

INDONESIAN MUSLIM WOMEN

Between Culture, Religion, and Politics

Bani Syarif Maula
Faculty of Syari'ah IAIN Purwokerto
banisyarifm@gmail.com

Abstract

Islam in Indonesia is culturally very different from that in the Middle East, particularly related to a tradition of greater freedom for women in public places. In Indonesia, there are many women entering public and political arena and even women are seeking and achieving unprecedented power and influence in public life. However, there are some barriers from religion and culture that give burdens to women to express their political views and to involve in public life. Very often women who want to enter politics find that the political and public environment is not conducive to their participation. This paper discusses cultural, religious, and political factors of the difficulties faced by Indonesian Muslim women to participate freely in public and political lives. This paper looks at how women's status in cultural and social structure influences the involvement of women in political activities. This study is a philosophical investigation of the value of culture, religion, and politics to Indonesian women in democratic practices. With the use of intensive reading of books and other information sources, together with policy document analysis, the study aims to explore the problems and possibilities of putting the visions of democracy into practice in contemporary Indonesian women, to explore the nature of culture, religion, and politics in Indonesia in influencing women's political activism, and to understand both the status of Muslim women and the dynamics of Muslim societies in Indonesia. This paper concludes that women are still under-represented in public and political institutions in Indonesia. The long struggle of women's movement for equal rights has not been easy due to the cultural and religious reasons.

Keywords: Muslim women, culture, religion, politics

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a large and extraordinarily diverse country, whose population of some 220 million people is spread over thousands of islands with about three hundred ethnic groups, among which the most important and wide-spread is Javanese. With regard to the religious life, most of the major world religions are represented in Indonesia, besides local religions and animistic beliefs (Susan Blackburn, 2004:2). Among these faiths, Islam constitutes about 87 percent of the population; making it the largest religious group in the country, and dominating people's lives considerably (Benyamin Fleming Intan, 2006:31). Moreover, Indonesia is culturally very different from the Middle East or west or south Asia, particularly related to a tradition of greater freedom for women in public places (Susan Blackburn, 2008: 96).

In Indonesia's present days there are many women entering public and political arena and even women are seeking and achieving unprecedented power and influence in public life. Movements for Muslim women to seek roles in national leadership have increased rapidly. Greater opportunities for women in education and changing national political situation have encouraged their involvement in politics. However, there are some barriers, such as religion and culture, that give burdens to women to express their political views and to involve in public life.

Even though, there are no more 'political taboo' and formal legal barriers that prevent women from taking part in decision making and women's social and economic position has gradually improved, very often women who want to enter politics find that the political and public environment is not conducive to their participation, besides cultural and social reasons. Women still feel that it is quite difficult for them to enter the public political arena and to articulate their needs and concerns to the state (Susan Blackburn, 2008:104). The continued perception of the dichotomy between private and public spheres has made it difficult of women to be actively involved in political life. This paper discusses cultural, religious, and political factors of the difficulties faced by Indonesian Muslim women to participate freely in public and political lives. This paper looks at how women's status in

cultural and social structure, which is basically based on religious beliefs, influences the involvement of women in political activities.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a philosophical investigation of the value of culture, religion, and politics to Indonesian women in democratic practices for developing civic competencies. The investigation of democratic practices as a conceptual framework is purposely chosen because of the antidemocratic nature of many Islamic views of contemporary Indonesian Muslims. With the use of intensive reading of books and other information sources, together with policy document analysis, the study aims to explore the problems and possibilities of putting the visions of democracy into practice in contemporary Indonesian women, to explore the nature of culture, religion, and politics in Indonesia in influencing women's political activism, and to understand both the status of Muslim women and the dynamics of Muslim societies in Indonesia.

After the introductory part, this study is divided into four sections. In the first section, the issue about Indonesian Muslim Women and Culture is discussed. In the second section, the topic of Indonesian Muslim Women and Religious Interpretations is elaborated. In the third section, the related issue of Indonesian Muslim Women and Politics is defined and analyzed. And the last section is concluding remark.

C. INDONESIAN MUSLIM WOMEN AND CULTURE

The social and political dominance of the Javanese is a feature of Indonesian society. Javanese society, along with its culture and tradition, dominates most of the Indonesian society in general. The cultural hegemony of Javanese in Indonesian society happens because of political supports, formal education system and the media. Javanese values, views and lifestyle have become the source and standard reference for many of the ideals and values of the larger community, not to mention the entire modern Indonesian society (Martin van Bruinessen, 1999:46-63)

In Javanese view, women's destiny is primarily centered on a women's role as wife and mother. There is a common cultural justification for women's subordination in Javanese culture where women (wives) are defined as a "background companion" or the better one "the companion at the husband's side" (Kathryn Robinson, 2009:71). This maxim reminds them that women's role is to sit behind her husband (both a literal and figurative custom) and support him as he needs. This gender conception has remained unchanged and even reinforced by Islam. Many Indonesian Muslims believe that according to Qur'an Surah An-Nisa' 34 if women (wives) fail to respect this obligation, men (husbands) have the right to beat them (Clarissa Adamson, 2007:10).

Therefore, Indonesian society in general is actually influenced dominantly by the Javanese culture, which is supported by traditional Islamic traditions and the state's intervention in determining people's gender roles. The influence of Javanese culture, religious beliefs and state's gender ideology, in which their patriarchal value systems predominantly discriminate against women, are obviously responsible for the continuing considerable influence of this ideal in the way it subordinates women to men.

However, democratization gives women new important opportunities to act as citizens of a democratic state (Elizabeth Martyn, 2005:3). For Indonesian women, this opportunity came when Suharto's authoritarian, patriarchal regime ended its power in 1998, and Indonesia began a new process of democratic transition. Indonesian women had to define their roles, citizenship and participation in a more democratic government, tasks largely met through their vigorous social-movement activism.

As a democratic country, the Indonesia's Constitution guarantees equality before the law, equal protection of the law, and enjoyment of equal rights and obligations for its entire citizens (Vienna Human Rights Conference:1993). However, gender discrimination persists in practice. As mentioned above, the status of women in Indonesia is lower than men. Because of this fact, there have been some movements for the improvement of the status of women and a drive for a more gender equal society. Actually, the women's movement itself and quest for

equality has existed since the nationalist movement for Independence began in the early twentieth century until the present days (Elizabeth Martyn, 2005:3).

According to Blackburn, the women's movement in Indonesia that emerged in the early twentieth century was characterized by nationalist movement (Susan Blackburn: 2001). Many women's organizations persisted in trying to create a united nationalist women's movement, which gained support and solidarity of the male-led nationalist movement at the time, because the nationalist movement and women's movement shared similar goals in gaining independence (Susan Blackburn: 2001). When Independence was finally achieved in 1945 the new democratic government gave women's rights a huge boost granting them legal rights in the constitution, the right to vote, and the right to equal pay. Furthermore, when the new marriage law was enacted in 1974, Indonesian women got their further rights in term of legal protections and greater power than before in the realm of family matters (Ratna Batara Munti, and Hindun Anisah, 2005:12-15). In general, women also became part of the country's development process as many women were appointed as government officers including decision makers, and when the government took greater supervision over the previously Islamic run court system, more women also held a position as judges, and decisions, particularly about divorce and polygamy, were less arbitrary and weighted against wives (Susan Blackburn:2005).

Since Indonesia's independence in 1945, women have been granted constitutionally equal rights with men, but in spite of their heterogeneity as a group, their common role as mothers and housewives is highly glorified in Indonesian context, in which men dominate almost all aspects of social lives (Suzy Azeahary, 1997:9) This patriarchal understanding of gender roles at the familial level coincided with the national-level ideology of dominance and subordination in such a way as to directly impact women's lives and bodies (Clarissa Adamson, 2007:19). Even the government implemented this view in its policies and even national laws.

Indonesian laws clearly state that the rights and position of women are equal to the rights and position of men. However, in practice, and in some regulations, treatment is unequal. Women, or wives in this context, are assigned the nurturing

and reproductive role in the private sphere, while men, or husbands, are assigned the productive role in the public sphere. The Marriage Law (Act No.1/1974), which is still in force until present day, is a good example that represents general principles of gender roles at the familial level based on patriarchal values. Article 31 of the law states that “the rights and position of the wife are equal to the rights and position of the husband, both in the family and in society”. However, polygamy may be allowed upon mutual petition to the court. Moreover, “the husband is the head of the family, while the wife is the mother of the household. The husband is the provider of the family.” The husband is expected to protect his wife and “provide for all necessities of life required in a family to the best of his ability,” while “the wife shall manage the household to the best of her ability.” These provisions reflect the socio-legal status of Indonesian women, which of course undermine women’s equality, development, and advancement (The Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2002:45).

Moreover, in 1973, the Ministry of Internal Affairs officially implemented the Family Welfare Movement (*PKK, Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*) as a central government project. The *PKK* promoted five major roles for women, which were women as loyal backstop and supporter of her husband, as caretaker of her household, as producer of future generations, as the family’s prime socializer, and as Indonesian citizen (Norma Sullivan,1983:148). The program was highly criticized for its excessive emphasis on women’s role as wife and mother and for its being the primary channel of communication between the state and village women. Moreover, its organizational structure is strictly a top-down model, adopted from the bureaucratic and military hierarchy. The head of the *PKK* is always the wife of the bureaucratic leader. For example, in any province, the governor’s wife will automatically be the leader of the *PKK* regardless of her capabilities (Suzy Azeharie, 1997:9).

After the establishment of the *PKK*, numerous other wives’ associations were formed. These included the Navy Wives’ Association, the Doctors Wives’ Association, the Economists Wives’ Association, the Civil Servants Wives’ Association, whose membership was mainly based on a women’s marital status and

her husband's work position, and the organizational hierarchy paralleled the work hierarchy of their bureaucrat husbands (Laura Cooley,1992:226). Additionally, it was always the wives of high ranking officials who hold leading positions, and therefore lower ranking wives have no opportunity to take part in decision making within the organizational structure.

Their members' primary concern was actually to maintain woman's traditional societal roles in relation to her husband and family, and to support her husband in the workplace environment (Laura Cooley,1992:226). Therefore, a strong motherhood ideology, which means how to be a good and subservient wife, a dedicated mother for the children, and the nation, was the dominant focus of these associations. By forming this project, Suharto regime could ensure the political loyalty of the wives of civil servants, while at the same time controlling them in order to secure political stability (Saraswati Sunindyo, 1996:135-136).

Indonesian women's rights activists, scholars and intellectuals, for a long time criticized the ways Suharto's policy put women in a secondary status in society as a mother and wife. Since the early 1980s, many of these activists and intellectuals worked with non-governmental organizations to implement a variety of strategies and programs aimed to stimulate people to think critically about how their conceptions of family and gender roles were influenced and manipulated by the government's policy. Among their practices, gender activists hold public campaigns through newspaper and magazine editorials, television and radio talk shows, and seminars to promote women's rights and deconstruct constraining ideologies (Clarissa Adamson, 2007:10).

Suryakusuma, as one of the gender activists, overtly criticizes the Suharto regime's gender ideology. She suggested that the state's gender ideology, which tended to domesticate women, had been spread throughout Indonesia by non-political women's organizations such as the *PKK*. Suryakusuma argues that this ideology tended to be urban and upper-middle class oriented, because it promoted activities and values which were irrelevant to the lives of poor rural women who mostly must work for their survival and do not have time to join in such activities such as cooking, knitting and sewing classes. She also criticizes this ideology for

overlooking many aspects of rural life such as a large number of female-headed households, the high rate of divorce, desertion, migration and unemployed husbands. This ideology, she argues, views women merely as male dependants and therefore denies their autonomy as widows, divorcees and single women (Julia I. Suryakusuma, 2004:161-188).

Suryakusuma also highlighted the negative effects of Suharto regime's gender ideology, such as the assumption that women were housewives that led women to be regarded as the 'secondary income earner', an assumption which was then used to justify lower wages and salaries for women. In addition, she argues, the view that men are the heads of households would exclude women from certain beneficial programs such as credit extensions and income generating programs (Julia I. Suryakusuma, 2004:161-188).

After the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, new women's organizations were mushrooming and more vibrant than ever and engaged in a wide range of activities without the backing of state sponsorship and power. Therefore, government-sponsored women's organizations, such as the *PKK*, had to adapt to a world in which gender ideology has changed and the basis for their membership has become purely voluntary (Susan Blackburn, 2005:29). The democratization era in Indonesia since the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998 gives women important new opportunities to act as citizens of a democratic polity.

Those new women's organizations share similar concerns in some aspects, particularly protecting women's rights and freedoms, and they also have similar agendas of challenging domination of patriarchal values by reinterpreting religious precepts and modernizing cultural traditions.

Similarly, not long after the demise of President Suharto, several radical Muslims organizations also appeared in early 2000. Those organizations share similar concerns in some aspects, particularly in the implementation of Shari'a law, and they also have similar agendas of challenging domination and influence of Western countries and Western ideas (Saeful Umam, 2006:171), including gender equality ideas brought about by moderate Muslim women's organizations.

To some extent, their agenda is quite success. This can be seen from a growing number of Shari'a-based regional regulations (Singapore: ISEAS, 2007:126). The shift away from a strong centralized state to regional autonomy based on the districts since the fall of Suharto has enabled some local authorities, which support the Islamist agenda, to enact regional regulations that limit the autonomy of women in regard to dress, travelling, being in public after dark, and denying their rights to sit in a high office (Dewi Candraningrum, 2006). The increasing popularity of the striking symbol of gendered Islamic identity, i.e. head covering, is an indication of Islamists' success in implementing their agenda. Moreover, in the name of the imposition of Shari'a law, in a number of places such as Jakarta and Kendal in Central Java, regional regulations state that only household heads are eligible to join the local government council (BPD), remembering that the 1974 Marriage Law legislates that men are household heads (Kathryn Robinson, 1993:173). The public debate in 1999 about whether Indonesia as a majority Muslim nation could have a woman president is another case, which indicates that the Islamist agenda actually has existed since in the beginning of reform era in 1998.

In fact, many moderate Muslims, which constitute the largest Muslim population in Indonesia, believed that what Islamist tried to implement Shari'a law was actually an Arabization process among them rather than Islamization. However, this situation becomes another challenge for moderate Muslim women's organizations to implement their agenda to uphold gender equity in the country, besides local cultures which influence the status of women in public life, as already mentioned above. Therefore, it could be said that in the era of Suharto authoritarian regime, Javanese culture dominated; while in the reform era, the Arabic culture, which masqueraded as Islamization, prevailed. The latter was actually considered by many Indonesians as beyond their Muslims' tradition and originating beyond their culture.

D. INDONESIAN MUSLIM WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Any discussion relating to women in Muslim societies has to take Islamic law into consideration to show that Islam does or does not give women certain rights. This is because when women's status in Islam is questioned, most people refer to the sources of Islamic law, which are the Qur'an and prophetic tradition, sometimes including jurisprudence. However, analyzing isolated passages from these sources is not likely to give an accurate portrayal of women's rights, nor do these sources necessarily reflect actual practice, because every Muslim society has its own culture and tradition that influence the interpretation of Islamic precepts, which is in turn implemented in Muslims' daily lives.

The perceptions of women among Indonesian Muslims in general have been influenced by various elements. One of them is the influence of Javanese tradition in interpreting Islamic precepts and teaching. Many Muslims believe that women are regarded as carnal temptation, for the mythical Eve was constructed as the seducer. The root of the devaluation of women has its source from the belief that Eve was created from Adam's left rib. Influenced by Javanese culture, many Indonesian Muslims perceive that, unlike men, women are unable to have spiritual power due to their role as mothers and servile wives. It is only males who have the potency to achieve the spiritual power and thus attain a refined life. In the tradition of Java, since childhood, women are trained to be submissive wives rather than mothers (Suzy Azeharie, 1997:118). According to Javanese culture, "a good woman is one whose place is in the home, being a loyal, submissive and supportive wife, handling the domestic chores and being responsible for the children" (Suzy Azeharie, 1997:118).

The idea of a good woman in Javanese culture is then entrenched in the Indonesian Marriage law No. 1/1974, article 31, as mentioned above, which divides men's and women's jobs into two rigid areas, the public and private domain. Moreover, as the Islamic rules allow polygamy, the Indonesian Marriage Law also does in article 3, 4 and 5. In this regards, many Indonesian Muslim scholars mirror Javanese tradition, because one of the social signs of power, according to Anderson,

is fertility, the Javanese holds that the possession of a woman is considered a natural attribute of power (Suzy Azeharie, 1997:118).

To evince women's role as wives and mothers living in private domain, which is of course subordinate status to men, many Indonesian traditional Muslim scholars argue by focusing on a Qur'anic text Sura An-Nisa' 34. From the official Indonesian translation of the Qur'an, the passage reads:

Men are the leaders (*qawwamun*) of women, because Allah has blessed them (men) with more than women and because they (men) spend their wealth on women. Because of this, virtuous women are those who obey Allah and restrain themselves when they are without their husband because Allah will protect them. Women who you fear defy you [their husband], admonish them, separate yourself from their bed and beat them (*daraba*), (Q.S An-Nisa':34).

Many Muslims in Indonesia believe that this verse prescribes that men are the leaders (*qawwam*) of women. Their argument is also supported by *hadiths*, which are usually cited and interpreted literally in order to keep women stay in home. One of the *hadiths* stipulates that "women should have their husband's permission if they want to go out of their houses into public world, because women's appropriate place is in the domestic domain" (Masdar Farid Mas'udi, 1993:158-159). Moreover, female sexuality, for many Muslims' perception, is seen as being more powerful and destructive than that of a man, and is identified as *fitna* or chaos. Therefore, according to them, women must be controlled to prevent men from being distracted from their social and religious duties. Another *hadith*, which is very popular and always cited by Indonesian conservative Muslim scholars, even stipulates that "people would not be prosperous if ruled by a woman" (in Arabic: *Lan yufliha qaum wallau amrahum imra'ah*), (Kathryn Robinson:168) and (also Masdar Farid Mas'udi: 158-159).

During the 1999 election period, the Qur'anic passage and those *hadiths* were hotly debated in public arenas in the context of the statement by some Indonesian Muslim religious scholars that women could not become a president according to Islamic law (Clarissa Adamson:10). The controversy of women's political rights, in this context was women's rights to leadership roles, erupted when the Indonesian

Council of Islamic Scholars (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI) asserted that the popular presidential candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri was not permitted to be president according to Islamic law because she is a woman (Clarissa Adamson:10), even though other moderate Muslim scholars had different interpretation. They believed that the Qur'anic prescription and *hadiths* cited above to argue against women becoming political leaders were misinterpretations of injunctions relating to domestic affairs (Kathryn Robinson: 169). A survey carried out in 2002 by the research institute PPIM confirmed such opinion even though it was not represented a majority: 26 percent of respondents believe that a woman cannot be the president of the country, while 7 percent think a woman should not be a member of parliament (Martin van Bruinessen, 2003).

The public debate about women's rights to leadership and a survey result above demonstrated the degree to which issues about women's roles both inside and outside the family contributed to the personalization of political concerns and visions of modernization. The debates whether Indonesia as a majority Muslim nation could have a woman president would seem on the surface to indicate that Islam is an important source of gender inequity in Indonesia (Kathryn Robinson: 21). Nonetheless, these debates provided gender activists with a timely context in which to encourage people to re-consider their understandings of women's roles in Islam (Clarissa Adamson:11).

Under Javanese culture, supported by literalist interpretation of Islamic prescriptions, Indonesian women were not appropriate to get involved and play a role in political life. Traditional Javanese women were not accustomed to play a part in politics, and had never been encouraged to do so. Politics appeared to be a man's world in which women did not feel at ease and for which they had no training. Similarly, when Suharto regime used ideology of compulsory motherhood for political control, women were actually de-politicized as housewives and mothers, losing their political rights.

However, in recent years, in the period following the demise of the Suharto regime, the opportunity to express political rights have been opened much wider than before, in line with growing awareness about human rights in general. With

the rise of an educated middle class, improved communications with the rest of the world and pressure from aid donors, the legitimacy of rights discourse grew in this country (Susan Blackburn:99). Similarly, in the same time there has been a growing number of women's movement, which makes several women's groups become more active through the process of struggling for democratic rights in order to achieve the needs of women. The women's movement is essential to achieve a more gender equal society, both in theory and in practice. Through women's movements, Indonesian women are expected to get significant achievements and women would be able to do many things for positive social changes, as far as women's rights are concerned. Many urban women are now educated and able to work outside the home. More women hold good positions in government offices and their proportion increases continuously. Education among women is wide spread, employment is also more accessible, and more legal instruments will protect the women's rights. This condition may provide more space and opportunities for women to represent their needs and interests than previous times.

This achievement has improved conditions and opportunities for many women, particularly those of the middle and higher class. The women's movement has also engaged in collective action that has changed policies and decision-making structures, so that they may better address issues of gender discrimination.

In addition to the political change that was followed by reform and democratization, the reinterpretation of Islamic law regarding women's rights among younger generation of Indonesian Muslims become more prevalent. There is a current tendency among younger moderate Muslims to move in a more progressive direction in gender activism in Indonesia. This trend has emerged as a result of changing local, national, and global socio-political influences, particularly the rise of progressive Muslim ideas in Indonesia. Based on the vision of making the Islamic religious interpretation more egalitarian and emancipatory, formulated by these activists, the shift has made Islamic texts more dynamic through a constructive dialogue with contemporary human reality which in turn put an agenda of socio-cultural transformation into real activism.

The Indonesian moderate Muslims believe how Islam provides an important place for women in the community, and guarantees their rights. By referring to the sources of Islamic law, Muslim women intellectuals and activists search for and develop strategies to challenge inequalities in their societies, question women's status in Muslim societies and provide an alternative concept of women's rights in Islam. They also endorse and promote women's participation in public sphere, particularly participation in decision-making processes. By doing this, according to Cooke, Muslim women are constructing a cosmopolitan identity with local roots that unites them in a shared culture, diffused by education and modernization, because Indonesian women, along with women from other countries, are increasingly aware of connections among their experiences and those of Muslim women elsewhere (Miriam Cooke, in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 24: 98-99).

The growing number of moderate Muslim women's organizations is not without challenge. The movements of radical Muslims have also been more intense since democratization in the freer political climate after the Suharto regime, as already explained above. However, in more democratic political atmosphere, many women's organizations, along with human rights groups, also oppose any regulation that restrict the autonomy of women in public lives and challenge those regional regulations that limit women's rights by judicial review.

Simultaneously, in the era of democratization after the demise of the authoritarian regime, women take more opportunity to negotiate inside and outside parliament for extended rights (Susan Blackburn: 99). Many women become accustomed to exercising and demanding their rights as citizens, and more Indonesian women have been active in attempting to influence government policy (Susan Blackburn: 99). This new climate of openness has created scope for women to make political gains, which include, among other things, the outlawing of domestic violence and the recognition of rape in marriage, the electoral quota, and the visible symbol of a woman president (Kathryn Robinson: 181). Therefore, distinction of private and public domain for women and men, at least among middle-class people, tends to be meaningless in Indonesian society today, where

notions of the private scarcely exist and women have always moved and worked freely in public places (Susan Blackburn, in *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 34,1999:191).

E. INDONESIAN MUSLIM WOMEN AND POLITICS

Women's participation in politics, as an indicator of equality between women and men, is one of the fundamental rights of women that have been stated in the CEDAW and many other international documents. However, in Indonesia, women could only participate in politics if the rights of citizen would be granted and protected by the state. Therefore, when the Suharto's authoritarian regime resigned in 1998, Indonesian women's rights advocacy gained a new momentum to push women's involvement in political life, as already elaborated above. The new advocacy of the post-Suharto era was coupled with pro-democracy and political participation movements. They quickly discovered that people's desires for democracy—when it was understood as equal representation and voice for all—could be leveraged to argue for gender equality. Since then, many Indonesian women became involved in political activism. Many newer organizations led by women have appeared around the country, establishing independent groups dedicated to issues of gender equality and human rights (Rachel Rinaldo). Given Indonesia's recent history of political repression and the Suharto regime's promulgation of a discriminatory and gendered notion of citizenship, it seems remarkable that there is something of a women's movement at all (Rachel Rinaldo).

Even though those women's organizations are mainly dominated by middle and upper-class women, and are centered largely on Jakarta, they have been actively promoting the rights of women, including the political rights, through their engagement in various political processes. Their actions have led to the adoptions of a number of measures, and the promulgation of legislation by the Indonesian government, one of which promotes women's involvement in political activities by obligating political parties to allocate a 30 percent quota for women candidates on political party lists. However, women candidates are disadvantaged by several factors, especially cultural, religious and economic factors. This means they should

work harder than men to be elected. Women's lack of access to funds and control over the political party machineries that would help them in running successful campaigns is another challenge for women's candidate to win seats in the Parliament (Hana A. Satriyo, 2009).

Achieving the equal opportunity between women and men in the political contestation has always been a complex process. Cultural issues, such as patriarchal culture putting men as the primary decision makers in the society, could obstruct women's performance in competing for the election. Moreover, the system of open-list proportional representation would also become a difficult task for women because of the expensive nature of the system.

F. CONCLUSION

Generally, women are still under-represented in public and political institutions in Indonesia. The long struggle of women's movement for equal rights has not been easy due to the cultural and religious reasons. From the cultural perspective, the Indonesian patriarchal society seems to give the duty of representation to men, and women are expected to comply and be content with the traditional gender roles within the family, in which their duties are taking care of the children, the house, and their husbands.

Moreover, as most of Indonesians are Muslim, religious reasons also become a deterrent for women who want to involve in political life and become political representatives. The Quran verses are usually incorporated to uphold the unequal relationship between men and women, in opposition to the quest for gender equality.

In political sphere, women political opportunities are disadvantaged by several factors, especially cultural, religious and economic factors. This means they should work harder than men to be elected. Women's lack of access to funds and control over the political party machineries that would help them in running successful campaigns is another challenge for women's candidate to win seats in the Parliament. In addition, gender ideology, which emphasized women's domestic roles as wives and mothers, is perpetuated by the state. A strong motherhood

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ideology of the state put women merely as male dependants, by which women's dedication as wives and mothers is glorified as an ideal picture of a good woman. Women's role as housewives are deemed as the only important role of women in social structure, with men regarded as the household heads. This type of state's gender ideology still remains in certain national laws that are contrary to the principle of equality between men and women, such as in Indonesian Marriage Law.

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