dianggap tabu oleh masyarakat sebelum abad ke-20 dan dilarang oleh pemerintah kolonial Belanda. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis pengaruh Kiai Soleh Darat terhadap pandangan Kartini terhadap Islam. Metode yang digunakan untuk menganalisis masalah tersebut adalah dengan metode kualitatif dengan cara mengumpulkan data-data yang dibutuhkan melalui studi pustaka. Surat-surat yang ditulis Kartini kepada rekan-rekannya di Belanda adalah bukti nyata bagaimana pemikiran Kartini

bertransformasi setelah belajar Islam kepada Kiai Soleh Darat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kartini yang awalnya kecewa terhadap ketertutupan masyarakat Jawa untuk memahami isi al-Qur'an, menjadi semakin terbuka pikirannya untuk memahami dan meyakini Islam sebagai agamanya.

ABSTRACT

Kiai Soleh Darat was an Indonesian scholar who had a significant influence on the transformation of Kartini's thinking. Through his teachings on the interpretation of the Qur'an, Kartini became increasingly interested in understanding its contents, which had long been considered taboo to translate by society before the 20th century and was prohibited by the Dutch colonial government. The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of Kiai Soleh Darat on Kartini's views of Islam. The method used to analyze this issue is a qualitative approach by collecting the necessary data through literature study. Kartini's letters to her colleagues in the Netherlands serve as concrete evidence of how her thoughts transformed after learning Islam from Kiai Soleh Darat. The findings show that Kartini, who was initially disappointed with the Javanese community's reluctance to understand the contents of the Qur'an, became increasingly open-minded in her effort to comprehend and embrace Islam as her religion.

INTRODUCTION

Few Indonesian literatures explained the relationship between Kartini and her religion Islam. Most writings of Kartini were about Kartini's thoughts on education, gender, and her heroism. A research written by Ningrum, R. R., et.,al. (2023) explained how R.A. Kartini struggled to explore and understand her faith. This study revealed that Kartini perceives religious pluralism as a blessing for every segment of society. Kartini was not a progressive thinker aspiring to reject her faith, but she opposed the

ignorant mindset and lack of openness in Islamic teachings during that period. Her thoughts on Islamic teaching in Java were written in her letters. Ningrum, R. R., et., al's writing is one of few research examined Islam and RA Kartini, while many Indonesian historiographies ignored the dimension of Islam in Kartini's thought which tends to be marginalized or even considered a non-dominant part. In fact, towards the end of her life, Kartini underwent a significant spiritual transformation, one of which was through her encounter with a great Javanese scholar, Kiai Soleh Darat from Semarang.

RA Kartini and Kia Soleh Darat had a relationship as a teacher and a student. Kiai Soleh Darat (1820–1903), a scholar of intellectuals, enthusiastically spread Islam's teachings using Javanese language so that more people could understand it. He was known as the teacher of many famous scholars, including KH Hasyim Asy'ari and KH Ahmad Dahlan. Translation and interpretation of the Qur'an into Javanese Pegon, including Surah Al-Fatihah, was one of his most significant contributions. Kartini welcomed this with great emotion because it was the first time she could directly understand the contents of the Qur'an in a language she had mastered. In one of her letters to Abendanon, she wrote: "How happy my heart was when I heard the meaning of Surah Al-Fatihah from Kyai Soleh Darat... all this time the Qur'an had only sounded to me like beautiful singing but I did not understand its meaning." (Kartini, Letter to Mrs. Abendanon, 1902).

The evolution of Kartini's Islamic perspective illustrates that an inclusive and communicative grasp of religion is crucial, particularly for women who, during that period, had restricted access to formal religious education. Kiai Soleh Darat exemplifies a contextual method of dakwah—transmitting Islam using local language and comprehension—making it accessible to diverse groups, including the priyayi elite such as Kartini. This context serves as a crucial foundation for reevaluating the intellectual and spiritual connection between Kiai Soleh Darat and Kartini. This piece seeks to investigate Kiai Soleh Darat's role in influencing Kartini's Islamic perspective, a topic that has received limited attention in the conversation surrounding Islam and feminism in Indonesia.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to Kartini's intellectual contributions, studies that specifically examine the influence of Javanese Islamic scholarship remain limited. Existing research tends to position Kartini within the framework of secular feminist discourse or as a figure detached from Islamic intellectual traditions. The novelty of this research lies in its analytical focus on the pedagogical, linguistic, and epistemological role of Kiai Soleh Darat in shaping Kartini's evolving understanding of Islam. By integrating historical sources, Kartini's correspondence, and contextual analysis of Javanese Islamic scholarship, this study offers a fresh interpretative framework that acknowledges Islam not as a marginal element of Kartini's worldview, but as transformative dimension of her personal and intellectual development.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, as it employs several techniques of data collection, with a primary focus on literature review. Unlike quantitative research,

qualitative research does not aim to generate findings based on statistical procedures or other numerical measures. Rather, it seeks to describe phenomena, analyse language, provide detailed accounts of respondents' perspectives, and examine issues within their natural contexts. Data collection in qualitative research may include interviews, observations, and literature studies (Murdiyanto, 2020: 19).

In this research, the author draws upon a range of written sources related to Kyai Soleh Darat and Kartini. Considerable scholarship has already been produced on *Tafsir Faizul Rahman*, a work authored by Kyai Soleh Darat. Moreover, Kartini's letters to her colleagues in the Netherlands serve as valuable primary sources. These letters, now compiled in the book *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*, are accessible online and provide important evidence of Kartini's intellectual transformation, from an orientation strongly shaped by Western ideas to one increasingly influenced by Islamic thought after her encounters with Kyai Soleh Darat. Drawing on these materials, the study seeks to synthesize research concerning the evolution of Kartini's ideas under the influence of the Islamic reformer Kyai Soleh Darat.

Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang used as a reference in this article is a primary source to analyze the Kartini's thought. The book is a compilation of Kartini's letters translated in bahasa Indonesia by Armijn Pane which was published by Balai Pustaka in 1938. However, the use of this book requires source criticism to ensure accuracy in interpreting Kartini's ideas. First, from an external perspective, this text is a translation from the original Dutch letters and was edited by Armijn Pane before being published by Balai Pustaka. This process may have changed the meaning, tone, or context of Kartini's original writing. Second, from an internal perspective, the content needs to be examined to see whether the ideas presented still represent Kartini's original thoughts or have been influenced by the translator's interpretation. In addition, the version available on Google Books may differ from the original printed edition due to formatting or editing updates.

Historical Context: Java in the Late Nineteenth Century

In the era of Kartini, The Javanese community is depicted in a letter written by Kartini as an environment filled with mysticism, legends, and myths. They believe in superstitions such as mystical knowledge and amulets. These beliefs have directly or indirectly influenced the mindset of the Javanese people in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to the belief in talismans and mystical knowledge, the Javanese people also highly uphold customs and beliefs in their ancestors. The Javanese nobility is believed by the surrounding community to possess divine powers that can provide safety for the common people. Therefore, these old beliefs must not be violated.

The Javanese community during Kartini's time mostly embraced Islam, but not in depth. This is explained in Kartini's letter to Stella in 1899 where she indicated that she did not understand the contents of the Qur'an because the majority of scholars and the Javanese people at that time considered it too sacred to translate the Qur'an into the local language (Aryanti, 2017: 8-9).

In the early 19th century, the education for women in the Archipelago seemed to receive less attention from the Dutch East Indies government, as at that time women's education in Europe had not yet developed. Just in 1876 after the emancipation movement in Europa arose, the first school for women in Batavia emerged. Nevertheless, schools for girls only began to emerge in the early 20th century after Kartini's ideas spread widely.

The Islamic formal education for women existed after the Islamic organization Muhammadiyah held in 1912. Kyai Ahmad Dahlan as the founder of Muhammadiyah supported his wife Siti Walidah to establish a Muhammadiyah wing organization for women's empowerment, namely Aisyiyah in 1917. Aisyiyah has become one of the movements of women's revival in the archipelago. The establishment of this movement simultaneously emphasizes the position of women in the circle of life among men. One of its programs was to establish *Sopo Tresno* for training to read the Qur'an specifically for women (Dahlan and Sulastri, 2023: 190-191).

Before the twentieth century the socio-religious condition in Java could not be separated from patriarchal culture. In the tradition of Javanese society there was a term in Javanese language *konco wingking* that was attached to women. *Konco wingking* means following behind the husband (Kusuma, 2022). *Konco wingking* refers to the domestic jobs for women to do *macak* (dress-up), *masak* (cooking), and *manak* (giving off-spring) (Maulana, 2021). This tradition limited the Javanese women in this century to obtain their rights in education, career, and politics.

The modernization in the end of nineteenth and twentieth century affected the right of women in Indonesia. Women could have opportunities to access education, ease access to reading books, and the massive emergence of newspapers. This progress encouraged Indonesian women to be aware of the rights of equality (Kusuma, 2022: 285). One of Indonesian women who realized about the importance of education and other rights was RA Kartini. Kartini's thoughts inspired other female figures to change the Indonesian women life better, especially after her passed away in 1904.

The importance of education for Muslim, including for women mentioned by many Islamic reformists, such as Muhammad Abduh, Rasyid Ridha, Ahmad Dahlan (the founder of Muhammadiyah), Kiai Soleh Darat, and Haji Abdul Karim Malik Amrullah (Hamka). These reformists argued that one of the solutions to implement and succeed the Islamic reformism is by developing and improving the education for Muslims. The progress of education is significant because it is part of coming back to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. These two main sources of Islamic teachings also advocate the importance of seeking and practicing knowledge, both for the benefit of this world and the hereafter.

Kiai Soleh Darat as an Islamic reformist in Java showed how importance Islamic reformism by opening the way to understand Islam for all Muslims without exception by translating the Qur'an into local language (the Javanese language). Although it was taboo to translate the sacred Qur'an into the local language, but then many accepted the reform conducted by Kiai Soleh Darat. The translation of al-Qur'an also connected Kiai Soleh Darat

to be a teacher for Kartini to learn more about Islam and the core teaching written in al-Qur'an.

Kyai Soleh Darat: Scholar, Intellectual, and Translator of Islam

Kyai Soleh Darat's real name is Kyai Muhammad Sholeh Al Samarani. He was nicknamed Kyai Sholeh Darat because he lived in the village of Darat Semarang. Kyai Sholeh Darat was born in Kedung Cendung Village, Jepara Regency, Central Java in 1820 AD/1236 H. He died at the age of 85 years (in the Hijri calendar) or 83 years (in the Gregorian calendar) precisely on December 18, 1903/28 Ramadhan 1321 H (Amaliya, 2023: 18-19).

His education began with his own father by understanding the Qur'an and the basics of religion. After that, he went to Islamic boarding schools in Java, such as Kyai Syahid, Kyai Muhammad Saleh Asnawi, Kyai Muhammad Ishaq Damaran, Kyai Muhammad Ba alwi, and a mufti' of Semarang, Kyai Abu Abdillah Muhammad Hudi Banguni. After studying in Java, he then went to Mecca with his father to perform the Hajj pilgrimage and stopped for a while in Singapore. No longer after that, his father died in Mecca so he decided to live and study in Mecca. While in Mecca, he studied with several teachers including Sheikh Muhammad Al Murqi, Sheikh Muhammad Sulaiman Hasbullah, Sheikh Sayid Muhammad Zein Dahlan, Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf Al Misri, and Sheikh Jamal Mufti Hanafi. While in Mecca he studied with the Sheikh Nawawi Al Bantani, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Al Minangkabawi, and Kyai Kholil Bangkalan (Amaliya, 2023: 19).

Upon his return from Mecca, Kyai Sholeh Darat founded a boarding school in Darat Village, Semarang. This boarding school then produced many great scholars such as KH. Mahfudz and Ahmad Sidiq, Kyai Idris (Solo), KH. Dalhar Watucongol, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Ahmad Dahlan, RA Kartini, Kyai Amir (Pekalongan), Kyai Bisri Syamsuri (Jombang) and so on (Amaliya, 2023: 19).

In 1891-1892 Kiai Soleh Darat wrote *Tafsir Faidh Al-Rahman* which is a translation of al-Qur'an into the Javanese language. The writing of Tafsir Faidh Al-Rahman was based on Sholeh Darat's motivation to translate the Qur'an into Javanese so that lay people at that time could learn the meanings contained in the Qur'an. In addition, the writing of the interpretation was also to respond to Kartini's anxiety about the fact that no ulama dared to translate the Qur'an into Javanese because it was considered too sacred. Another factor that encouraged Soleh Darat to write this interpretation was because there were some people who specifically asked Sholeh Darat to write an interpretation of the Qur'an. It was said that the request was very urgent, even being asked to immediately distribute his interpretation of the Qur'an even though the writing was only one chapter (Hamidah, 2021: 56).

Soleh Darat conducted a da'wah to the common people and the royal elite. Just after returning back from Makkah, Kiai Shalih actively carried out his preaching activities starting from serving or helping to teach at the Salatiyang Islamic Boarding School, Purworejo, until finally establishing the Land Islamic Boarding School which was originally a prayer room inherited from his father-in-law, Kiai Murtadho. Besides, Kiai Sholeh actively carries out preaching activities to the royal elites such as in the open pavilion of Demak Regency, in

Bulus Purworejo Regency, and in several other areas. In his preaching activities, there is an interesting story when Kiai Shalih preached at the open pavilion of Demak. At that time, a routine monthly religious study was taking place which happened to be attended by R.A. Kartini. In that meeting, Kartini was interested to the explanation of the interpretation of al-Fatihah from Kiai Shalih. This interest then caused Kartini to urge her uncle to accompany her to meet Kiai Shaleh. Because of the event, the opinion emerged that the interpretation of Faid ar-Rahman, a Javanese interpretation of the Quran, by Kiai Shaleh, was deliberately made for Kartini (Misbah, 2018: 82-83).

Kartini's Encounter with Kiai Soleh Darat

Kartini was deeply impressed by the model of Islamic instruction provided by Kiai Soleh Darat. His teachings addressed her unease regarding the inaccessibility of religious texts, which, at that time, were often conveyed by Javanese scholars in ways that left lay audiences unable to comprehend them. Evidence of Kartini's admiration for Kiai Soleh Darat's instruction can be found in her letters, where she repeatedly employed the phrase "from darkness into Light," echoing the Qur'anic expression in *Surat al-Baqarah* (2:257), *min al-ẓulumāti ilā al-nūr*. This expression was later translated into Dutch as *Door Duisternis tot Licht* (Masrur, 2010: 285–286).

Kartini's initial admiration for Kiai Soleh Darat gradually developed into a closer teacher–student relationship. As a wedding gift, Kiai Soleh Darat presented Kartini with a three-volume Qur'anic commentary, covering *Surat al-Fātiḥah* through *Surat Ibrāhīm* (Abdullah, et.al., 2021). Kartini eagerly read and engaged with this tafsīr, which enabled her to explore the contents of the Qur'an in a way previously inaccessible to her. Her longstanding curiosity about the sacred text of Islam was thus fulfilled through the interpretive work of Kiai Soleh Darat. What had long been regarded as a cultural taboo—namely, translating the Qur'an into the vernacular—was effectively challenged through his efforts.

The tafsīr gifted by Kiai Soleh Darat left a profound impact on Kartini's understanding of Islam. This influence is evident in several of her letters to her European correspondents. In her letter to Mrs. Van Kol dated 21 July 1902, Kartini wrote: *"I am determined and strive to improve the image of Islam, which has so often been the target of slander. May we be granted mercy, so that we may work toward enabling followers of other religions to view Islam as a noble faith."* Likewise, in her letter to Mrs. Abendanon dated 1 August 1903, Kartini declared her desire to attain the highest honor: to become a true servant of God, Allah SWT.

The Transformation of Kartini's Islamic Thought

Kartini often expressed her views on religion in the letters she wrote to her colleagues in the Netherlands. In a letter to Mrs. Abendanon dated 15 August 1902, Kartini voiced her disappointment with Islam, particularly her inability to understand the contents of the Qur'an: *"At that time, I no longer wished to engage in practices whose purpose and*

benefit I did not understand. I no longer wanted to read the Qur'an or memorize parables in a foreign language whose meaning I could not comprehend. Perhaps even my teacher did not know its meaning. Tell me what it means, and I will gladly study anything. I have sinned. This book is too sacred, and thus we are not allowed to know its meaning."

Kartini's view of Islam then changed a few months later, indicating that she had found her way in understanding Islamic religious texts. In the letter, Kartini wrote about the evils and violations caused by some people, not the fault of the religion itself, but of those individuals. According to Kartini, in her 1899 letter, all religions, including Islam, will always teach goodness and compassion. The letter written by Kartini stated, "This is what has caused us to turn away from religion for so long, because we have seen numerous events that show the lack of compassion practiced by people under the guise of religion. Gradually, we realized that it is not religion that lacks compassion, but humans who spoil everything that was originally good and pure." In this view, Kartini still maintained a neutral perspective toward all religions.

Another critique voiced by Kartini appears in her 1899 letter to Stella Zeehandelaar, where she strongly opposed the prohibition on translating the Qur'an, both due to its being regarded as too sacred and because of restrictions on Muslim activities imposed by the Dutch colonial government. In this letter, Kartini asserted that teaching the Qur'an in Arabic without explaining its meaning was, in her words, "something insane" (Kusuma, 2022: 287). Efendi (2012) further notes that Kartini's critique underscored the fact that the Qur'an, particularly in its societal practice, was rarely explained or translated into a language that could be readily understood. This dynamic was closely tied to the policies and attitudes of the colonial administration, which often adopted Islamophobic measures in response to the frequent resistance movements mobilized by Muslim scholars (*kiai*). Within the broader history of colonialism in Indonesia, Islam functioned as a significant social force, capable of organizing and sustaining opposition to foreign domination (Efendi, 2012: 93).

The repressive attitude of the colonial government in Java was reflected in the increasing number of restrictions imposed on Muslims, such as the prohibition of translating the Qur'an from Arabic into Javanese. As a result, ordinary people found it difficult to understand the contents of the Qur'an, since the development of Islam was heavily constrained by colonial politics. This situation prompted Kartini to continue seeking answers to her curiosity by learning from someone she considered highly suitable. Her search eventually led her to Kyai Soleh Darat, who at that time was teaching the interpretation of *Surah al-Fatihah*. Kartini was deeply impressed by this lesson, because up to that point she had only recited *al-Fatihah* without truly grasping the meaning contained within it (Kusuma, 2022: 288).

Relevance and Intellectual Legacy

Kartini's encounter with Kyai Soleh Darat had a profound impact on her intellectual development, shifting her orientation from predominantly Western liberal thought to one increasingly informed by Islamic perspectives. Earlier narratives about Kartini largely

emphasized her ideas on emancipation, education, and Western influence. These narratives, however, became more nuanced when her letters revealed her reflections on and engagement with Islam. Such an alternative narrative portrays Kartini not merely as a women's emancipation figure shaped by Western education, but also as a critical Muslim woman who was open to religious interpretation.

Kartini's openness to religious exegesis can be traced to her intellectual transformation after studying the Qur'an under Kyai Soleh Darat. In a letter to Mrs. Abendanon in 1902, Kartini expressed her shifting perspective, stating: "*Those days are past. We once believed that European society was truly the best, without equal. Forgive us, but do you yourself regard European society as perfect? Can you deny that behind the beauty of that society there exist many elements which cannot rightly be called civilization?*" (Letter to Mrs. Abendanon, 27 October 1902). Furthermore, in 1903 Kartini also voiced her rejection of the Christian missionary (*zending*) practices in the Dutch East Indies, declaring in her writings that leaving Islam for another religion constituted a grave sin (Masrur, 2012).

Kartini's evolving Islamic thought, expressed in her letters, cannot be separated from the influence of Kyai Soleh Darat, who boldly opposed colonial restrictions and societal taboos on translating and interpreting the Qur'an. His unique method of translation employed *Arab gundul* (pegon script), a strategic choice to circumvent colonial prohibitions on Qur'anic translation. His work, *Faid al-Rahman*, was recognized as the first Qur'anic commentary in the archipelago written in Javanese using Arabic script. This tafsir was presented to Kartini as a wedding gift when she married R.R. Joyofiningrat, regent of Rembang.

Compared to the other Islamic scholar in the 19th century, such as Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani, Kyai Soleh Darat's approach was more local. Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani employed global approaches to disseminate Islamic knowledge due to his dedication as an Imam in Masjidil Haram. Many Syaikh Nawawi's writings were in Arabic, including some works about fiqh: *Nihayah al-Zain fi Irsyad al-Mubtadi'in* and *Kasyifat al-Syaja* (Muqoddas, 2014: 11). Both Kyai Soleh Darat and Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani had different approaches in teaching Islam through their works, but they had a similar vision to educate Muslim students and gave their contribution to the Archipelago.

Because of using the local approach, Kyai Soleh Darat dedicated himself to the advancement of Islam and the welfare of the Muslim community throughout his life. Through his writings, he sought to uncover Islamic teachings and make them accessible to the Javanese public and his students. His works span various branches of Islamic scholarship, including theology (*'aqidah*), Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), hadith, and Sufism. His focus lay in cultivating a worldview grounded in Islamic teachings and in nurturing the spiritual life of Muslims, particularly in the Nusantara. As a result, many students flocked to study under him. Among his notable works are:

1. *Majmū'ah al-Sharī'ah al-Kāfiyah li al-'Awām*, a manual of religious sciences for Muslims.
2. *Munjiyāt*, a Sufi text addressing key themes from al-Ghazali's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

3. *al-Ḥikam*, also a Sufi work, discussing central themes from Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah al-Iskandarī’s *al-Ḥikam*.
4. *Laṭā’if al-Ṭahārah*, a treatise on ritual purification.
5. *Manāsik al-Ḥajj*, a guide to the rites of pilgrimage.
6. *al-Ṣalāh*, on the proper performance of prayer.
7. *Tarjamah Sabīl al-‘Ābid ‘alā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, on Ash‘arī–Māturīdī Sunni theology.
8. *Murshid al-Wajīz*, a concise guide to Sufism and ethics.
9. *Minhāj al-Atqiyā’*, a treatise on Sufism and moral conduct.
10. *Ḥadīth al-Mi‘rāj*, concerning the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey and Ascension to receive the command for the five daily prayers.

With such profound scholarship across multiple branches of Islam, Kyai Soleh Darat dared to translate and interpret Qur’anic verses that had long been regarded as sacred and untouchable. This intellectual courage directly inspired Kartini to deepen her study of Islam under his guidance.

Kyai Soleh Darat’s thought on women also strongly influenced Kartini’s vision of emancipation. He emphasized the principle of partnership between men and women in Islam (Affandi, 2023: 5), teaching that Islam upholds the dignity of women in all aspects of life and that husbands and wives must honor one another. These ideas resonate closely with Kartini’s critique of Javanese cultural practices that restricted women’s access to education. Restrictions she believed were rooted not in Islam but in local traditions. Accordingly, Kartini strongly supported more inclusive and dynamic interpretations of Islam, such as those advocated by Kyai Soleh Darat. His decision to translate the Qur’an into Javanese opened opportunities for women to engage more deeply with Islamic teachings. This movement, in turn, laid the foundation for boarder religious literacy among women, paving the way for the establishment of women’s study circles (*pengajian*), madrasah education, and participation in contemporary gender-oriented *fiqh* discourses.

CONCLUSION

Kyai Soleh Darat made a significant contribution to the transformation of Kartini’s thought, which initially leaned heavily toward Western modernist ideas but later became deeply influenced by Islamic perspectives. As reflected in her letters compiled in the volume *Door Duisternis tot Licht* (translated into Indonesian as *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*), Kartini initially lamented the taboo and prohibition surrounding the translation of the Qur’an. This tradition, however, was challenged by Kyai Soleh Darat, who took the bold step of translating the Qur’an into Javanese. Through his effort, Kartini developed a greater interest in studying the Qur’an in depth, implying that her intellectual awakening was shaped not only by Western sources but also by the accessibility of Islamic knowledge made possible by local religious scholarship.

Nevertheless, scholarly discussions on Kartini’s engagement with Islam remain scarce in Indonesian historiography. Kartini is most often associated with women’s

emancipation, particularly her struggle against the many restrictions and obstacles imposed on Javanese women seeking progress. Yet, her intellectual trajectory cannot be confined to this dimension alone; Islam exerted a profound influence on the development of her thought. Kartini's perspective on women's emancipation itself cannot be separated from the intellectual imprint of Kyai Soleh Darat, whose teachings emphasized the dignity and worth of women, in accordance with Islamic principles, implying that Kartini's advocacy for women's rights emerged within a synthesis of indigenous Islamic reformism and her broader humanist commitment.

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