

CONFIRMING DOMESTIC IDENTITY, SUPPORTING PUBLIC COMMITMENT (The Case of *Tuan Guru's* Wife in Lombok West Nusa Tenggara Eastern Indonesia)

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Abstrak

Berbeda dengan Tuan Guru (pemimpin agama) yang merupakan figure penting dan berpengaruh, bukan hanya agama tetapi juga politik dan budaya, di Lombok, para istri mereka bukanlah tokoh dunia publik. Pengamatan demikian mungkin saja mengindikasikan terjadinya proses domestikasi yang lalu mengakibatkan subordinasi dalam relasi keluarga Tuan Guru. Penelitian ini menawarkan nuansa dan pemahaman lain dalam melihat relasi gender pada keluarga Tuan Guru, dengan menggarisbawahi cairnya demarkasi ruang public dan private yang terjadidi dalamnya. Penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana sesungguhnya para istri Tuan Guru memposisikan dirinya dalam relasi kuasa pernikahan yang memberikan kesan bahwa relasi gender itu tidak linier dan kaku tetapi kompleks dan cair.

Pembagian ruang public dan private adalah isu penting bagi gerakan feminis. Agama, negara, dan keluarga dikritisasi sebagai lembaga-lembaga yang melanggengkan istrinisasi karena mereka masing-masing adalah dasar bagi, alat untuk, dan tempat bagi suburnya budaya patriarkhi. Ideologi gender yang dianut oleh Indonesia sebagaimana yang termaktub dalam UU perkawinan No 1/1974 misalnya membenarkan dikotomi laki-laki sebagai kepala keluarga dan perempuan adalah iburumah tangga. Negara, melalui system hukumnya, secara aktif memapankan pembagian yang kaku ini sembari menyamarkan berbagai fakta yang terjadi tentang bagaimana sesungguhnya perempuan Indonesia menegosiasikan pembagian yang kaku tersebut. Berdasarkan interview mendalam dengan para istri Tuan Guru dari tiga pondok pesantren yang terbesar di Lombok, penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa pembagian ruang public dan privat dalam keluarga Tuan Guru adalah sebuah cara untuk menegaskan identitas domestic seorang istri dan mendukung komitmen publik para Tuan Guru. Dalam beberapa poin, cara pandang ini memang mengadopsi ideologi yang ditanamkan oleh Negara sebagaimana dikemukakan di atas, tetapi dengan beberapa modifikasi. Garis pemisah antara ruang public dan domestic tidak selalu jelas karena para istri pun bertanggungjawab dan terlibat aktif dalam kehidupan pesantren termasuk dalam bidang manajemen, pendidikan, keuangan serta aktif berpartisipasi dalam pengembangan dan tanggungjawab social lembaga pesantren. Keterlibatan public istri tuan guru tersebut, hanya saja, bukan atas nama gerakan aktivisme atau pembebasan perempuan, tetapi lebih sebagai mendaulatkan diri mereka sebagai pemain belakang layar yang sangat menentukan keberhasilan perjuangan sosial para Tuan Guru. Di sinilah letak kompleksitas relasi gender itu.

Keywords: Istri Tuan Guru, relasi gender, pesantren

A. Introduction

There has been much written about the life of *Tuan Guru*, as prominent figures and charismatic religious leaders in Lombok West Nusatenggara (Masnun, 2011; Kingsley, 2010; Smith, 2009;

Anggara, 2008; Aziz, 2006). However, the perspective which specifically emphasize on family life has not yet been research to any great extent as research about *Tuan Guru* is usually contingent upon their public life. Their

domestic life, especially, *in* relation to their wives and how their wives support and participate in their personal and social life, is omitted from the discourse. This is ironic, for the following reasons: *First*, the closest person who might be very influential in their lives, their wives, does not account for the whole scheme of *Tuan Guru*'s important position. *Second*, the absence of the description of their wives' involvement in their social devotion leads to the fact that indeed not many *Tuan Guru*'s wives are recognized publicly among *Sasaknese*¹ Muslim. This fact, then, leaves many negative assumptions about the roles of *the* wives as well as the attitudes of *Tuan Guru* toward them. People might think that the wives do not have any social commitment and *Tuan Guru* does not provide opportunity for them to publicly involve. This research will try to fill aforementioned gap by addressing some questions: what roles are actually played by *Tuan Guru*'s wives? How do *they* value themselves as the partners of *Tuan Guru*? How do they position themselves between their domestic identities and social commitments as wives of *Tuan Guru*?

This research underscores a classic issue within the feminist theory related to the demarcation line of public and private spheres between husbands and wives, supported by state and religion and embedded in the legal system. In doing so, the research will examine in what ways the ideology of "state *ibuism*"² and also formulation

of Indonesian Marital Law 1/1974³ which put women *vis a vis* men as housewives and head of families is actually represented in Indonesian families. I argue that the rigid division has never been applicable in the daily lives of Indonesian women. There have been many discussions and much research to support this argument (Atkinson, 1990; Hoskins, 1990; Errington, 1990; Wolf, 1992; Koning, et. al, 2000; Geertz, 1961). The fluid division of public and private becomes very clear if we look at the lives of *Tuan Guru*'s wives. In some areas of their lives, they do indeed position themselves as housewives giving considerable meaningful support to their husbands, because in this way they contribute greatly to the achievement and social acceptance of their husbands. By doing that, they actually think, they are the managers of their husbands' schedule and activities. It is also important to note, that the dividing lines between public and private is obscured by their active involvement in the establishing and improvement of *pesantren*, an institution where *Tuan Guru* show and maintain their charisma and popularity.

In demonstrating the values embraced by *Tuan Guru*'s wives, this research includes in depth-interviews with three *Tuan Gurus*' wives from the three biggest *pesantren putri* (Girls Islamic Boarding School) in Lombok.⁴ Each of

only housewives who devote themselves only for their husbands career.

³ The legal text of the Indonesian Marital Law 1/1974 regarding this issue can be seen at Section 31 (3): The husband is a head of family and the wife is a household mother. Similar text is also stipulated in section 79 (1) in the Compilation of Islamic Laws 1/1991 in Indonesia.

⁴ Those three *pesantrens* each belongs to *Nahdhatul Ulama* (Ta'lim al Shiblyan Praya), *Nahdhatul Wathan* (*Pesantren Putri Nurul Haramain*) and *Pesantren Nurul Hakim* which is claimed as having no specific Islamic organization affiliation. Pondok *Pesantren Nurul Hakim* is the oldest as it was

¹ Sasaknese is an ethnic name for indigenous and majority population of Lombok Island.

² This term is the extension of *Ibuism* theory coined by Jayadiningrat back in 1970s as the most striking works related to the issue of domesticating woman which criticizes feudal values in Javanese tradition supported by bourgeois values of Dutch imperialism. Suryakusuma (2004), who coins the term of *stateibuism*, refers to the ideology of simplifying women as

them is purposively chosen based on different Islamic organization affiliations of *pesantrens*, wives' age range, and their education level. The differences are taken into account to see whether this variety of background influences the way the wives value and position themselves as the most intimate person of *Tuan Guru*. However, the research shows there are no significant impacts resulting from the differences toward the way the wives place themselves as an equal partner of *Tuan Guru*. They all shared similar values in that they confirm their domestic identity as housewives but this domestic position enables them to reach social roles indirectly through their support of *Tuan Guru*'s social commitments. Furthermore, their devotion as housewives does not always prevent them from contributing greatly to the establishment, management, and improvement of *pesantrens*.

The paper begins by discussing the dichotomy of public and private lives in Indonesia legally as well as practically. The second part will overview *pesantren* and *Tuan Guru*, and then discuss gender issues in the Lombok context. Finally, the paper will uncover the findings of how *Tuan Guru*'s wives negotiate and play their roles as individual women as well as wives of *Tuan Guru*. The structure of the paper is formed under a consideration that examining the position of *Tuan Guru*'s wives, I argue, should be placed in the context of three important issues; public and private dichotomy, far-reaching position of *Tuan Guru* in Lombok and gender issues in Lombok context. *Tuan Guru*'s wives interplay these three factors and by taking them into consideration while listening to how they subjectively position

themselves, uninformed assumption about them could be minimized, or even avoided.

B. Public and Private Dichotomy in State Policies and Cultural Practice

Many studies have criticized the rigid dichotomy of public and private roles of wives and husbands in Indonesia particularly as embedded in legal structure issued by the state. The Indonesian National Marital Law 1/1974 as well as the Compilation of Islamic Laws 1/1991 stipulates strictly the position of women as housewives who are responsible for housekeeping and husbands as head of families who are in charge for economic support. Those legal formulations show how state, supported by religion, makes a policy to influence gender construction which, in fact, does not always represent cultural practices in Indonesia (Blackburn, 2004). The state, with its power, instills the ideology of women as domestic labor and men as public creatures and it creates what Suryakusuma (1999, 2004) coins as "State Ibuism". Furthermore, Suryakusuma problematizes the role of state in organizing groups of civil servants' wives in Indonesia (*Dharma Wanita*) which is used merely as a means to support the career of their husbands and in turn to strengthen the intervention of state power toward families' private lives. However, it is important to note, that while ideologically, the Indonesian mindset is very influenced by this structural regulation, at a behavioral level, Indonesian women have been negotiating their domestic boundaries. At the juncture of this debate, this research argues that such legal justification of woman's domestic position and man's public place does not necessarily imply the subordination

built in 1948, NurulHaramain, in 1991, dan Ta'lim al Shiblyan al Manshuriyyah Praya, in 2000.

and domesticating of woman. The cases of *Tuan Guru*'s wife prove that the position as a housewife does also purport an equal participation of men and women – and it really depends on how a woman negotiate and utilize the role.

The ideology of dichotomization legalized by the state is not always applicable in Indonesia every day lives and many studies have proved the deviation of this universalizing issue in many parts of the country (Atkinson, 1990; Hoskins, 1990; Errington, 1990). At a practical level, the lines between public and domestic are not as clear as in the written formulation as Indonesian women share great equality in the economic life with their male counterparts. Geertz (1961) in her research about Javanese families found that wives have more authority, influence, and responsibility than their husbands within families, which then creates strong solidarity ties among women at a kindred level. The centrality of women or 'matrifocality'⁵ is further explored by Tunner (1973) in three ethnicities in Indonesia: Javanese, Acehnese and Minangkabau and she found that in these three societies, mothers, or women, are legitimated central and important actors in both economic and ritual spheres. While these three societies are organized on different kinship system, they share matrifocality where women also enjoy their public life while becoming the center of family life. In Lombok West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), there is also a tradition called *Begawe* or ritual and traditional feast where

⁵ Matrifocality means literally: mother-focused which is coined first by Smith (1956). Tanner (1973) further distinguished between matrifocality and matriarchy as the latter refer to the centrality of white American women within their families affectively which is a counterbalance of their economic independence. In contrast, Matrifocality is the centrality of women within families affectively as well as culturally and structurally in the social level.

men are the frontier part of conducting domestic tasks such as preparing food during the process and celebration (Khairani, 2009). What emerges from the explanation above is that, assigning Indonesia women to the roles as housewives, through many public policies, actually, does not prevent them from being the central figure who have authority and are able to exercise influence in many important decisions within families. Therefore, housewives and head of families is a strict definition and ideological concept but it is a fluid notion in cultural practice.

C. *Pesantren*, *Tuan Guru*, and Gender Issues in Lombok

Tuan Guru (male religious experts and preachers in Sasak community) in this research refer to those who lead *Pesantrens* (Islamic boarding school).⁶ *Tuan Guru* and their *pesantrens* have become two inseparable institutions as neither can exist without the other. *Pesantren* is an institution where *Tuan Guru* bases their social-religious commitment. Likewise, the title of *Tuan Guru*, along with some integrated privileges, can only be acquired through leading or owning the *pesantren*.⁷ These religious institutions, developed

⁶ Historically, the title of *Tuan Guru* for religious experts in Lombok is firstly used in 18th century and it is not originally from Sasak rather the term imported from Banjarmasin and South Sulawesi. Before that, religious experts were called *Lebe* (modin) (Marwah, 2010). Three first generation of *Tuan Guru* are *Tuan Guru Umar Kelayu*, *Tuan Guru Abdul Hamid Presak Pagutan*, and *Tuan Guru Sekarbela*. From the beginning, social commitment of *Tuan Guru* was established in educational aspects which then are expanded to many aspects of social life such as politics and contemporary issues.

⁷ Contrast this with the definition and categorization of *Tuan guru* according to Kingsley (2010). Kingsley (2010) highlights the differences of *Tuan Guru* and *Kyai* in Java; unlike *Kyai* who should lead the *pesantren* to get the title of *Kyai*, to get the title of *Tuan Guru* does not require owning or leading *pesantren*. However, Kingsley (2010) admitted that social acceptance and far-reaching of *Tuan Guru* will be determined by the size of

by *Tuan Guru*, play and extend innumerable significant roles in almost every sphere of Lombok society; religious, political, social, as well as economic (Aziz, 2001; Anggara, 2008). Therefore, it is hardly possible to discuss one and leave another; rather they both should be taken into account. Smith (2011) for example, in her discussion about *Pesantrens*' roles in co creating the culture of polygamy in Lombok, is actually discussing the role of *Tuan Guru* as the actors of such practice.

In religious life, no doubt, *Tuan Guru* and the *pesantrens* are the most important figures and institutions for Sasaknese, if not the only one. Significant roles of *Tuan Guru* started in the early history of Islamizing Lombok and their commitment in Islamic proselytizing has never declined. Through their *pesantrens*, *Tuan Guru* contribute greatly to Islamic education. In Lombok, the first established education institution can be dated back to 1937 when a very prominent *Tuan guru* established NWDI (Nahdhatul Wathan Dinniyah Islamiyyah), a boys' Islamic boarding school, and 6 years later, on 21st April 1943, a girls' Islamic boarding school which is called as NBDI (Nahdhatul Banat Diniyyah islamiyyah) was also established. These institutions later became the embryo of NahdhatulWathan, established on March 1st 1953, which is listed as the biggest social religious organization in Lombok today. *Tuan Guru* also play direct roles in politics acting as governor, regent, or mayor or

as supporters of those who are interested in those important positions, as *Tuan Guru*'s followers can vote for them.

As prominent figures they are also play vital roles in responding to the dynamic changes in society. Like or dislike, they have to make adjustment. Therefore small number of *Tuan Guru* are making social transformation by getting involved in contemporary issues such as gender and family law (Harwati, 2008), religious pluralism (Suprpto, 2005), and conflict resolution (Kingsley, 2010) and establishing civil societies (Suprpto, 2005). Their point of view within Islamic law has also moved from classical *fiqh*-oriented to social change-oriented (Mutawalli, 2005). However, it should be noted, some *Tuan Guru* are still reluctant to include a progressive perspective, particularly in relation to gender issues (Umam, 2004; Nikmatullah, 2004). Therefore, *Tuan Guru* is segmented in terms of their level of acceptance and attitudes to the rapid changing of society.

Considering the crucial roles of *Tuan Guru* and *pesantren*, as explained above, every community development effort in Lombok always involves *Tuan Guru*. Therefore, it is inevitably the case that the *Tuan Guru* are also the first to be consulted for community building efforts and they are the ones who are frequently blamed should any problems be faced by the community. The description elucidates the far-reaching areas of *Tuan Guru*' social responsibility and in this context the position of their wives should be understood.

Meanwhile, there are many gender problems in Lombok which require more serious effort, especially from the prominent role models of the community such as *Tuan Guru*'s wives. NTB is

pondok pesantren which is measured by the number of students seeking Islamic knowledge from them. He categorizes *Tuan Guru* into *Tuan guru Besar* and *Tuan guru Lokal*. I would argue *pesantren* and *Tuan guru* are two inseparable institutions. *Tuan gurulokal* is the way community respects someone who has leadership capacities and higher Islamic knowledge by appointing them the title.

one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia where the Human Development Index (HDI) is in the bottom two (2) out of thirty three (33) provinces in Indonesia. Poverty is very prevalent and the high rate of illiteracy and maternal mortality are ubiquitous and contribute to the lowest HDI rank. If we consider the number of females is higher than the number of males in NTB,⁸ the poverty and those social problems are also part of women's lives in NTB and the feminization of poverty is obvious. NTB is also well known as a sender area of migrant workers which in many cases also lead to women trafficking cases. The list of the problems demands more serious involvement of *Tuan Guru* and their wives as the prominent figures and religious leaders.

D. *Tuan Guru Wives*: “We are the Managers!”

Mulyani (2009) criticizes the lack of attention in discussing religious leaders' wives in some previous works about *pesantrens* in Java, since women in these traditional Islamic schools play important roles in shaping the qualified educational process in the *pesantrens*. She also points out the lack of academic interest toward women's roles in the case of *Dayah* (name of *pesantren* in Aceh). This criticism seems to be applied also in the Lombok context where the significant roles of women, whatever they are, have not yet received much attention. Djuwita (2004) has traced the existence of women *ulama* (Islamic experts) and she found three prominent women *ulamas* who actively foster social religious understanding in Lombok. Women

actually have a powerful foothold in the life of *pesantrens* everywhere in Indonesia (Suryani, 2008; Nurdiana, 2009; Gunadi and Hidayati, 2009). Therefore, a vivid portrait of women from *pesantrens* should get much more academic discussion and publication.

In examining the participation and leadership of women in *pesantrens*, a different approach is required to the one used toward *Tuan Guru* as they each have different social expectations and contexts. Mulyani (2009) has stated that the leadership of *Nyai* (*Kyai's* wives) in Java should not be judged under the same standard as *Kyai* (religious leader). This point can also be applied in looking at *Tuan Guru's* wives participation and social commitment. The following recounts illustrate how wives of the *Tuan Guru* see their own contribution to the life of *pesantrens*. Their stories show that their involvement might differ from that of the *Tuan Guru* but is equally important.

E. The Profile of *Tuan Guru's* Wives

Tuan Guru's wives are usually called *Umi*, an Arabic derived word which means mother. However, unlike *Kyai's* wives in Java who are specifically called *Nyai*, *Umi* among Lombok society is not specifically for *Tuan Guru's* wives but also for mothers who have already gone on a pilgrimage. The absence of a specific name for *Tuan Guru's* wives might signify how society is not really aware of their important roles and existence.

Three *Umis* (UmiSyamsiyah, UmiRohani, and UmiMu'awanah),⁹ informants of this

⁸ Total population of WestNusatenggara Province by 2010 is 4,496,855: 2,316,687 females and 2,180,168 males. The data can be accessed at www.bpsntb.go.id

⁹ For confidentiality of informants, the names used here are pseudonyms.

research, come from different backgrounds in many ways: family, age, and education. Umi Syamsiyyah was born into a family of *Tuan Guru*. Umi Rohani is actually not from a *Tuan Guru* family but her father was prominent figure as a village headman while Umi Mu'awanah is from a noble family as is obvious from the female *sasaknese* noble tittle (*Baiq*) attached to her name. They represent three different generations. Umi Syamsiyah is in her late 60s, while Umi Rohani is now 43 years old and Umi Mu'awanah is the youngest (35 years) and the only co-wife (second wife in a polygamous marriage) among the three *Umis*. This generational difference brings with it a varied educational level. Umi Syamsiyah did not have the chance to finish her formal education and dropped out because she got married. Umi Rohani finished her Islamic Senior high school which is now an Islamic boarding school she and her husband lead, and Umi Mu'awanah got her undergraduate degree and even had obtained her master degree after marriage.

To some extent, these differences have an impact on the range of involvement the wives have in supporting *Tuan Guru*, and how they perceive themselves. However, it is important to note that none of them can be categorized as being only or fully housewife without crossing their domestic boundaries at all.

1. Umi Syamsiyyah: "You can see me through my children"

Umi Syamsiyyah is the oldest informant for my research. Having given birth to thirteen (13) children, she encouraged all of them to strive for high achievements in education and careers, thus, proving herself to be devoted and successful mother. She does not have

any degree herself but she realizes that her children were born in a different situation from her and should be prepared for future challenges.

In her late age (60s), Umi Syamsiyyah, is still busy with the management of catering for all the students in her *pesantren*. She is the one who is responsible for the menus and schedule of students' breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Organizing dishes for thousands of students is a daunting task but she is the senior manager of catering. She has responsibility of arranging the job-description of catering teams. More than that, as an owner of a very big *pesantren* in West Lombok, she is also always busy welcoming and looking after many guests of *Tuan Guru*. This is how she sees herself best contributing to the activities of *Tuan Guru*. However, she admits that she compensates for her lack of education by providing the best opportunities for her children to gain knowledge wherever they want to go.

"I do not have time to go outside and involved in many activities like trainings and attending workshops and public activities but I do support *Tuan Guru*'s activities and I encourage my children to get involved too. In my era, women were not so encouraged to go to high school. I did not graduate from formal higher school and here I am, but I sent all my kids; sons and daughters to higher education. I educate them to be good people so that they can continue their fathers' commitment. One of my daughters is now the rector of the university of this *pesantren*. I also tried hard to prepare my daughters to be very good women so that they can get good husbands too. So now my own kids and my in-laws have good capacities to continue this *pesantren*"

The roles of this Umi are very important not only for the existing needs of *pesantren* but also for preparing the future steps of organizing the *pesantrens*. She also put much effort in maintaining the social standing of *Tuan Guru* and the *pesantren* as having successful children gives *Tuan Guru* more credit to prove the good leadership of *Tuan Guru* to the public. It is impressive to learn how this *Umi* defines and manages her roles and what could be more important than being a good mother while thinking of ways how to sustainable and improve the good name of the *pesantren*?

2. Umi Rohani: "We are both ministers: I am for domestic affairs and he is for foreign affairs".

Umi Rohani, a 43 year old elegant woman, married a very progressive *Tuan Guru*, only a year after she graduated from the *pesantren*, which was owned by her future father-in-law. Since she became 'queen', she has put all her devotion to help her husband, the *Tuan Guru*, in improving the *pesantren*. Her husband now becomes internationally recognized after a very successful 'go-green program' for the surrounding society and getting the Magsaysay award from Philippines government. She is extremely proud of this, as she consider the success to be not only his, but theirs. During the interview, she emphasizes that whatever a husband achieves, it is because there is a great wife behind him. She recalls when her father-in-law handed over the *pesantren* to her husband years ago and the effort they have both made to help the *pesantren* become well known and make a priceless contribution to

society and the next generation. "I lifted rocks when we started building this room and all the furnishing you see in this room were made by *Tuan Guru* with his own hands, yes, with his own hands."

In addition to this effort, Umi Rohani is always available for her students to be their 'mother' and as sharing-partner for those who have some personal problems. She also manages the cleaning and catering beside some administrative management of the *pesantren* such as nominating and choosing teachers. Her involvement in the *pesantren* implies a sincere contribution in supporting *Tuan Guru*'s career. While their roles might be judged as essentializing women's roles, it is still important to recognize every single effort of *Tuan Guru*'s wives. This is one way in which we can appreciate their roles because what they do really depends on who and what they are. They cannot be forced to do things beyond their capabilities.

"People can see this *pesantren* and social standings of *Tuan Guru* but they might not be able to see what happened before. While *Tuan Guru* is busy outside, I take care of everything inside and what *Tuan Guru* shows outside is prepared by me even a very simple thing. You can ask *Tuan Guru* if he knows what is in his suit case. No! He does not know at all. I am the one who reminds him of his schedule. So, if we think about a government state, it has a Minister of Domestic Affairs who take care of what happens inside the state, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs who speaks up and builds networking internationally. That's my husband and I are committed to working together as a team in a similar way"

The way in which this *Umi* sees the roles of wives and husbands is a clear example of

how she carries out her duties as *Tuan Guru*'s wife while at the same time seeing herself as an individual woman of equal status. In this case, she defines her roles as not merely the means of furthering *Tuan Guru*'s aims, but also pursuing her own satisfaction for their shared achievement. Although *Tuan Guru* and she choose to participate in different spheres, they have a shared goal for the *pesantren*.

3. Umi Mu'awanah: No Decisions without My Opinion

The decision to become a co-wife was very controversial for Umi Mu'awanah considering her track-record as an activist for gender issues. She now has the responsibility of managing the *pesantren*. However, she justifies her decision by saying that not all polygamous marriages will lead to unhappy families and conflict between wives. The first wife of her husband is a government employee who cannot devote her time for *pesantren* and for this reason, her husband wanted to find a devoted woman who would help him manage the *pesantren*. She admits that she has taken on the commitment of contributing to social life by going hand in hand with *Tuan Guru* in taking care of the *pesantren*.

"I know I am way much younger than my husband but I married him and he married me because we found ourselves having a similar mission in life, particularly about improving the *pesantren*. That's why I wanted to be his second wife in a polygamous marriage with all the consequences. This is part of my struggle and *Tuan Guru* always positions me as his equal partner. He never takes any decision without consulting it to me and vice versa. It is true that my schedule for going to many cities is less after getting married but I take this deliberately with many considerations

when balancing my role as a wife and as an individual woman."

The relationship of Umi Mu'awanah and her husband represents the fluid application of power and authority within families. Rosaldo (1974:21) discusses how the authority in having decisions within families, which is usually in the husbands' hand, is frequently pressured by the power their wives have to influence the decisions. In the case of this *Umi*'s relationship to her husband, the authority and power seem to be, sometimes, exchanged by *Umi* and *Tuan Guru*. They have their own authority to make particular decisions but they are each influenced by the power of one another. Being an activist gives this *Umi* self-confidence to also represent *Tuan Guru* in some forums. She becomes a spoke-person of *Tuan Guru* who frequently does lobbying to some important institution and resources for networking and fund raising. Eventually, *Umi* Mu'awanah states that her position as the second wife does not put her as a second creature before her husband.

F. Reconsidering Domestic Identity: Between Housewives and Citizen

Women's issues are not universal as they are culturally, religiously, and politically grounded. Mohanty (2009) challenges a globalized standard of the feminist movement and raises consciousness toward the difference of women in the third world to avoid generalization of theorizing women. This generalization, as discussed before, ironically also happens at a national level within some third world countries, including Indonesia. Robinson (2002) finds that the homogenizing imperative

of gender roles within Indonesian public policies actually masked the differences found throughout archipelago.

The case of three *Umis* provides insights into how women in different societies have their own situation and background in placing themselves within the so-called public versus private border of women's participation. There is no, in fact, clear-cut definition about public and private, even among feminists themselves as the issue covers a wide-range of women's conditions. Therefore, we cannot really judge that the physical absence of some women from public and assume it means they are not contributing and participating to the public life at all. The public and private realm definition related to participation of women should account for the diversity of women's backgrounds as women are engaged in various culturally-grounded activities. Moreover, the call for women's participation in public life should consider their personal conditions without automatically encourage them to physically participate in the public sphere. However, the housewifization of women and relegating them to being only housekeepers, as dictated by public policies in Indonesia, should be revisited as women can play many pivotal public roles, more than just housekeeping, even from their domestic realm.

The blurred line between domestic and public lives emphasizes the importance of redefining the concept of citizenship. Prokhovnik (1998) challenges how the definition of citizenship is reduced to the public realm, which is further confined to political activities and economic independence. She suggests that being a citizen should not mean taking women out of their private realm as they can equally gain their citizenship

even when they remain in there. The cases of *Tuan Guru's* wives suggest that women can participate for public commitment no matter where they are if the situation demands it.

In some respects, the position of those three *Umis* might be in line with the ideology of state *ibuisism* coined by Suryakusuma where a woman is simplified to the role of a means for her husband's career which then maintains the domesticating ideology of woman. However, it must be noted that in *Tuan Guru's* wives cases, they are not members of *Dharma Wanita* as part of the state's apparatus and therefore, the state can justify its intervention toward the wives' activities. Conversely, those three *Umis* are the owners of the *pesantrens* and they should, to some extent, have more autonomy, freedom, and full responsibility to maintain the quality of their educational institution. In some ways, *pesantren* are like businesses, share-owned by both wife and husband, requiring equal involvement from both. As a consequence, without a wife, in many cases, the day-to-day operation of the business would fail.

Meanwhile, *Tuan Guru's* wives are central to biological as well as social reproduction and this is fundamental to *Tuan Guru* and *pesantren* as they rely upon lineage. The wives are the mothers who produce the next generation for the potential successor of leading the *pesantren*. Therefore, social standing and good performance of their children are needed. Dhofier (1979) in his research about *Kyai's* kinship in Java, Indonesia, found that "a successful *pesantren* leader also relies on the support of his family members". The successor is usually recruited from their sons or sons-in-law. Their wives then are seen as having equal rights in managing everyday

lives or even have higher dignity over *Kiay* in front of their children quoting popular *Hadits* “paradise is under the feet of mothers” (Dhofier, 1979). The findings of this research correspond to what Dhofier (1979) has highlighted as it is obvious from Umi Syamsiyyah’s case when she emphasizes her concern in raising the successful successors (her children) of *Tuan Guru*.

Despite the enormous differences among three *Umis*, as discussed above, certain important roles have been retained in a variety of manifestations such as being spokes-person, equal partner, manager, supporter, co-worker and team-mate of *Tuan Guru*. Therefore, being partner of *Tuan Guru* gives them double-folded strong identities; active housewives and responsible citizen. *Tuan Guru* is publicly revered and they culturally and religiously devote themselves to their social commitments. Consequently, their wives take the position of being not only housewives but they see themselves as an integral part of the public commitment of *Tuan Guru* and act as *Tuan Guru*’s managers. They perceive themselves as having more authority in managing the activities of *Tuan Guru*.

Being managers is quite prominent among them although the degree of control on decision making and direct public involvement varies among those three *Umis*. In the case of Umi Mu’awanah, for example, the bargaining position between “master and manager” (Sullivan, 1994) or Umi and *Tuan Guru* is stronger as she has more intense public involvement and she can translate the managerial role to have more power for the *pesantren*. All of them, however, can exercise real power within their families. This finding is different from what Sullivan (1994) found when she stated that being manager in the

domestic role for women, sometimes, is confined to managing finance and housekeeping without extending to real power within or outside families. However, it should be highlighted here, that although we do need to appreciate the roles of these three *Umis*, which are more important than we thought, we have to admit that they have not done much to support and empower women in their communities. Considering their influential position as the wives of prominent figures, their direct involvement, particularly, regarding many gender issues in West Nusa Tenggara is a very strategic role to show their more nuanced public commitment and devotion. Nevertheless, the stories, above, have given a more complex reality for *Tuan Guru* and their families where the public and private dichotomy does not rigidly work.

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