

Women's Marginalization from Public Spaces: The Case of Aceh

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Abstract

Women's roles and positions in the governmental system, as well as in other institutions in the contemporary context, can be seen from their involvement in the political arena and the ability of women to occupy decision-making positions. Women's inability to achieve important positions in public is influenced by many factors, including ideology and government policy, as well as by social changes and modernization. This article aims to focus on the condition of Acehnese women by analyzing their roles and positions in the governmental system as well as in other institutions. The discussion intends to explore the factors that have triggered the marginalization of Acehnese women in public. This article implies that the exclusion of Acehnese women from public spaces is largely caused by internal and external factors, by protracted conflicts as well as the modernization process in the region.

Key words

Acehnese women, marginalization, public space, contemporary context, decision making

Introduction

Women's marginalization is still being studied by many researchers and scholars in order to address gender inequality in many aspects of life. Some cases of women's marginalization among Muslims are related to the issue of *hijab*, although in some Arab and Muslim countries, *hijab* is not a symbol of oppression but one of devotion to Islam. Nevertheless, in several Muslim countries, it seems that women are

forced to wear *hijab*. There are also women who are not allowed to drive on the road and are denied education; however, these are exceptional cases (Sloan, 2011). In western countries, there are cases of women being unfairly treated because of their color, religion, ethnicity, and background. Women's oppression for these reasons has encouraged women to find better ways to integrate in the predominantly white society (Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011). This is the era in which women are transforming their status from marginalization to resistance.

Meanwhile, in the case of Aceh, we may find other reasons for marginalization among women. Aceh is a unique case in relation to other part of Indonesia. It was a region of conflict for three decades before this was ended with a peace agreement on 15 August 2005 (Wennmann, 2011). The agreement stated that Aceh would remain as one of the states of Indonesia, but unlike other parts of the country, it was given autonomy in administration. Aceh is also the only province in Indonesia that practices Shariah law after a bill stipulating this was passed by the provincial legislature on Monday, 14 September 2009 (Uddin, 2010).

During the era of conflict in Aceh, women—played important roles in many aspects, including the steps that lead to the peace agreement in August 2005. A number of studies and articles are available on this. However, many of these studies have been more concerned with the Acehnese women from an historical perspective, mainly focusing on the theme of the public roles of women in Aceh (Zainuddin, 1961; Said, 1981; Alfian, 1994; Mernissi, 1994; Zengraaff, 1983; Ibrahim, 1996; Talsya, 1982). Most of these publications explain that Acehnese women always had important positions in the governmental system and played greater roles during the Dutch War in Aceh.

Historical studies show that Acehnese women have played important roles since Taj' al-Alam Safiatuddin (1641-1675) governed the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam. Indeed, a woman had taken the role as Sultan and governed the *Samudra Pasai* Kingdom called *Nibrasiyah Rawangsa Khadiyu* (1400-1428). Indeed, this fact could be read on a grave of one of the Kings of the *Samudra Pasai* Kingdom (Zainuddin, 1961, p. 52). Furthermore, in the middle of the seventeenth-century, there were four women leaders leading the *Aceh Darussalam* Kingdom—Sultanah Taj al-Alam Safiyyat al-Din Syah (1641-1675 M), Sultanah Nur al-'Alam

Nakiyyat al-Din Syah (1675-1678 M), 'Inayat Syah Zakiyyat al-Din Syah (1678-1688 M) and Kamalat Syah (1688-1699 M) (Said, 1981, pp. 377-423).

Moreover, the roles of Acehnese women in public became apparent during the war between the Acehnese people and the Dutch colonial power. During this prolonged struggle, there were occurrences of heroines defending religious values and the nation. In fact, it was shown that women in Aceh were not only involved in the war but were also in positions of command. Cut Nyak Dien was one of the women who fought the Dutch colonialist together with her husband. In historical books, Cut Nyak Dien has been described as a commander with male and female subordinates. During the war, she decided to take on the role of a guerrilla by moving from one jungle to another. She carried on the struggle for years through movement tactics to avoid the Dutch military. At the end, her assistant reported her hiding place to the Dutch. According to Zentgraaff, there were hundreds or even thousands of women who fought against the Dutch military. There was also Pocut Baren, who was an Acehnese woman from the West Coast and known for her vitality among the Acehnese women (Zengraaff, 1983, pp. 111-113).

However, a contradiction has been shown in contemporary contexts in which women in Aceh are not playing significant roles in public spaces, specifically in governmental institutions. Naimah Hasan (2008), in her writing, explains that women at the present time are involved in decision-making (executive), but only to a limited degree. The same also applies to legislative and judicative institutions. In the contemporary context, Acehnese women not only have limited access or opportunity, but also lack strategic positions in any institutions. At the end of 2010, there was an objection from the District House of Representatives towards having a female as a sub district head in Aceh (Srimulyani, 2011).

The facts suggest that the role of women in Aceh has changed, mainly in public spaces, where women have been slowly marginalized in the public sphere compared to previous times. However, there is no fact that shows that women in Aceh have been set back. It has been proven that many women survived the prolonged regional conflict between Jakarta and the Free Aceh Movement for years. In addition, Acehnese women organized a Women's Congress called *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh I*. The *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh I* issued certain recommendations, including

that the conflict in Aceh should be solved through negotiation or a peaceful process (Drexler, 2006, p. 166). Acehese women's activities in the public arena also significantly improved post tsunami and post conflict in Aceh. Although Acehese women have campaigned for women's issues in Law on Governing Aceh [LOGA] and Canons in Legislative Institutions, there are only a limited number of women in legislative positions (Suksi, 2011).

This fact raises the argument that women's roles and positions in Aceh are marginalized in public spaces, although there is no limitation in carrying out activities and traditions within the community. The success of Acehese women to accommodate women's issues in the Law on Governing Aceh [UUPA] and Canons [Local regulations] has been a phenomenon that shows the continuation of women's roles in public spaces. Therefore, the inability of women to achieve important positions in public is mostly influenced by ideology and government policy as well as by social changes and modernization.

This article aims to explain the contemporary context of Acehese women by analyzing their roles and positions in the governmental system as well as in other institutions. The discussion intends to learn the factors that have triggered the marginalization of women in public. The context of this discussion starts with the independence of Indonesia. The purpose is to facilitate the analysis of the changes towards Acehese women post Indonesian Independence, when the ideological and structural changes contributed to women's participation in public spaces.

Acehese Women in Governmental Positions

Women's roles and positions in the governmental system in the contemporary context can be seen from women's involvement in the political arena and the ability of women to occupy decision-making positions. These aspects are important parts of State. Most of the regulations and public policies were made by people who occupy these positions, and they can affect all the activities of women in public spaces.

Acehnese Women and Politics

Evelyn Suleeman quotes from Soetjipto stating that a new definition of political involvement should not only include activities in the public arena, such as political parties, government systems, opposition movements, stakeholders, and community organizations, but also all other activities relating to public power. This differs from the previous context, in which involvement in politics was defined in a very limited way (Suleeman, 2009, p. 101).

One way to explore the involvement of Acehnese women in politics could be by looking at women representatives in the legislative institution. Women's involvement in the legislative institution, for the last ten years, has been very limited, as shown by the number of positions held by women in the Aceh National House of Representatives (DPR), whether at province or district level, from 1999 to 2004 and from 2004 to 2009. From 1999 to 2004, there was the highest participation of Acehnese women in DPR, with women occupying five of the 55 seats available at the provincial level (9.1 percent). Nine other districts/cities did not have any women representatives in the legislative institution; therefore, the women's proportion was about 3.3%.

Following this, there was a change in 2009 during which the women representatives attained only four seats from the 69 seats available, meaning that the female representation dropped to 6.38 percent. This trend did not improve after one woman representative died in the tsunami disaster on the 26th of December 2004. Hence, it is safe to say that in the 2009 election, the number of women representatives did not increase at all. This is clearly the case when women were only able to claim four of the 69 seats available in the Aceh Provincial House of Representatives. Similar situations also occurred in the districts and cities (Srimulyani, 2011).

At the national level, although there were thirteen representatives from Aceh Province, there was only one woman. At the district/city level, from 21 districts/cities, only six districts/cities have had any women representatives in the legislature. These districts and cities are: Sabang, Aceh Besar, Aceh Barat Daya, Simeulu, Gayo Lues and Aceh Tengah. Therefore, in total, the women legislators at districts/cities are 6.35 percent (Hasan, 2008, p. 59).

In actual regulatory matters, women have been allocated a proportion to participate in the legislature according to regulations from 2003. On the 18th of February 2003, the Aceh National House of Representatives (DPR) signed a Bill (UU) Number 12/2003 on the Election of DPR and Provincial DPRD representatives that required to include 30 percent of legislators should be women. In addition, the Indonesian Government issued Bill Number 2/2008 on Political Parties that obligates having women representatives amounting to at least 30 percent in order to form a new political party. The UU states that political parties should include women; otherwise they would be rejected from registering for an election (Suleeman, 2009, pp. 101-102).

Although both the Aceh and Indonesian Governments have issued a policy on including 30 percent of representatives to be women, its implementation is still low with women representatives making up only 10 percent at the present time. This phenomenon started to emerge a few years back, from the low level of involvement of women in the local elections in Aceh for governorship, and for the district/cities leaders in the 11 December 2006 elections. There were 40 positions available, but, at the end, there was only one woman elected from Banda Aceh (Hasan, 2008, p. 60).

The reality of the situation did not reflect the opportunities provided by the Aceh Provincial Government in the last local election. It was mentioned in the Canon Aceh Number 2, Year 2004, on governor/deputy and district/city leaders' election mechanisms that was later changed into the Canon Number 3, Year 2005, and Canon Number 7, Year 2006. These regulations provided better opportunities for political parties to invite independent candidates that only needed three percent support from the people. The implementation of the Canons clearly gave space for women to compete in the elections for local leaders.

From 19 districts and cities, there were only three districts or cities that had women candidates; these were two candidates in Banda Aceh, two candidates in West Aceh and one candidate in Aceh Tamiang. In brief, from 258 candidates, there were only five women who competed and there was no single woman candidate in the competition for governorship (Hasan, 2008; Gender Working Group, 2007, p. 16).

Acehnese Women and Decision-Making Power

As explained in the introduction, many Acehnese women have been involved and have succeeded in decision-making positions in the past, as queens and war commanders. However, in the present context, this has changed and men have been executing most decision-making positions. Women in decision-making roles are rare. At the executive level, in almost any part of Aceh, women have not become district or city leaders so far. However, for village and sub district leaders, there are some positions held by women. There was a case where a woman stood as leader of the opposition for the local representative at the sub district level in the Bireuen district; however, she was not successful (Srimulyani, 2011). In addition, of the 71 second-most senior executive official positions in Aceh, women occupy only three. Moreover, from the 294 third level positions, there are 25 women, and from the 1,022 fourth level positions, there are 167 women (Hasan, 2008, p. 58).

In the judiciary, at the High Court, from nine judges, there are only four women, and at the Attorney's Office, of the 31 attorneys there are only six women. In the Religious High Court, of the 10 judges, there are no women, and at the Islamic Court, of the 138 judges, there are 15 women.

The phenomenon seems to have decreased after the devastating tsunami and earthquake in Aceh. The involvement of women in decision-making after the tsunami was also low. This could be seen from the ad-hoc body established by the central government called the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Body (BRR) Aceh-Nias. The results showed that women's involvement was not significant, and that there were only three organization structures, which were the Advisory, Supervising and Implementing Bodies. At the Advisory Body, among 37 personnel as chairman, secretaries and members, there was only one woman. Likewise, for the Supervising Body, among eight members, there was also only one woman (Hasan, 2008, p. 59).

Moreover, the number of women staff was also lower than expected, namely, 145 from 1,219 (11 percent). This number was lower for those in decision-making positions, which were 12 from 281 (4 percent) (Gender Working Group, 2007). A similar situation also developed in the Aceh Reintegration Body (BRA), which was established after the

Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The BRA was established by the Aceh Government and comprised several elements. From all the elements of the BRA, the Implementation Unit, the Aceh Peace Support Forum, the Resource Person and the Supervisor Body there were 44 personnel, but only three women. The positions held by women are very scarce; however, as previously mentioned, women were involved in the conflict resolution process (Hasan, 2008, p. 60).

Acehnese Women outside of the Governmental System

Acehnese women's roles outside of the governmental system have been really different from those in the governmental system. Although Aceh has been involved in prolonged civil conflict, women were able to carry out their daily activities. In some areas, women acted as the family leaders for years due to the conflict's consequences. Indeed, women were also considered as pioneers in promoting peaceful ways for solving the conflict in Aceh.

Acehnese Women and the Conflict

During the prolonged conflict in Aceh (Sjamsuddin, 1990; Aspinall, 2002; Sulistiyanto, 2001), for more than 10 years after the lifting of the military operation zone (DOM) from 1989 to 1998 (Rabasa & Chalk, 2001; Lamoureux, 2003; Miller, 2009) up to the Martial Law (DM), from 2003 to 2004, social values and traditions in Aceh were being destroyed. Most of the conflict's consequences could be seen through the loss of properties (houses), an economic setback, and the displacement of men and youth, who were tortured and even killed. Women were mostly affected from both the conflicting parties, and many women became single parents.

Furthermore, women suffered greatly from the impact of violence and sexual abuse during the war. There were many types of abuse and violence suffered by the women (UNFPA, 2005). Many women also became the family leaders since their husbands had fled and their children were traumatized by the conflict. Women had to take responsibility as breadwinners and had to support their families financially (Siapno, 2002, p. 63).

The conflict caused significant changes for most women in Aceh. Through the involvement of their husbands with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and their having to flee to neighboring countries, women became the leaders, practically and emotionally (Nowak & Caulfield, 2008). Indeed, women also became peace protectors and in many cases protected their family members. Moreover, women did not become a part of the conflict's cause.

The difficulties suffered by most Acehnese women were worse since they often had to flee from their homes and villages for security reasons. Most families needed to live in temporary shelters during the conflicts. Unfortunately, many women lost their homes through burning, and were affected by the economic downturn as well. These events commonly occurred during the Martial Law in Aceh, during which the military carried out an intensive military operation across the province.

The Aceh conflict attracted some interest for a solution since the stepping down of Soeharto (Coppel, 2006). The changing of the Indonesian presidents from the New Order to the Reformation Order had also changed and brought a new episode to Aceh in the struggle for Human Rights after the lifting of the Military Operation Zone on 7 August 1998. Immediately after that, women tried to advocate a campaign for human rights of women affected in the conflict through a number of activities (Tan, 2006).

In addition, there were also some organizations concerned with women's issues and supporting the psychosocial needs of women affected by the conflict by providing regular discussions and training in districts and cities in Aceh. The advocacy was able to formulate a new organization for the Acehnese women called *SeLA* (*Serikat Inong Aceh*) in July 2000.

This organization included hundreds of women from villages from several districts and cities in Aceh to strengthen and support women's rights, including the advocating of scholarships to allow the children of conflict victims to access education. Thus, this organization became stronger, and, since 2001, extended to more districts and cities through 44 different organizations called *PEKKA* (*Perempuan Kepala Keluarga*), which included more than 1,000 households led by women (Anwar, 2010). *PEKKA* also operates in other area of Indonesia apart from Aceh.

Acehnese Women and Peace

After the fall of Soeharto, the political situation became significantly different. From the end of 1999 until early 2000, the call for a referendum started in Aceh and became stronger with the lifting of the military operation zone status from Aceh on 7 August 1998 (Bourchier & Hadiz, 2003; Smith, 2002). The movement to call for a referendum reached a peak as the killings continued, resulting in losses among the Indonesian Military, GAM, and civilians. The initiative for a referendum received a good response from GAM, which issued a statement for the call. In this position, some women's groups started an initiative to invite Acehnese women to discuss the issues in Aceh. The Congress idea was supported by the Women's Coordinating Organization called *Badan Koordinasi Organisasi Wanita* (BKOW) (Santoso & Ferry, n.d.).

The idea of the Acehnese Women's Congress called *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh* (DPIA) became a reality and it was held between 19 and 22 February 2000. The Congress was attended by 437 women representatives from all over Aceh, except for a representative from Singkil who did not attend because of security reasons.

Duek Pakat Inong Aceh I was the first Women's Congress conducted in Banda Aceh. One of the agenda items was to discuss women's issues, the conflict, and peace. The topics discussed in the Congress also included Islamic Law, Informal Law, women and social changes, women's roles in peace promoting in Aceh, access to economic and human resources, as well as women's roles in politics and decision-making (Blackburn, 2004).

Duek pakat Inong Aceh I was a consolidation among women. However, there was intimidation aimed at postponing the meeting. Intimidation events were targeted at organizers and participants. These practices happened due to the different interests of *Duek pakat Inong Aceh I*, where one side expected a peaceful solution and the other side hoped for a referendum option (Drexler, 2006).

However, at the end of long discussions during *Duek pakat Inong Aceh I*, it resulted in some recommendations for a peaceful ending in Aceh. It had been very clear that a peaceful solution of the prolonged conflict was expected and it encouraged women to get actively involved (Budianta, 2000). The results of *Duek Pakat* were given to the former

Indonesian President, Abdurrahman Wahid, on 11 March 2000 to endorse the implementation of some of the recommendations regarding the peaceful solution of the Aceh conflict through dialogue (Hasan, 2008).

The success of Acehnese women in the first women's congress *Duek pakat Inong Aceh I* could be seen as an empowerment of Acehnese women after the military operation zone was lifted from Aceh. With limited financial support, many women had been able to attain a seat and talk about women's issues. As a result, the recommendations were not only about conflict resolutions but also about other important issues.

Through this Congress, an organization had been formed to advocate the recommendations of the congress, called *Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh* (BSUIA). At first, the BSUIA was led by Syarifah Rahmatillah and had several members, namely, Naimah Hasan, Samsidar, Azriana, Ruqaiyah Ibrahim Naim, and Rosni Adam. By that time, Syarifah had been replaced by Naimah Hasan through a democratic election, and then led by Nursiti (Santoso & Ferry, n.d.).

The first Congress of *Duek pakat Inong Aceh I* could be regarded as a monumental event of women's involvement in the state. The fact was that the Congress was full of experienced Acehnese women calling for a peaceful conflict resolution in Aceh.

Acehnese Women Post-Conflict and Tsunami

The tsunami disaster in Aceh (Shaw, 2006) led to the conflicting parties speeding up their efforts to negotiate the peace agreement. Both the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement agreed to sign an agreement to end the prolonged conflict in Aceh, the Helsinki MoU, in August 2005 (Shulze, 2007). Achieving this peaceful solution was an important point in Aceh history (Salim & Sila, 2010). The agreement between both parties to end the conflict created a favorable situation; as a result it provided opportunities for rehabilitation and reconstruction post-tsunami. Moreover, it also enabled the women's movement to advocate gender perspectives developed by the BRR and BRA, so that it would reach out into the wider community within Aceh.

The encouraging and safer situation post tsunami and post conflict significantly motivated the women's movement to develop women em-

powerment programmes. One of them was the Second Acehese Women's Congress called "*Duek Pakat Inong Aceh II*", which was conducted from 16-19 June 2005. The Congress was attended by 400 women from different backgrounds, geographic locations, tribes and religions. The meeting started with a one-day seminar on the Meaning of Recovery for Women's Involvement in the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Aceh. This contributed to the ceasefire and peace process in Aceh (Drexler, 2008).

The purpose of the *Duek Pakat Inong Aceh II* was to identify women's issues and difficulties during the conflict that had so far been ignored. Indeed, the Congress hoped that women would be involved in the peaceful resolution of the conflict and all rehabilitation and reconstruction activities post tsunami in Aceh. The Women's Congress was able to formulate some important recommendations for the Aceh Government to invite women to development programs and was given to the BRR, the Indonesian President and other stakeholders involved in the Aceh rehabilitation and reconstruction process (Clarke, Fanany, & Kenny, 2010).

Additionally, some woman activists actively supported the formulation of the LOGA Draft as a follow-up process to the Helsinki MoU. The activists met the LOGA formulation team in order to accommodate women's issues into the LOGA Draft. For this reason, women activists met and discussed women's issues facilitated by the Women's Network for Policy (JPUK) in October 2005 (Rasyidah, 2008, pp. 105-109).

At the end, the advocacy strategy pursued by most women activists and local organizations through the Women's Network for Policy in drafting of the LOGA at the Aceh Province up to national level succeeded. They had been able to insert into the LOGA No. 11 Year 2006 the issue of women representatives of at least 30 percent as a requirement to formulate a local political party in Aceh. Therefore, in political parties, locally and nationally, women should make up a certain proportion of at least 30 percent. This shows that the issue of women's roles in promoting women's issues in the LOGA should also be reflected in daily implementations.

The hard work of women activists and some local women's organizations in Aceh in empowering women programs encouraged women to get involved, including promoting women's rights in the LOGA. The

Declaration of Women's Rights in Aceh on the 11th of November 2008 was a moment of inspiration for most women in Aceh in their efforts to achieve equality with men. However, before this declaration was formulated, the local government had designed and signed a Canon on Women's Rights. A canon is an integrated part of the governmental system, while a declaration is a moral movement that needs recognition of equal rights between women and men (IDLO, n.d.).

The Acehese women's success in campaigning for women's issues was not a part of the dynamic Acehese women's movement post tsunami, which was significantly improved. At this time, new NGOs (*non-governmental organizations*) were formed quickly, including women-oriented NGOs, such as *Yayasan Bungong Jeumpa*, *Beujroh*, *Sri Ratu*, *Annisa Center* and many more. Besides this, women activists from NGOs formed a network as an aim for reconciliation, advocating women's issues such as the GWG (Gender Working Group), JPuK (Women Network for Policy) and others.

Acehese Women and Tyranny

The exclusion of Acehese women from public spaces was not conclusively committed by a regime in power during the period. In sociological studies, political power is an important element in community life. In its implementation, the power tends to rely on the relationship between influential parties towards others in promoting influences by agreement and force. In general, the highest power in a community is the state. Formally, the state has the right to use the highest power even by force. In addition, normally, the power is carried by a certain small group called the ruling class. This class has the authority and power to maintain support from the people. As a result, the powerful group usually uses authority to keep its power (Soekanto, 2002).

Progressing towards justly controlled or free communities is difficult. The reasons are the differences in thoughts and norms between the regime in power and the controlled people. Thus, the powerful group tends to use certain power channels. There are five important channels applied by a regime in executing the power, namely: military, economic, political, traditional and ideological strategies (Soekanto, 2002, p. 299). Indeed, ideology has been a major instrument in constructing power and

political hierarchies (Berman, 1998).

Referring to the above theory, the efforts to limit women's movements started at the time of the Dutch Colony with the introduction of modern education in Aceh. This campaign had been applied through leadership ideology planted in education. The Dutch Government introduced modern education that led to disharmony among the Acehnese communities. Historical facts show that the strong collaboration between the *Ulamas* and leaders in Aceh led to struggles with the Dutch. As a result, the Dutch promoted modern education by providing opportunities to the children of the *uleebalang* [leaders] so they could enjoy education at the established Dutch schools. Therefore, to achieve the goals, education was forced on children in Aceh (Ibrahim, 1978, pp. 136-138).

Consequently, to maintain the Dutch Colony in Aceh, the Dutch set up a modern educational system for the Acehnese in which priority was given to the young people that graduated from the Dutch schools to be state officers and work for the Dutch Government. As a result, those who were able to graduate came from families of traditional leaders. This opened up positions at universities, in the police force, in the state transportation company, and others to the Acehnese.

The establishment of schools for women was also aimed at reducing Acehnese women's movement in public spaces by introducing education to them regarding women's skills. To succeed with this purpose, the Dutch Colony sent high-level officers' wives to promote education and teach Acehnese women. The wives of Dutch officers, such as Mrs Swart (the wife of Governor Swart) and Mgrs. de Nijs (the wife of Resident de Nijs Assistant) contributed to women's "development and changes in Aceh." This fact was influenced by the Dutch Colonial interests to control security and order among women in Aceh who were actively involved in the struggle against the Dutch military (Ahmad & Kutoyo, 1984).

After the independence of Indonesia, the policies of the Dutch Colony had limited the women's spaces in the public; this was followed by the New Order, by applying a concept called *state Ibuism* (Ibuisme Negara). This concept, *state Ibuism*, was described in the State Regulations, GBHN (Garis-garis Besar Haluan Negara) in 1973, stating that women's roles were in the families, consisting of guidance for family welfare and children's education. For this purpose, the women's

rights were guaranteed and protected. At the change in term of the State Regulations after five years, women's roles had been maintained as family managers for welfare and prosperity.

To support this concept, there were several initiatives to form women's institutions with the purpose of accommodating women in their roles in domestic activities. In those women's organizations that were formed with regard to the wives of government officers, women's roles in public were formulated into five categories—*panca dharma wanita* [women's five principles]. They include that women should assist their husband, help with the children's education, be the households' economic managers, and also be extra breadwinners (Isnaeniah, 1998).

The role of women as citizens is presented by mothers and wives at home in daily activities. In the New Order regime, mothers and wives were integrated into staffing administration. For example, a governor's wife, a regent's wife, a sub district head's wife, and the head of a village played important roles in implementing development programs for women-related programs. The women development programs were organized along with government programs at the grassroots or community level, mainly for women in rural areas. The main purpose was to campaign for harmony and family welfare (Siapno, 2002).

Thus, the most important purpose of the *Ibuism* concept was to formulate women's leadership in the family and in the community. The New Order regime made sure that all government officers would be supporters of the incumbent party during that time. The organization of women into groups or organizations was very effective and most of them led to political campaigns or purposes.

Furthermore, the condition of Acehnese women in the contemporary context was not far from the policies of stakeholders (Central Government) in solving the conflict in Aceh. The implementation of the Red Net Operation policy (Robinson, 1998) and the Military Operation Zone during the Soeharto periods (Sherlock, 2003), including the status of Martial Law during the Megawati Soekarno Putri presidency¹ in resolving the Aceh conflict, influenced the roles of women in communities in Aceh. The facts show that these hard times had burdened most

¹ On 19 May 2003, President Megawati declared the Martial Law Status in Aceh as a response to the collapse of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed in Geneva on 9 December 2002.

Acehnese women with having to manage their households and families on their own as a consequence of their husbands, boys, or other relatives being involved with the Free Aceh Movement (Nowak & Caulfield, 2008). As a result, many women in Aceh became victims of the conflict during the Military Operation Zone and the Martial Law (UNFPA, 2005).

Acehnese Women in Social Changes

The shifting of Acehnese women's roles was much more influenced by socio-political factors in Acehnese communities. The changing of the political system in the communities started in the sultanate governmental system, which was part of the colonization that later became part of the Indonesian States. In fact, the role of Acehnese women in the contemporary context should be related to the modernization of Indonesia itself. Modernization was a huge societal transformation through various life aspect changes, including ways of thinking, ways of life, social institutions, and the change of production techniques from traditional to modern (Scott, 2006; Bodgatta & Montgomery, 2000). Indeed, modernization had been a key process of industrial and developmental learning (Andersen & Taylor, 2008).

Modernization, industrialization, and development in Indonesia have caused certain norms and behavioral changes in the community. For Indonesia, there are five external factors that triggered social changes: communication, bureaucracy, capital, technology, and religious ideology. These five factors are not perceived yet as local issues of change. The Indonesian government itself tried to connect any social changes into each regional perspective with a national development framework. The development process was not portrayed as an effort of local communities' participation in deciding their needs. Therefore, any cases in the community would be similar to each region as the impact of the implementation of the development programme (Salim, 2002).

If we analyze the contemporary context of women in Aceh by using the above theory, bureaucracy is still an influencing factor in exploring women's roles in public spaces in Aceh. In most cases, women are not able to be decision makers, as they were in the past. Bureaucracy consists of at least three main layers: regulations, procedures, and

application. In fact, the bureaucratic activities must be implemented in total in order to improve the educational quality. It has been an important aspect in modern organization that should be rational and objective (Salim, 2002).

In reality, women have been able to take roles or positions in some important positions since there is no discrimination against women in the governmental system in Aceh. However, the facts show that there are still very limited opportunities for women to fill strategic roles.

For example only six percent of the total sixty-nine legislative members at the province level in Aceh are women (Table 1). The number is a bit better at district level with women legislators total up to twenty percent when all the district representatives are taken into account (although notably three of the *kabupaten* are without women representatives).

Table 1.
Women in Legislative Body at District Level of Aceh

No	District	Men	Women	Total
1	Banda Aceh	29	1	30
2	Aceh Besar	34	1	35
3	Sabang	18	2	20
4	Pidie	43	2	45
5	Pidie Jaya	22	3	25
6	Bireun	33	2	35
7	Bener Meriah	24	1	25
8	Aceh Tengah	28	2	30
9	Aceh Utara	44	1	45
10	Lhokseumawe	22	3	25
11	Aceh Timur	33	2	35
12	Langsa	21	4	25
13	Aceh Tamiang	26	4	30
14	Aceh Tenggara	22	3	25
15	Gayo Lues	18	2	20
16	Aceh Jaya	20	0	20
17	Aceh Barat	29	1	30
18	Nagan Raya	22	3	25
19	Aceh Barat Daya	25	0	25
20	Aceh Selatan	30	0	30
21	Aceh Singkil	22	3	25
22	Subulussalam	16	4	20
23	Simeulu	17	3	20

Source: Komisi Independen Pemilu Aceh tahun 2010
(Independent Committee of Aceh Election year 2010)

Women representation in civil and *syari'ah* judiciary system is also below thirty percent.

Table 2.
Numbers of Women in Judiciary System in Aceh

No	Position	2009 - now	
		Men	Women
1	<i>Pengadilan Tinggi</i> (High Court) Banda Aceh	8	2
2	<i>Mabkamah Syari'ah</i> (Islamic Court) Aceh	14	2
3	<i>Kejaksaan Tinggi</i> (Prosecutors)	171	35

Source: High Court, Syari'ah Court and Prosecutors Office, Aceh

It is a fact of the bureaucratic system in Indonesia that it is still patriarchal. However, in the past, Acehnese women have had opportunities to take leadership powers due to the Islamic flexibility that was part of the Acehnese community and which did not ban women from power. Moreover, there were some women leaders who received strong support from *Ulamas* in the past, such as Syaikh Abdurrauf as-Singkil, who was widely known nationally for his intellectual capacity.

In the past, Acehnese women have occupied the position of *Sultanah* (Queen/Ruler) for nearly 40 years during the early 17th century, beginning with Taj' al-Alam Safiatuddin. Additionally, during the war between the Acehnese and the Dutch colonialists, Acehnese women were also involved as part of the revolutionary army and served at the front line as soldiers as well as generals (Reid, 1969).

Closer to home, Aceh traditions mean that women have an immense role at the family level. In their tradition, after marriage, the husband will live with the wife's family (marriage matrilocality). Even Hurgronje mentioned that the husbands felt like guests when staying with wife's family (Hurgronje, 1906). Acehnese women were normally actively involved in the family economy to support the family and their children. While men looked for money (*mita peng*), the women's role was to look for rice (*mita breuh*) (Jayawardena, 1977).

In addition, industrialization has been an important power that has introduced a form of new productive organization initiating some adjustments and new norms in societies (Abdullah, 2007). In an agricultural

society, the family is the center of production and labor, but in the industrial era, families are consumers of goods and work is based on individual skills and capabilities (Mosse, 2007). For example, a community changes from a traditional agricultural organization that still believes in collective ownership values into a community that adopts professional values and the organization of work, thereby influencing the roles and relationships between men and women in the Acehese society.

Having a role in a traditional agricultural society does not require a person to have special skills or education. As a result, both men and women may participate in agricultural activities. In the meantime, there are differences between the transitional agricultural community and the industrial community that places more emphasis on aspects of professionalism, such as a diploma or other educational background and experience. However, the access to education is not yet equal for men and women in Aceh.

The most influential aspect of women's involvement in the professional world is the issue of childbearing. Due to the influence of the capitalist system that believes childbearing to be a liability for women to be able to work in public spaces, this issue has been a reason for many companies to pay lower salaries to women compared to men. This is different, as in traditional communities (agricultural) the childbearing factor is not considered a problematic issue (Srimulyani & Inayatillah, 2009). From these elaborations, it becomes clear that the problematic issues for contemporary Acehese women are not similar to those in the past.

Conclusion

The roles and positions of Acehese women in public spaces in the contemporary context have changed compared to the past. Presently, Acehese women have fewer opportunities and are less involved in the governmental bureaucracy. This aspect has been used as an indicator to measure the current standard of Acehese women. However, in many aspects, women in Aceh have shown progress and changes compared to the past. Ironically, during the prolonged conflict in Aceh, women played significant roles for years. They became the breadwinners, supporting their families, as well as dead body collectors, and even negotia-

tors for their societies and families. Unfortunately, also, in many cases, women became the victims. Moreover, Acehnese women were the first to initiate the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Aceh. However, when the peace negotiations were conducted, not a single woman was invited to participate in the negotiations. It is also true that after the peace deal was signed, women's activities in public spaces were again similar to before. In some advanced schemes, some women have been able to initiate and campaign for women's issues to be regulated and admitted through formal governmental laws [Canon], although women representatives are still not significantly represented in the local parliament of Aceh.

This fact shows that, in reality, Acehnese women have not stepped backwards, since Acehnese women have been involved in many change processes in the past. The inability of women to participate in the governmental system or in the bureaucracy was influenced by governmental ideology, which is much more patriarchal. This ideology has resulted in many Acehnese women being marginalized through governmental regulations and policies. In addition, modernization and development have also had serious effects on social changes in Aceh for decades, which have led to women's development initiatives being largely ignored. In short, the government policies and modernization have triggered the factors towards the marginalization of Acehnese women from public spaces.

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