

The Phenomenon of Coastal Women: Between Patriarchal Culture and Gender Justice

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Abstract

Presently, there is a new phenomenon of empowering women in areas still strong with customs and traditions. Similarly, the dynamics of women policy democratization have experienced gaps in a multicultural society historically categorized as the Islamic Kingdom's territory. Therefore, the government is faced with the challenge of determining the right strategies to align cultural structures that have lived in society for a long time using inclusive programs. These included activities to empower coastal women in the economic sector to improve the welfare of the community. This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of social anthropology in the democracy era. It fills the gap associated with the various failures in implementing various programs by prioritizing gender justice and equality in patriarchal remote areas with the character of an Islamic sultanate.

Keywords: *Women, Empowerment, Coastal Area, Patriarchal, Gender*

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INTRODUCTION

The economy of coastal communities is mainly dependent on the activities of women (Kusnadi, 2006). Ariadno and Amelia (2016) reported that relatively 42% of them are involved in the fisheries and marine sectors. This data proves that women have largely contributed to the management of the coastal regions.

However, various studies further reported that they are often isolated and neglected during decision-making. They are not involved in governance and in determining policy priorities and have limited access to sources of self-development compared to men. Besides, the limited availability of funds, facilities, integrity, and community capacity to mainstream women in remote coastal areas has increased isolated and neglected regions.

The diverse conditions of people in these areas led to discrimination against women. According to Zastrow (2007), discrimination is a gender-based problem that specifically affects women in coastal areas. Oko (2008) further stated that power relations trigger injustice and inequality. Finally, gender discrimination hinders women from becoming prosperous.

Due to the unequal conditions that cause discrimination and losses that specifically affect women, efforts are needed to provide social justice and protection through an empowerment program. Kabeer (2005) stated that women's empowerment is their ability to make the right choices in life. According to Ife (2008), one way to execute this initiative is through policies/programs.

The aim is to empower poor women in the coastal areas, although their conditions keep getting worse. Hubeis (2010) stated that these programs and policies had been implemented for a long time, however the practice of gender injustice is still prevalent. This is due to the powerlessness of women in advocating for gender equality and the disapproval of their workloads, such as in the household, which is regarded as an intangible obligation, as well as the patriarchal and hierarchical cultural values that are deeply rooted in the society.

The importance of using a gender analysis viewpoint deviates from the understanding and awareness of socio-cultural differences, which causes inequality conditions that need not be promoted to ensure that these empowerment programs and policies effectively target vulnerable groups. The European Commission (1998) stated that using a gender approach promotes equality, including the distribution of resources in this context. Meanwhile, the gender analysis framework was designed to transform developmental policies and planning based on a welfare approach that prioritizes the principles of justice, efficiency and ultimately supports women's empowerment goals (Moser, 1993).

One of the targeted coastal regions for women's empowerment programs in the frontier, outermost and disadvantaged (3T) areas is North Maluku. This province has a shoreline that is 1/8 of the length of the Indonesian coastline as well as comprises 78% of the total 1,079 villages, which is equivalent to 856 communities. A total of 106,311 poor people resides in these rural areas. North Maluku has potential natural resources, especially in the sea. Unfortunately, 80 percent of the local fishermen in the province are still living below the poverty line.

Historically, North Maluku is the former territory of the 4 largest Islamic kingdoms in the eastern archipelago known as the *Moloku Kie Raha* sultanate (4 mountain sultanates in Maluku), which consists of Ternate, Tidore, Bacan, and Jailolo. This region is divided into 3 cultural areas, namely Ternate, Tidore, and Bacan. Based on the culture and ethnicity in the North Maluku region, South Halmahera Regency, located on Bacan Island, is a heterogeneous area with 3 indigenous tribes, namely Makian, Galela, and Tobelo (Amal, 2006). Geostrategically, Morotai Island is the most relevant compared to other regions. It is the outermost island on the northeastern part of Indonesia, close to ASEAN and East Asian countries. This area is one of the special economic zones for the development of the fishery and tourism industries.

Based on the 5 distinctive features and different developmental characters as well as the geographical location of this small island in the North Maluku region, this study focuses on the transition process of a cultural society in the middle of a democratic era that mandates equality of human rights. This strategy is aimed to empower coastal women in a multicultural society that still adheres to a patriarchal culture.

North Maluku Province is the territory of the 4 Islamic kingdoms. Historically, it is also known as the maritime Kingdom. This province has experienced rapid development in the international arena, especially in Southeast Asia through the Maluku, Sulawesi, and Sulu seas, the trade routes for cloves and nutmeg. The people's dependence on marine activities has existed for a long time, therefore coastal areas are their life force.

The Islamic kingdoms known as *Moloku Kie Raha* (4 mountain Sultanates in Maluku) are Bacan, Jailolo, Ternate, and Tidore. The characteristics of these regions are closely related to the cultural and religious values of Islam. The multicultural society of North Maluku is not only inhabited by the descendants of the 4 kingdoms rather by various tribes that immigrated due to the spice trade route since the Dutch colonial era. The power of the 4 kingdoms in running this business was quite different. For example, the Ternate Sultanate played an important role in controlling trade routes.

The Ternate Sultanate was founded in the second half of the 15th century, and its first Sultan was Zainal Abidin that ruled from 1448 to 1500. According to Shaleh Putuhena, before being appointed as sultan, Zainal Abidin traveled to Java and deepened Islam in Giri. However, Islam was introduced in the government structure after the return of Zainal Abidin. This was later adopted in Western literature as a benchmark regarding the beginning of Islamization in Ternate (Masinambaw, 1980).

Zainal Abidin was the first sultan that strengthened the Islamic religion by including it in the political structure and tried to expand and instill its teachings. (F.S.A. de Clercq 2007). Since Zainal's reign, Islam has been officially institutionalized as the state religion. The title of sultan was also designated to each of the subsequent Ternate kings.

The reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin led to the introduction of Islamization in Ternate and Maluku generally. This is because when Zainal was appointed as the King of Ternate, the title Sultan was used, whereas the previous rulers were addressed as Kolano during their reign. The leader of an Islamic country is addressed as a sultan. However, Islam became increasingly significant when Sultan Zainal Abidin came to power from 1486 to 1500. In addition, there was rapid development, and Islamic values were deeply embedded when Bayanullah, the successor of the sultan Zainal Abidin, came into power between 1500 and 1522. Bayanullah obliged both men and women to wear Islamic clothing and enforced marriage in like manner. The spread of Islam in Ternate is inseparable from the role of a famous scholar and preacher, Datu Maula Husen, from Java, who arrived at this province in 1465. Interestingly, with good religious knowledge and as a recitation expert with a sweet voice, Datu spread Islamic teachings and effectively influenced the Ternate community.

The Ternate Sultanate is a development of the Kingdom which has been established since the middle of the 12th century. One of the Sultans that immensely contributed to the expansion of power was Babullah from 1570 to 1584. During Babullah's reign, the Ternate Sultanate covered part of the territorial waters of eastern Indonesia by expanding its territory towards the south, west, east, and north of Bima, Makassar, Banda, and Mindanao, respectively. However, this territory was limited to Ternate, Makian, North Halmahera, and Sula-Taliabu Islands. Furthermore, when Islam became the official religion, the Ternate Sultanate was further expanded by conquering the territory of the Jailolo Kingdom and other areas (Lapian, 1980).

The Ternate Sultanate, like most kingdoms in the archipelago, recognized hierarchical layers. The king occupies the highest position, followed by the nobles. (Darsiti and Soeratman, 2002). As the number one person in government,

the sultan is accompanied by a royal council called *bobato*. The term bobato in the Ternate language is translated as regulator and ruler. In this study, the word used as the equivalent is ruler. The members of this council consist of royal officials in charge of the government (*bobato dunia*) and religious matters (*bobato akhirat*). In a religious structure (*bobato akhirat*), the sultan is also regarded as the number one leader or high priest. Additionally, the sultan is obliged to keep, protect, spread, and preserve Islam. As an imam, the sultan is assisted by other high-ranking scholars. However, the one at the topmost rank was called *kadhi* or *jo kalem*.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to provide a description of the role of coastal women in a multicultural society. How coastal women play a family economic role but are still not recognized in society and the state. Cultural diversity in North Maluku has a significant impact on creating gender justice. The dynamics of the democratic process with the values of justice and freedom between men and women is a challenge for realizing the value of women's equality. This article explains the democratic transition in Indonesia in a patriarchal society

RESEARCH METHOD

This coastal women's research uses qualitative research methods. Using a phenomenon approach, this research uses in-depth interviews with coastal women involved in small-scale economic activities. The research locations are in three regions of North Maluku, namely North Ternate and Bacan Island. The data obtained from the interviews were then reduced and interpreted, then conclusions were drawn.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coastal Women in the Circle of Ternate Sultanate: "balakusu sekano-kano" strata

The fishermen's wives in Ternate Sultanate carry out their diverse activities only on land. They sell their catch without processing it into products of economic value. To fulfill daily needs, coastal women or fishermen's wives need to carry out certain activities outside their home to make ends meet. Ternate City is a coastal area inhabited by indigenous people that are deeply rooted in culture. In addition to selling their husbands' catch, the fishermen's wives also process them into fufu or smoked fish. Furthermore, when small-scale fishermen are unable to go to the sea due to weather reasons, they engage in construction activities. The helplessness of fishermen's families, especially their wives, occurs during the fishing season. Unfortunately, coastal women, especially those in the customary area of Ternate Sultanate, do not benefit from any empowerment program, thereby being unable to process the fish into chips, meatballs, and floss. Consequently, they tend to get poorer and helpless during a famine.

The social strata of the Ternate sultanate community consist of several levels which have their respective roles and recognition in the society. A typical example is "*bala kusu sekano-kano*," which simply implies commoners at the lowest strata. They play no major role in society and are regarded as ordinary people. Some of them live in poverty and are not designated to occupy any

government position. The coastal area in Ternate City is *bala kusu sekano-kano*. This area is undeveloped because of their belief and status in the social structure. Long-standing beliefs regarding the status and role of *bala kusu sekano-kano* cause the coastal women or fishermen's wives from the Ternate tribe to be classified as poor and primitive.

In addition, they are excluded in the coastal women's empowerment groups. Besides, the government's inability to provide self-motivational programs in these cultural communities makes the poor even poorer, thereby deteriorating their social and economic life.

The Economic Role of Buton Tribe Women

In contrast to Ternate, Coastal Women in Bacan Island are fragmented by the presence of a new ethnic group, namely Buton. The activities of women in this tribe are far more than those from Bacan. The kinship relations between the sultanates highly influenced the Buton people residing in Bacan and Ternate in the archipelago. They are primitive, and the women mostly engage in smoked fish processing activities to meet their daily needs. Bacan is the largest island in North Maluku Province.

The women-only engage in making fish chips while the Butons carry out other activities such as selling and processing smoked fish. The results realized from the field show that the motivation initiative is ideal and aids the Buton women to progress and become economically empowered. However, they are still poor due to their numerous children and residing in villages that have difficulty accessing information technology. The role of the local government is minimal because the program only supports fish storage equipment. The government has been unable to develop policies in terms of self-help, social, and economic services such as training in fish processing according to hygienic standards and good marketing management.

Economic Liberalization in the Sultanate

The occurrence of democratization in Indonesia since the reform era led to certain fundamental changes for those dependent on cultural structures, especially those within the Islamic kingdoms. One of the most changing aspects is the enforcement of human rights, which triggers women's participation and role in the public sphere. The patriarchal cultural structure of the sultanate society experienced acculturation in accordance with democratic values, such as economic rights and politics that mandate the participation of men and women. The political liberalization scheme was based on economic liberalization. This process led to the fragmentation of multicultural societies in Indonesia, thereby adopting non-governmental institutions such as community groups that play a role in developing these areas based on religion, ethnicity, and race. This includes a shift in the patriarchal culture that has existed for a long period. The government's toughest challenge during the democratization era is facing the indigenous peoples rooted in the patriarchal structure to uphold human rights in the public domain to ensure women's empowerment programs and policies are effectively operated in the Islamic Kingdom.

Typology of Coastal Women in the Multicultural Society of North Maluku

Studies have shown that coastal women, especially those in North Maluku, exhibit different characteristics. These are evident in the 3 research areas, namely

Ternate City, Bacan, and Morotai Islands. This typology is categorized based on their economic activities or roles.

First is the Coastal Women in Ternate City, located at the center of North Maluku Province, where the power of the Ternate Sultanate triumphed. Ethnographically, it is inhabited by various ethnic groups and tribes. The economic activities carried out in this area are divided into 2, with respect to women from the Ternate tribe and those from non-Ternate tribes or migrants that have lived in this city for a long period. Subsequently, the economic activities of the Ternate tribe women that reside on the coast are traditional, and they depend on their husbands by selling fishing products. In circumstances when there are weather constraints, it is usually difficult for these families to find additional economies. Historically, the coastal communities of North Ternate City are mostly fishermen with the lowest strata or ordinary people of the Ternate Sultanate. Meanwhile, migrant women from the Javanese ethnicity actively participate in processing marine products into economic goods because they have enough capital to engage in this business. In Ternate City, they are the dominant players in the fishery product processing business.

Second is the coastal women in Bacan Island. The activities of these women are also divided into 2, namely those of the Bacan and Buton tribes. The women from the Bacan tribe are involved in the fish cracker processing group. Conversely, those from the Buton tribe are smoked fish sellers. In addition, Buton women are more diverse, they visit the port to purchase catches from fish entrepreneurs and further smoke and sell it in Bacan and Ternate daily. *The third* is the coastal women in Morotai Island. In terms of economic activities, these women play 2 roles in order to assist their husbands in fulfilling family needs. First, the wife is responsible role for processing the fish into floss or selling the husband's catch in the market. Second, whenever they are constrained from going to the sea, they plant cloves and nutmeg and sell them. The methods adopted by these women in helping their families were discovered in the 3 research areas. Interestingly, they are fragmented by ethnic or cultural origin. Although Ternate City tends to be densely populated and more advanced than other areas, women or fishermen's wives are left behind in the modernization technique of marine product processing due to cultural, structural factors.

CONCLUSION

The democratization process in the sultanate experienced distortion and disparity. Besides, the economic and political liberalization process in North Maluku generally resulted in the issuance of various policies and programs that needed to adapt to the culture and customs of the people in the sultanate. The characteristics of a cultural society strongly influenced by religion pose a challenge for the state to implement programs that emphasize gender equality in social and economic life. The patriarchal culture, which is still a phenomenon in the structure of indigenous peoples, has negatively affected women empowerment policies in various fields.

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