

# Postcolonial Female Intellectual Agency: Siti Baroroh Baried and the Making of Arabic Philological Scholarship at Universitas Gadjah Mada (1946–1963)

Ruliah Sari\*<sup>1</sup>, Nur Aini Setiawati<sup>1</sup>

\*ruliahsari2696@mail.ugm.ac.id

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Gadjah Mada

## Abstract

This study highlights the significant role of Siti Baroroh Baried in the intellectual transformation of post-colonial higher education at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) between 1946 and 1963. It aims to analyze and reconstruct her scholarly contributions to the development of philological studies, as well as her pioneering role in establishing the Department of Arabic Literature at UGM. Her work reflected a broader shift in post-colonial academic thought through her influence on academic discourse, institutional practices, and women's participation in intellectual life at UGM. The method used in this research is the historical method, encompassing heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The result shows the strong ethical and intellectual foundation in Siti Baroroh Baried stemmed from her family background in the Kauman, Yogyakarta, which highly upheld religious values and education. Beginning in 1946, she received significant support from several progressive-minded UGM lecturers. This support created a more inclusive and egalitarian intellectual environment, enabling the active participation of women without being limited by gender stereotypes. Through her scholarly work and teaching practices, Baried contributed to the advancement of philological studies by introducing systematic approaches to Arabic texts, developing early instructional materials, and institutionalizing Arabic literary studies at Universitas Gadjah Mada in 1962. This study argues that Siti Baroroh Baried represents a form of post-colonial female intellectualism, manifested through her academic leadership, institutional role, and lasting contributions to Arabic literary studies at Universitas Gadjah Mada.

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## Introduction

In the historical narrative of the Indonesian nation, Siti Baroroh Baried, who was born in Yogyakarta on May 23, 1925, is consistently associated with her diverse activities in Islamic education, religion, health, and Indonesian women's issues through her long involvement in the Aisyiyah organization (Muchlas, 2013). Previously known as Siti Baroroh Tamim, she is widely recognized as a progressive female figure due to her substantial role in developing Aisyiyah since the late period of the Old Order and the early years of the New Order. Moreover, she served as the longest-tenured leader of the Central Board of Aisyiyah (PP Aisyiyah) for approximately twenty years, encompassing five leadership periods (Hadiroh, 2019; Chamamah, 2023). While this body of literature has contributed to an understanding of her organizational significance, it has simultaneously marginalized her role as an academic intellectual involved in the production and institutionalization of knowledge in post-colonial Indonesian higher education.

Siti Baroroh Baried, as an intellectual who also specialized in Philology with a focus on culture studies, was awarded the Bintang Budaya Parama Dharma (Highest Cultural Star) by the President of the Republic of Indonesia in 2019. This award is a formal recognition of the intellectual legacy that had already been established through Siti Baroroh Baried's academic tradition and cultural research. Previously, while still an academic, she had attained the title of Professor, and her inauguration had taken place less than a year before she assumed the role of Chairwoman of PP Aisyiyah. This appointment was based on the Presidential Decree effective from September 1, 1964. Baried subsequently delivered her inaugural address on August 10, 1970, with the speech entitled "Bahasa Arab dan Perkembangan Bahasa Indonesia" (Arabic Language and the Development of Indonesian Language) (Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia Number 0762/C/DPEK of 1971). This appointment became a highlight for Universitas Gadjah Mada because Siti Baroroh Baried was only 39 years old at the time, which was considered quite young, and her appointment became a highlight for Universitas Gadjah Mada (Ruliah, 2019).

Despite this recognition, historical and scholarly narratives have tended to emphasize her organizational leadership and social activism, while paying limited attention to her role as an academic intellectual. As a result, her contributions to the development of knowledge, academic institutions, and higher education in post-colonial Indonesia have remained marginal within broader historiographical accounts. Since 1963, within the educational context of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), she served as the Head and founder of the Department, concurrently developing her field of study in Philology (Sumijati, 2008). While these achievements are documented institutionally, they have not been fully integrated into broader accounts of Indonesia's post-colonial intellectual development. This relative invisibility in national narratives, despite her pioneering academic and organizational roles, highlights the need for a focused study that examines how Siti Baroroh Baried's leadership and intellectual contributions influenced post-colonial academic and social discourses in Indonesia.

This study conceptualizes Siti Baroroh Baried as a post-colonial female intellectual, defined as an academic actor who actively participated in the transformation of colonial-derived knowledge systems into nationally oriented scholarly disciplines. In this sense, post-colonial intellectualism refers to the capacity of scholars to shape academic discourse, institutional practices, and disciplinary boundaries within the context of a newly independent nation-state. Such a framework enables a critical re-evaluation of women's intellectual agency, which biographical or organizational approaches have frequently obscured.

Based on the author's review of existing literature, no study has comprehensively examined the role and intellectual contributions of Siti Baroroh Baried in shaping post-colonial academic and social discourses in Indonesia, particularly in the context of her leadership at Universitas Gadjah Mada and Aisyiyah. Existing studies tend to focus on Aisyiyah's organizational activities and programs, for example, Baroroh Baried: Peran dalam Eksistensi Aisyiyah Tahun 1965–1985 by Ruliah Sari from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, which discusses Baroroh Baried's life background, roles, and social-organizational activities during her tenure in Aisyiyah, but does not connect her work to her intellectual influence on broader post-colonial discourses. Similarly, other studies that touch upon Baroroh Baried's contributions, such as Halimah Nur Febriyani's thesis focusing on the development of Aisyiyah in education and economic programs, and Yoshi Shofwatul's research noting Baroroh Baried's participation in the 1965 Asia-Africa Islamic Conference, do not explore how her leadership and intellectual contributions shaped broader academic and social discourses in post-colonial Indonesia.

Biographical writings and institutional histories, including official publications of Universitas Gadjah Mada, provide detailed documentation of Baried's academic career and professional achievements. However, these works remain largely descriptive and lack analytical engagement with her intellectual contributions within a post-colonial historiographical framework. Consequently, a significant research gap persists: Siti Baroroh Baried has not yet been examined as a female intellectual whose academic leadership contributed to the shaping of disciplinary knowledge and institutional practices in post-colonial Indonesia.

This article argues that Siti Baroroh Baried should be situated as a post-colonial female intellectual whose academic interventions were instrumental in the transformation of Universitas Gadjah Mada, particularly through the development of philological scholarship and the institutionalization of Arabic literary studies. This study is based on the assumption that since 1946, her educational activities, cultural involvement, personal attitudes, and decisions before 1963 are inseparable from her activities post-1963. Her academic experiences in Arabic and Eastern Literature studies in Egypt provided the methodological and intellectual foundation that directly informed both the development of Philology and the establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature at UGM. This demonstrates a clear conceptual and methodological link between her studies abroad and her academic leadership, rather than merely a temporal coincidence. Thus, these two aspects can be regarded as interconnected lines of thought in Siti Baroroh Baried's intellectualism, reflecting the integration of her scholarly knowledge and institutional innovation.

The study stops in 1963 to capture the formative phase of Siti Baroroh Baried's academic career and to highlight her role at UGM in the development of Philology and the foundational work in establishing the Department of Arabic Literature. Further research may explore the subsequent development of the department as well as Baroroh Baried's leadership in later periods.

## **Research Methods**

This study examines Siti Baroroh Baried's thinking, focusing on how her ideas and intellectual interactions were influenced by personal experiences, educational background, and interactions with other figures, and how those thoughts were consequently transformed (Kartodirdjo, 2014). Since an individual's self-awareness is the primary reality, its role as a driving factor or creator of historical facts becomes immensely significant. The method of analysis used in this research is the historical method, which is conducted in four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. These stages allow knowledge to be obtained through impartial and free investigation into different images, concepts, and mental processes that are one or two steps removed from objective reality (Gottschalk, 2015).

Heuristics in this research were conducted by searching for data relevant to the research topic, as the presence of historical sources is an absolute requirement for all historical research (Hamid, 2014). Data collection was gathered from sites providing previous publications on Siti Baroroh Baried's activities, such as Delpher, and utilized documents from contemporary newspapers like *De Java Bode* and *Nieuwsgier*, alongside existing archives at Universitas Gadjah Mada and the private photo collection of Siti Baroroh Baried's family. Subsequently, the process of source criticism, carried out through internal and external criticism, was applied to the entirety of the data sources to ensure the authenticity of the source and the data used in constructing the historical narrative. The third step is interpretation, where the researcher interprets the data found during the heuristic process and validates it through source criticism (Kuntowiojoyo, 2013). The interpreted data demonstrate the development of Philology and Siti Baroroh Baried's key role in the founding of the Department of Arabic Literature at UGM. The final step is historiography, in which the researcher writes the results of the interpretation into a historical paper.

## **Result**

### **Originating from the Kauman Family**

The figure of Siti Baroroh is closely tied to the values of the Kauman family, particularly in the batik village of Karangkajen, Yogyakarta. The development of Karangkajen batik began when Haji Dja'far, a central figure in disseminating religious and educational traditions in the Karangkajen and Kauman areas, married Ndoro Masayu, a relative of the Yogyakarta Palace (keraton). It is undeniable that batik flourished outside the palace due to its transmission by individuals closely connected to the

court. Their successor was their son, Haji Tamim, who married Siti Asmah and had three children: M. Daris Tamim, Djindar Tamim, and Siti Baroroh (Ruliah, 2019). Upon reaching adulthood, all three children became actively involved in the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah organizations.

Despite the limited information regarding her family background, it is known that the tradition of endogamy within the Kauman community—marriage within the same group to maintain lineage—played a vital role in establishing a strong and exclusive social network. This practice reinforced family and community bonds while ensuring the continuous transmission of cultural and social values across generations (Chamamah, 2023). Adhering to this tradition, Siti Baroroh married a Kauman descendant from her grandfather's lineage, Muhammad Baried Ishom. Following the marriage, she adopted her husband's surname, Baried, and became widely known as Siti Baroroh Baried.

The genealogical and social structure of the Kauman family, including practices of endogamy and marriage within prominent local lineages, created a strong social network that not only reinforced family and community cohesion but also provided Siti Baroroh with access to educational, religious, and cultural resources essential for her later academic and intellectual development. Growing up in a family closely tied to the Karangkajen batik tradition and to Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah organizations, she was exposed to a combination of cultural literacy, artisanal knowledge, and Islamic educational values. These formative experiences contributed to her interest in the integration of cultural and religious principles in her intellectual pursuits. Furthermore, her family and community connections facilitated her involvement in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah networks, which later supported her academic leadership and institutional initiatives at UGM.

### **Early Education and the Period of Service**

Siti Baroroh Baried began her primary education at a Muhammadiyah Primary School in 1938, a period when women's access to formal education was generally very restricted. The state of knowledge among Indonesians was significantly underdeveloped, as the Dutch East Indies government intended the Indonesian people to remain subservient before independence in 1945 (Gultom, 2020). Djojonegoro (1996) noted in his work the pronounced educational disparity during this era, with severely limited educational access in remote areas. Conversely, education was also employed as a tool to consolidate the rising tide of nationalist ideology post-independence (Idris, 2024).

Upon completing primary school, Siti Baroroh Baried continued her studies at the Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (MULO), equivalent to a junior high school. The MULO was generally the first school that did not strictly follow the traditional Dutch education model but remained Western-oriented and did not seek to adapt to Indonesian circumstances (Nasution, 2014) fully. The school utilized Dutch as the language of instruction, alongside the use of Malay, Javanese, and Arabic in the learning process. This multilingual environment reflected the colonial legacy while simultaneously transitioning towards the Indonesian language being promoted after the Youth Pledge of 1928. Access for women to secondary education remained lower during this period; data from the Dutch East Indies Department of Education in 1939 indicated that only about 15% of MULO students were female (Stuers, 1960).

Subsequently, Siti Baroroh Baried pursued her education at the Hollandsch Inlandsche Kweekschool (HIK), a teacher-training college that served as a strategic avenue for social mobility for educated native Indonesians. For women, this path held dual significance: in addition to opening career opportunities as a teacher, it also affirmed the social construct of women as educators of the younger generation. Siti Baroroh Baried was a product of a critical intellectual environment. This social group had managed to liberate itself from the hegemony of the ruling elite and offered alternative education in support of the independence movement (Bambang, 2000).

Upon completion of her studies, Siti Baroroh Baried chose not to proceed to university immediately but instead dedicated herself to teaching at the Muhammadiyah Girls' Junior High School in Yogyakarta. This decision can be analyzed within the framework of *ibuism*, where women's roles are anchored in the domestic sphere and child education. Yet, she simultaneously leveraged this position to expand her public role (Suryakusuma, 2021). From a postcolonial perspective, Blackburn (2004) emphasizes how elite Indonesian women exercised agency within structural constraints, navigating societal expectations to access public, educational, and intellectual spaces. Siti Baroroh's actions exemplify this form of female agency, demonstrating how she transformed her domestic and teaching roles into a foundation for broader societal and academic influence.

Building on her early engagement in teaching and community roles, Siti Baroroh's trajectory illustrates how elite Muslim women navigated societal expectations to create intellectual and public opportunities for themselves. Her experiences in the domestic and educational spheres not only allowed her to exercise agency but also prepared her for the challenges and networks she would encounter upon entering higher education. The next section explores her initial academic engagement at Universitas Gadjah Mada, focusing on the formation of her intellectual networks and early scholarly activities that laid the foundation for her later contributions.

### **Academic Network and Higher Education Context**

The year 1946 was a challenging time for newly independent Indonesia, which was simultaneously preparing to face the threat of the Netherlands returning to reclaim the territory. Nevertheless, the government's establishment of the Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta garnered significant attention and interest. However, this opportunity was primarily available to those who could afford the tuition or were already employed. Siti Baroroh Baried was one such individual who seized this opportunity. Despite confronting various limitations, several opportunities emerged that enabled Siti Baroroh Baried to continue her education. The establishment of the Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada became an essential pathway for her to access higher education, albeit with modest facilities. Siti Baroroh Baried enrolled in the Faculty of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture. Limited choice in majors led her to select the Literature program. Her studies were not driven by personal interest or a hobby, but rather by the opportunities and encouragement she received. This is evident from archival material at Universitas Gadjah Mada, specifically the interview titled "Wawancara Prof. Dr. A. Siti Baroroh Baried, 1985" (UGM Archives, 1985), in which she explained her motivations. Indeed, even when she had the opportunity to pursue further studies at Universitas Indonesia, she did so primarily because of an invitation from her lecturer, Prof. Dr. Prijana, as she recalled in an interview with Kompas upon her retirement from academia in 1991.

During her time at Universitas Gadjah Mada, the primary impediment to academic activities was not only the scarcity of facilities but also the security situation. Security issues re-emerged despite many successes achieved in various regions of Indonesia until 1950 (Ricklefs, 2010). Lectures at the Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada were temporarily suspended due to the Dutch military occupation of Yogyakarta in 1948–1949. The Repertoire of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences (FIB) UGM records that while Indonesia was preparing to face the threat of re-occupation by the Dutch, the nation simultaneously initiated the founding of four universities within two years in the regions of Yogyakarta, Klaten, and Solo. This demonstrates that the Revolutionary Period was critical for the development of higher education in Indonesia.

Historiographical data indicate that the number of graduates with a Sarjana Muda (Bachelor's equivalent) from the Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada was significantly lower than the initial enrollment of approximately 80 students (Sumijati, 2008). In an interview, Siti Baroroh Baried mentioned that only six Sarjana Muda graduates, including herself, were able to graduate and proceed to doctoral studies at the Universitas Indonesia. However, the Repertoire FIB UGM cites seven individuals, all of whom would eventually become influential figures in the fields of literature and culture. This fact underscores that higher education during the revolutionary period, despite its constraints, successfully produced a pioneering generation. Conversely, the national higher education system still faced structural limitations, most evident in Baroroh's experience as a student at the Universitas Indonesia, where she and other students had limited access to textbooks, and the curriculum had not yet been fully adapted to national needs (Baroroh, 1985).

A pivotal moment was her encounters with influential lecturers, such as Prof. Dr. Prijana, Dr. Teeuw, and Bapak Katamsi. From them, Siti Baroroh Baried was introduced to Eastern Literature and Indian Culture, which she described as the gateway to studying Indonesian culture and Philology (Baroroh, 1985), which would later become her field of expertise. One of the university's roles is to create learning methods that enhance students' reasoning abilities. This capacity for reason can be cultivated by engaging with fields such as philosophy, history, art, literature, and language (Suwignyo, 2008). Through this academic environment and mentorship, Baroroh was able to expand her intellectual horizons and develop the conceptual and methodological foundations that shaped her subsequent contributions to Philology and the Department of Arabic Literature.

Referencing Keller, individuals within the realm of higher education are a minority yet effective and responsible intellectual elite. Alatas (1988) defined an intellectual as someone who dedicates themselves to contemplating non-material ideas and problems using their capacity for reason (Bambang, 2000). Lecturers like Prof. Dr. Prijana, Dr. A. Teeuw, and Bapak Katamsi were not only instructors with distinct teaching methodologies but also provided access to the international academic world.

The academic and infrastructural support provided by progressive intellectual and bureaucratic figures like Prof. Dr. Prijana bolstered the policy of sending Indonesian students abroad. Siti Baroroh Baried corroborated this in an interview at Universitas Gadjah Mada in 1985.

### **The Scholar's Journey as a Pioneer**

In the early 1950s, even before Siti Baroroh Baried had earned her doctoral degree, she was requested to teach at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM). The fact that she was invited to prepare before obtaining her doctorate demonstrates that the academic institution valued her intellectual quality and personal integrity over formal qualifications. Furthermore, in the early 1950s, Indonesia was still in the phase of developing a national higher education system. During the education congress, the Minister of Teaching and Education formed a committee to draft a bill on education and teaching (Hidayat & Muthalib, 2018). This initiative aimed to establish an education system grounded in Indonesia's own national ideology. Educational practices in independent Indonesia until 1965 were largely influenced by the Dutch education system (Dangu, 2022). The availability of highly qualified teaching staff, such as those with doctorates, was extremely limited. Consequently, many capable and intellectually promising graduates, like Siti Baroroh Baried, were immediately invited to teach, even without a doctorate. Moreover, she was continuously supported in developing her expertise.

In 1953, Prof. Dr. Prijana, who served as the Dean of the Fakultas Sastra at Universitas Indonesia and later as Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture from 1957 to 1959 during President Sukarno's administration, facilitated Siti Baroroh Baried's study of the Arabic language in Egypt. This was driven by the perceived necessity for Arabic language instructors, a gap that Siti Baroroh Baried was deemed capable of filling. Her academic and cultural experiences in Egypt not only enhanced her philological expertise. These experiences also prepared her to address the increasing demand for qualified Arabic language instructors in Indonesia. The strategic importance of Arabic as a medium to access classical texts, literature, and philosophy was already recognized by intellectuals and policymakers in the early 1950s.

Notably, in 1952, Exarch John Hadda, wrote a letter addressed to President Sukarno of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizing the necessity of Arabic for understanding the Qur'an and deriving moral and intellectual lessons for the nation (Exarch, 1952). Complementing this, a subsequent letter to the Ministry of Religious Affairs proposed the introduction of Arabic instruction for university students, highlighting a broader national-level recognition of Arabic's role in academic and cultural development. Within this context, Prof. Dr. Prijana's facilitation of Siti Baroroh Baried's studies in Egypt in 1953-1955 can be seen as a targeted response to both the institutional need for qualified Arabic instructors and the nation's intellectual aspirations. Her time abroad thus bridged personal scholarly development with broader academic and cultural imperatives in post-independence Indonesia.

Beyond her formal academic activities in Egypt, Siti Baroroh Baried demonstrated an intellectual orientation that extended beyond the classroom. In her first year, she studied the Arabic language, followed by Eastern literature in her second year. However, her learning did not stop at linguistic and textual mastery. With a strong sense of cultural mission, Baroroh actively used her stay in Egypt to gain a firsthand understanding of local life. She interacted with farmers (Fellahin) and visited Aswan, an important center of life and a crucial water source for Egypt and Sudan (Tjiptoning, 1956). These field experiences enriched her observations of the connections between geography, natural resources, and regional socio-political dynamics, including the contest for influence in Egypt and Sudan following Sudan's independence. Her observations continued as she explored historical sites in Luxor, deepening her understanding of the continuity between ancient Egyptian culture and modern society.

These experiences shaped Siti Baroroh Baried's understanding of Arabic not merely as a linguistic system but as a medium for comprehending culture, history, and literature. In the context of her efforts to develop higher education in post-independence Indonesia, these experiences also

functioned as intellectual and cultural capital, supporting the development of a philological and humanistic approach to Arabic studies.

It is evidenced by the fact that, upon returning to Gadjah Mada University after completing her studies in Egypt, Siti Baroroh Baried taught courses on Islamic cultural history alongside Arabic. As she explained in her 1991 interview with Kompas, conducted in the context of her retirement, this teaching practice demonstrates how her philological expertise was directly translated into curriculum design that integrated language, culture, and history. In this sense, the development of philology was not merely a background to her scholarly formation. Still, it functioned as a conceptual foundation that directly underpinned the establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature at Gadjah Mada University. The combination of rigorous academic training, cultural observation, and applied teaching thus provided the intellectual framework and institutional vision for the formal establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature in 1963.

This development was significant, not only because Siti Baroroh Baried's expertise was expected to address this need, but also due to the academic consideration that cultural exchange with Middle Eastern countries, with Arabic serving as the primary medium. Thus, the Arabic language department at UGM is not merely a religious language but also a tool to study Arab culture, literature, and civilization. This paradigm shift occurred within UGM itself, marking a departure from prior institutional approaches and positioning Arabic studies within a humanistic and multidisciplinary framework. Unlike the more theologically oriented programs at IAIN/UIN, Baroroh Baried's initiative emphasized the Arabic language as a means to understand broader cultural, historical, and literary contexts. Her academic experiences in Egypt, where she studied Arabic and Eastern Literature, provided the methodological and cultural perspective necessary to implement this vision (Baroroh, 1985), effectively transforming Arabic studies into a bridge between language, culture, and the humanities within a general university setting.

As a female academic, Siti Baroroh Baried demonstrated intellectual courage by innovating the Arabic studies curriculum in a predominantly conservative and male-dominated environment (Arquisola, 2022). Her approach framed Arabic studies within a multidisciplinary and humanistic perspective, aligning with Kuntowijoyo's (2006) view that humanities education conveys human values and their symbolic expressions. Specifically, she introduced courses on Islamic Culture and Orientalism, broadening the scope of Arabic studies beyond traditional religious instruction and integrating historical, literary, and cultural analyses. This initiative was crucial for Indonesia's efforts to assert its position against imperialism and to foster relations with Asian-African nations (Soetopo, 1957). According to Dr. Zulfa Purnamawati, Head of the Arabic Study Program, quoting Baroroh Baried, the establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature was motivated by two factors: the need to master Arabic, a language influential to Indonesian, and the need to understand socio-cultural relations between the Middle East and Indonesia. The program also aimed to train Arabic language and literature experts for relevant institutions. By linking classical Arabic texts with contemporary cultural and literary perspectives, Baroroh Baried challenged disciplinary norms and societal assumptions about women's roles in academic leadership, setting a precedent for female scholarship and curricular reform at UGM.

Siti Baroroh Baried's academic journey extended beyond establishing foundational knowledge; it evolved into a concrete contribution to building the academic tradition at UGM. The fields of literature and philology she pursued served as a bridge to understand the cultural landscape of Indonesia from both historical and theoretical perspectives. Consistent with cultural theories developed in Europe and subsequently adapted in Indonesia, which view culture as a system of symbols, values, and social practices constituting a society's identity (Geertz, 1973; Williams, 1981), her philological approach treated classical Arabic texts not merely as linguistic documents but as cultural products embodying social meanings. By analyzing language, style, and content, she revealed the social values and symbolic systems underlying Arab societies, allowing these insights to inform a multidisciplinary and humanistic curriculum. In this way, Siti Baroroh Baried's methodology demonstrates how cultural theory can directly underpin philological practice, connecting textual analysis with broader historical, social, and cultural understanding.

## Discussion

The power of ideas or ethos can significantly influence a specific historical process. The correlation between the interaction of ideas and actions does not arise and develop autonomously from human life (Kartodirdjo, 2014). Furthermore, Soedjito Sosrodiharjo asserted that the structural life of a society is shaped by the influence of one person upon another (Sosrodiharjo, 1992; Huda, 1998). Given this, why should the family be chosen as the initial object before discussing an individual's biography? Because the family serves as the primary source or foundation from which society and the nation emerge. The family is the first cradle of character formation, where noble values are instilled before an individual acquires the ideas and drive to step into the broader social sphere.

Siti Baroroh Baried's existence as a daughter in the Kauman family holds significant meaning. Her father, who worked as a teacher at a Muhammadiyah school, represented a male authority figure emphasizing the importance of education and religious values. As a respected male figure, he not only directed his children to study but also stressed moral and spiritual values in daily life. Her mother, conversely, demonstrated the active role of women in the economic sector through the batik trade. Through this activity, her mother exemplified how women contributed to driving the traditional economy during that era.

The dual roles of her parents illustrate two distinct models of gender relations: patriarchal authority grounded in religious education and female mobility in the domestic-public economy. Observing her mother navigate a cross-city batik trade network provided Baroroh with early insight into women's capacity to participate in public and economic spheres. This empirical observation aligns with previous studies on Javanese women's roles, which highlight the negotiation between domestic obligations and engagement in economic or social activities (Suryakusuma, 2004; Huda, 1998). Within the context of Muhammadiyah women, for instance, mothers' active participation in economic and community initiatives served as a model for social mobility and intellectual engagement (Ro'fah, 2016). Baroroh's experience thus exemplifies how gender norms were not rigidly deterministic but could be navigated strategically, with women exercising agency within both familial and broader societal frameworks.

The selection of a spouse from "within" the community can be analyzed through Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship structure, which views marriage as a system of female exchange that organizes social alliances between groups. In the Kauman context, while marriages were endogamous, keeping women within the community, this structure also mediated access to educational, religious, and intellectual networks. Siti Baroroh Baried's marriage to Baried Ishom, a highly educated physician and active member of Muhammadiyah, exemplifies how the social constraints of endogamy could simultaneously create opportunities for intellectual engagement. Thus, Lévi-Strauss's framework helps explain not only the community's control over women's social relations but also the structural channels through which Baroroh accessed mentors, academic support, and networks that shaped her scholarly trajectory. In this sense, her marriage functioned as a bridge linking patriarchal social norms with the expansion of women's roles in education and intellectual life.

The Islamic concept of family, reflected in the relationship between Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah, suggests the existence of a religious Muslim culture (Ro'fah, 2016). For Siti Baroroh Baried, this environment provided a strong spiritual foundation and access to women's community organizations like Aisyiyah, which opened avenues for women to engage in education, da'wah, and social activities. From an early age, Baroroh navigated the tension between adherence to patriarchal norms and emerging opportunities for social and intellectual mobility.

A comparison with Nyai Ahmad Dahlan (Siti Walidah), who pioneered women's education through Aisyiyah in the early 20th century, highlights both continuity and generational difference. Siti Walidah confronted colonial and early cultural dominance, emphasizing religious education and empowerment in the social-religious domain (Ro'fah, 2016). In contrast, Baroroh, born in a post-independence context, engaged with modern academia, focusing on philology and classical manuscripts (Ruliah, 2019). This contrast demonstrates that Kauman women did not merely endure patriarchal structures; they strategically leveraged their habitus and social networks to access education and intellectual arenas, translating cultural capital into scholarly agency. Thus, the comparison serves as a lens to understand Baroroh's trajectory: it is not only the continuation of a tradition of women's engagement but also its transformation, where religiously grounded social capital intersects with higher education to produce new forms of female intellectual leadership.



The Aisyiyah organization, benefiting from the socio-economic status of its leaders who received support from batik entrepreneurs and possessed sound educational backgrounds, was able to provide educational facilities (Huda, 1998). Colonial data show that in the 1930s, primary school participation rates for boys were significantly higher than for girls; only about 7–10% of native Indonesian girls could access primary education, while boys reached over 20% (Locher-Scholten, 2000). In this context, Siti Baroroh Baried represents an exceptional minority, a young woman who successfully penetrated structural gender and colonial barriers.

Her family's socio-economic and religious position in Kauman played a crucial role in enabling this outcome. Her mother's active involvement in the batik trade provided economic resources necessary for schooling, while her father's role as a Muhammadiyah teacher and the family's integration into religious and educational networks offered both social legitimacy and access to progressive avenues for female education. The combination of these factors functioned as both economic and social-religious capital, facilitating Baroroh's ability to pursue higher education in an era when opportunities for indigenous women were extremely limited. Moreover, her success reflects the broader influence of the Muhammadiyah reform movement, which emphasized the importance of education for women since the early 20th century (Peacock, 1978), showing that individual achievement was embedded within supportive social and institutional structures.

More complete records of Siti Baroroh Baried's activities are available from her time entering higher education at Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada, continuing to Universiteit Indonesia, and her study experience abroad, including in Cairo, Egypt. However, the period of her early education and teaching service is crucial to emphasize as the foundation that shaped Siti Baroroh Baried's intellectual character and social commitment. She not only acquired academic skills but also cultivated an ethos of service that consistently defined her intellectual journey.

The intellectual network and the context of higher education during the revolutionary period were also formative factors in Siti Baroroh Baried's academic journey. In an era still influenced by patriarchal social norms that distanced women from education and confined them to the domestic sphere, and where women's access to higher education was severely restricted, Siti Baroroh Baried's endeavor to pursue studies can be understood as part of an effort to transcend cultural boundaries (Blackburn, 2004). The support of progressive academics and bureaucratic figures, such as Prof. Dr. Prijana, further expanded Siti Baroroh Baried's scope, enabling her to continue her studies at Universiteit Indonesia and subsequently in Cairo, Egypt (Tjiptoning, 1956). After successfully graduating with a baccalaureate (Bachelor's equivalent) from Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada in the late 1940s, she continued her studies at Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta with the assistance and support of her lecturers. Balai Jajasan Gadjah Mada was officially inaugurated as Universitas Gadjah Mada on August 14, 1950 (Musliichah, 2016).

Consequently, Siti Baroroh Baried's educational trajectory reflects not only individual achievement but also the interaction between structural barriers, historical opportunities, and academic networks. Furthermore, her success in overcoming social and academic limitations during the early independence period demonstrates that Indonesian women possessed the capacity to become significant actors in the nation's intellectual and cultural transformation. Siti Baroroh Baried's journey to study abroad ultimately did more than enrich her knowledge; it became a symbol of changing times. She represented Indonesian women capable of negotiating their cultural identity and role amid national transformation.

Upon returning to Indonesia, Siti Baroroh Baried not only taught and researched classical manuscripts but also affirmed the fundamental principle that women have a place in the academic sphere, which had historically been male-dominated. Her dedication to preserving and studying ancient manuscripts strengthened her position as a scholar contributing to the development of philology while legitimizing the presence of women in higher education. This experience and achievement served as an intellectual and symbolic foundation for the establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature at Gadjah Mada University, as her philological expertise and humanistic, multidisciplinary vision provided the framework for a curriculum integrating Arabic language, culture, and history. In this way, Baroroh Baried became a symbol of the interconnectedness between the dynamics of the newly independent state, the struggle for education, women's emancipation, and the building of academic institutions, demonstrating how women's participation in intellectual life can drive structural transformation within the university.

Examining Siti Baroroh Baried's career between 1946 and 1963 provides crucial insight into her contributions to Indonesian education and culture, particularly in the development of Arabic studies at Gadjah Mada University. In the early post-independence period, when educational infrastructure was still limited and the academic landscape was being established, Baroroh emerged as a consistent figure affirming the role of knowledge and culture in shaping national identity. She was actively engaged in the academic sphere through studies in philology and literature, developing a research tradition that combined scientific methodology with a profound understanding of the Nusantara's cultural heritage, while emphasizing the importance of mastering the Arabic language as a medium for understanding Arab literature, history, and culture.

Siti Baroroh Baried's role exemplifies the integration of higher education and cultural development as a cornerstone of nation-building. Her studies in Egypt and expertise in philology provided the intellectual foundation for the establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature at Gadjah Mada University, where she designed a curriculum that integrated Arabic language, culture, and history within a humanistic and multidisciplinary framework. Her experiences in Egypt not only broadened her understanding of Arabic and Eastern literature but also equipped her with a holistic approach: Arabic was viewed not merely as a linguistic or religious subject, but as a means to comprehend Arab history, culture, and literature in an integrated manner.

With this foundation, upon returning to Gadjah Mada University, Siti Baroroh Baried taught courses on Islamic cultural history alongside Arabic, demonstrating an integrated approach that connected language, culture, and history. The combination of rigorous academic training, cultural observation, and applied teaching provided the intellectual framework and institutional vision that underpinned the formal establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature in 1963. In this context, philology served as a crucial tool: through the analysis of classical Arabic texts, Baroroh Baried was able to develop a curriculum that combined language mastery with historical understanding and literary appreciation. Philology thus became not merely an academic skill but a strategic medium linking Arabic studies with institutional development and the cultivation of scholarly traditions at UGM.

Siti Baroroh can be understood as a female intellectual whose work at Gadjah Mada University extended beyond the classroom, directly contributing to the development of Arabic language and literature programs. She designed a teaching program emphasizing a comprehensive understanding of Arabic, connecting language proficiency with cultural and historical literacy. Through philology, she accessed, analyzed, and interpreted classical texts, enabling students to engage not only with language but also with the broader context of Arab culture, literature, and history. Her moderate and inclusive perspective shaped a vision for Arabic studies that was both humanistic and multidisciplinary, highlighting that language is not merely a tool for communication but also a medium for understanding the richness of Arab literary and cultural traditions. Her commitment is evident in the curriculum innovations and teaching approaches that positioned the Department of Arabic Literature at UGM as a center of Arabic scholarship in Indonesia.

While her activities after 1963 further extended her influence, in this study, they are considered primarily as the consequence and legacy of her formative work during 1946–1963. In this period, Baroroh's contributions positioned her within the broader national intellectual dynamic while simultaneously establishing the Department of Arabic Literature as a humanistic, multidisciplinary, and progressive academic institution at UGM. She represents the first generation of Indonesian women who actively produced knowledge, marking a significant milestone in the history of Arabic studies, philological application, and women's participation in the academic sphere.

## **Conclusion**

Siti Baroroh Baried's academic experiences in Egypt provided her with both linguistic mastery and a deep cultural understanding of the Arab world. During her studies, she engaged directly with the Arabic language and Eastern literature while observing social, historical, and cultural life, which enriched her perspective beyond the classroom. Philology served as a methodological tool, enabling her to analyze classical texts critically and connect them with historical and cultural contexts.

Upon returning to Gadjah Mada University, Baroroh applied this knowledge to develop the Department of Arabic Literature. She designed a curriculum that integrated Arabic language, literature, and cultural studies, positioning Arabic not merely as a religious language but as a medium for understanding Arab civilization and Nusantara literary traditions. Her Egyptian experience, combined

with philological methods, bridged individual scholarly mastery with institutional innovation, establishing UGM as a center where Arabic studies connected language proficiency with broader cultural, historical, and literary understanding.

Through this approach, Baroroh not only contributed to the preservation and interpretation of classical manuscripts but also legitimized women's roles in higher education and intellectual leadership. The establishment of the Department of Arabic Literature in 1963 thus reflected her vision of integrating rigorous scholarship, cultural insight, and humanistic education, demonstrating how Arabic studies could serve both academic and nation-building purposes.

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