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**Female Representation in Local Contexts:**

**Women's Leadership in Tasikmalaya**

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## Female Representation in Local Contexts: *Women's Leadership in Tasikmalaya\**

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*Kodrat perempuan* (women's nature as constructed by society) is a norm or cultural value which is still widely observed in Indonesia including that of in Tasikmalaya (both the regency and city). It is assumed that, in reality, this norm functionally impedes women's political participation, including their representation in parliament. However, there is an opposite norm, which supports women's representation in parliament: the 30% quota policy, which has been in effect in Indonesia since 2004. This political policy requires that women consist of at least 30% of every political party's proposed candidates. In contrast to the norm of *kodrat*, this norm is expected to increase the number of female parliamentary representatives. This study analyzes women's experiences in the parliamentary elections and workplace, examining the competition of the two opposite norms, in which each norm is nurtured by its supporting social force: the *kodrat* norm is supported by certain local and religious values, and the quota policy is supported by the current social forces of democracy and feminism. The object of the study is women MP's experiences in the 2004 and/or 2009 general election in Tasikmalaya regency and city. Using a grounded approach, this study identifies women's experience in both the elections and parliamentary processes, and how these opposite norms encourage or hinder woman's political leadership.

The study finds that women apply certain strategies and dynamically manipulate the hurdles that they face in order to have a career in the male-dominated world of politics. Using the limitations imposed by norms such as *kodrat* through either wait-and-see strategies, strategies of spousal consent, or strategies of showing an affirmative attitude. This study also finds that *kodrat perempuan* has a proportional role in preserving the internal order of the family (family harmony), as well as social one, as women still have the space and opportunity to engage politically (though within constraints). Other factors, including women's own capacity, skills, and networks, and external forces such as the 30% quota for female candidates, certainly contribute to women's participation and representation. However, these other factors only seem to become effective after women themselves manage the implications of the norms of *kodrat* in their family and their community.

### **Key words:**

*Kodrat Perempuan*, agency, quota policy, gender, woman's representation, and social practice.

### **Introduction**

An important aspect of the democratization process in the *Reformasi* era is general elections for members of the central and local parliaments. These parliaments are the key institutions of democracy, in which the public good and the public's interests are discussed and fought for, through the formulation, clarification, evaluation, and approval and/or disapproval of government policies and programs. The performance of parliament depends on its members, who are elected through general election, the main procedure of a democracy. After the fall of the New Order, Indonesia has held relatively free general elections in 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014. There were three stages of the 2004 General

Election: the legislative election for the House of Representatives (DPR), the House of Regional Representatives (DPD), the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) at provincial level, and the DPRD at the Regency/City level.<sup>1</sup>

Candidates at all levels are essentially treated equally in the general elections. However, politics is still pervasively considered as male trade. Male politicians dominate political parties, and accordingly they influence the selection and staff of their structures and their candidates Members of Parliament (MP). Being aware of unjust practices towards women, special attention has been given to them since colonial times. In the *Reformasi* era, attention towards women's political participation took a new, measured step: a gender quota was introduced in 2003 and applied beginning 2004. This effort, a 30% quota for female candidates pioneered by different agents (particularly the feminist movement), has had a positive impact on women's representation due to increased representation. This policy creates a new perspective of the social construct known as *Kodrat Perempuan*, meaning that women are encouraged nationally and locally to enter the world of politics, which is traditionally dominated by men.

How women are recruited, and how they perform as MPs, are interesting subjects. Using the city and regency of Tasikmalaya as the site of study, this article discusses how Muslim women take dynamic roles in the election process and parliament. It examines, in a contemporary local context, how gender and religion co-influence the democratization process; how the religious ideal of *Kodrat* informs gender relations in terms of women's engagement in leadership; and how different themes, such as elections, quota policies, parliamentary participation, and women's leadership inform women's social engagement. In other words, this study investigates how the perception *Kodrat Perempuan* supports or hinders women's leadership in the election process and work at the regional parliament of Tasikmalaya Regency and City. The data for this article was gathered during two field work periods – from August 2008 to April 2009, and again from April to November 2010 – and is analyzed using Anthony Giddens's agency approach. Giddens considers important aspects of subjectivity and objectivity and what lies in between,<sup>2</sup> and defines social practice as a number of living practices which are continuously taking place in space and time over

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<sup>1</sup> Syamsuddin Haris and Moch Nurhasim. 2007. "How Political Parties Work in DPRD: Some Introductory Notes," in *Political Parties' Performance at Local Parliament in Indonesia*, edited by Sri Nuryati. Jakarta: LIPI Press, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Giddens. 2010. *Teori Strukturasi: Dasar-dasar Pembentukan Struktur Sosial Masyarakat*. Jakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, pp. 1–3.

an extended period. The facility is the result of the continuous process of reproduction, modification, and production of its agents. Giddens's perspective focuses on the role of agents in identifying situations in which social practices become possible.<sup>3</sup> As changing a social practice is dependent on internal and external factors, social practices thus also depend on internal and external influences to remain, be modified, or recreated. The social practice consists of systems, norms, values, structures, institutions, etc.

#### **A. Leadership Trajectory**

While traditional roles which reflect the construction of *kodrat perempuan* continue to be kept, recent external factors, such as the implementation of the 30% quota policy, have encouraged Indonesian women to participate in political processes. They receive support when attempting to enter formal politics. However, they must be equipped with knowledge, skills, networking, and other capitals if they want to perform well in such a competitive and male-dominated field. These other capitals which pave the way for women candidates to be elected as members of a parliament include their family background, fame, and economic capital. In the case of Tasikmalaya, different genealogical backgrounds, such as being from family of religious leaders, community figures, or successful businesspeople contribute to a candidate's electability. Though there are many institutions of religious education in the Tasikmalaya regency and city, only a few women from these backgrounds have been elected. Women candidates from the families of religious leaders must make a serious effort to gain the support of society. In doing so, these women also need financial support, among others, to promote their efforts to gain a seat. To what extent women prepare and project themselves in this field can be traced from their leadership trajectory.

Discussion of how women are elected as MPs cannot be separated from how their leadership trajectory is nurtured and how their perception of *kodrat perempuan* influences their political engagement. The following two tables provide background information for further discussion.

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<sup>3</sup> Giddens. 2010. *Teori Strukturasi*, p. 4.

Table 1  
Female MPs in the Tasikmalaya Regency DPRD

No	Name	Status	Education	Family Background	Income	Political party, and Period as MP	Date of Interview, or other sources
01	Evi Elvinadianty	IRT, dress seller (housewife)	Elementary to senior high school, a student at local college	Dress Business	Occasionally running a small dress business	PPP, 2004–2009	October 23, 2008
02	Dede T Widarsih, SE	IRT of a State employee, Head of Transportation affairs, Tasikmalaya Regency	Elementary to undergraduate level	State employee	Occasionally running a small dress business	Golkar, 1995-1999, 1999–2004, 2004–2009, 2009–2014,	October 24, 2008 and October 19, 2010
03	Ucu Dewi S	A private <i>madrasa</i> teacher	Elementary to religious senior high school, a student of a local college	Active in Islamic education	A private <i>madrasa</i> teacher	PKS, 2004–2009, 2009–2014	October 23, 2008 and October 18, 2010
04	Siti Nurjannah	IRT of a state employee	Elementary to undergraduate level	State employee	-	PPP, 2009–2014	October 28 and 29, 2010
05	Titin Sugiartin	IRT, merchant	Elementary to senior high school, a student at a local college	Trader family	Merchant	PDIP, 2009–2014	October 28, 2010
06	Yane Sriwigantini,	IRT, merchant	Elementary to undergraduate level	Trader family	Private employee and merchant	PAN, 2009–2014	August 5, 2010
07	Rosy Hermawati	IRT	Elementary to undergraduate level	State employee	-	PKS, 2009–2014	October 18, 2010
08	Neng Medina Ruhiat	IRT	Elementary to Undergraduate Level	Religious family, relative of the founder of Cipasung <i>pesantren</i>	-	PPP, 1999–2004, 2004–2009 2009–2014 of DPRD West Java Province	fieldwork
09	Laela Suroya	IRT	Elementary to Undergraduate Level	Religious family, relative of the founder of Cipasung <i>pesantren</i>	-	PKB, 2004–2009	fieldwork
10	Mimi Rohmiati	IRT	Elementary to senior high school level, a student at a local college	Religious family	-	PPP, 2009–2014	October 28, 2010

Sources: *Memori DPRD Masa Bhakti Tahun 2004–2009* (Report of DPRD Period 2004–2009) of Tasikmalaya Regency, Interview and Fieldwork August 2008–April 2009 and April–November 2010 in Tasikmalaya Regency and City

Table 2  
Female MPs in the Tasikmalaya City DPRD

No	Name	Status before being MP	Education	Family Background	Income	Political Party, Period and Status as MP	Date of Interview or Other Source(s)
01	Nurkamilah	IRT	Elementary up to senior	Religious family	-	PPP	<i>Memori 2002–2004</i>

			high school				
02	Tien Mastini	IRT	Elementary up to undergraduate level	Religious family	-	PKB	<i>Memori 2002–2004</i>
03	Ani Nuraini	IRT	Elementary to senior high school	Religious educator	-	PAN, 2004–2009	December 11, 2009
04	Eti Guspitawati	IRT, and trader	Elementary to senior high school	Trader family	Merchant	PDIP, 2009–2014	July 30, 2010
05	Ratnawulan	IRT	Elementary to senior high school	State employee	-	Golkar, 2009–2014	August 3, 2010
06	Ai Popon Purnawati	IRT	Elementary to senior high school	Family trader	Helping her husband in managing a factory	PPP, 2009–2014	October 19, 2010

Sources: *Memori DPRD City Tasikmalaya 2002–2004* (Report of DPRD period 2002–2004), *Memori DPRD Masa Bhakti Tahun 2004–2009* (Report of DPRD period 2004–2009) of Tasikmalaya City, Interviews and Fieldwork, August 2008–April 2009 and April–November 2010 in Tasikmalaya Regency and City.

As seen from the family backgrounds of MPs, their construction of *keodrat* is like that found in other female roles, that is, closely tied with the traditional roles of women in the family, including being a housewife (locally known as Ibu Rumah Tangga; IRT) and thus dealing predominantly with the management of the household and the education of children. They are expected to ask permission to become active in social engagements, and to play supporting roles for the family's success and harmony. Over the course of time, their main role as IRT is negotiated in accordance with their circumstances. This is because, in this area of engagement, women are directly given alternative sources of discourse which treat men and women as equals, including gender issues, human rights, UUD (Basic Constitution), 30% of quota policy. Accordingly, in addition to their general role as IRT, they extend their roles to becoming managers of family businesses, educators at institutions, preachers at religious study groups, religious activists, or politician, as seen in the case of Rossy Hermawati of the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PKS. Before becoming a member of parliament, Hermawati was active in the *Tarbiyah Kampus* (a campus-level dakwah movement, popular in the 1990s) during her studies in Bandung (1994–1998). The year 1998 was a historical one for her, because she was graduated and joined the new political party, *Partai Keadilan* (PK),<sup>4</sup> which was derived from the *Tarbiyah Kampus* movement in which Hermawati was active. She was among the first generation of women to join the party.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> PK was transformed became as PKS/Partai Keadilan Sejahtera in 2004, as the party has had to adapt with to the new regulations.

<sup>5</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Rossy Hermawati. Tasikmalaya Regency, October 18, 2010.

In areas deemed inappropriate for women the traditional perception of *kodrat perempuan* is rationalized to respond to external factors which tend to define *kodrat* in an essentialist manner, i.e. using a naturalistic view. A more natural apprehension of *kodrat* is deployed to maneuver existing barriers, and allow women to engage in political processes. The traditional perception of *kodrat*, such as asking permission to become politically active, is deployed by women to pave the way for their political careers. Through this strategy, they not only gain permission, but also practical support. For example, Yane Sriwigantini of Tasikmalaya Regency, and Ai Popon of Tasikmalaya City, were both IRT when the opportunity to become MPs came. In addition, neither initially reacted aggressively to their political opportunities, only acting after they gained the permission and support of their husbands. In some instances, husbands became supportive agents for their political campaigns by leading the campaign team.<sup>6</sup>

Female MPs' leadership trajectories are nurtured by different sources of discourse: religious and local norms, family backgrounds, as well as discourse from the state and media. Of MPs with a family background in business, Titin Sugiartini of the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PDIP and Ai Popon of the Tasikmalaya City branch of PPP may serve as examples. Their leadership paths were mostly formed through their family's business lives. Sugiartini's father, Ugan Suganda, began his kerosene business in 1948, serving distribution needs in Tasikmalaya Regency. After 44 years as the regency's main agent, his business had to be adjusted to the policy of "Rayonisasi" (area of distribution) in 1992, meaning that the company could distribute the kerosene to only seven *kecamatan*s (wards) ranging from Indihiang to Kadipaten. Sugiartini entered this business at the same time as this policy change. What is interesting in her case is that her father provided her with an economic link, which she used to make contacts with her constituents. He also educated her as to how to maintain her kerosene agents in a mutually beneficial manner; such a skill was useful for her campaign. In other words, her leadership was formed in part through her business dealings with other people. Her business activities provided not only economic opportunities for many people, but also created a network in which her family members and business partners maintained their relations. Two years after becoming active in kerosene distribution, Sugiartini became active in politics, joining PDIP in 1994. Soon afterwards, she was made the treasurer of her ward's branch of the PDIP, and later became the secretary of the organization. She was active in the party for 15 years before

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<sup>6</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Yane Sriwigantini, August 5, 2010 and with Ai Popon, October 19, 2010.

running in the local parliamentary election in 2009. She sees *kodrat* as originality, what is originally women's and is not had by men. This negotiated understanding of *kodrat* was nurtured by her experiences managing the kerosene business and participation in politics, through which she often dealt with different types of people. This eases her engagement in the public sphere, including politics.<sup>7</sup>

Like Sugiartini, Ai Popon Purnawati, of the Tasikmalaya City branch of PPP (serving in the local parliament from 2009 to 2014), also comes from a business background. Her father and husband's businesses, in which she plays an important role, contribute to her leadership trajectory. This can be traced back to her childhood, when she was appointed as class head in the fourth grade of Karang Sambung Primary School; she retained this position until she graduated in 1983. Her leadership trajectory was also nurtured in her junior high school years, when she became class treasurer. In 1992, at age twenty-two, she joined the PPP. Her family are strong supporters of the party; her husband came from the same political background; and Tamansari, Tasikmalaya City, is a stronghold of the PPP. After eight years of being an active member of the party, she was elected village treasurer of Tamansari in 1999, representing PPP. She held this position for seven years before she was chosen as First Head, dealing with the party's internal organization, in 2006. Three years later, she was elected as the party's leader in Gobras Village; four months subsequently, she was also chosen to be the party's head in Tamansari Ward, a position which she continues to hold.<sup>8</sup> These capitals, among others, increased Purnawati's chances of being elected as MPs.

Purnawati explains that *kodrat perempuan* is "to take care of children, husband and the family." She did this function by becoming an IRT after she married in 1989. At the same time, she believes that women must have economic independence. In Islam, wives are not obliged to financially support their families, and when they do have income, it belongs to them, to be spent as they wish. Purnawati used her income in order to not be dependent to her husband, spending her money on both family needs and herself. Unlike Sugiartini, who considers *kodrat perempuan* to not be very influential on women's social practices, she negotiates *kodrat* by playing both private and public roles.<sup>9</sup> She approaches this double burden creatively, by managing them with her husband's support.

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<sup>7</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Titin Sugiartini, Tasikmalaya City, October 28, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Ai Popon Purnawati, Tasikmalaya City, October 19, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Ai Popon Purnawati, Tasikmalaya City, October 19, 2010.

Eti Guspitawati (PDIP; Tasikmalaya City), Yane Sriwigantini (PAN; Tasikmalaya Regency), and Evi Elvinadianty (PPP; Tasikmalaya Regency), also come from a business background. Their husbands are local businessmen who produce and sell one of the region's most famous commodities: Muslim dress. In spite of being housewives, they are also involved in their family businesses.

As *Majlis Taklim* (Religious Group Studies) is the dominant place for women to participate in religious studies, many consider it an important place for social engagement. All female MPs interviewed used *Majlis Taklim* as an important site for their political campaigns. For Evi Elvinadianty, *Majlis Taklim* is the place for social engagement. Like many other participants, her leadership trajectory in *Majlis Taklim* began through fundraising in her neighborhood to support the management of the *majlis*. Originally from Tangerang, she moved to Tasikmalaya in 1998, but did not consider herself an outsider as people accepted her warmly. Her helpfulness may explain her ready acceptance. She became affiliated with PPP in 1993, while living in Tangerang. In Tasikmalaya, she joined with the local party, and was soon made the head of Tasikmalaya Regency's Wanita Persatuan Pembangunan/WPP (Women for United Development). One of its activities was religious preaching at *Majlis Taklim*. Evi Elvinadianty predominantly dealt with *Majlis Taklims* in areas with a strong PPP presence, allowing her to grow from only an IRT, to caretaker of *Majlis Taklim*, to politician. When the 30% quota policy was implemented in 2003, she was one of the women of Tasikmalaya's nominated for a parliamentary candidacy; she won her seat a year later.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note that the assumption that politics is both a male field and a corrupt one has had a significant influence on the absence of Muslim women politicians from the *pesantren*. Most MPs are male, with a *pesantren* educational background, either as *santri* (a *pesantren* student) or as both *santri* and madrasah (junior/senior high schools with *pesantren* management) students. One reason to explain this is so is that Islamic education institutions emphasize women as supporting agents, not equal partners. Traditional *pesantrens* still maintain the norm up to present for example by teaching the book known as *Uqud al-Lajain fi Huquq al-Zanjain* (Nawawi Banten [1813–1897] wrote it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Evi Elvinadianty, Tasikmalaya Tabulate, October 28, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Pieternella van Doorn-Harder. 2007. "Reconsidering Authority: Indonesian Fiqh Text About Women." and "Religious Authority, Politics and Fatwas in Contemporary South Asia," in *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. edited by R. Michael Feener and Mark E. Cammack: 49- 65; Martin Van Bruinessen. 1995. *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan. p. 122.

In most cases, teachers in Islamic education institutions idealize Muslim women as obedient agents in families, prioritizing housework and the education of children. Local norms seem to support this wisdom. Accordingly, women (particularly Muslim women) are influenced by this discourse in the context of Tasikmalaya. This is why so few women from *pesantren* backgrounds become MPs. Only two women MPs in Tasikmalaya Regency have come from a *pesantren* family in the last decade: Neneng Madinah of PPP and Laela Suroya of PKB. There are at least two explanations for this. First is the general assumption of ideal role of woman, in which the perception of *keodrat* is usually used to support the formulation of women's ideal roles. Second is the particular position of the *pesantren*; Cipasung *pesantren*, from which the two women MPs originated, is known as an inclusive one, particularly in regards to the position of woman. Both MPs are daughters of KH. Ruhiat and Nyai Badriyyah, who established the *pesantren*.<sup>12</sup> Though he kept neutral in politics, KH. Ruhiat was a citizen who supported the Republic of Indonesia, saying “Biar, bagian politik itu sudah ada ahlinya, akang memimpin pesantren saja, jangan sampai semua ke politik. Kalau pesantren ditinggalkan, bagaimana nanti jadinya negara merdeka ini kalau penduduknya tidak berakhlak agama?” (Leave politics to the experts. Let me take care of my *pesantren*, not engage in political activities. What would happen in this country if people didn't behave religiously?). As such, he did not prohibit his students or family members from political engagement. This allowed some of his students and family members to participate in political processes, including the two of his daughters, both of whom became involved in politics long after their father's death in 1977. Another factor may be that the women (the *nyais*), including Madinah and Suroya, were not expected to become leaders at the *pesantren* as their male siblings were. This allowed them to become active socially, including in politics. Although her term in local parliament is finished (2004–2009), Suroya is still an active member of PKB in the regency. Neneng Madinah Ruhiat's political career, meanwhile, has developed further; she was elected as a member of West Java's parliament in 2009, and is a member of the D Committee, dealing with provincial development.

In short, it can be concluded that female politicians must also go through processes which equip them with the knowledge, skills, and networks to engage in politics. At the same time, other social and cultural capitals (such as their families' economic and structural backgrounds, or having family members who are leaders in the government or religion) also further ease them in successfully reaching their goals. Most of female politicians

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<sup>12</sup> Iip D. Yahya. 2006. *Ajengan Cipasung: Biografi KH. Moh. Ilyas Rubiat*. Yogyakarta: PT. LkiS Pelangi Aksara. p. 34–5.

interviewed played the roles of housewives in the private sphere and politicians in the public sphere. In this case, their perceptions of *kodrat* are contextualized and compromised by existing religious and social engagements, as well as the mainstreaming of new adaptations of their traditional roles. How their perceptions of *kodrat* influence their leadership experiences is discussed below.

## **B. Leadership Experiences**

Women's political engagement and leadership experiences consist of the following four dimensions: their campaigns, candidacies, elections, and experiences as MPs.

### **1. Candidacies**

The stereotype that politics is a dirty business may influence women's participation in parliamentary candidacies. In the case of Tasikmalaya, this is further influenced by the construction of *kodrat*. As a result, women are generally reluctant to be involved in this formal political process, though external factors encourage women to do so. Those factors are the policy of gender equity, human rights, and the 30% women candidates quota. The first two factors are imposed either by the state through its policies, regulations and institutionalizations, or by NGOs through workshops and training; these contribute significantly to creating a conducive context for women's political participation. The other factor, the 30% quota policy, certainly has a significant role in giving women more exposure in the public sphere, as seen in the candidacy of women MPs.

The women MPs interviewed experienced such reluctance, overcoming it only after a number of agents support their involvement. Husbands were generally the most determinant factor encouraging women to engage in parliamentary elections. Many of the local female politicians interviewed said they had their husband's support. One common aspect of patriarchal families is gender relations which place husbands as the heads of families, meaning that wives must ask permission before engaging socially. This value is retained in the context of Tasikmalaya. Although political parties have generally paid more attention to their male cadres, after the implementation of the 30% quota they have been strongly recommended to make serious efforts to accommodate a minimum of 30% women candidates.

The recruitment pattern of political parties is exhibited by the eight political parties<sup>13</sup> which passed the parliamentary threshold in the 2009 General Election. This required the following: selecting women candidates from internal cadres, either from women's organizations or general party members, who are senior members, qualified candidates, professionals, or persons with fame and wide social support. The recruitment process for women candidates is similar to that for men. Women candidates are proposed by either the lower structure of the parties the superior one, or proposed by internal teams of the political parties, or through women's own initiatives. In the case political parties that do not have their own cadres, leaders or selection teams will invite women candidates with high electability from outside the party. To maintain fairness in the recruitment process, members of the team come from the parties' managing body. In practice, political leaders and their secretariats may play decisive roles in choosing women candidates. Only a few political parties have adopted the 30% quota in the structure of their party or selection of legislative candidates.<sup>14</sup> Of the eight leading political parties (Golkar, PDIP, PKB, PAN, PPP, Demokrat Party and PKS) in the period from 2005 to 2010, the largest percentage of women politicians was 26%, or 13 out of 50 staff members, in the structure of the PKB. The lowest was 5.8%, or 4 out of 69 staff members, in the PKS.<sup>15</sup>

The *kodrat* construction plays an invisible role in the process, but is evident through different attitudes or expressions. Its influence can be found before the formal selection, during the selection process, or in determining candidates for the highest position in a regency or city. Before the formal selection, female candidates must evaluate whether or not they want to run, establish whether or not their closest family supports them, and determine whether or not others (including their political parties) support them. During the selection process, some of the *kodrat* values can be seen, including from the fact that women candidates are not considered a priority, even after the implementation of the 30% quota. Women's reluctance to get involved in politics is deeply rooted in their perception of *kodrat*, as experienced by candidates such as Ucu Dewi Syarifah and Rossy Hermawati of PKS and Ani Nuraini of PAN, who said that they would not have run had their families (husbands and sometimes parents) and political parties not supported them.

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<sup>13</sup> They are Democrat Party, Golkar Party, PDIP, PKS, PPP, PKB, PAN, and Gerindra Party.

<sup>14</sup> Ani Soetjipto. 2011. *Politik Harapan: Perjalanan Politik Perempuan Indonesia Pasca Reformasi*. Tangerang: Marjin Kiri. pp. 58-9.

<sup>15</sup> Golkar Party 12 % (13/108 staff), PDIP 14.8 % (4/27 staff), PKB 26 % (13/50 staff), PAN 10 % (5/50 staff), PPP 9% (2/22 staff), Democrat Party 10 % (8/77 staff) and PKS 5.8 % (4/68 staff). Ani Soetjipto (*et.al*). 2010. *Menyapu Dapur Kotor*: p. 23. The data of the structure of PDIP mentioned in this book PDIP 14.8 % (14/27 staff), is incorrect; the correct number is not 14 female members, but only 4. "Susunan Pengurus DPP PDIP, Pramono Agung Sekjen". *Detik News*. March 31, 2005.

Only once they had permission and support did they participate in their parties' selection procedures.<sup>16</sup>

The situation explained above shows that women in Tasikmalaya politics may still have to face a cultural barrier. This barrier is known in social studies as a glass ceiling effect. The barrier puts woman's leadership and competence in a situation where this area is treated "as masculine characteristics."<sup>17</sup> In this case, some of woman politicians in Tasikmalaya adhere as well as face a cultural norm which restricts their political engagement. Though this case is not common practice in other parts of the country, some other scholars encounter a similar experience, such as found by Pieternella van Doorn-Harder. She argues that it is important to understand this in the context of "the underlying cultural construct," which influences people.<sup>18</sup> She explains that

"In Java, cultural and religious forces joined to create the so-called glass ceiling that women face. At the same time, Javanese culture undergirds the commitment of these women: they think relationally and perceive individuals within their family, community, and environment. For the women leaders, how one handles this microcosm ultimately testifies to one's relationship with God. They see this as more important than seeking personal gain or stardom."<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, I found that Dede T Widarsih, a senior politician of the Golkar Party, experienced this dilemma. She was reluctant to become a candidate for regent of Tasikmalaya Regency, instead proposing that she run as deputy regent. She considered the role of women in her regency to still be perceived traditionally, and found this value to be supported by both religious understanding and local precepts.<sup>20</sup> As such, and considering her party's calculations, it is understandable for her to decide to not run for regent. Though in the first interview Widarsih said that *kodrat* does not influence women's political participation significantly,<sup>21</sup> her decision, with *kodrat* as an important consideration, proves otherwise. It was a political calculation which she had to make; she says that "we have to obey religious teachings and we have to consider where the current is flowing in politics."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kusmana. Field Work. Tasikamalaya, April–November 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Jerlando F.C. Jackson and Elizabeth M. O'Callaghan. 2009. "What Do We Know About Glass Ceiling Effects? A Taxonomy and Critical Review to Inform Higher Education Research," in *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 50, No. 50, pp. 463.

<sup>18</sup> Pieternella van Doorn-Harder. 2006. *Women Shaping Islam: Indonesian Women Reading the Qur'an*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> van Doorn-Harder. 2006. *Women Shaping Islam*. p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Dede T Widarsih. Tasikamalaya City, October 19, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Dede T Widarsih. Tasikamalaya City, October 14, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Dede T Widarsih. Tasikamalaya City, October 14, 2008.

In the case of how women are recruited in the parliamentary candidacy process, parties have been told to implement a 30% quota of women candidates. This has led to an increase in political parties offering candidacies to women. This has been a surprise for many women, as they have been marginalized (and, to some extent, absent) from the political arena, and thus have weaker precedent and tradition in the field than their male counterparts. They act as if the political sphere is alien to them, waiting for opportunities, reluctantly accepting, and then worrying about not being capable of handling the task. As mentioned above, they must be convinced to become candidates. For example, Ai Popon Purnawati of the Tasikmalaya City branch of PPP only accepted her candidacy after her husband and local religious and community leaders gave their support. Yane Sriwigantini, of the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PAN, accepted the offer only after her husband and family convinced her.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of PKS, women's participation in parliamentary elections has been considered imperative after the party decided to offer the opportunity to its women cadres. If either the candidate or her spouse refuses, the party's local board will persuade them to accept the opportunity. The party formulates it as part of a religious mandate (*dakwa*), a movement for social change. Rossy Hermawati and Ucu Dewi Syarifah accepted their candidacies only after their political party convinced their husbands. Hermawati explains that, as a member of PKS, she is obliged to do *dakwa*. The organization itself is a *Tarbiya* movement, and believes that a political vehicle is necessary for the effective implementation of *dakwa*; in other words, they use their political party through to reach institutional objectives. This is why each member of the movement, including women, must support it. When husbands protest, the party's local boards persuade them to give their wives permission to participate in the political process.<sup>24</sup>

Some husbands actively encourage their wives to participate in politics, including parliamentary candidacy, as experienced by Mimi Rohmiati and Siti Nurjannah, both of the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PPP. Rohmiati, though a housewife, has experience in public engagement, particularly during the two periods her husband served as regent of Tasikmalaya Regency. As first lady of the regency, she was made the leader of state-supported organizations such as Dharma Wanita, PKK, and Badan Koordinasi Majelis Taklim (BMKT). Aware of his wife's capacity and his own influence as both regent and an important member of the PPP, Rohmiati's husband Tatang Farhanul Hakim suggested that

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<sup>23</sup> Kusmana. Field work, Tasikmalaya, April–November 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Rossy Hermawati, Tasikmalaya Regency, October 18, 2010.

she run for MP.<sup>25</sup> Siti Nurjannah's experience was similar. It began in 1999, when her husband declined an offer to become the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PPP's treasurer because he was a state employee. He instead proposed that his wife take the position; the party agreed, and Nurjannah became a politician. Prior to the general election in 2009, she served concurrently as the local PPP's treasurer, as well as treasurer of BKMT (since 2006), and the treasurer of the Forum Da'i Tasikmalaya Regency (Forum for Muslim Preachers in Tasikmalaya; 2007–2009). Her candidacy in the 2009 general election came after she had held an important position in the party for quite a while.<sup>26</sup>

Other women are motivated to engage socially. Of the interviewees, Titin Sugiartini and Ratnawulan seemed the most assertive. Sugiartini has been involved in PDI(P)'s activities for more than two decades. She became more active with the party after her second husband, Suwito, died in 2006 and has since been trusted with a number of responsibilities. Ultimately, the party proposed that she be one of PDIP's candidates in the 2009 election, and she gained a seat in the Tasikmalaya Regency parliament for the 2009–2014 period.<sup>27</sup> Ratnawulan, on the other hand, is wife of a state employee who became active in Golkar's activities in 1995, participating in her husband's activities in both the local government and Golkar. Her political participation intensified in 2000s, after her husband died. Prior to the election, Ratnawulan was made leader of the Forum Kota Sehat Siaga (FKSS; Forum of an Alert and Healthy City). Normatively, this position is supposed to be held by the mayor's wife, but because she declined Ratnawulan was made leader. She explained that she was given the task because of her previous involvement in governmental organizations, including Dharma Wanita and Gabungan Organisasi Wanita (GOW; Union of Woman's Organizations). As part of FKSS, which coordinates and supports the implementation of ward, village and neighborhood Alert Health Programs, she met people in different positions and from different organizations, including PKK, Posyandu, local governments, and NGOs concerned with basic health development. By the time candidacies were opened, she had an important position and could not easily be neglected.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of how women are selected as candidates, the following considerations were mentioned by all interviewees, from different political parties backgrounds (Golkar Party, PKS, PPP, PDIP, PAN, PKB): seniority, position in the structure of the party,

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<sup>25</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Mimi Rohmiati, Tasikmalaya Regency, October 28, 2010

<sup>26</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Siti Nurjannah, Tasikmalaya Regency, October 28, 2010

<sup>27</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Titin Sugiartini, Tasikmalaya Regency, October 28, 2010

<sup>28</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Ratnawulan, Tasikmalaya City, August 3, 2010

loyalty, popularity, and wealth, as well as other social, cultural and economic capitals.<sup>29</sup> Generally, the elite of political parties (such as the local board) select a number of candidates based on the aforementioned criteria. Names of candidates are accommodated through the parties' internal mechanisms, which are normatively bottom-up processes from the ward level up to the regency or city one; at the lower level, the approval of candidates is confirmed. However, in practice such standardized procedures do not always come up with the expected results or number of needed candidates. As such, in many cases, political elites must look at an alternative way: direct recruitment. This also happens when the elites play their political interests, despite objective considerations and external influences, such as the 30% quota. At least, with such obligations, women are encouraged to become engaged in formal politics.

In short, women's political candidacies are celebrated, but partly within the precept of the perceived *kodrat*. This is evidenced from the fact that women MPs asked their husbands' permission before becoming involved, as well as their reluctance to take the highest leadership positions (as experienced by Dede T Widarsih, in the election of the regent). In this way, women can finally engage politically, and receive the support of their families, political parties, and communities. With this, they can begin their campaigns. The question of how *kodrat* influences the campaign process is discussed below.

## 2. Campaigns

How does the perception of *kodrat perempuan* influence women's campaigns? The campaign is crucial for candidates to win elections, and it is only completed after candidates have decided to run. Candidates' and voters' perceptions of *kodrat* may influence the decision making process, whether or not the women candidates will join the political process. The nature of campaign is to gain people's support, and thus does not explicitly deal with the cultural value of an idealized woman. However, campaigns may relate to values when they are attached to certain act which requires value judgments – such as when women candidates are asked to campaign at night time in a remote area – or require creativity – such as thinking in a manner deemed inappropriate for her *kodrat*. Female candidates generally run their campaigns in accordance with the assumed *kodrat* and the local ideal of propriety. They campaign as men do, such as through the *majlis taklim*. They take advantage of different media, including banners, billboards, pamphlets,

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<sup>29</sup> Kusmana. Field Work Tasikmalaya Regency and City, August 2008–April 2009 and April–November 2010.

stickers, and business cards, in their political campaign. In the media, they may indicate voting steps to direct voters to vote for them, include slogans or general themes for which they will fight, or simply put their pictures and the logo of their affiliated party. Banners and billboards are installed in places where they can potentially be seen by many people, particularly intersections and business districts. Pamphlets, stickers, and business cards are distributed by either campaign teams or the candidates themselves during campaign stops, including *majlis taklim* or door-to-door visits. Furthermore, fieldwork indicates that one female candidate used her culinary expertise as campaign tool in the 2004 General Election, gained significant support (more than 2000 votes), but failed because of regulations which were still based on rank.<sup>30</sup>

Like male candidates, women also give financial aid for developing public facilities, including the construction of *gardu* (security posts), mosques, or *majlis taklims*. They also contribute funds for the food consumed at their rallies and gatherings. As many places are visited, they usually share the costs with other candidates. In terms of constructing public facilities, Sugiartini of the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PDIP, for example, paved several alleys and named them Gang (alley) *Ummat* 1, Gang *Ummat* 2, etc. Many alleys in rural areas of Tasikmalaya are muddy during the rainy season, meaning people have difficulty passing through; thus, she considered the paving necessary to allow people to move more quickly, thus influencing their mobility. Another thing is that, by using the term *Ummat* (meaning community, here designated as a Muslim community) can make her candidacy more readily accepted, as she is calling forward their religious sense of belonging.<sup>31</sup> This approach is effective because it was implemented in the context of the growth and dissemination of Islamic ideals, as reflected in the recent *Perda Shari'a* movement. In this context, the *kodrat* construction plays a role because this kind of political activity deals with areas which affect everybody, regardless of their gender. A more direct influence of the *kodrat* construction can be seen in the candidates who use views of women for the purpose of their political campaigns. For example, teaching others how to bake cakes, as mentioned above, is a campaign strategy used by women which is very much influenced by the constructed *kodrat* (though it is still rare).

Socially, female local MPs in Tasikmalaya come from different family backgrounds. It appears that these family backgrounds contribute, to some extent, to their chances of success in the election. The electability of a candidate cannot be separated from their social

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<sup>30</sup> Kusmana. Interview with, Heni Hendini. Tasikmalaya City, April 22, and November 1, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Titin Sugiartini, Tasikmalaya, October 28, 2010.

capital; they must have popularity, economic resources, and networks. Many of the candidates, such as Sugiartini, Sriwigantini, Guspitawati, Purnawati and Elvinadianty, were from a mercantile background. Others come from families of civil servants, such as Nurjannah, Rohmiati, Widarsih and Ratnawulan, or educators, such as Ucu Dewi Syarifah and Ani Nuraini. A candidate with family in business has the advantages of merchant and buyer relations, as well as employer and employee relations. For example, Ai Popon Purnawati and her husband have different kinds of businesses: furniture production, and the manufacturing of rubber through the recycling of oil used tires for footwear. These businesses deal with many people: business partners, buyers, and employees. There are numerous employees and business partners, and they generally live nearby – within Tamansari, her area of her campaign. They expected that, if she was elected, she would pay more attention their area's development. This possibility can be measured from a privilege in which a member of parliament has, namely the Aspiration Fund (*Dana Aspirasi*), which amounted about Rp 300,000,000 annually in the Annual Budget of 2010. This explains, for example, why Purnawati got 7400 votes. Though it was 600 votes less than the minimum, this was the highest number of votes in her campaign area from her party (PPP), and thus she had priority for membership in the Tasikmalaya City DPRD for 2009–2014.<sup>32</sup> As with the aspect of financial aid, the use of social capital is not directly related to the use of *kodrat* in social engagements. A relation may be drawn when female candidates uses their understanding of *kodrat* to increase their electability by (for example) using their and their family's area of influence to promise that they will pay attention to mothers' and children's interests in the campaign, as was done by Rohmiati's campaign. For her, this was a measured and feasible promise because she headed PKK for two periods, while her husband was the regent of Tasikmalaya.<sup>33</sup> Once again, however, it is a rare.

Though female political campaign engagement is generally in areas which are under the influence of women's closest male relations, such as their husbands, brothers and fathers, external factors provide the space and opportunity for them to pursue their political campaigns. In other words, the patriarchal culture manages to adapt to the situation. This gives more space and opportunities for women's political campaigns. The construction of *kodrat* an indirect role in supporting women's political campaigns, as the campaign itself is neutral, as well as the key role of women's closest agents (husbands, fathers, and brothers), who are very influential.

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<sup>32</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Ai Popon Purnawati, Tasikmalaya, October 19, 2010

<sup>33</sup> Kusmana. Field work in Tasikmayala, April-November 2010.

### 3. Elections

How does the perception of *kodrat perempuan* influence women's elections? As with campaigns, elections are an important step for candidates to become MPs, but are not directly related to their understanding of *kodrat*. This relation depends mostly on external agents' construction of *kodrat*, and the support (or lack of it) for women's electability hinges on voter tendencies. However, women candidates' understanding of *kodrat* may affect their speech and actions, thus influencing their campaigns and persuading voters to elect them. Women candidates' marginal electability in Tasikmalaya is reflected in the election results shown below.

Table 3  
Female MPs in Tasikmalaya Regency

Female MPs	Male MPs	Period	Percentage of Female MP
5 <sup>34</sup>	41	1999–2004	11.1 %
5 <sup>35</sup>	40	2004–2009	11.1 %
7 <sup>36</sup>	38	2009–2014	15.6%

Table 4  
Female MPs of Tasikmalaya City

No	Female MPs	Male MPs	Period	Percentage of Female MPs
1	2 <sup>37</sup>	43	2002–2004	4.4 %
2	1 <sup>38</sup>	44	2004–2009	2.2 %
3	3 <sup>39</sup>	42	2009–2014	6.7 %

Based on the number of elected women MPs, the electability of women remains weak compared to that of men. The highest percentage of women elected was 15.6%, in the 2009 general election in Tasikmalaya Regency, which is still far short of the 30% quota;

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<sup>34</sup> They are Dede T. Widarsih of Golkar, Tien Mastini of PKB, Sobariah of PPP, and Laela Suroya of PKB. Sobariah, Sutini Tirtaatmadja of TNI-POLRI and Suroya. In the course of time, Sobariah replaced Farhanul Hakim, and Suroya replaced SD Nurdin. Meanwhile Mastini moved to DPRD of Tasikmalaya City, which was newly established for the period of 2002–2004. *Memori DPRD City Tasikmalay 2002–2004*, p. 31–2, and *Memori DPRD Tabulate Tasikmalaya, Masa Bakti 1999–2004*: pp. 33–8. The total number (5) is the accumulation of all female MPs during the period of 1999–2004. The number changed over time as some were substituted or moved to another DPRD as a consequence of the administrative separation of Tasikmalaya Regency and City.

<sup>35</sup> They are Dede T widarsih of Golkar, Laela Suroya of PKB, Neng Madinah Ruhiat of PPP, Evi Elvinadianty of PPP, and Ucu Dewi Syarifah of PKS. *Memori DPRD Tabulate Tasikmalaya, Masa Bakti 2004–2009*: pp. 7–8.

<sup>36</sup> They are Dede T Widarsih of Golkar, Ucu Dewi Syarifah of PKS, Mimi Rohmiati of PPP, Siti Nurjannah of PPP, Rossy Hermawati of PKS, Titin Sugiartini of PDIP, and Yane Sriwigantini of PAN. Kusmana. Field Work, Tasikmalaya Regency. April–November 2010.

<sup>37</sup> They are Nurkamilah of PPP and Tien Mastini of PKB. *Memori DPRD City Tasikmalaya 2002–2004*, p. 31–2.

<sup>38</sup> She is Ani Nuraini of PAN. *Memori DPRD City Tasikmalay 2004–2009*: p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> They are Ai Popon Purnawati of PPP, Eti Guspitawati of PDIP, and Ratnawulan of Golkar. Kusmana. Field Work. Tasikmalaya City, April–November 2010.

the lowest number is much worst, with 2.2% in the 2004 general election, and 6.7% in the 2009 general election in Tasikmalaya City.

Based on the number of women candidates from the leading political parties in the 2009 general election for the local parliament of Tasikmalaya City, the 30% quota significantly influenced the percentage of women candidates: the lowest percentage of the leading parties was over 10% (11.8%; PKB), and the highest percentage was over 60% (66.7%; PKPI), as shown in Tables 5 and 6. Though the number of women candidates is much higher than the number of elected women, the implementation of the 30% quota has certainly compelled more women to become politically engaged. Does their perception of *kodrat perempuan* influence their participation in this process? The answer is yes, but only indirectly. This means that direct influences are external factors, namely state regulations. However, in practice, the way in which women are recruited has difficulty conforming to existing gender relations, which are heavily influenced by the *kodrat perempuan* construction. As such, women candidates have to deal with their parents, husbands, families, and even local religious and community leaders in order to be elected. Permission and support, as the result of their efforts to respond to external imperatives such as the quota policy, indicate that the *kodrat perempuan* construction influences their candidacies in one way or another.

Table 5  
The Leading Parties in the 2009 General Election, Tasikmalaya City  
(7 out of 38 political parties)

Political Party	Total	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Percentage of Female Candidates
PDIP	40	9	31	22.5 %
PPP	39	8	31	20.5 %
Golkar	32	9	23	28.1 %
PKS	48	9	39	18.8 %
PKB	17	2	15	11.8 %
PBB	31	5	26	16.1 %
Demokrat Party	30	5	25	16.7 %

Table 6  
Political Parties with more than 30% women candidates, Tasikmalaya City

Political Party	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Percentage of Female Candidates
PDS	2	2	50 %
PKPB	3	3	50 %
PKPI	4	2	66.7 %
PPI	1	1	50 %
PKP	2	4	33.3 %
PPDI	3	3	50 %

There are 395,697 voters in Tasikmalaya City, consisting of 198,663 men (50.2%) and 197,121 women (49.8%) in 2004 general election. The level of participation is very high, at 90.04% (352,061 voters) for the 2004 legislative general election.<sup>40</sup> This high level of female political participation has not included a high level of women's representation in local legislature, as indicated above. Joni Lovenduski explains that women who participate in, or are offered, parliamentary candidacies tend to be weaker than male candidates in terms of property, knowledge, and political experience. She also finds that domestic tasks consume much of their time, resulting in little time for them to engage in, for example, parliamentary work. This understanding that domestic work should be done by women, she finds, comes from the perception that such work is appropriate to women's constructed natures (in Indonesia referred to as *kodrat*). As an example, she noted that conservative political parties in England had been unsupportive of women's participation in politics, citing the "nature" of women.<sup>41</sup> Finally, she argues that political tasks are considered male, a perception believed to hinder women's entry to politics.<sup>42</sup>

My interviews and observation indicates that Lovenduski's three points are also found in Tasikmalaya. Some religious figures remain unsupportive of women's civic engagement, worrying that these women are less serious in carrying out traditional roles such as childbearing and housework. They believe that the role of women as formulated in (for example) the book *Uqud al-Lujain fi Huquq al-Zanjain*<sup>43</sup> is the ideal role for women to play.<sup>44</sup> Women are expected to be familiar with work in three areas of their homes: the room, kitchen, and the area around the water source (such as a well). This is the main task expected of women, and only this should be the focus of women's time, thoughts, and energy. It can be so time consuming that there is not enough time for other activities. This, according to these religious leaders, is a practical reason why many women can simply not engage in other intensive fields, including becoming MPs.

The above value is supported by a precept of the local Sundanese culture: *istri dulang tinande* (women are the vessels of accommodating things), which is often interpreted as emphasizing wives' need to be obedient towards their husbands. Obedience here is understood dynamically, as wives should not merely obey husbands' commands, but also organize things in their households without openly challenging their husbands. In general,

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<sup>40</sup> KPU Tasikmalaya City. 2004. *Pemilu 2004: Legislatif (DPR, DPD, DPRD Provinsi, DPRD Kab./City & Presiden & Wakil Presiden*. Tasikmalaya: KPU, p. 61.

<sup>41</sup> Joni Lovenduski. 2008. *Politik Berparas Perempuan*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius. p. 94.

<sup>42</sup> Lovenduski. 2008. *Politik Berparas Perempuan*. p. 88.

<sup>43</sup> Van Bruinessen. 1995. *Kitab Kuning*. p. 122.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Enung Nursaidah, Tasikmalaya Regency, November 6, 2008.

this value is often used to limit women's positions to being housewives. Modernization, introduced since the early twentieth century, has opened wider spaces and opportunities for women to engage in social and political affairs. What is interesting to see is that the education policy in Indonesia allows both boys and girls to pursue as much education as possible; this has resulted in an increase of women with high levels of education in different backgrounds. However, women have not taken the same strategic positions as men, particularly in public leadership. This may be because the Sundanese value is nurtured through familial socialization and educational institutions, both religious (such *pesantren* and *madrassa*) and secular. This value is reflected in one interview, in which a statement was made that women only need a basic education, as they are expected to focus predominantly on their role at home. In another case, a respondent was encouraged to pursue higher education, but in a religious discipline. Imas Maesharah, the daughter of the founder of the Benda *Pesantren*, explained that her father advised her to not pursue education in a non-religious discipline, assuming that religious knowledge would help her raise her future family.<sup>45</sup>

Many political parties have not made the needed commitment to recruit women politicians as MP candidates. As shown in Table 6 above, only 6 of the 38 political parties in Tasikmalaya City fulfilled the 30% quota policy in 2009,<sup>46</sup> and all seven leading political parties proposed less than the required quota. Women approached by political parties are generally considered to be qualified because of their strong family tradition in political activism, or their knowledge, abilities, or other social capital. For example, Laela Suroya and Neneng Medina have parents who are religious leaders, and Titin Sugiartini, Epi Guspitawati and Ai Popon Sugiartini have husbands who are well-known local merchants. Women without such qualifications are not being offered, or taking, chances in the political process.

To conclude, in the context of the 30% quota policy, the marginality of women's representation is reflected not only in the number of elected MPs, but also in the number of candidates. This marginality has three causes. First is the lower human resource capabilities of women candidates. Second is the double burden faced by women candidates in combining their household tasks with politics and administration, which is the result of patriarchal precepts and the constructed *kodrat* which place women in the household and

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Imas Maeshara Tasikmalaya City, July 29, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> MB. Wijaksana. Mrach 2004. "Perempuan and Politik: Ketika yang Personal adalah Konstitusional," in *Jurnal Perempuan Untuk Pencerahan dan Kesetaraan* 34, pp. 84–5

may restrict their social engagement. Third is the scarcity of women candidates, which can be explained by a weaker commitment from political parties or the parties' difficulty finding ideal female candidates in order to implement the 30% quota policy. The experiences of those women elected as MPs follows.

#### 4. Female MPs

Thought the election is a tiring process, female MPs only begin their real challenges afterwards. The promises and programs that have been addressed, and peoples' aspirations that have been heard during the campaign, enter a new phase: an attempt at realization. Like male MPs, women are given training and orientation regarding the parliament. As they come from political parties, MPs have their own secretariat to support their work, in addition to the secretariat of the parliament itself. For example, in making legislation, controlling and evaluating executive programs, ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the executive's budgeting processes and its expenses, and in fulfilling peoples' aspirations, MPs need adequate data and a comprehensive understanding of the problems to carry out their tasks.

How the perception of *kodrat* is operative in parliament can be seen from the formation of committees. Lovenduski's finding that female legislative members are given tasks within the sphere of the constructed *kodrat* is verified by this study. During the field work, I found that women MPs were usually grouped into committees deemed appropriate to their constructed *kodrat*, such as those related to education and health matters. This was experienced by the women MPs in Tasikmalaya Regency and City within the period 2002–2004, and by the members in the City regional parliament between 2004–2009 and 2009–2014. For instance, Ani Nuraini of PAN was first assigned to the social welfare development committee. Only rarely are female MPs assigned to committees not dealing with educational and social matters. This was the experience of Dede T Widarsih, whose placement was due to a number of reasons, particularly her higher education (majoring in economics), experience as head of Organisasi Angkutan Darat (Organda; a transformation organization which organizes owners and drivers of public transports in a district) for more than two periods, her affiliation with Golkar (which was at that time still the leading political party), and her husband's status in the municipality.<sup>47</sup> In practice, there are numerous considerations behind the formation of committees. The consideration of

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<sup>47</sup> Kusmana. Field Work in Tasikmalaya. August 2008–April 2009, and April–November 2010.

equality appears to have been used later to redistribute members of committees, to give them new experiences. Another consideration is professionalism: each legislator gets to know each other better, and to gain new knowledge, skills and interests. Political interests are a third consideration, in that male politicians tend to deal with “komisi basah” (wet committees) – committees which deal with large projects or programs. By placing female MPs in “komisi kering” (dry committees) – committees with small budgets – they receive less competition. However, over the course of time, female MPs who were initially placed on committees considered appropriate for their *kodrat*, also received opportunities to deal with other matters, as their knowledge, networking, and experience improved.

With regard to how female MPs challenge executive programs and policies, and make serious efforts to promote the interests of women or the general public, Lovenduski argues that female politicians may best actualize their political careers through what is commonly perceived as being best for women. Women MPs must work to increase their autonomy in this sphere, while at the same time improving their knowledge and skills through daily political activities, at a similar level to male politicians.<sup>48</sup> That which is perceived to be best for women cannot be separated from the common understanding of *kodrat*. In the case of Tasikmalaya, though women may seem to be treated the same as men in public engagements, certain restrictions are still prevalent. For instance, women are treated differently in regards to what time of night they make work, how far their workplace may be from the home, and what areas of work can be entered. It seems that female legislative members in Tasikmalaya are not free from these barriers, though they may be less restrictive because these women MPs have been equipped basic knowledge, skill, and social capital, and have gone through the experiences necessary for politicians. For example, Yane Sriwigantini of the Tasikmalaya Regency branch of PAN faced no objections to her working at night and driving from home to the local parliament (before it was moved nearby, it was a one-hour drive). She had become independent while working in Jakarta, several years before she got married.<sup>49</sup> Eti Guspitawati of the Tasikmalaya City branch of PDIP restricted herself to working no later than an hour before midnight, and always asked her husband’s permission to do so. Her involvement in political activities was supported by her husband.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Lovenduski. 2008. *Politik Berparas Perempuan*.p. 281.

<sup>49</sup>Kusmana. Interview with Yane Sriwigantini, Tasikmalaya Regency, August 5, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Kusmana. Interview with Eti Guspitawati, Tasikmalaya City, July 30, 2010.

In summary, looking on female MPs in the context of Tasikmalaya, they face assumptions that the appropriate topics for them to deal with are education and health. This assumption remains strong for new MPs. Those who receive tasks and responsibilities outside of their constructed *kodrat* are perceived as having the qualifications and daring to do so, such in the cases of Dede T Widarsih and Evi Elvidadianty.

## **Conclusion**

As discussed above, the social practice of female political representation in Tasikmalaya exemplifies women's transformation from IRTs (housewives) to female politicians. The political engagement of women, particularly in legislative candidacy and legislative performances in Tasikmalaya, is celebrated within the influence of people's construction of the female *kodrat*. Their construction of *kodrat* is characterized by the term's dual nature and nurture aspect. Within this larger scope of the term *kodrat*, women's civic engagement is operative within the consciousness of women themselves, and of people who adhere to this constructed understanding of *kodrat*. It is therefore understandable if women's situations remain problematic, either due to less-competitive human resources, political parties who are not supportive of women's political engagement, or religious and cultural barriers. It could also be inferred that the case of Tasikmalaya informs us that women need other agents to be successful in political engagement. In this way, families, political parties, communities, and the State are important supporters in encouraging women's political engagement. In this regard, women apply some strategies and dynamically manipulate the barriers they face to have a career in politics, realm either through either wait-and-see strategies, strategies of spousal consent, or strategies of showing an affirmative attitude.. Other factors, including women's own capacity, skills, and networks, and external forces such as the 30% quota for female candidates, certainly contribute to women's participation and representation. However, these other factors only seem to become effective after women themselves manage the implications of the norms of *kodrat* in their family and their community.

Challenges for female politicians in obtaining political opportunities come from internal and external factors. Internally, they face with their own weaknesses. Externally, they face living values which are nurtured by religious and/or cultural understandings and practices. These living values persistently position women's social engagements within the perceived ideal model: free to engage socially, but advised not to forget their *kodrat* or traditional roles at homes.

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