

Hadith, Justice, and Gender Equality: Indonesian Progressive Muslims' Thought

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Indonesian progressive Muslims' thought on Hadith and gender. It particularly focuses on analyzing the following questions. 1) What is the construction of the Indonesian progressive Muslims' thoughts on Hadith and gender? and 2) What is their Hadith hermeneutics; i.e., methods, principles, approaches? The thinking and the works of two prominent Indonesian Muslim reformers, Husein Muhammad and Siti Musdah Mulia, who have significantly contributed to the contemporary development of Islamic intellectualism and gender justice in Indonesia, will be explored in this study. Both Muhammad and Mulia essentially question the authenticity of the misogynist Hadiths as they contradict with the principles of gender equality and justice established in the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition. Accordingly, both have called for a reformation in understanding the Hadiths in favour of gender equality and justice. It is fundamental that the Hadiths have to be understood within their socio-historical context. Their hermeneutics lie in the analysis of the chain of transmitter (naqd al-isnad) and the substance of Hadith's wordings or reports (naqd al-matn). These are not relatively new although previous Hadith scholars have used such methods with some limitations.

Keywords: Gender, hadith, Indonesian Progressive Muslims, Islamic intellectualism

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INTRODUCTION

The debate on Islam and gender has always remained an interesting polemic in academic discourse. There are some Western-Liberal feminists who have accused Islam as a

patriarchal religion as it discriminates and oppresses women (Mir-Hosseini, 2004). However, such an accusation is misleading since Islam is embedded in historical, cultural, social, and political life, and thus, understanding Islam should include a consideration of the above variables which ultimately may result in a myriad of interpretations. This includes the perception of whether Islam can be interpreted as promoting gender equality or the opposite. It is therefore important for us to differentiate what Fazlur Rahman has termed as the normative Islam and the historical Islam (Rahman, 1979). While the former refers to Islam as scriptural-based religion as represented in the Qur'an and Hadith, the latter refers to Islam which is interpreted throughout history. Against the normative framework, how Islam responds to the issue of gender equality and justice can be addressed.

To some extent, the discrimination against women in Islam can be observed in some of the Islamic *fatwas* (legal opinions). As such, women have been considered as the second class citizen and face discrimination and marginalization in the family, socio-political, and economical spheres. In other words, the status and role of Muslim women are regarded as not equal in comparison with their Muslim male counterparts (Abou El Fadl, 2001).

It is noteworthy that there are some Qur'anic verses which might be interpreted and used to justify gender inequality. Among

the prominent Qur'anic verses considered as acknowledging the superiority of men over women is an-Nisā': 34 which states that men are the leader of women (Scott, 2009). However, according to Abou El-Fadl (2001), the verse does not significantly contribute to the perspective of gender inequality but rather it is the Hadith that contains a myriad of justifications with regard to the status and roles of Muslim women. In the traditional Islamic jurisprudence, among the significances of Hadith is its role in clarifying the meanings of Qur'an verses. This implies that one must refer to Hadith on matters that are ambiguous or not clearly explained in the Qur'an (Khalāf, 2004). Therefore, conservative Muslim *ulama* (the religious experts of Islam) often use Hadith to justify their Islamic legal opinions including on matters related to the superiority of men over women.

Hadiths containing discriminative and gender-bias views against women are often called misogynist Hadiths (Mernissi, 1991a). As the support for normative-theological basis of argument, this kind of Hadith constitutes theological, social, political, and economic impacts that undermine the status and roles of women. This type of Hadith has become a great challenge for Islamic feminists who have been questioning the authenticity of misogynist Hadiths and proposing egalitarian interpretations in favour of gender equality and justice (Duderija, 2016). Among the prominent proponents for this are Fatima Mernissi,

Khaled Abou El-Fadl, Asghar Ali Engineer, Riffat Hassan, Qasim Amin, and Amina Wadud.

In the Indonesian context, challenging the authority of misogynist Hadith is not new. According to Robinson (2006), since Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country, Islam has largely contributed to the discourse of gender in the country. In the 1990s, gender analysis began to be incorporated in the study of Islam particularly in relation to the Qur'an and Hadith. In addition to that, the thoughts of Muslim reformist scholars have become widely popular and have influenced Indonesian progressive Muslims. During Suharto's new order, the challenge to the reformists was the regime's policy which imposed the ideology of patriarchy known as "*state ibuisism*" to families. This ideology reinforced the idea that housewives should be husbands' subordinates. This policy resulted in the state's patriarchal hegemony on what constitutes women and motherhood. With the post-Suharto's new order, some changes have been made to the country's policy. Nonetheless, the progressive Muslims still have to face similar challenges; in this case it is the flourish of Islamist or conservative Muslims who seek to enforce textual interpretations of Islam that jeopardise the principle of gender equality and justice (Robinson, 2006).

As far as the discourse of gender and Hadith are concerned, Indonesian progressive Muslims are generally critical towards misogynist Hadiths. For them, since a Hadith was narrated in a particular

context in which it was produced, it should be interpreted, contextualized, and re-examined in response to contemporary problems. However, to date, little attention has been given to the construction of Indonesian progressive Muslims' thoughts on Hadith and gender. This paper, thus, seeks to explore the Indonesian progressive Muslims' thoughts on Hadith and gender. Specifically, it addresses the following questions:

What is the construction of the Indonesia progressive Muslims' thoughts on Hadith and gender?

What is their Hadith hermeneutics; i.e., methods, principles, approaches?

This study, therefore, is significant as it attempts to provide a conceptualization underpinning the thoughts of the Indonesian progressive Muslims.

METHODS

Firstly, a brief historical account on the discourse of Islam and gender in Indonesia is provided to illustrate how Islam has always been significant in the pursuit of gender equality. Then the discussion will explore the challenge of misogynist Hadiths and the reason why it is important for misogynist Hadiths to be re-examined and reinterpreted. This is followed by a discussion on two prominent Indonesian Muslims' thoughts on Hadith and gender, namely Husein Muhammad and Siti Musdah Mulia. These two scholars were chosen in this study because they represent two prominent Indonesian Muslim reformers

who have significantly contributed to the contemporary development of Islamic intellectualism and gender justice in Indonesia. Their respective hermeneutical implications in understanding Hadith which endorse gender-biased and misogynist views will be explored in this paper.

RESULT

Islam and Gender in Indonesia: A Brief Historical Context

The interface between Islam and the pursuit of women's rights in Indonesia can be traced back to the early twentieth century. During Dutch colonialism, the ethical politics resulted in a policy that enabled women to have rights to education, albeit limited only to elite circles. This policy led to the establishment of women movements across the archipelago. While some of the movements were established on the basis of their respective primordial identities, others were established on the basis of Muslim identity. Among the Muslim women organizations were *Aisyiah* (the Muhammadiyah woman's wing organization) established in 1917 in Yogyakarta, *Sarikat Siti Fatimah* established in 1918 in Garut, West Java, and *Nahdatoel Fataat* established in 1920 in Yogyakarta. These organizations essentially had similar concerns, namely the pursuit of women's rights both in the domestic and public spheres, women empowerment and rights to education, health and reproduction, and child protection (Affiah, 2017). However, it is noteworthy that they did not employ

an Islamic-based framework within their movement.

During Suharto's New Order, the main challenge of women's movement was the policy enforced by the authoritarian regime which was the "state *ibuisism*" policy; i.e., "the official policy promoting the role of wife and mother of the New Order which endorsed patriarchal familyism as a cornerstone of authoritarian politics" (Robinson, 2006). The authoritarian regime produced policies which placed women in domestic spheres. Facing this constraint, women movements began to incorporate gender framework into their activism in the 1980s, which was significantly adopted in the contemporary Islamic thought in the 1990s. This, in turn, led to the interface between feminism and the Islamic tradition. Through the network of IAIN (State Islamic Institute), particularly IAIN Jakarta and IAIN Yogyakarta, a few Indonesian Muslim intellectuals have brought gender perspective into the discussion of gender equality from an Islamic point of view (Affiah, 2017).

It was also in the 1990s that the works of Islamic feminists both from Western and Middle Eastern countries were translated into Bahasa Indonesia. They include *Setara di Hadapan Allah* (Equal before Allah) by Riffat Hassan and Fatima Mernissi (1991), *Wanita dalam Islam* (Women in Islam) by Fatima Mernissi (1991b), and *Hak-Hak Perempuan dalam Islam* (Women's Rights under Islam) by Asghar Ali Engineer (1994). These authors have profoundly influenced Indonesian Muslim intellectuals to advocate

gender justice through an Islamic-based framework. The Indonesian works on Islam and gender subsequently emerged, such as Marcoes-Natsir's *Lies* and Meuleman's *Wanita Islam dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual* (1993), Mansour Fakih's *Membincang Feminisme* (1996), and most importantly Nasaruddin Umar's *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif al-Qur'an* (1999) and Syafiq Hasyim's *Hal-Hal yang Tidak Dipikirkan: Tentang Isu-Isu Keperempuanan dalam Islam* (2002).

The progressive Indonesia Muslim scholars have called for the reformation of the Islamic tradition which endorses the superiority of men over women. They declare that there are Qur'anic verses and Hadith that have been misinterpreted to justify gender inequality and that gender-biased interpretations should be understood in the context of the patriarchal tradition in which they were produced. Accordingly, the scholars have stated that the Qur'an and Hadith must be interpreted contextually in the light of contemporary problems. For them, Islam truly acknowledges the principle of justice and equality regardless of sexual and racial identities (Brenner, 2011; Robinson, 2006; Wieinga, 2009).

The rise of Reformasi, which refers to Indonesia's political and economic transformation since 1998, opened up more inclusive space and opportunity for public debate. Numerous Muslim organizations also began to flourish, as this was previously impossible due to the authoritarian regime. The participation of Megawati Sukarno Putri as a female candidate in the 1999 presidential

election generated Islamic debate over whether women can be leaders. Challenging traditional-conservative Muslim streams, Indonesian progressive Muslims scholars have argued that the concept of *qiwama* (men's leadership/superiority) must be reinterpreted in favour of gender equality (Robinson, 2006). In other words, *qiwama* does not have to do with the prohibition of women in leadership roles, rather, it is about a familial relationship between husband and wife, which is dependent on a particular socio-cultural context. In principle, the scholars argue that Islam acknowledges women in leadership roles (Mir-Hosseini, 2013).

For Indonesian progressive Muslims, the challenge is to deal with the state's policy on gender relationship, most notably with regard to family law. One of the most contentious issues is on polygamy. This has led to demands by the Indonesian progressive Muslims for the revision of the 1975 Marriage Law and "its further scrutiny through the 1989 Kompilasi Hukum Islam (Compilation of Islamic Law) (Robinson, 2006). The Gender Mainstreaming team of the Department of Religion, led by Siti Musdah Mulia, a prominent Indonesian Islamic feminist, has strongly called for the Counter-Legal Draft to the Compilation of Islamic Law, particularly concerning the Muslim Family Law. They contended that the law remained discriminative against women, and therefore it was imperative to revise it in favour of the principle of democracy and gender equality (Robinson, 2006).

The Challenge of Misogynist Hadiths

The term “misogyny” is etymologically derived from the Greek word: *misogynia*. It is a composition of two words: *miso* (hatred) and *gyne* (women). In English, the word has further evolved into *misogynism* which means “an ideology of hating women”. Terminologically, the term misogyny refers to doctrines of schools of thoughts which discriminate and dehumanize women (Sari, 2016). In *Cambridge Dictionary*, it refers to “a man who hates women or believes that men are much better than women”.

In the Western scholarly discourse, the term misogyny is used to describe a circumstance of ancient traditions, particularly medieval societies, in which a patriarchal culture heavily dominates. In the late twentieth century, a number of scholars used the term not only to refer to hatred against women, but also to an attitude and behaviour which are against anything about women (anti-feminine) (Rieder, 2012).

Meanwhile, Hadith etymologically refers to communication, story, and conversation. According to traditional Hadith scholars (*muḥaddithūn*), it terminologically refers to the report of all of the Prophet Muhammad’s sayings, deeds, decrees, and characters (al-Khatib, 2006; Azami, 1977).

Hadiths which appear to endorse misogynist and gendered-bias views against women are called misogynist Hadiths. This type of Hadith is understood as that which promotes the concept of inferiority of women and promotes the prohibition of women’s involvement in the public sphere (Abou El Fadl, 2001). The term misogynist

Hadiths was introduced by Fatima Mernissi, a prominent Islamic feminist, in her book entitled *The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam*. She was critical of the authenticity of misogynist Hadiths, arguing that they are subject to validation and reinterpretation (Mernissi, 1991a).

The domination of a patriarchal culture in the structure of Muslim societies, discrimination, marginalization, and even violence against women can be normatively based on the misogynist Hadiths (Abū Zayd, 1990). Some Islamic laws and legal opinions, which discriminate women, have even used Hadiths as their normative-theological basis. Therefore, it is imperative to be critical of misogynist Hadiths in favour of gender equality and justice.

Husein Muhammad: A *Kyai* Feminist

Husein Muhammad is a *kyai*, Muslim clergy/ulama. In 1980, he obtained a bachelor degree from *Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu al-Qur’an* (The Higher Institute for Qur’anic Studies) in Jakarta and subsequently studied at Al-Azhar University, Cairo. In 1983, he returned to Indonesia and he now serves as the leader of *Pesantren Darut Tauhid*, Arjawinangun, Cirebon, West Java.

In 2001, Muhammad was involved in establishing several NGOs for women’s rights, such as Rahima, Puan Amal Hayati, Fahmina Institute, and Alimat. Since 2007, he has served as the commissioner of the national commission for anti-violence against women. Muhammad is well-known for both his intellectualism and activism

pertaining to the issue of gender equality and religious pluralism. Among Muhammad's important works are *Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai atas Wacana Agama dan Gender* (2001) and *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren* (2005).

The main focus of Muhammad's thoughts on gender equality is on reform of Islamic texts in Indonesia that endorse gender-biased interpretations, with the main focus on classic texts known as *Kitab Kuning* (The Yellow Books) which are dominantly used in the teaching of Islam at *Pesantren*. An example of such texts is '*Uqūd al-Lujjayn* by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani which emphasises the concept of unequal relationship in a marriage (Nuruzzaman et al., 2005).

According to Muhammad (2005), Islam profoundly acknowledges the universal principles of justice and equality as manifested in the doctrine of *tawhīd* (monotheism). He argues that in principle *tawhīd* truly acknowledges justice and equality before God. A number of Qur'anic verses affirm these principles, such as Al-Ḥujurāt: 13. Muhammad further insists that *tawhīd* must become the basis in the conceptualisation of gender justice and equality from an Islamic point of view (Muhammad, 2005).

Muhammad also concedes that some Qur'anic verses and Hadiths might be interpreted as endorsing gender-biased and misogynist views against women. This might be due to the fact that there are some parts of Islamic texts that remain ambivalent

and contradictive. On the one hand, there are some Qur'anic verses and Hadiths that affirm gender justice, yet, there are some that are against the principle. Therefore, according to Muhammad, it is crucial that one should understand the Islamic texts properly by analyzing the socio-historical context in which they are revealed or narrated (Muhammad, 2005).

Muhammad (2005) believed that it was therefore necessary to conceptualize a new approach to hermeneutics to understand gender-biased and misogynist Hadith. As such, he proposed the following hermeneutical steps: 1) use the objective of Shari'a (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) as the primary basis for interpretation; 2) analyse the socio-historical context (*al-siyāq al-tārikhi al-ijtima'i*) of the texts; 3) analyse the linguistic dimensions of meaning used within its particular context (*al-siyāq al-lisāni*); 4) identify the casual aspects of the texts as a way to think about the needs of the new social context (*qiyās al-ghāib 'ala al-shāhid*); 5) test the reliability and credibility of Hadith, including *isnad* criticism (the chain of Hadith transmission), to test the authenticity of Hadith based on the Hadith transmitters, and *matn* criticism (the substance of the report), to test the authenticity of Hadiths based on its content (Muhammad, 2005).

In particular, Muhammad had employed *isnad* criticism and *matn* criticism in the reading of misogynist Hadiths. This can be seen from his criticism of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani's '*Uqūd al-Lujjayn* which contains gender-biased understandings of

the Hadiths. According to Muhammad, after testing the chain of Hadith transmission, there are 30 Hadiths with *isnad* that are defective and which cannot be trusted. While the rest of the Hadiths are reliable (*ṣaḥīḥ*), the substance of the *matn* of these Hadiths is unacceptable, as it is contrary to the Qur'an and other Hadiths which advocate justice, equality, and respect for women (Muhammad, 2005).

Muhammad had argued that the principle of equality, justice, and universal human ethics was championed by Prophet Muhammad in the context of the Arabic patriarchal culture. He insisted that it was therefore necessary to analyse the socio-historical context of Hadith (*asbāb al-wurūd*) when examining misogynist Hadiths. Accordingly, the Islamic texts, both the Qur'an and Hadiths, which appear to endorse gendered-bias views against women, should be positioned in the context of their historical context as being directed toward the social goals of justice and equality. In essence, it is significant to analyse a particular context in which the Hadith is narrated (Muhammad, 2005).

Siti Musdah Mulia: A Female Muslim Feminist

Siti Musdah Mulia is a prominent Muslim feminist in Indonesia. Mulia was raised in a religious family. She began her education at *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), where she learned classical-Islamic sciences, such as Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Qur'anic exegesis. She obtained a Bachelor degree in Arabic Literary from State Islamic Institute

(IAIN) of Alaudin, Makasar in 1982, a Master's degree in the History of Islamic Thought in 1992 and a PhD in Islamic Political Thought in 1997 from the State Islamic Institute of Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, where she encountered with and was profoundly influenced by some liberal-progressive Muslim intellectuals at the time, such as Nurcholis Madjid and Harun Nasution.

According to Mulia (2009), the doctrine of *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) reflects a theological basis for gender justice and equality. She argues that *tawhīd* is the essence of Islam which illuminates the whole aspects of Islam. Understanding its meaning and essence correctly is imperative as it serves as a fundamental-theological guidance for Muslims to manifest both their religiosity and humanity on a daily basis. According to the Qur'an, both men and women are equal before God (Al Ḥujurāt: 13) i.e. they have equal status and rights as God's creatures (*khalifah*). The Qur'an also explains that gender relation presupposes equality and partnership (At Taubah: 71). Mulia (2009) asserts that the Qur'an acknowledges a set of provisions for women's rights, such as inheritance (An Nisā':11) and witness (Al-Baqarah: 282), both of which were not available to women before the arrival of Islam. In particular, Mulia elucidates the image of women from a Qur'anic worldview. First, women have a political independence (*al-istiqlal al-siyasah*) as reflected in the figure of the Queen of Sheba (An Naml: 23). Second, women have economic independence (*al-*

istiqlal al-iqtishadi) as reflected in the figure of a woman who managed farming in the story of Moses (Al Qashash: 23). Third, women have an individual autonomy (*al-istiqlal al-syakhsyi*), as either an individual (At Tahrir: 11) or part of society (At Tahrir: 12) (Mulia, 2009).

We can also find the manifestation of the principle of gender equality in the Prophet's Hadith. The Prophet has once said that "women are the sibling of men" (Sunan Abu Dawud and Tirmidzi). According to Mulia (2014), the meaning of "sibling" in the Hadith reflects equality, compassion, respect, and justice. Therefore, both men and women have to be in cooperation for the realization of shared ideals of humanity. It is also implied in the Hadith that the Prophet highly values women's dignity, a concept the Arabs did not recognise before Islam arrived (Shahih al-Bukhāri). There are some Hadiths which report that during the life of Prophet, the women's domain was not bound to the domestic sphere only; quite a number of them were also actively involved in public affairs.

Nonetheless, like Muhammad (2005), Mulia (2014) conceded that there were some Qur'anic verses and Hadiths that might have been interpreted in such a way that justified gender inequality.

Mulia argued that misogynist views against women were the result of literal or textual understandings on both the Qur'an and Hadith. This way of understanding downplays the universal principles of Shari'a (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*). As such, she insisted that understanding gender

relation and particularly women's position in Islam required a contextual reading on the revealed texts (the Qur'an and Hadith). This allows us to view it from historical accounts, including socio-historical and political contexts in which they are revealed or narrated. It is particularly significant, since Islam emerges in the context of the seventh century of the Arabian Peninsula which is patriarchal (Mulia, 2009).

Mulia (2009) insisted that in reading Hadiths one should take the objective of Shari'a (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) into consideration. This is particularly important, as Shari'a aims to realize public goods (*mashlahah*), including to justice and equality. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* aims at protecting the five necessities: preserving faith (*hifz al-din*), soul (*hifz al-nafs*), wealth (*hifz al-mal*), mind (*hifz al-aql*), and offspring (*hifz al-nasl*) (Auda, 2007). According to Mulia (2014), based on the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, some Hadiths explaining gender relation are subject to reinterpretation, as they are particular rulings (*furu'*), not the fundamentals (*uṣūl*). In principle, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* should be a basic framework for understanding Hadith.

Like Muhammad (2005), Mulia's methodology for understanding Hadith focuses more on analyzing the substance of Hadith's wordings or reports (*matn criticism*). It is conceptualized as follows: Firstly, the Hadith should be understood in the light of the Qur'an. Secondly, it should be understood in the light of socio-historical context (*asbāb al-wurūd*) in which it was narrated. Thirdly, it requires

a substantive ethics analysis to reflect on ethical implications resulting from the Hadith. And fourthly, a particular Hadith should be compared with other Hadiths (Mulia, 2009).

In order to ground Mulia's methodology, one needs to examine how she understands Hadiths which endorse misogynist views against women. For example, a Hadith narrated by Abu Bakrah, the prophet's companion, states that "those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity (cited in Mernissi, 1991a). This hadith has been understood by many as advocating the prohibition of women's leadership in the public sphere. According to Mulia (2014), such interpretation of the Hadith is questionable, since it was referring to Queen Sheba's capability to lead and govern her people as recorded in the Qur'an (An Naml: 23), and should not be generalised to all women. In other words, the Hadith should be understood and interpreted in the light of its historical context.

DISCUSSION

Some Hermeneutical Implications

The objection toward Hadiths which endorse gender-biased and misogynist views against women generally lies in the way the views contradict with the principles of justice and equality as explained in the Qur'an. The misogynist Hadiths are also in contrary with the Prophet's attitudes and practices which emphasise the need to treat women with love, compassion, and respect.

In the Islamic tradition, Hadiths remain central in the heart of Muslims, as it is the second most important Islamic source of reference after the Qur'an. It is therefore understandable why some Hadiths are perceived as the misogynist Hadiths as they have been used to justify gender inequality. As a result, some would consider that gender difference is God's decree that has to be accepted. However, the Hadith should be positioned as a "discursive tradition" which is subject to criticism and reinterpretation. From the perspective of authenticity, the Hadiths are distinctly different from the Qur'an. For one thing, how does one justify whether a given Hadith is truly the Prophet's saying? In this case, a Hadith should fit to the requirements of validity in order to become a referential argument (*hujjah*), to produce Islamic rulings, and to be practiced by Muslims (*ma'mul bih*) (al-Adhabi, 1983).

Syuhudi Isma'il (2007) elucidated the significance of the inquiry of the Hadith's authenticity. First, the Hadiths were written much later after the life of the Prophet. Second, based on some historical accounts, a number of Hadiths were fabricated even during the companion era. Third, the process of Hadith compilation and codification was undertaken much later after the death of the Prophet. Fourth, a variety of Hadith canons used various methods in codification. Fifth, in the process of Hadith transmission, a Hadith might be transmitted in its meaning (*al-riwayah bi al-ma'na*) instead of its wordings.

Both Muhammad (2005) and Mulia (2009) had asserted that a Hadith should

be understood within its socio-historical context. The reason is that the Hadith is arguably a historical text which reflects a particular historical context. A historical analysis is particularly significant to understand the authorship context of the Hadith. Muhammad and Mulia are also in agreement that a comparative analysis, *i.e.* to compare Hadith with the Qur'an, is highly significant to discern the authenticity of Hadith. Since the Qur'an is seen as the authentic divine words, Hadiths which contradict the universal Qur'anic principles, are subject to criticism and reinterpretation.

In the Hadith scholarship, both Muhammad's and Mulia's methodologies for understanding Hadith represent a contemporary trend to validate the authenticity of Hadith. In other words, they do not only test the authenticity of the chain of Hadith transmission (*naqd al-isnad*), but also more importantly, they examine the substance of Hadith's wordings or reports, including its historical context (*naqd al-matn*). It is noteworthy that their methodologies are not relatively new, as some classical Hadith scholars had already employed such criticism to test the authenticity of Hadith, even since the companion era.

Salāh al-Dīn al-Adhabi (1983) was critical of Ahmad Amin's claim that the early hadith scholars only focused on *isnad* criticism and downplayed *matn* criticism. He argued that it was not true, for the early Hadith scholars and even some of the Prophet's companions had taken *matn* criticism into account. He had cited many

examples for this. Among them including a narration by Aisha, the Prophet's wife, in which she criticized the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah: "a deceased person will be punished because of his family's cry" (Al-Adhabi, 1983). For Aisha, the Hadith was not reliable, and that Abu Hurairah's hearing was bad. She subsequently explained about the Hadith's historical context (*asbāb al-wurūd*) and compared it with the Qur'an. According to Aisha, the Hadith was uttered when the Prophet passed the house of a Jew crying for a person who was dead. Besides, it is also not consistent with the Qur'an (Al Baqarah: 286), explaining that a deceased person will bear his/her own burden.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored two Indonesian progressive Muslims' thoughts on Hadiths and gender. According to Husein Muhammad and Musdah Mulia, the Qur'an and Hadiths essentially acknowledge the principles of gender equality based on the doctrine of *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism). Therefore, Hadiths which appear to endorse gendered-bias and misogynist views against women are subject to criticism and reinterpretation, since they are in contrary with the principles.

Both Muhammad and Mulia have proposed a set of hermeneutics for understanding the Hadiths. They suggested that the Hadiths have to be understood within their socio-historical context and that it is important that the particular occasions the Hadiths were uttered by the Prophet should be scrutinised. Their hermeneutics lie in the analysis of the

chain of transmitter (*naqd al-isnad*) and the substance of Hadith's wordings or reports (*naqd al-matn*). This implies that to test the authenticity of the Hadith, Muslims cannot rely only on the validity of the chain of Hadith transmission. More importantly, they need to be critical of the substance of the Hadith's wordings or reports, and this includes analyzing its historical context. The two methods for analysing Hadiths proposed by the two Indonesian progressive Muslims would certainly provide a much more critical perspective for scholars and enable them to arrive at a much more reliable and solid interpretation of Hadiths.

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