

Qauwamun: the relationship of subordinating women and victims of domestic
violence in Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper aims to focus on the conditions of religious factors in embedded domestic violence in Aceh. The discussion intends to explore the concept of Qawwamūn to describe how traditions of matrifocality and Islam contemporarily inform women's subjectivities, and also analyse the ways Feminist Anthropology scholars. The conclusion of this study is the key condition factor of Women's Lives and Financial Security to the woman in Acehnese context combines with the traditions of matrifocality and the concept of Qawwamun, as the way to negotiating subjectivity of wife to husband in Aceh. However, the concept of Qawwamun is operated through the interaction with the culture of each area, and interpreted within the framework of religion. In the case of Aceh, the author found that basic religious knowledge of Acehnese women is good. Though it is not applied to all the women in Aceh, with a policy of teaching religion is quite good.

Keywords: *Qawwamūn; Embedded domestic violence; Feminist Anthropology; subjectivity.*

1. Introduction

This paper aims to focus on the conditions of religious factors in embedded domestic violence in Aceh. The discussion intends to explore the concept of Qawwamūn to describes how traditions of matrifocality and Islam contemporarily inform women's subjectivities within Aceh. Including the gender roles and expectations, and codified in legal systems that privilege male authority over women in Acehnese families.

1.1 *Qawwamūn*

The concept of Qawwamūn (men's 'authority' over their 'obedient' wives). Several Muslim scholars have attempted to reinterpret this verse through using classical hermeneutical principles. The verse which is most misinterpreted in the Qur'an is Verse 34 in the Chapter "Nisa" (Woman), which is often used to justify the abuse:

"Men are [qawammuna] over women with what God has favored some over others and with what they (men) spend out of their wealth. (In their turn) righteous women are devoted and guard the unseen as God has guarded (it).

As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly). But if they obey you, then seek nothing against them. Behold, God is most high and great” (Devos, 2015, pp.4)

Qawwām, generally used for someone who stands and serves, is variously translated as maintainer, provider, manager, guardian, protector. (Eshkevari, 2013, pp.203). Qawwamun is not only variously rendered in the different translations of the Qur’an, but has also been interpreted differently by the jurists from both medieval and modern times. These interpretations range from men’s authority over women to educate, guide, and discipline them to their responsibility in providing for and taking care of women’s interests. Conservative scholars interpret Qawwamun as men’s guardianship over women in the context of their different roles and responsibilities, but stress that neither is to be oppressed (Stowasser, 1994).

Engineer (1996) views this “slight” edge of the man over woman not due to any inherent weakness on her part; rather it is construed within the framework of the social context and different functions of men and women which may necessitate male guidance and caring. Yet, wives may surpass their husbands in intellect, knowledge, physical strength, and earning power.

According to Al-Hibri (2003), a male’s qawama over a woman can only be recognized if he is supporting her financially, and if he “has been favored by God in certain matters he is advising the woman about (and about which he knows more at that time)” (p. 9). In the absence of these conditions, the male cannot assume the role of qawama.

Unfortunately, this verse by itself has often come to represent the sole authority of the men to all women in all matters at all times (Al-Hibri 2003). By restricting women in attaining their due rights, such as a right to education and work, and limiting her movement, patriarchal societies have kept women dependent and always in need of support and advice from their better educated husbands. Furthermore, even in cases in which a woman is a highly educated professional she still has to defer to the authority of her husband or other males in the household. This also has negative repercussions for the marital relationship as it promotes male superiority, his word as the last word, and denies mutual consultation (shura) to arrive at a decision. (Hamid, 2015, pp.327)

2. Research Methodology

In this paper, I analyse how the concept of Qawwamūn as a religious factor embedded in domestic violence against wife in Aceh., in a contemporary context which espouses values of gender equality and social justice. I also analyse the ways Feminist Anthropology scholars to describe how traditions of matrifocality and Islam contemporarily inform women's subjectivities within Aceh. Including the gender roles and expectations, and codified in legal systems that privilege male authority over women in Acehese families, and interviews with 11 people (women who are victims of domestic violence) but 16 case studies (because some people marriage more than once) in Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Rethinking Muslim women's subjectivities

The Acehese people have historically practiced distinct beliefs and traditions that lean towards a matrifocal, matrilineal culture.(Tanner, 1974: 137) Four consecutive sultanas, military generals and public figures represent the strong leadership of women of Aceh. These individuals have helped to create a living legacy that influences the way women are perceived today and sets important precedents for gender relations and female emergence into positions of higher status and respect, female power and leadership,.(Kusujiarti, 2015, pp.199). Siegel (1966) argues that partly because of The teaching of the religious teacher (ulama) defined the dilemma of men in the family and offered a solution to it. It defined the course of maturation and promised men power and position in their families. However, against the more powerful resources of women, husbands were little better off than (p.3). within Aceh. These are not static occurrences, but part of an Acehese living memory that influence and informs Acehese culture and society into the present. In other words, Islam in Aceh did not seem to be too concerned with restricting women's public roles and reconstructing indigenous practices in such a way as to domesticate and subordinate women. On the contrary, Acehese society adhered to indigenous belief systems and practices, which engendered a high level of female power, existing in parallel with "Muslim discursive traditions" (Siapno, 1997, pp.6).

Nevertheless, Research by Siapno (1997) illustrated that Acehese believe according to Islamic rules of proper behavior, a women cannot leave the house without her husband's permission. If she violates this code, her husband has the right to beat her, or if done often enough, to divorce her. Women in rural villages believe that in the afterworld, the gates of heaven will be closed to women who betrayed their husbands. (p.269). Similarly, men have

been assigned a leadership role, with the responsibility of providing financially for their wife, which is the key condition factor of financial security to the woman as a way to negotiating subjectivity of wife to husband in Aceh.

3.2 Negotiating subjectivities of women

In Aceh, After marriage, men had (financial) obligations both to their wives and their wives parents, although men tried to create a role as husbands and, especially, as fathers, women thought of them as essentially superfluous. They allowed men no part in raising children and tolerated them only so long as they paid their own way and contributed money for goods that a woman could not obtain through her own resources. Most resources [except houses], however, are owned by men. Women get houses and sometimes rice land at marriage, or shortly thereafter, whereas men are usually without resources in the village until their parents die or until they earn enough through trade to buy rice land. (Siegel, 1969, pp.51-55,145).

However, Tanner (1974) has emphasized the peripheral quality of men's relationships to the families they enter into at marriage should not be misconstrued; as husbands and fathers they are peripheral, but not functionless or unimportant. At the very least, a women views her husband as a financial resource. Men, who have ways to earn money outside the village subsistence economy, can provide cash that women value as a useful supplement to their own resources. Therefore, Tanner attributed that to Acehnese matrifocality and the peripheral role of the husband/father are, in part, a result of the residential and economic facts. The women stay in the village, control the subsistence economy, and manage their households. Children observe that it is their mothers who feed them, instruct them, and indulge them. They see their mothers as responsible and important figures who work hard, are respected in the village at large, and take care most family affairs. But father's relatives are farther away. Fathers are simply not present very much, and when they are, they may not be actively involved in the important and necessary affairs of daily life (p.138-139)

Siegel (1969) has summarizes women's attitudes to husbands as they feel that their husbands contributions entitle them to be fed and deferred to while they pay for it, but when the money is gone, they should go too. They do not feel that men are entitled to share in the larger decisions of the family. From the women point of view the family consists of the people who occupy the house compound—themselves, their sisters, mother, and children. Their husbands have no place, and hence no right to make decisions,(p.177) Therefore, Tanner (1974) compared a

husbands are treated as guest, but as Siegel so appoints out, quests can outstay they welcome (p.179). When husbands do not succeed in the rantau, they do sometimes stay in the village. It is not always a happy solution. For example, in a fight between one such husband and his wife—a fight engendered by the husband’s interference with his wife’s domain—she kicked him, tried to stab him, and slashed at him with a cleaver as well as reportedly exclaimed “What do I need you for?” (p.168). during the fight the husband hit his wife. Which, he points out that this is the sort of “situation villagers imagine a man confronts if he does not provide what his wife want” (p.169).

While some couples, Siegel (p.176) found that Acehnese attribute most divorces to such conflicts over money, and the divorce rate itself is one sign that these conflicts are widespread. In Pidie (The village Siegel lived in) as a whole, 50 percent of marriage end in divorce (the figure is from the Pidie Office of Religious Affairs) which Siegel surveyed the rate is somewhat lower, or about 39 percent, and 14 of the 22 cases of divorce that attributed to conflicts over money, with the women always accusing their husbands of being kriet, stingy. Most divorces are actually obtained by men because it is a much simpler procedure for them to divorce their wives than for women to get a judge to grant a divorce. But in all of the 14 cases just cited, the action that led to the divorce was in fact instigated by the women (p.174-175), was relatively consistent with the Annual report 2014 on domestic violence against Women of the Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh found that financial abuse involving financially irresponsible husband to wife about 115 of the 142 case of financial abuse (Balai Syura Ureung Inong Aceh, 2014) and 1,277 of the 4124 cases of divorce that attributed to conflicts over money or financially irresponsible husband to wife in Aceh. (Mahkamah Syar'iyah Aceh, 2014)

The information about domestic violence against financial abuse in Aceh above that showed different and adopting conditions of subordinate women factors to negotiating male authority of Acehnese women in the past. Although, Acehnese women today neither had high status as in the past, which have been systematically marginalized by multiple factors. Among these factors are the institutionalization of a state ideology which limits women's roles to the singular role of subordinated women to be a housewife. However, when I talked to my key informants in Aceh, i was surprised because most of my key informants are victims of financially irresponsible husband. For example 5 case of the 11 people in 16 case studies (because some people marriage more than once). 1) Ibu Salmi (not her real name) who is employed at a coffee shop (warung kopi), she told me about married status of her, she not to divorce but does not live with her a husband 25 years because in her community married status without a husband

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is freedom than divorced status, she can work alone and no one (men) disturbs her because married status. 2). Ibu Mali, (not her real name) who is employed as teacher, she asked for a divorce a husband because financially irresponsible husband. 3). Ibu Desa, (not her real name) who is employed as a doctor, her a husband financially irresponsible and she can accept, but she asked for a divorce a husband because polygamy. 4). Ibu Rina, (not her real name) who is employed as a cosmetics sales, she asked for a divorce a husband because financially irresponsible husband and mayhem to her, and she tried to ask for divorce 3 time but failed Because her husband threatened to kill her. 5). Ibu Saina, (not her real name) who is employed as a Cleaning office and she asked for a divorce a husband because financially irresponsible husband with the concept of her “marriage is not just for sex”.

Therefore, the concept of Qawwamūn, this concept could be used to maintain a controlling wife for men, while women can use this concept to bargain husband, based on the cultural context of each area.

4. Conclusion

The key condition factor of Women's Lives and Financial Security to the woman in Acehese context combines with the traditions of matrifocality and the concept of Qawwamun, as the way to negotiating subjectivity of wife to husband in Aceh. However, the concept of Qawwamun is operated through the interaction with the culture of each area, and interpreted within the framework of religion. In the case of Aceh, the author found that basic religious knowledge of Acehese women is good. Though it is not applied to all the women in Aceh, with a policy of teaching religion is quite good.

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