

WOMEN'S ROLE AND POSITION DURING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION PERIOD: A COMPARISON OF INDONESIA AND THAILAND

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Abstract

This paper observes the historical, cultural, political, and social aspects of Indonesian and Thailand women to understand the progress of the women's role and position in the two countries, especially during the democratic transition period. This is qualitative research that utilized library sources to collect information and data through various resources such as books, documents, historical books, and websites dated back from 1970s to 2000s in Indonesia and Thailand. Although there are similarities in development programs to address women's role and position before democratization in Indonesia and Thailand as both of them mainly focused on "practical gender interests". Interestingly, this paper reveals that during the democratic transition period, Indonesian women's role and position in politics are one step ahead. This is due to the political stability, persistent commitment of the government to the gender equality agenda, and growing support from progressive Muslim leaders. In contrast, political turbulence due to often military coups which result in the government's slow performance for women's advancement combined with less support from Buddhist leaders slowed the progress of Thailand women. This paper highlights the important role of the government policy on gender equality for women's advancement, political stability, and the role of the majority religion (Islam in Indonesia and Theravada Buddhism in Thailand) to support women's role and position in politics.

Keywords: *Women's Role and Position, Politics, Democratic Transition, Indonesia, Thailand, Government.*

Abstrak

Tulisan ini mengkaji aspek sejarah, budaya, politik, dan sosial perempuan Indonesia dan Thailand untuk memahami perkembangan peran dan posisi perempuan di kedua negara, terutama pada masa transisi demokrasi. Ini adalah penelitian kualitatif yang memanfaatkan sumber perpustakaan untuk mengumpulkan informasi dan data melalui berbagai sumber seperti buku, dokumen, buku sejarah, dan situs web dari tahun 1970-an hingga 2000-an di Indonesia dan Thailand. Meskipun ada kesamaan dalam program pembangunan untuk mengatasi peran dan posisi perempuan sebelum demokratisasi di Indonesia dan Thailand karena keduanya berfokus pada "kepentingan gender praktis". Menariknya, tulisan ini mengungkapkan bahwa selama masa transisi demokrasi peran dan posisi perempuan Indonesia dalam politik selangkah lebih maju. Hal ini disebabkan oleh stabilitas politik, komitmen pemerintah yang gigih terhadap agenda kesetaraan gender dan dukungan yang semakin besar dari para pemimpin Muslim progresif. Sebaliknya, gejolak politik akibat seringnya kudeta militer yang mengakibatkan lambatnya kinerja pemerintah untuk kemajuan perempuan ditambah dengan kurangnya dukungan para pemimpin Buddhis

memperlambat kemajuan perempuan Thailand. Tulisan ini menyoroti pentingnya peran kebijakan pemerintah tentang kesetaraan gender untuk kemajuan perempuan, stabilitas politik, dan peran agama mayoritas (Islam di Indonesia dan Buddhisme Theravada di Thailand) untuk mendukung peran dan posisi perempuan dalam politik.

Kata Kunci: Peran dan Posisi Perempuan, Politik, Transisi Demokrasi, Indonesia, Thailand, Pemerintah.

Introduction

It is believed that Southeast Asian women (including Thailand and Indonesia women) enjoy equal economic privileges and the society is highlighted by the complementarity of men's and women's work/roles.¹ The high status and complementary role of men and women in Thailand and Indonesia can be seen such as in the presence of *bilateral* kinship, as system of family lineage in which the relatives on the mother's side and father's side are equally important for emotional ties or for transfer of property or wealth.² In Thailand, *bilateral* kinship is derived from the peasantry system in North and Northeast Thailand³ in which

¹ See Shelly Errington, "Recasting Sex, Gender, and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview", in Jane Monig Atkinson, and Shelly Errington (eds), *Power and Differences: Gender in Island Southeast Asia*, Stanford, 1-4 (California: Stanford University Press, 1990); Barbara Ward, *Women in the New Asia: The Changing Social Roles of Men and Women in South and South-East Asia*, Netherlands: Unesco, 1963; Anthony Reid, "Females Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia", *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988): 629-645.

² DBpedia, "About: bilateral descent", https://dbpedia.org/page/Bilateral_descent, 14 May 2022

³ Amara Pongsapich, *Occasional Papers on Women in Thailand* (Bangkok, Thailand: Women's Studies Program Chulalongkorn University, Social Research Institute, 1988), 60; Darunee Tantiwiramanond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, "New Opportunities or New Inequalities: Development Issues and Women's Lives in Thailand", in Virada Somsasdi and Sally Theobald (eds), *Women, Gender Relations and Development in Thai Society*, 89. (Thailand:

children regardless of sex will have an equal share of the property and land.⁴ In Thai society, mothers play central role as bearers, nursers, and socializers of their children, and women have a hidgher degree of control over their own chidldearing and rearing behaviours and decisions.⁵ In Indonesia, for instance, women particularly those who live in rural areas also enjoy *bilineal* kinship in where mother manages money, such as in trade, and sons and daughters inherit the family possessions and the household goods.⁶

Women's Studies Center Faculty of Social Science Chiang Mai University, 1997).

⁴ Darunee Tantiwiramanond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *By Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 4; Juree Vichit-Vadakan, "Women in Politics in Thailand", in Yogesh Atal (ed.), *Women in Politics: Australia, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand*, 178 (Bangkok: UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1993); Bhassorn Limanonda, "Exploring Women's Status in Contemporary Thailand", in Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (eds), *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity and Globalization*, 250 (Australia: Allen & Unwin, New South Wales, 2000).

⁵ Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig, "Conjugal and Parental Roles: A Behavioral Look into the Past and Present", in Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig, Kerry Richter, Amara Soonthorndhada, Chanya Sethaput, Anthony Pramualratana, *Changing Roles and Statuses of Women in Thailand: A Documentary Assessment* (Salaya, Thailand: the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1992), 34.

⁶ Cora Vreede-De Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggles and Achievements* (Paris: Mouton & Co-'s Gravenhage, 1960), 24-30. Other kinship systems in the Indonesian archipelago are: the *patrilineal* system in which the wife generally follows the husband into his

While both Indonesian and Thailand women have similar kinship features, current developments shows Indonesian women's role in politics are one step forward compared to Thailand women (hereinafter called Thai women). Indonesia had the first female President Megawati Sukarnoputri in 2001-2004 earlier than Thailand which had the first female Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in 2011-2014.⁷ In addition to that, in terms of representation of women in national parliament, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as of 1st March 2022, Indonesia ranked 107 while Thailand ranked 138 worldwide.⁸

Having interesting fact, this paper would like to seek further explanation of the relatively slow progress of Thailand's women's role and position in politics compared to Indonesian women. By doing so, this paper observes the historical, cultural, political, and social aspects of the two countries to understand the differences in the progress of the women's role and position, especially during the democratic transition as an important period of providing the basis for gender equality for women's political

family and the children become members of the father's family as can be seen in Bali; and the *matrilineal* system in which the continuation of the family is assured by the women's line and the children do not belong to the father's family but to the *suku*, the family of the mother such as in Minangkabau and Aceh. For the analysis of the *matrilineal* tradition in Pariaman society during the colonial era (1846-1922) see Ka'bat, "Tradisi Matrilineal Dalam Tjoerita Parasaan Me'saleh", *HUMANISMA Journal of Gender Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 1-15. For the current dynamic in Minangkabau society on women's rights on land prorepty see Azima, "Pemberdayaan Wanita dan Tanah Adat Minang", *HUMANISMA Journal of Gender Studies* 2, no. 2 (2018): 101-109.

⁷ Yingluck Shinawatra Prime Minister of Thailand, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yingluck-Shinawatra>, 15 March 2022.

⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Unions, "Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments.", <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=3&year=2022>, 1 March 2022

participation in democratization and contemporary era.

Here, I argue that Thai women's progress in politics are slower than Indonesian women because of the unstable political conditions (often interrupted by military coups) which slowed the Thailand's government effort to drive women's advancement, combined with less support from Buddhist leaders. Meanwhile, Indonesian women's role and position in politics are far more advanced due to political stability, continuous commitment from the government and to carry out policy on women's advancement, and support from progressive Muslim leaders.

This paper defines the democratic transition period in Indonesia: from the fall of the New Order's leader of Suharto in May 1998, to the 2004 General Election. This is an important period lying the foundation for the advancement of Indonesian women's role in politics. In Thailand, it defines from the May 1992 democratic uprising as the critical moment that open the door for democratization, to the 2005 General Election, yet before the military junta that overthrew the government of Thaksin Shinawatra on 19th September 2006. The May 1992 democratic uprising in Thailand is an important event that aimed to get rid of the military intervention of General Suchinda Kraprayoon which led up to the democratic election in September 1992 which marked the victory of pro-democracy parties and ended military domination.⁹

⁹ Suchit Bunbongkarn, *State of the Nation Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996); Suchit Bunbongkarn, "The Military and Democracy in Thailand", in R.J. May and Viberto Selochan (eds), *The Military & Democracy in Asia and The Pacific* (Australia: The Australian University Press, 2004).

Method

This is qualitative research that utilized library sources to collect information and data through various resources such as books, documents, historical books and website dated back from 1970s to 2000s in Indonesia and Thailand. The criteria for selecting the books and websites cited were those written by scholars on Thailand and Indonesia as scientific references on the role of women in the two countries from the 1970s - 2000s, and the website provides up-to-date information on this matter. All the resources and data are analyzed by using the descriptive analysis method with a gender perspective.

Result and Discussions

Women's role and position in Indonesia and Thailand: before democratization

This section explores the notion of women's role and position in Indonesia and Thailand before democratization period.

Before the democratization period of May 1998 in Indonesia, the New Order (*Era Orde Baru*) was a critical period in Indonesia since it acquired the longest political period (1966-1998) accompanied by political stability for the sake of economic development.¹⁰ Paternalism, which positioned women as a secondary element to support the state's policy, highlighted the political-economy grand design of the New Order. The authoritarian rule of Suharto extended strong control over Indonesian women which he styled himself as the "Father of Development" (*bapak pembangunan*) and sought Indonesian women's loyalty through the devotion to their roles as mothers and wives.¹¹

¹⁰ Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability* (Genting Lane, Singapore: Talisman, 2004), 29.

¹¹ Barbara Hatley, "Nation, "Tradition," and Constructions of the Feminine in Modern Indonesian

The New Order developed a "state *ibuism*" gender ideology that demanded total devotion from Indonesian women and expected them to focus on their roles as wives and mothers in developing Indonesia.¹² The gender ideology depicts women regardless of their social class, as mothers and wives who should take care of their families while actual power is controlled by men.

In observing the notion of women's role and position in Thailand, this paper dated back to Thailand's absolute monarchy before 1932, when the *sakdina* system, in which the king derived power by controlling labor, was adopted.¹³ Within the *sakdina* system, men are the core who became representatives of the village community, whereas women were left at home caring for children and the family economy.¹⁴ The *sakdina* system provided a pattern of the sexual division of labor between men and women: men's responsibility was in the public sphere such as in corvee labor or military task, while women's responsibility

Literature", in Jim Schiller and Barbara Martin-Schiller (eds), *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural Politics & Political Culture*, 98 (USA: the Centre for Interantional Studies, Ohio University, 1997); Kathryn Robinson, "Indonesian Women—from Order Baru to Reformasi", in Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity and Development*, 141 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000).

¹² Suryakusuma, Julia I, "The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia", in Laurie J. Sears (ed.), *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996). See also Madelon. D. Nieuwenhuis, "Ibuisim and Priyayization: Path to Power?", in Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Anke Niehof (eds), *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*, (The Netherlands: Foris Publications, 1987)

¹³ John L.S. Girling, *Thailand: Society and Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1981), 20.

¹⁴ Gail Omvedt, *Women in Popular Movements: India and Thailand During the Decade of Women*, 42; Juree Vichit-Vadakan, "Women in Politics in Thailand", 179.

was to take care of the economic well being of the family. The *sakdina* system also implies a pattern of the power relationship between men and women. The system justified men's power to represent the family concerning the state or to make a decision on behalf of the family, while women's power was restricted to their position as mother and wife. As a result, men in Thailand played a dominant role in the public sphere, while women were relatively marginalized from the public sphere.

Women's peripheral position in the public sphere can be found before King Mongkut, Chulalongkorn, and Vajiravudh's leadership, where women acquired a very low position as they did not have the right to participate directly in politics as well as the freedom to decide their lives.¹⁵ Thai women were the property of their fathers and their husbands, and their husbands could do anything including selling them, giving them away or inflicting bodily punishment, and practicing polygamy.¹⁶ At that time, Thai women did not have opportunities to expand their role and position in the public sphere.

The practices gradually disappeared since King Mongkut's proclamation issued in the 1860s, which abandoned husbands and parents from selling their wives and daughters; followed by King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) who abolished slavery, established education for women and men in elites' class, and King Vajiravudh (1910-1925) who forbade polygamy as well as prostitution and passed education Act in 1921 to provide a primary school for boys and girls.¹⁷

¹⁵ Khunying S. Masdit, *Politics in Thailand with Special Reference to The Role of Women* (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, 1991), 17.

¹⁶ Khin Thitsa, *Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand* (London: Calvert's North Star Press, 1980), 5.

¹⁷ Tamara Loos, "The Politics of Women's Suffrage in Thailand", in Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (eds), *Women's Suffrage in Asia: Gender,*

Although in 1935 the monogamy law was passed in Thailand¹⁸ yet it still disadvantaged women since the wife could no longer act independently of her husband even concerning her part of a shared property.¹⁹ Polygamy is still found in contemporary Thailand mainly in the upper class as prestige-purpose and shows welfare status.²⁰ In terms of education, it took 46 years from 1855 to 1901 for formal education to be available for the middle class and girls²¹ which indicates the slow progress of women's education as an important basis for elevating their position. Although Thai women were granted the right to vote in 1932, they were banned from top positions in the village, district, and administrative levels until 1982.²²

As we understand the basic notion of women's role and position in the two countries, what were the policy regarding women's role in public sphere in the period before democratization?

Nationalism and Democracy, 171 (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004).

¹⁸ Amara Pongsapich, *Occasional Papers on Women in Thailand* (Bangkok, Thailand: Women's Studies Program, Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, 1988), 66; Tamara Loos, "The Politics of Women's Suffrage in Thailand", 173.

¹⁹ Khin Thitsa, *Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand*, 7.

²⁰ Khin Thitsa, *Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand*, 7; Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig "Thai Family Structure and Organization: Changing Roles and Duties in Historical Perspective", 26

²¹ Amara Soonthorndhada, "Adolescent Role Behavior, Expectations and Adaptations: Past and Present", in Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig, Kerry Richter, Amara Soonthorndhada, Chanya Sethaput, Anthony Pramualratana, *Changing Roles and Statuses of Women in Thailand: A Documentary Assessment*, 56 (Salaya, Thailand: the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1992).

²² Tamara Loos, "The Politics of Women's Suffrage in Thailand", 172.

The government policy on women in Indonesia and Thailand: before democratization

During the New Order Indonesia (1966-1998), policy on women's role in politics was focused to control loyalty of Indonesian women to the state. Additionally, in order to promote a stable family, the New Order regime introduced the new Marriage Law in 1974 which promoted monogamy.²³

The situation of Thai women is relatively similar to Indonesian women during the New Order. In Thailand, the development program for women began when Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram (1938-1944 and 1948-1957) imposed the National Cultural Development Act in 1942 as a cultural framework for Thai nation-building. Phibun's construction of Thai women's identity merely focused on upgrading women's appearance such as dress code according to western-style²⁴ and improving women's home-making role to support their husbands in the nation-building.²⁵ To control women's roles as mothers and wives inside and outside the bureaucracy, women had to join the Women's Cultural Club under the Bureau of Women's Culture.²⁶ Moreover, all women's organizations were united under the National Council of Women of Thailand in 1956 which aimed to promote better roles for mothers and wives within the nationalistic

framework.²⁷ Here, I agree with Van Esterik,²⁸ that (at that time) Thai women functioned only as icons to represent modern and civilized Thai women as mothers and wives, regardless of their marginal role and position in the public sphere. Here, we can see the similar framework of Indonesia and Thailand state to address women's role in development before democratization.

To gain a deeper illustration, this paper observed various policy and program for women in both countries before democratization. By using Molyneux' ²⁹ concept of "practical gender interests" and "strategic gender interests", this paper discovers similarities in programs that focused on "practical gender interest" aims to optimize women's functions within specific contexts and goals, rather than "strategic gender interest" which addressed women's subordination in society by creating pattern and structure of more equal relationships between women and men.

There are two major programs to address "practical gender" interest in Indonesia ³⁰ : firstly, introducing Family Welfare Guidance (*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, PKK) which was mandatory for the wife of the governor, regency, municipal, and

²³ Susan Blackburn, *Women and State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130–134.

²⁴ Penny Van Esterik, *Materializing Thailand* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000), 104.

²⁵ Darunee Tantiwiranond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *By Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 44.

²⁶ Penny Van Esterik, *Materializing Thailand*, 101; Darunee Tantiwiranond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *By Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand*, 28.

²⁷ Darunee Tantiwiranond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *By Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand*, 46.

²⁸ Penny Van Esterik, *Materializing Thailand*, 103

²⁹ Molyneux, Maxine, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, The State, and Revolution in Nicaragua", *Feminist Studies* 11, 2 (1985) :232-33, via ProQuest Information & Learning Company, <http://pcift.chadwyck.com/pcift/search?So=H&Ac=M&JID=c424&Action=SearchOrBrowse&SEARCH=Search>

³⁰ Susan Blackburn, "Gender Interest and Indonesian Democracy", in David Bouchier and John Legge (eds), *Democracy in Indonesia 1950s and 1990s*, 168-74 (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies Monash University, 1994).

head of a village in Indonesia³¹ where women were given various skills to be good mothers and wives. The PKK became a channel for the state to control women either in rural or urban areas in Indonesia.³² Furthermore, *Dharma Wanita* was founded on 5 August 1974 to control the loyalty of urban middle-class women, which required all civil servants' wives to join and show loyalty to the state.³³

In Thailand, since the 1970s under the initiation of Queen Sirikit, women were united to support their husbands and the state policy such as in the Association of Thai Women Farmers in 1976, the Association of Housewives to Protect Thailand, Wives of the Professionals, Army Housewives, Navy Housewives, and Air Force Housewives in 1984.³⁴

Secondly, a program for controlling the population by introducing a family planning program. In Indonesia, it is called *Keluarga Berencana* (KB), which was included in the second Broad Guidelines on State Policy (*Garis Besar Haluan Negara*, GBHN) 1973.³⁵

³¹ Calra Bianpoen, "The Family Welfare Movement: A Blessing or a Burden?", in Mayling Oeygardiner and Carla Bianpoen (eds), *Indonesian Women: The Journey Continues* (Canberra, Australia: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS) Publishing, the Australian National University, 2000).

³² Norma Sullivan, "Gender and Politics in Indonesia", in Maila Stevens (ed.), *Why Gender Matters in Southeast Asian Politics* (Australia: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Aristoc Press, 1991) and Norma Sullivan, *Masters and Managers: A Study of Gender Relations in Urban Java* (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1994)

³³ KOWANI (Kongres Wanita Indonesia), *Sejarah Setengah Abad Pergerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1978), 279.

³⁴ Darunee Tantiwiramanond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand*, 30.

³⁵ Mayling Oey-Gardiner, "And the Winner is...Indonesian Women in Public Life", in Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity and Development*, 103 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).

Similarly, Thailand's family planning program was also part of the Third Plan Development Program from 1972-to 1977.³⁶ Although the programs successfully controlled women's roles as mothers and wives, it has a positive effect on women's life. This happened as the average number of children per family dropped, women experienced better health and more time to enhance their lives which led to women's life expectancy rising from 63 years in 1990 to 67 years in Indonesia in 1998,³⁷ and at 74.9 years in Thailand 1997.³⁸

Furthermore, women took benefit also from the education program which has been introduced in the mid-1970s in Indonesia. As a result, the primary school participation rate of boys and girls aged 7 to 12, increased from 83 percent in 1980 to 94 percent in 1995 in Indonesia.³⁹ In Thailand, by the 1990s illiteracy rates have decreased significantly although sex disparity remains with 9 percent of women and 5 percent of men illiterate.⁴⁰

All of the above programs for the improvement of Indonesian and Thailand's women's life and condition occurred at the same time with proliferation of the Women in Development (WID) approach. WID was triggered by Ester Boserup's argument in the

³⁶ Amara Pongsapich, *Occasional Papers on Women in Thailand*, 31; Darunee Tantiwiramanond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, "New Opportunities or New Inequalities: Development Issues and Women's Lives in Thailand", in Virada Somsasdi and Sally Theobald (eds), *Women, Gender Relations and Development in Thai Society*, 110 (Thailand: Women's Studies Center Faculty of Social Science Chiang Mai University, 1997).

³⁷ Khofifah Indar Parawansa, "Institutional Building: An Effort to Improve Indonesian Women's Role and Status", in Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity and Development*, 72 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).

³⁸ Bhassorn Limanonda, "Exploring Women's Status in Contemporary Thailand", 254.

³⁹ Kathryn Robinson, "Indonesian Women—from Order Baru to Reformasi", 149.

⁴⁰ Bhassorn Limanonda, "Exploring Women's Status in Contemporary Thailand", 255.

1970s that development especially in Third World countries had marginalized women, modernization hardly considered and benefited women, and therefore women should be integrated into development.⁴¹ Boserup's intellectual elaboration became the starting point for the Women in Development (WID) approach, which since the 1970s has been trying to integrate women in development. Boserup's argument is echoed by scholars such as Barbara Rogers (1980)⁴² and Irene Tinker (1990).⁴³ Further in its development, the integration of women in development continued with a holistic approach and placed men as partners through Gender and Development (GAD) approach since the 1980s.

Table 1 and Table 2 below presents the government policy on women's role and position in Indonesia and Thailand before the democratization period which mainly under WID's framework especially during the United Nation Decade for Women 1975-1985.

Table 1. Indonesian Government Policy on Women During the New Order

Year	Activities	Mission
1974	The passing of the 1974 Marriage Law	To create uniformity in the marriage code, promoted equity rights for wives.
1975	Establishment of the Ministry for the Role of Women in the response to the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985)	To develop women's capacity in managing their dual role (<i>peran ganda</i>) in the domestic and public sphere.
1978	The 1978 GBHN	To introduce the term 'women' in development.

⁴¹ Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (Great Britain: George Allen and Unwin, 1970).

⁴² Barbara Rogers, *The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980).

⁴³ Irene Tinker, *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

1984	The Law No.7/1984	To ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
1993	The 1993 GBHN	To declare women as <i>mitra sejajar</i> (equal partners) in development.
1995	The Decree No.17/1995 by the Minister of Home Affairs	To enforce district (<i>kabupaten</i>) and provincial governments to establish the Women in Development Management Teams (Tim P2W), to coordinate with various government departments on women's programs.

Sources:⁴⁴

Table 2. Thailand Government Policy On Women Before 1992

Year	Section	Term
1974	National Executive Committee	Ministry of Education
1978	Sub-Committee on Planning for Women and Child Development	the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB)
1979	Interim Task Force on Women's Development	NESDB
1979	Sub-Committee for Development of Women's Affairs	NESDB
1981	National	Prime Minister's

⁴⁴ Extracted from Susan Blackburn, "Gender Relations in Indonesia: What Women Want", in Grayson Lloyd and Shannon Smith (eds), *Indonesia Today: Challenges of History* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2001); Khofifah I. Parawansa, "Institutional Building: An Effort to Improve Indonesian Women's Role and Status", in Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity, and Development* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002); Mayling Oey-Gardiner, "And The Winner is...Indonesian Women in Public Life", in Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity, and Development* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2022).

	Commission of Office Women's Affairs	
1983	National Commission on Women's Development	Ministry of Interior
1989	National Commission on the Promotion and Co-ordination of Women's Affairs	Prime Minister's Office

Source:⁴⁵

Therefore, the combination of improvements in women's lives and the availability of the government policy to support women's roles and positions become the basis for the progressive improvement of women's role in politics after the reform era in Indonesia (after 1998), and after 1992 in Thailand. Nevertheless, the advancement of Indonesian women's role and position in politics commenced in 1998 is more progressive, compared to Thai women since 1992.

This can be seen for example in the representation of women in the national parliament as a vital decision-making institution. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) statistics on 28th February 2005, Indonesia ranked 75 in the representation of women in national parliament worldwide compared to Thailand ranked 97.⁴⁶ Furthermore, there were 927 (14 percent) women village heads of the 66.000 villages in Indonesia in 1991,⁴⁷ compared to 2.4 percent of women village heads in 1999 in Thailand.⁴⁸

Although Thailand has started democratization early in 1992 and Indonesia

⁴⁵ Extracted from Darunee Tantiwiramanond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991).

⁴⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Unions (IPU), <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif280205.htm> situation as of 28 February 2007.

⁴⁷ Mayling Oey-Gardiner, "And the Winner is... Indonesian Women in Public Life", 107.

⁴⁸ James Ockey, *Making Democracy: Leadership, Class, Gender, and Political Participation in Thailand*, 57 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

in 1998, Indonesian women's role and position in politics are advanced more compared to Thai women. Why it is so? The next section provides a plausible explanation of the different stages of advancement of women in both countries during the democratic transition period.

Women's role and position during democratic transition period in Indonesia and Thailand: enhancements and limitations

There are three factors contributing to the advancement of Indonesian women's role and position in politics compared to Thai women during the democratic transition period:

First, there is significant support for gender equality from Muslim leaders in Indonesia, while there is relatively less support from Buddhist leaders in Thailand. In Indonesia, the decline of the "state ibnuism" ideology of the New Order made room for other ideologies including Islam to dominate the discourse on women's role and position in the reform era. In line with Megawati Sukarnoputri's nomination as female president in 1999, the debate whether or not women could become president commenced at the Congress of Indonesian Muslims, 3-7 November 1998 which recommended the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Council of Islamic Scholars) to publish *fatwa* (an Islamic legal opinion given by a Muslim jurist scholar) on this matter.⁴⁹ The growing debates among Muslim scholars about which aspects of power women are allowed to hold and which are prohibited⁵⁰ confirms the rising influence

⁴⁹ Kathryn Robinson, "Gender, Islam and Culture in Indonesia", in Susan Blackburn (ed.), *Love, Sex and Power: Women in Southeast Asia*, (Victoria, Australia: Monash University Press, 2001), 17.

⁵⁰ R. Machali, "Women and the Concept of Power in Indonesia", in Susan Blackburn (ed.), *Love, Sex and Power: Women in Southeast Asia*, 4-7 (Victoria, Australia: Monash University Press, 2001).

of Islam on gender and power in the reform era.

At this stage, we found the emergence of a new generation of Muslim leaders who propose a new interpretation of Islam such as Siti Musdah Mulia member of the Women's Empowerment Team of the Indonesian Religious Department (*Departement Agama Republik Indonesia*), who created Counter Legal Draft (CLD) to counter Compilation of Islamic Law (*Kompilasi Hukum Islam*, KHI) which has been used in civil and religious courts since 1991.⁵¹ The CLD proposes to reform KHI including Islamic Marriage Law, which according to Siti domesticates women's roles merely as mothers and wives, and thus seeks equal property rights between wives and husbands, and abandons polygamy.⁵² Although CLD was abandoned in February 2005, it provoked further discourse on KHI such as in Indonesian Women Human Rights Commission.⁵³

The growing demand to promote gender equality within Islam is reflected in the flourishing books which explore gender equality in Islam such as by Badriyah Fayumi, Nasaruddin Umar, and Zaitunah Subhan,⁵⁴

⁵¹ Kathryn Robinson, "Gender, Islam and Culture in Indonesia", 28-9. KHI has been used as formal guidance in deciding family disputes such as marriage, divorces, or inheritance.

⁵² An interview between Ulil Abshar-Abdalla and Siti Musdah Mulia, September 1, 2003, "Kompilasi Hukum Islam Sangat Konservatif," see JIL official website <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=408> ; JIL. (2005). "About Liberal Islam Network," <http://islamlib.com/en/aboutus.php>

⁵³ "Buka Kembali Bahasan Naskah Tandingan Kompilasi Hukum Islam", *Kompas*, March 8, 2005.

⁵⁴ See Badriyah Fayumi, et.al., *Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Islam* Jakarta: Departement Agama Republik Indonesia, DEPAG RI, 2001); Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001); Zaitunah Subhan, *Rekonstruksi Pemahaman Jender Dalam Islam: Agenda Sosio-Kultural dan Politik Peran perempuan* (Jakarta: El-Kahfi, 2002).

as well as, the effort to scrutinize the Yellow Book (*Kitab Kuning*), a primary guide book of Indonesia's *pesantren* which contains misogyny teachings.⁵⁵

Indeed, the emergence of Muslim women activists such as Wardah Hafidz who sought to promote the contextual approach in line with the effort to promote feminism and gender discourses in Indonesian Islamic thinking when the issue was still at the periphery has been witnessed since the early 1990s.⁵⁶ The supporters of the contextual approach such as Ziba Mir-Hosseini⁵⁷ believes that reading and interpreting the divine messages should not always rely literally on the text as it may not represent the original revelation. At the same breath with Wardah Hafidz are Siti Musdah Mulia and (late) Lili Zakiyah Munir. Siti Musdah Mulia endorses the contextual approach in reading Al-Qur'an so that the wisdom of the revelation, and justice as the primary principle of Islam, can be achieved.⁵⁸ Similarly, Lili Zakiyah Munir, a leading Indonesian Muslim human rights activist,

⁵⁵ Such effort was led by wife of the 4th Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Sinta Nuriyah Rahman, et.al., *Kembang Setaman Perkawinan: Analisis Kritis Kitab 'Uqud Al-Lujjain* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2005).

⁵⁶ Wardah Hafidz, "Feminisme: Agenda Baru Pemikiran Islam (wawancara dengan Wardah Hafidz)," *Ulumul Qur'an* 6, no.3 (1995):113

⁵⁷ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought: Strategies for Reform," in *Islamic Family Law and Justice for Muslim Women*, ed. Nik Norianii Nik Badlisah (Malaysia: Sisters in Islam and the Ford Foundation, 2003), 113. For discussion about the influence of the context, status and gender of the transmitter and the role of women companion transmitter in the era of Prophet Muhammad in influencing their hadis transmission and see Zunly Nadia, "Peran dan Aktifitas Perempuan Era Muhammad SAW (Studi atas Hadis-Hadis Riwayat Sahabat Perempuan)", *HUMANISMA Journal of Gender Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 16-32.

⁵⁸ Siti Musdah Mulia, *Muslimah Reformis: Perempuan Pembaru Keagamaan*. (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), 19.

boldly endorses the contextual approach arguing it will fulfill the intention of Al-Qur'an, namely justice.⁵⁹

According to Bhassorn Limanonda, Theravada Buddhism is the predominant religion in Thailand which continues to exert a strong influence over social values, codes of ethics and day to day behaviour.⁶⁰ I agree with Van Esterik that, Theravada Buddhism either beliefs or institutions must be considered in gender analysis because Buddhism is a key component of Thai identity.⁶¹ Indeed, subordination of Thai women can be found within Buddhism at least in two forms: firstly, Buddhist beliefs, such as women are regarded as lower beings compared to men⁶² and birth as women indicate bad 'karma' or demerit in the past lives.⁶³ Secondly, in Buddhist institutions, in which women are not allowed to be a monk because women are considered lower status.⁶⁴ According to Buddhism, the only way for

⁵⁹ See Lili Zakiyah Munir, "Lily Munir on Indonesian Islamic Liberation Theology," an interview with Yoginder Sikand, May 24, 2005, http://www.muslimwakeup.com/main/archives/2005/05/lily_munir_on_i.php (accessed 15 September 2006)

⁶⁰ Bhassorn Limanonda, "Exploring Women's Status in Contemporary Thailand", in Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (eds), *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity, and Globalization* (New South Wales: Allen & Unwin Australia, 2000), 249.

⁶¹ Penny Van Esterik, *Materializing Thailand*, 65-69.

⁶² A. Thomas Kirsch, "Buddhism, Sex-Roles and the Thai Economy", in Penny Van Esterik (ed.), *Women of Southeast Asia*, 22 (Northern Illinois University: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1996); Khin Thitsa, *Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand*, 20; Alexander R. Kapur-Fic, *Thailand: Buddhism, Society and Women*, 435 (Naraina, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1998).

⁶³ Khin Thitsa, *Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand*, 20; Chitra Ghosh, *The World of Thai Women*, 51 (Calcutta: Best Books, 1990).

⁶⁴ Khin Thitsa, *Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand*, 16; Chitra Ghosh, *The World of Thai Women*, 51.

women to achieve merit accumulations is through devotion to their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers by fulfilling their husband's and son's needs, as well as serving monks in the *sangha* (order of Buddhist Monk).⁶⁵ Omvedt said that Theravada Buddhism helped to legitimize gender sexual division of labor in which Thai women may play a major role in the economy, yet men monopolize religious and political structure.⁶⁶

Theravada Buddhism's values and masculine institutions have been preserved since the absolute monarchy up to the present day.⁶⁷ Peter A. Jackson provides an interesting explanation that Theravada Buddhism has been preserved as a "historical legitimation function" which provides legitimation parallelism between the symbolic religious domain and the secular power structure' of modern Thailand.⁶⁸ This can be found when the *sangha* is used to promote government programs such as national development and national integration program since the 1960s.⁶⁹

Duncan McCargo's research on *Buddhism, Democracy and Identity in Thailand* (2004) noted that: i) Thai Buddhism is highly intolerant of those who deviate from mainstream teaching, ii) while Thailand has been experiencing gradual political liberalization since the 1970s, not because of the prevailing religious climate,

⁶⁵ Alexander R. Kapur-Fic, *Thailand: Buddhism, Society and Women*, 436.

⁶⁶ Gail Omvedt, *Women in Popular Movements: India and Thailand during the Decade of Women*, 43.

⁶⁷ Somboon Suksamran, "Buddhism, Political Authority, and Legitimacy in Thailand and Cambodia", in Trevor Ling (ed.), *Buddhist Trends in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993); Peter A. Jackson, *Buddhism, Legitimation, and Conflict: The Political Functions of Urban Thai Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989).

⁶⁸ Peter A. Jackson, *Buddhism, Legitimation, and Conflict: The Political Functions of Urban Thai Buddhism*, 4.

⁶⁹ Somboon Suksamran, "Buddhism, Political Authority, and Legitimacy in Thailand and Cambodia", 129-130.

but in spite of the deep conservatism of its Buddhist order.⁷⁰ As day-to-day life and politics are greatly influenced by religious values, support from religious leaders in Thailand to advance women's role and position in public sphere is imperative.

Secondly, there is a strong commitment from the Indonesian government to establish a legal framework to improve women's role and position in politics, compare to Thailand.

In Indonesia, this can be seen in three stages: (i) In 1999, when (late) President Abdurrahman Wahid introduced Presidential Instruction No.9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming to elevate women's role and position in development including in BAPPENAS (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional*, National Planning Agency). This was supported by Khofifah Indar Parawansa as Minister for Women's Empowerment who promoted institutional changes in the New Order programs on women and created networking with various NGOs. (ii) In 2003, the legal framework of the affirmative action or gender quota was enacted in section 65 of the General Election Law No. 12/2003.⁷¹ (iii) In 2004, the legal framework of the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women was approved by Law No. 23/2004.

The above achievements are part of the proliferation of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach which was endorsed by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) to

replace the WID approach in the 1980s.⁷² DAWN is a forum among women from Third World countries who realized that WID, in fact, marginalized women in Third World countries.⁷³

Table 3 below describes the Indonesian government policy on women which has shifted from "practical gender interest" during the New Order, to "strategic gender interest" in the Reform Era to facilitate the improvement of Indonesian women's role and position in politics.

Table 3. Institutional Achievement for Indonesian Women During Reform Era

Activities	Mission
The State Ministry for the Role of Women was changed to the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment in 1999	To promote equity for women in family, society, and nation.
Presidential Instruction No.9/2000 for Gender Mainstreaming	To increase men's participation in the various program on gender equality. For example, the family planning program resulted in an increase in men's participation from 1.1 percent in 1999 to 1.8 percent in 2000
Revitalized the New Order P2W team as the Women's Empowerment Team, and changes the PKK (previously is <i>Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga</i>) into to the Family Welfare Empowerment (<i>Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga</i>)	To enhance women's role in family and society
The approval of the affirmative action/gender quota rule in section 65 article	To support Indonesian women in parliament in the 2004 General Election.

⁷⁰ Duncan McCargo, "Buddhism, Democracy and

Identity in Thailand", *Democratization* 11, no.4, (August 2004): 155–170. DOI:

10.1080=1351034042000234576

⁷¹ Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, "Refleksi dan Proyeksi Sepuluh Tahun (1999-2009): Affirmative Action dan Keterwakilan Perempuan di Parlemen," *Year Book P2P LIPI 2007*, (2007): 27-41.

⁷² Young, Kate. (2000). "Gender and Development", in Nalini Visvanathan, et. al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, Zed Books, London, and New Jersey.

⁷³ Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), "Rethinking Social Development: DAWN's vision", *World Development* 23, no 11 (1996).

1 of the General Election Law No. 12/2003.	
The approval of Law No. 23/2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women, in September 2004	To require the state in providing service and justice for citizens in dealing with violence in the family.
Issued to ratify ILO convention with the Law No.21/1999, and raised the amending of the Marriage Law (No.1/1974)	To reduce discrimination against women workers and release constraints on women's role in the domestic sphere

Sources:⁷⁴

In Thailand, the three Prime Ministers after the 1992 democratic uprising in Thailand, namely Chuan Leekpai (1992), Banharn Silpa-archa (1995), and Chavalit Youngchaiyudh (1996), had to deal with a fragile base of government as they emerged from political parties' coalition and struggle to overcome critics and maintain power. Nevertheless, there were some institutional progresss such as in 1994 the National Commission on Women's Affairs proclaimed the National Declaration on Women including the Perspective Policies and Planning for the Development of women 1995-2015.⁷⁵

Thaksin Shinawatra's Thais Love Thais Party (*Phak Thai Rak Thai*) won the majority seats in 2001, as well as, in 2005 which won 377 seats.⁷⁶ However, Thaksin concerned more with popular issues such as rebuilding economic prosperity and poverty alleviation,

⁷⁴ Khofifah I. Parawansa, "Institutional Building: An Effort to Improve Indonesian Women's Role and Status", in Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessell (eds), *Women in Indonesia: Gender, Equity, and Development* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).

⁷⁵ ILO, "National Guidelines in Thailand - National Commission on Women's Affairs", 2005, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gem/s/eo/guide/htm>

⁷⁶ "The Result of Thailand General Election in 2005" according to The Election Commission, <http://www.thaiembdc.org/pressctr/pr/pr4148.pdf> (19

which proved effective to increase public popularity and won the election⁷⁷. It seems that gender issues to promote women's advancement role and position in Thai politics have not been taken into account as a crucial agenda as it is not strategic to re-gain election victory. As a result, the improvement of Thailand women's role and position in politics may begin to be taken into account in Thailand's development programs, yet it is still on the periphery.

Moreover, there is no legal framework such as gender quota for increasing representation of women in parliament. In Indonesia, the gender quota in Indonesia (suggested a 30 per cent quota of women candidates) are legislated with the 2003 Election Law in the 2004 General Election, which getting stronger in the 2009, 2014, and 2019 General Elections required political parties to nominate at least 30 per cent of women in all electoral districts.⁷⁸ The legal framework of gender quota in Indonesia as enacted in section 65 of the General Election Law No. 12/2003, resulted in an increase in the number of women in the national parliament, from 9 percent in the 1999 General Election to 11.6 percent of women following the 2004 General Election.⁷⁹ The latest 2019 gender quota in Indonesia has contributed to the highest ever proportion of women elected to the national parliament or People's Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR), with 120 (20.9 per

⁷⁷ Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand*, 3 (Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2004).

⁷⁸ Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, *Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks in Post-Subarto Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press & Kyoto University Press, 2015); Sri Budi Eko Wardani & Valina Singka Subekti, "Political dynasties and women candidates in Indonesia's 2019 election", *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2021): 28-49

⁷⁹ Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, "Refleksi dan Proyeksi Sepuluh Tahun (1999-2009): Affirmative Action dan Keterwakilan Perempuan di Parlemen".

cent) of 575 seats as a result of the 2019 General Election.⁸⁰

In contrast, in Thailand there are only 36 women (7.2 percent) of 500 members of the House of Representatives following the February 2005 General Election⁸¹, which decreased slightly from 44 women MPs in the 2001 General Election.⁸² Looking at the Law in Thailand such as the Organic Act on Political Party B.E.2550 in 2007 and the Organic Law on Elections Commission B.E.2550, do not mention any gender quota provisions.⁸³ In 2014, the (military) Royal Thai Armed Forces led by General Prayuth Chan-o-Cha seized power in a coup d'état and filled the newly established National Legislative Assembly (NLA) with its allies, and awarded women just 3% of the seats available.⁸⁴

The 2019 general election could have been an opportunity for more females into elected office. However, the military's grip on power and attempts to limit the opposition's electoral influence disproportionately affected female candidates, as noted by

⁸⁰ Sri Budi Eko Wardani & Valina Singka Subekti, "Political dynasties and women candidates in Indonesia's 2019 election"; Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, "Motherhood Identity in the 2019 Indonesian Presidential Elections: Populism and Political Division in the National Women's Movement", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 42, no. 2 (2020): 224-250.

⁸¹ Inter Parliamentary Unions (IPU), <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif280205.htm>

⁸² James Ockey, *Making Democracy: Leadership, Class, Gender, and Political Participation in Thailand*, 57.

⁸³ *Thailand: Organic Act on Political Parties B.E. 2550* [2007] <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/asia/TH/thailand-organic-act-on-political-parties-b.e./view> (accessed 15 May 2022); *The Organic Act on the Election Commission, B.E. 2550* (2007) http://thailaws.com/law/t_laws/tlaw0377.pdf (accessed 15 May 2022).

⁸⁴ Oliver Ward, "A Man's World: Military Rule in Thailand Has Strangled Female Representation in Politics", *ASEAN Today*, 21 June 2019, <https://www.aseantoday.com/2019/06/a-mans-world-military-rule-in-thailand-has-strangled-female-representation-in-politics/> (accessed 15 May 2022)

Yoshinori Nishizaki that several prominent female MPs were banned by the military junta from standing for election.⁸⁵

Furthermore, Puchada Sirivunnabood in explaining the situation of women members of parliament in the 2019 General Elections in Thailand said that women are underrepresented in government and in parliament in Thailand, and suggests to enhance the role of women in Thai politics by introducing a gender quota because so far, Thailand's 2017 Constitution has no gender quota.⁸⁶

Thirdly, there is political stability which contributes to the continuous women's policy in Indonesia (such as from the New Order, Reform Era, and post-Reform Era Indonesia). An advancement of Indonesian women's role and position during the reform era has been contributed also by gradual improvement of women's policy during the New Order as can be viewed: (i) the 1973 Broad Guidelines on State Policy (GBHN) incorporated women's contribution in development by the establishment of the Ministry for the Role of Women in 1978. (ii) the 1983 and 1985 GBHN acknowledged women's dual roles in private and public realms (*peran ganda Wanita*), followed by women as equal partners (*mitra sejajar*) in the 1993 GBHN.⁸⁷ (iii) the 1995 GBHN

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, as cited by Oliver Ward. For interesting analysis explaining the background of the majority female members of Thailand's Parliament elected since 1975 whom most of them are related, by blood or marriage, to former male MPs which have contributed to entrenching family-based rule politics, see Yoshinori Nishizaki, "New Wine in an Old Bottle: Female Politicians, Family Rule, and Democratization in Thailand", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 2 (2018): 375–403. doi:10.1017/S002191181700136

⁸⁶ See Puchada Sirivunnabood, "Women MPs in the 2019 Thai Parliament", <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/commentaries/women-mps-in-the-2019-thai-parliament-by-puchada-sirivunnabood/>, 3 June 2019 (accessed 7 April 2022)

⁸⁷ Mayling Oey-Gardiner, "And the Winner is... Indonesian Women in Public Life", 103.

promoted the establishment of the Women in Development Management Teams (Tim P2W) to organize women's programs in the district and provincial government. (iv) the 1999 GBHN as the first GBHN during the reform era, marked an official introduction of 'gender' to address women's issues in development.⁸⁸

In contrast, Thailand's political stability is often disturbed by a military intervention that prevented the government from implementing continuous programs. This corresponds with Bhassorn Limanonda's noted that instability of Thailand's government over the past several decades has obstructed the advancement of Thai women's role in politics.⁸⁹ A constitutional Monarchy since 1932, Thailand has moved between democratically elected governments and military dictatorships numerous times. There are at least 12 military coups in Thailand history since the country's first coup in 1932 to the latest military coup on 22 May 2014 by the Royal Thai Armed Forces.

For example, from the 1970s to the 1980s, there three major occasions affected political stability namely the 1971 coup by Field Marshal Thanom and Praphat, the 1973 civilian uprising to overthrow the military domination of Thanom and Prahat, and the 1976 coup by Thanom and Praphat.⁹⁰ Development of Thailand's women's programs occurred within those political fluctuations. In 1974, the Ministry of Education founded the National Executive

⁸⁸ Khofifah Indar Parawansa, "Institutional Building: An Effort to Improve Indonesian Women's Role and Status", 71.

⁸⁹ Bhassorn Limanonda, "Exploring Women's Status in Contemporary Thailand", 247.

⁹⁰ Suchit Bunbongkarn, *The Military in Thai Politics 1981-86* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987); Suchit Bunbongkarn, "The Military and Democracy in Thailand", in R.J. May and Viberto Selochan (eds), *The Military & Democracy in Asia and The Pacific* (Australia: The Australian National University Press, 2004).

Committee, which was then replaced in 1978 by the Sub-Committee on Planning for Women and Child Development under the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), it took three years to integrate women's issues under Prime Minister's office by promulgating National Commission of Women's Affairs in 1981, yet it dissolved at the end of the year.⁹¹ Eventually, the National Commission on the Promotion and Co-ordination of Women's Affairs was set up in 1989⁹², or eleven years after the Ministry for the Role of Women was set up in Indonesia in 1978. In situations of political fluctuation and conflict, it takes years to establish institutions such as the National Commission on the Promotion and Co-ordination of Women's Affairs in Thailand.

It is clear that, although both countries commenced attention to women in development in the 1970s, Thailand experienced political fluctuations and instability of the government resulting in the slow progress to elevate Thai women's role and position in politics from the 1990s to 2000s, compared to Indonesia.

Conclusion

This paper observed the situation of women in Indonesia and Thailand during the democratic transition period. The democratic transition period is important as it does not only signify the changing of political structure but also the changing of policy and social features for promoting women's role and politics to deepen democratization in contemporary situation.

Although there are similarities in development programs to address women's

⁹¹ Darunee Tantiwiranond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *By Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand*, 33.

⁹² Darunee Tantiwiranond and Shashi Ranjan Pandey, *By Women, For Women: A Study of Women's Organizations in Thailand*, 33.

role before democratization in Indonesia and Thailand as both of them mainly focused on “practical gender interests”. Interestingly, this paper reveals that during the democratic transition period (in Indonesia from May 1998 to the 2004 General Election, while in Thailand is defined from May 1992 to 2005), Indonesian women’s role and position in politics are one step ahead. This is due to political stability, the persistent commitment of Indonesian government for improvement of women’s role in politics, and growing support from progressive Muslim leaders and activists who promotes a new interpretation of Islam that support women’s role in public sphere.

In contrast, political turbulence due to often military coups, contributed to Thailand government’s slow performance for advancement of women in politics, combined with less support from Buddhist leaders.

Advancement of women’s role in politics in Indonesia and Thailand requires not only progressive government policy toward gender equality (especillay for women’s advancement), but also political stability to ensure continuous completion of the policy. Moreover, it needs strategic support from the majority religion (Islam in Indonesia and Theravada Buddhism in Thailand) and religious leaders as their religious view on women's role and position will predominantly shape the opinion and attitudes of ordinary people in dealing with women in their private lives to be brought into the public sphere.

Further studies are needed to analyze the development of gender perspectives in (Theravada) Buddhism in Thailand for advancement of women in politics. In addition, research on the effort of political parties, women, and gender activists’s to encourage a gender quota in Thailand is strongly encouraged.

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