

Minangkabau Women's Politics Participation in the Tradition of Khatm Quran (An anthropology study of women in Kanagarian, Balai Gurah, West Sumatra)

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This study concerns on the women of Minangkabau in politics system that is egalitarian and has a central position within the society with the focus on the involvement of women in politics in the process and activities of Khatm Quran tradition which is a part of the local society's responsibility. Generally, there is a representation of women in politics and local position within the local society. There is a causal relationship between women's egalitarian characteristics and their positions in politics in daily life. In fact, egalitarian characteristics have a significant effect on the decision making process and in the process and activities of Khatm Quran tradition.

Keywords: Minangkabau Women, Political Culture System, Leadership, Khatm Quran Tradition

I. Introduction

Minangkabau women have a significant role in Minangkabau political system for a long time which can be seen from stories of Minangkabau leadership such as *kaba*, *tambo*, and legends where there was a king in Minangkabau called as Bundo Kanduang. There is also Mande Rubiah (Mrs. Rubiah) who is well-known as a queen by the coastal communities.

The terminology of 'mother' in Minangkabau culture refers to the term of "Bundo Kanduang". Bundo Kanduang refers to a woman who is able to carry out her role as a mother in Minangkabau cultural system where she has to possess knowledge and exemplary characteristics (Hakimy 1978 :32).

According to Evelyn Blackwood (1993:39), Minangkabau women's authority nowadays can be considered as strong in daily and cultural activities. Therefore, this study will discuss the relationship of politics and cultural system in terms of politics participation within Minangkabau culture, especially in Khatm Quran tradition.

II. Research Method

This study is conducted in Balai Gurah, Agam regency, West Sumatra. The study uses qualitative method in trying to discover and grasp the facts in accordance with the real condition of the local society. The type of study is a descriptive analysis which deeply describes the fact by using accurate data on the observation of behavior and talks arising from social interaction of local society.

Data used in this study are primary and secondary data. The data are collected through observation, deep interview, and documentary study. Data analysis model used is interactive analysis model by Milles and Hebermann.

III. Discussion

A. Minangkabau Women “ Bundo Kanduang” as the spearhead on a Gadang house

In Minangkabau cultural context, the existing kinship system is unilateral kinship system which is a system that counts only one line of ancestry, that is one of the parents only, as the ancestry connector. In this matter, Minangkabau uses only the mother line which is known as matrilineal. The consequence is that the highest inheritance is inherited to the mother’s side of family and the title is inherited by the uncle to a nephew.

Minangkabau culture is well-known by its proverbs which have lots of values and life symbolism of Minangkabau society including how to act and behave. It includes the role of Bundo Kanduang. There are proverbs mentioning the role of Bundo Kanduang, among them:

1. *Umbun puruak pegangan kunci , umbun puruak aluang bunian*

“*umbun puruak pegangan kunci , umbun puruak aluang bunian* “ means that women are the successors and have authority over the inheritance of family and relatives (Hakimi 1978 :1). Besides, Bundo Kanduang is also a figure who is responsible in the formation of values and morality for the her children and their clan (Syafnir 2006 :54-56). Therefore, Bundo Kanduang is a true mother who has to possess leadership and motherhood quality, a strong and wise personality, and a solid mentality.

2. *Limpapeh rumah gadang*

Bundo Kanduang is the successor who inherits the highest inheritance, has the Gadang house, and participates in family discussion. It means that in Minangkabau a mother is considered as “Limpapeh rumah Gadang”. Bundo Kanduang is a woman who

has glory and honor in a form of heredity line system, matrilineal. Matrilineal is a maternal lineage. This system influences all aspect of life within the society. Bundo Kanduang as the *limpapeh rumah gadang* has to be able to place her household as the first place in education children and make herself as the role model for her children and nephews' education so that honesty, hospitality, and courtesy are values that naturally attach on mothers.

3. *Pusek jalo kumpulan tali.*

Pusek jalo kumpulan tali means that mother has to be placed in the central position to ensure the successfulness of the children. Therefore, a mother should have a broad knowledge and good characteristics in each aspect of life.

4. *Sumarak dalam nagari hiasan dalam kampuang*

Mother's value is not only on the outer level, but also in household and the country pillars.

5. *Nan gadang basa batuah*

As Bundo Kanduang, a mother is considered as the glory and pride of her people. Hence, a mother should follow the basic concept of Minangkabau, “*basandi syarak, syarak basandikan kitabullah*”, that every step of a mother should follow the Islamic tradition and teaching.

B.. Minangkabau Women in Khatm Quran Tradition

Few days before the ceremony takes place, the society have prepared everything starting from cleaning the place, whitewashing the dirty walls, wiping bushes from the lawn, throwing away twigs, cleaning the ceilings and so on. The guests will be served by traditional cakes, sweets and drinks before attending the ceremony.

Activities mentioned above were local wisdom. It can also be called as local knowledge. The local wisdom is a life view and knowledge and strategies in a form of activities done by local society in answering all problems within Minangkabau dynamics of life.

In Minangkabau society, there is a local wisdom, through its developing traditions, where they call their land as a realm where takambang natural philosophy becoming the teacher is the foundation of thought. The nature, for Minangkabau society, is a mean of life learning in every aspect of life.

For Minangkabau society, mutual helps become a responsibility for each person and it is stated on a proverb called “*nan barek samo dipikua, nan ringan samo dijinjang*” (both light and heavy, we bear it together)

Minangkabau culture demands its society to have mutual respect and adjust mutual courtesy as the proverb says that “*nan tuo dihormati, nan ketek disayangi, samo gadang bao bakawan, ibu jo bapak di utamakan*” (the elders are respected, the youngsters are loved, the peers are befriended, mother and father are advanced).

Besides of mutual assistance in the preparation of Khatm Quran, an agreement is also conducted by the committee, teachers, and public figures along with the society. It shows how Minangkabau society considered having different opinion as something usual which can be solved easily through a discussion and a decision making. It is as a proverb says that “*bulek aie dek pambullah, bulek kato dek mufakaik*” (through an agreement, a decision can be made easily).

Minangkabau society is a society that attempts to conglomerate traditional values with Islamic values. They have been known to live in egalitarian environment and appreciate individual right to make opinion berrpendapat (Abdullah 1966, Abdullah 1988, Naim 1984, Kato 2005). Hence, democratic culture becomes Minangkabau’s identity where an agreement is the most important foundation of life in Minangkabau culture.

Democracy in Minangkabau, especially in decision making, has to be done through a discussion in order to meet an agreement. A decision will be there when an agreement arises from various parties.

Minangkabau society has awareness that they are a part of social web which has responsibilities and rights. In decision-making, each person may deliver an opinion followed by an agreement (Beckmann 2000 hlm 1-2).

Departing from the general pattern of Minangkabau culture, democracy culture is also applied in a series of Khatm Quran ceremony preparation in Kanagarian Balai Gurah which has been seen as a culture rooting within the society.

A discussion conducted to reach an agreement is a pattern applied within a series of preparation for Khatm Quran ceremony in Kanagarian Balai Gurah. It is as stated by Mr. Thamrin:

“ *Basilang kayu dalam tungku mako api kahiduik (Piling up woods in the fireplace, so that the fire emerges) which means that every problem can be solved through a discussion. When we celebrate Khatm Quran, we discuss so that we can achieve an agreement*” (Interview 8 Juli 2016)

In all activity series, women have the same position and chance in each of decision making process and assigned roles.

Tradition of Mutual Agreement Discussion in Khatm Quran

One of local wisdoms in this country is language and culture. An effort that can be done to conserve them is by delivering and teaching children with various proverbs and explaining the values contained within the proverbs. Minangkabau society has meaningful proverbs. Those are a reflection of a typical life view in conducting a discussion to meet a mutual agreement. The discussion is the most important life foundation in Minangkabau culture and it has the passion of egalitarian. Therefore, this study attempts to describe the proverbs that have egalitarian and agreement meaning applied in the series of Khatm Quran ceremony for children which is held through non-formal education, Quran Awaliyah Institution in Kanagarian Balai Gurah, West Sumatra.

Egalitarian passion which is a democratic principle has been developing for a long time within the Minangkabau society. These values have been there long before Europeans arrived in Indonesia. It is proved by the developing custom philosophy of Minangkabau corresponding with the dynamics of national and state life. The egalitarian passion is described in the philosophy or proverbs, among others, *Kato mufakaik nan Bakuaso* (an agreement is in power, *Basilang kayu dalam tungku mako api kahiduik* (place the woods in the stove, so that the fire can lit), *Bulek aia dek Pambuluah, Bulek kato dek mufakaik* (When a word is assembled, an agreement can be met), *ditinggikan sarantiang, didahulukan selangkah* (when only one branch is raised, it takes precedence), *duduk samo randah tagak samo tinggi*” (sit low and stand tall at the same level), (Wirdanengsih 2016 hlm 1)

Conclusion

This study shows a causal relationship between the characteristics of egalitarian in women and their position in politics in daily life matters. In fact, egalitarian characteristic has a significant power over the process of decision making in the Khatm Quran ceremony. However, it differs with a study conducted by Nurwandi (2010) which showed that there was no causal relationship between the egalitarian characteristics of women with their position in Minangkabau with the reality and fact of politics participation in election, where the participation level is low such as presidential election and regional head election.

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