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Women in Islamic Historiography and History

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ABSTRACT

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This article aims to reveal the rareness of historical writing that elevated the female figure as the main character. This gives rise to the assumptions that women are not much involved in history. The method used in this article is the historical research method. This Article finds that there are several possible factors that have made the writing of women's development history neglected and relatively slow compared to other social histories. First, the erroneous paradigm of women's history. Many opinions assume that everything related to women's problems is domestic issues and private. While anything related to science is identical to the world of men. Second, the wrong perspective about women's world is very influential on other factors. Among them are methodological and source issues; women are considered to be dealing with private issues only, while most of the documents/data deal with public issues, which are dominated by men's world. Therefore, it is possible that women are often overlooked and neglected from the record.

Keywords; Women, Historiography, Islamic History

Introduction

The image of women in Islamic history, in the perspectives of most people both some experts and Muslims themselves, often come into two extreme views. One view holds that women in Islamic society are oppressed, while another view argues that Islam gives women an incomparable position in other religions and cultures.¹

Having seen the development of historiography both in the world and in Indonesia, it can be said that history belongs to men. There are several factors contributing to this including women themselves being less interested in history, because historical writers are more interested in real and public writing, such as politics, economics, and other scientific fields. This male-centered historical writing is called androcentric. Bambang Purwanto said that *"baik secara sadar atau tidak, realitas historis perempuan telah diabaikan sebagai proses sejarah Indonesia"* ["whether consciously or not, the historical reality of women has been ignored as part of the Indonesian historical process"].

Ideologically, the limitation of space for women is also triggered by the concern of men that women will perceive productive functions. With the emergence of this idea, where it is accepted that women have been perceived as having reproductive functions (only being at home, taking care of children, and doing housework), women are allegedly going to compete with men if they are in power in the public sphere because women are very influential in the growth of people's lives. Moreover, women among scholars are considered as role models for their people.²

When Islam came, women were given the best possible honour. They were given full rights that were previously impossible, such as giving inheritance and full ownership of their property. Even other parties were not allowed to interfere except after obtaining permission from the women. Women also had rights in the fields of education and politics as commanded by the Prophet who ordered his people to seek knowledge. This order is general for both men and women. Even in the past, many women were given the right to take part in discussions and defend their arguments. In the Islamic tradition, *mukallaf* women can make various agreements, oaths, and vows, both to fellow humans and to God³. Islam expands the role space and fulfils women's rights perfectly, respecting their humanity, dignity and status. Islam also recognizes their involvement with men in all fields, except for work that is not in accordance with her dignity and nature as a woman.

Islam is different from previous civilizations and religions because Islam pays great attention to women in all aspects of their lives. From the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, it is not difficult to prove how the teachings of Islam really pay attention, respect, and protect women's problems and put them in a respectable place.⁴

Based on al-Hujurat verse 13 of the Qur'an, it emphasizes that there is no difference in human values between men and women. Believers, both men and women, are equal before Allah, the difference is their piety. Therefore, both of them have been declared equally by obtaining the grace of Allah. Thus, it is clear that the status of women is equal to that of men.

¹ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, translator, Ilyas Hasan, (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), p. 15.

² Nur Ikhlas, "Reposisi Islam dalam Bingkai Historiografi", in *Journal of Ushuluddin I*, No. 1, 2019, p. 103.

³ Agustin Hanapi, "Peran Perempuan dalam Islam", in *International Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2015, p. 16.

⁴ R. Magdalena, "Kedudukan Perempuan dalam Perjalanan Sejarah", in *Harkat an-Nisa: Jurnal Studi Gender dan Anak*, Vol. 2 No. 1, 2017, p. 22.

The Quran also clearly says that women are partners (partners, twins, siblings) so their position and rights are almost the same. If there is a difference, it is only in the form of the main functions and duties assigned by God to each gender, so that the differences do not result in one feeling of having an advantage or being superior to the others.⁵

There are some verses that explain the closeness of the relationship between men and women, for example in the marriage bond: Q.S. al-Ruum verse 21, Q.S. al-Nisa verse 1, and Q.S. al-Baqarah: 187. These three verses explain the closeness of the relationship between men and women is based on their origin, that men and women come from the same origin and need each other. The verses also imply equality in the rights to love and peace by accepting each other. God did not create one to exploit others and to feel happy over the other's suffering, but by loving and caring for one another, they will find peace.⁶

The public has already known that women are hidden from history (Hidden from history). This is according to Sheila Rowbotham in her book titled *Hidden from History: Rediscovering Women in History from the 17th century to the present*. This view is caused by historical research and writing that tend to focus on issues around politics and violence, which according to Kuntowijoyo is as "Two things always belong to men". Then Ann D. Gordon, et al., in their article entitled "The Problem of Women's History" stated that historians often ignored women because they assumed that the significant things are the real things, such as politics and economics. They argued that men are active while women are passive; women's lives are considered timeless, which are centered on conceiving and raising children in the family.⁷

In the development of historiography, especially Islamic historiography, it is very rare to find writers who specifically write about the history of women. There have been few if any, writings about the biographies of female figures, however, the writings are not in the science of history but rather in social science. The androcentric style of historical writing makes women only as extras.⁸

In general, medieval European literature depicts that women are seen as second-class citizens. However, other medieval historical sources state that many female intellectuals made considerable contributions to civilization. This second statement is proof that women also contribute to the progress of civilization, it is just that many historical writers are still not interested in discussing women's contributions at a time.

Like historiography, history moves continuously and is fundamental to the objective of women's activities. The disappearance of women when entering the objective time of history is because women have natural times such as menstruation, childbirth, and child-rearing.⁹ Women's natural time is unique and forms a subjective and different history from historical times. Women's natural time is unavoidable, but it should not be a barrier to women's historical journey in historiography.¹⁰

According to Purwanto in *Gender Perspective in Indonesian Historiography*, there are several possible factors that have made the writing of women's development history neglected and relatively slow compared to other social histories. First, the erroneous paradigm of women's history. Many opinions assume that everything related to women's problems is domestic issues and private. While anything related to science is identical to

⁵ Agustin Hanapi, "Peran Perempuan....", p. 19.

⁶ AgustIn Hanapi, "Peran Perempuan....", p. 17.

⁷ Andi Syamsu Rijal, *Peranan Perempuan dalam Historiografi Indonesia*, p. 1.

⁸ Nur Ikhlas, "Reposisi Perempuan Islam dalam Bingkai Historiografi", in *Journal of Ushuluddin*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2019, p. 103.

⁹ Alvin Noor Sahab, and Vivi Lutfiani. "Annales Sect in Islamic Historical Research." in *Jurnal Indo-Islamika* Vol. 10. No.2, 2020, p. 85.

¹⁰ Nur Ikhlas, "Reposisi Islam....", p. 104.

the world of men. Second, the wrong perspective about women's world is very influential on other factors. Among them are methodological and source issues; women are considered to be dealing with private issues only, while most of the documents/data deal with public issues, which are dominated by men's world. Therefore, it is possible that women are often overlooked and neglected from the record.¹¹

Further, this is also related to the limited number of female scholars in history. One of the major difficulties in attempting to reconstruct and write the socio-intellectual history of Indonesian female scholars is the scarcity of written sources. In the historiography of Indonesian Islam, there is no literary genre as known in the Middle East as *tarajim* (sing. *Tarjamah* or *tarjamah al-hayah*) or Western historiographical terms, *tarajim* or *tarjamah al-hayah*, known as biographical dictionaries.¹²

Tarajim books in the Middle East are usually arranged based on layers and generations within a certain period of time; or based on groupings in certain areas of expertise or professions. Because of that, there are, for example, *tarajim* which are *thabaqat* of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad; or *tabi'in* in the post-companion period, and the generations after them from century to century. Further, there are also *tarajim* based on expertise such as *thabaqat al-fuqaha* (Islamic law experts), *thabaqat al-muhadditsin* (hadith experts), or *thabaqat al-ashfiya'* (Sufis).¹³

Such *tarajim* is very essential for the writing of socio-intellectual histories of ulama, including female scholars. Because, for ulama, in addition to stating the date of birth, the date of death and the genealogy, *tarajim* also includes a history of their education; their teachers, places of education and scholarship they had visited, their written works, and even their character, morals, and personality.¹⁴

Unfortunately, such *tarajim* is absent from the genre of Indonesian historical Islamic literature, not only specifically about female ulama but also about male ulama. Therefore, the reconstruction of the socio-intellectual history of Indonesian ulama since the early days of the development of Islam in this region is a very difficult undertaking. For this reason, the socio-intellectual history of the ulama in the archipelago, especially until the end of the 16th century, was mixed with myths and legends, as can be seen, for example, in the history of Islamic propagators and broadcasters such as Walisanga in Java.

The existence of *tarajim* or biographical dictionaries does not only assist in writing the socio-intellectual history of certain groups (*thabaqat*) in society, including women ulama, but also provides opportunities for the application of a prosopographical approach to history or simply can be said as a biographical approach. More importantly, *tarajim* also allows the application of "quantitative approaches". This quantitative approach is a breakthrough in the approach to history because the most common approach used at all times is the qualitative approach. Hence, with *tarajim* it is possible to apply statistics because there is information that is always present in *tarajim*, as mentioned above. Therefore, it is possible to make, for example, the percentage of ulama from certain areas, how many are studying at certain madrasas or teachers, and so on.¹⁵

¹¹ Desma Yulia, *Perspektif Gender dalam Historiografi Indonesia*, p. 2.

¹² Jajat Burhanudin, (ed.), *Ulama Perempuan Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002), p. xxiii.

¹³ Jajat Burhanudin, (ed.), *Ulama Perempuan ...*, p. xxiv.

¹⁴ Jajat Burhanudin, (ed.), *Ulama Perempuan ...*, p. xxiv.

¹⁵ Jajat Burhanudin, (ed.), *Ulama Perempuan ...*, p. xxvi.

Method

This research uses the historical research method, which is a system intended to assist in collecting historical sources to be studied, analyzed, and criticized in order to achieve historical truth. There are four steps in historical research methods, namely: heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography.

This research begins with the search for historical sources or evidence (heuristics). The sources of this research are books and articles relevant to the research study. To obtain sources, research is carried out with literature studies and visiting official websites that can be accessed online.

The second step performs the verification process. Verification is the assessment or testing of such source materials from the point of view of their mere veracity. Such verification is carried out by comparing the contents of one source with another, so that reliable sources are obtained.

The next stage is interpretation, where the selected historical data is interpreted from the historian's point of view, and the last stage is historiography, which includes compiling a collection of historical data and writing these data into a reliable writing.

Discussions

Women in Islamic History

The Quran has featured small spiritual biographies of several Prophets, syahid (martyrs) and wise people. Most of the examples presented are men. However, there are also many detailed explanations that discuss the great women in the Quran.¹⁶ These women who are praised in Islamic history and narrations are important because the Quran talks about women who lived during the time of the Prophet Muhammad proving that throughout history women obtained an honorable status in Islam.

Islamic history records that the first person to capture and appreciate the truth of Islam was a woman, named Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. She was the one who convinced the Prophet that he was a messenger of God who had to convey His teachings to mankind. She also supported the Prophet's struggle by giving most of her wealth, so the Prophet was very impressed throughout his life by the quality of Khadijah's piety and the sacrifices she made.¹⁷

The woman who was the closest and the most beloved by the Prophet was Aisha bint Abu Bakr. The Prophet taught half of his knowledge to Aisha so that the Prophet's wife grew and developed as an expert in Islamic religion and literature. Many of the companions of the Prophet and his successors (tabi'in) studied with her. Aisha received a number of nicknames, the most famous of which were as-Siddiqah (the honest woman) and al-Humaira, which means reddish colour due to her rosy-red cheeks. She was also known as a smart and active woman socially, even politically. She was also a very critical and courageous woman.¹⁸

Fatimah was one of the Prophet's daughters whom the Prophet loved the most. However, the expression of affection given by the Prophet was not in the form of pampering her with the gift of wealth or riding on the greatness of her parent's name (nepotism) but by educating her with a strong mental formation and living in moderation.¹⁹

¹⁶ Nur Ikhlas, "Reposisi Islam....", p. 109.

¹⁷ Neng Dara Affiah, *Islam, Kepemimpinna Perempuan, dan Seksualitas*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Obor, 2017), p. 3

¹⁸ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama di atas Panggung Sejarah*, (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020), p. 78.

¹⁹ Neng Dara Affiah, *Islam, Kepemimpinna ...*, p. 4.

These three women were loved, respected, and supported by the Prophet throughout his life. On the contrary, at that time women were considered as human beings who were not whole, dwarfed, and underestimated. Even in some Arab tribes, at that time, the birth of women was considered a disgrace and a burden to the family, so they had to be killed. However, the Prophet respected them and gave them the same space as men, especially in the field of science.²⁰

Asma bint Abu Bakr was the daughter of Abu Bakr ash-Siddiq, the wife of Zubair bin Awwam, and the older sister of Sayyidah Aisha, the wife of the Prophet. She was 10 years older than Aisha. she was born in 595 AD, or 27 years before the Prophet's migration. she died in 73 AH/692 AD at the age of one hundred years. She belonged to the first generation of Islam or "*As-Sabiqun al-Awwalun*". Ibn Hajar and Ibn Ishak, two prominent historians, in their book, said that Asma was the first eighteenth person to convert to Islam." Arab society at that time gave a title or nickname to her, "*Dzatun Nithaqain*" (a woman who has two scarves). The first scarf was given to the Prophet Muhammad. and the second scarf was given to his father, Abu Bakr ash-Siddiq, when they migrated to Medina.²¹ Asma narrated 58 hadiths from the Prophet.²²

Zainab bint Ali bin Abi Talib was born in 6 AH/626 AD. She was the third child after Hasan and Husayn from a noble couple, Fatimah bint Rasulullah and Ali bin Abi Talib. She was popularly known as Zainab al-Kubra. Zainab grew up in an honourable, pious, humble, and scientific environment. Together with her brothers, she experienced life and received guidance from her grandfather and grandmother: Muhammad Rasulullah SAW and Sayyidah Khadijah. Like her father (Ali bin Abi Talib), Sayyidah Zainab al-Kubra was also known to like learning and love science. Prophet SAW said, "*Ana Madinah al-'ilm wa 'Aliy babuha.*" (I was the city of knowledge, and Ali was the door). Therefore, it is not surprising that Sayyidah Zainab had extensive and deep knowledge. Her mind was bright. Because of her intelligence, she was nicknamed Aqilah Bani Hasyim (an intelligent woman from Bani Hasyim).²³

Amrah bint Abdurrahman; her full name was Amrah bint Abdurrahman bin Sa'd bin Zurarah bin Adas al-Ansariyah an-Najjariyah al-Madaniyah. Her grandfather was a generation of great friends of the Ansar. Her mother was Salimah bint Hakim bin Hasyim bin Qawalah. Amrah was born during the reign of Uthman bin Affan, around the year 29 AH/629 AD. She was one of the students of Sayyidah Aisha bint Abu Bakr. Her close relationship with Sayyidah Aisha brought Amrah to gain a lot of religious knowledge. She memorized a lot of the hadiths of the Prophet SAW from what she heard from her teacher. Among the scholars and community leaders of her time, Amrah was praised as a female cleric. Her views and thoughts were heard and quoted by them.²⁴

Sukainah bint al-Husayn. She was the beloved daughter of Imam Husein bin Ali, the grandson of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib-Sayyidah Fatimah, and the great-grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. She was born in 669 AD and died in 736 AD. Sukainah was one of those who accompanied her father to Karbala with her brother, Sayyid Ali bin Husein as-Sajjad. Sukainah was an honorable woman with a clean personality and the most prominent woman of her time.²⁵

The first famous name in Islamic mysticism was a woman. Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah was a freed slave who was born in Basra in 714 or 717 AD. She was often referred to as Rabi'ah al-Qaisiyayah. Rabi'ah was a very phenomenal female scholar. Many people call her *waliyullah*, the woman who loved Allah. Her name is so popular and legendary.

²⁰ Neng Dara Affiah, *Islam, Kepemimpinan ...*, p. 4.

²¹ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 74.

²² Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 78.

²³ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 88.

²⁴ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 91.

²⁵ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 92.

She is remembered by people, especially in the world of philosophical Sufism as a woman icon who loved God (al-hubb al-ilahi).²⁶

Nafisa bint al-Hasan. Nafisah was born in Makkah, in the middle of the month of Rabi'ul Awal, 145 H. Her full name was Nafisah bint al-Hasan al-Anwar bin Zaid al-Ablaj bin al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib. At the age of five, her parents brought her to Medina. In this place, she spent her days on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad. At that time, her father was the amir (governor) who was appointed by the Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur. Nafisah was also often called 'Abidah Zahidah (diligent in rituals and asceticism). Some people categorize her as a female guardian with a number of sacred things. Every year, for thirty years, she was said to have visited Mecca to perform Hajj, which she did on foot while fasting and praying at night.²⁷

Zubaidah. Her full name was Zubaidah bint Abu Ja'far al-Mansur. She was the daughter of Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, the second caliph of the Abbasid dynasty. She was born in the city of Mosul, Iraq, in 766 AD. Her mother was Salsabil. She (Zubaidah) married Harun ar-Rashid who later became the famous caliph. Zubaidah died in Baghdad in 831 AD and was buried in the Quraysh Graveyard. Zubaidah was an intelligent and kind woman. She loved science and literature very much. She was also a female poet. It is said that she often invited distinguished scholars and writers to her palace to discuss literature and poetry reading.²⁸

Ali Yahya Mu'ammam in his book, *al-Abadhiyya bi Mauqifi at-Taarikh* (Ibadhi through history) mentions that many Muslim women in North Africa have played important roles in the development of the glory of Islam. One quote from the contents of his book is: Umm Yahya was a pious woman, highly educated, living in Amsigin which is located between Jaillat and Tinjaarah in the Jebel Nafusa region (Libya). Umm Yahya believed that it was not perfect for women to pursue education in a school with a curriculum intended for men, so she established special schools for women from primary to secondary levels. She also established a girls' dormitory for students living out of town. The curriculum applied in these educational institutions was appropriate and supported the skills and talents of women. She also helped the students with job opportunities for some of her students who wanted to continue their education to a higher level.²⁹

Number and Proportion of Female Companions

In the various collections of biographies specifically about the Companions, about ten to fifteen per cent of the entries are about women (with one exception, which is only about four per cent of the biographies specifically about women). More than one thousand two hundred female companions are listed in various collections of biographies. This shows the significant numbers in the phenomenon of female friends, however, it is difficult to get a definite quantitative number.³⁰

At the first glance, it seems easy to determine the total number of female companions recorded by biographers. However, in fact, the issue is very complex for a number of reasons. First, all collections contain multiple entries for the same women. This is because certain women belonged to the various groups in the collection or because there are different versions of a woman's name. The more accurate and scholastic the compiler, the greater possibility of the number of double entries, because the author recorded any version of the women's names they knew. Second, references to

²⁶ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 99.

²⁷ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 112.

²⁸ Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama ...*, p. 123.

²⁹ R. Magdalena, "Kedudukan Perempuan dalam....", p. 15.

³⁰ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban* (Ilyas Hasan, transl.), (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), p.

female companions are scattered across many early sources, so those aspiring compilers could find women not mentioned in earlier collections and women who were merely quoted in the early collections but not given separate biography. *Third*, in sources that are not biographical or genealogical, women were often referred to only in general terms: as someone's daughter, wife, aunt, or grandmother, as a woman of a certain ethnicity; with a descriptive designation; or simply as "a woman."³¹

In Ibn Hibban's book of reliable narrators, 68% of all the women listed were companions. At least 31 of the 52 women (60%) in Ibn Al-Qaisarani's book of narrators in the two hadith collection books, Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, were from the first generation. Of the 240 Sufi women in Ibn Al-Jauzi's hagiography collection, 14% of them are female companions. In Adz-Dzahabi's biographical dictionary for the first seven centuries of Islam, 54% of the women were companions of the Prophet. His contemporary, As-Safadi, expanded the number of biographies of prominent Muslims from the time of the Prophet to his time, and more than half of the women in his compilations were companions. Similarly, about half of the female narrators in Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani's Tahdzib At-Taahdzib narrated directly from the Prophet.³²

***Tabi'in* Generation**

Islamic biographical literature originally followed a chronological division, namely *thabaqat*, which was translated as classes, stages, or generations. This term indicates the similarity of time, place, and rank. The earlier generations were placed higher than later generations, mainly because they were closer to the source (the Prophet). However, there is also an understanding that the era of the Prophet was an ideal era, and in the course of time, Muslims have deviated from that ideal era. *Tabi'in* were those who did not narrate directly from the Prophet but from one of the companions of the Prophet.³³

If calculated, the proportion of female *tabi'in* was far less than the proportion of female companions. Probably, there were no more than 150 female *tabi'in*. This number is an estimation due to some disagreements to determine.³⁴

One reason for the dramatic decline in the number of women in biographical collections from the first to the second generation has to do with the distinctive position of female companions as precedents and role models for Muslims in general and for Muslim women in particular. The generation of women after the time of the Prophet is difficult to compare with women in the period of the founding of Islam, an ideal period.³⁵

The decline in the number of women whose biographies are recorded can also be explained by theories stating that the status of women in Islamic society became worse around this time due to ecological reasons (the transition from a nomadic society to an urban-agricultural society), caused by changes in the economy (especially the growing importance of land), and due to various external cultural influences (Byzantium, Persia, and Turkey).³⁶

³¹ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 46.

³² Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 47.

³³ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 85.

³⁴ Ibn Sa'd mentions 94 biographies in his last section, Ibn Hibban mentions 90 female *tabi'in*, but only about 25 were also mentioned in Ibn Sa'ad, Ibn Hajar, Tahdzib at-Taahdzib, mentions about 144 women who did not narrate from the Prophet.

³⁵ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 87.

³⁶ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 87.

***Tabiu at-Tabi'in* Generation**

After the second generation, the quantity and quality of information about women contained in various biographical collections declined substantially until the 8th/14th century. The decline in the number and proportion of women mentioned in dictionaries as hadith experts continued until the number and proportion of women disappeared completely after the fourth generation (although there were some women who can be identified as women of the fifth generation in other sources). However, the chronology of the groups of narrators did not provide an opportunity to pinpoint the year of these women's existence, and biographies about them only depicted them as links in the chain of narrations. In various hagiographies of Sufi women, about fifty pious women could be dated from external evidence that they lived in the period after the *tabi'in* until the beginning of the 4th/10th centuries, but this information is generally ahistorical.³⁷

Al-Khathib Al-Baghdadi (d. 463/1071) found only 31 women worthy of mention in the History of Baghdad, which covered the period from the founding of the city until his death. Ibn Asakir (d. 571/1176) mentioned 200 biographies of women but mostly related to the Umayyad dynasty whose capital was Damascus. Ibn Khallikan (d.681/1282) mentioned seven women in his obituary biographies, covering a period of 500 years.³⁸

The later compilers, such as Adz-Dzahabi, As-Safadi, and Ibn Al-'Imad, found not many women after the second generation in earlier collections worthy of note. This may be due to the criteria for including women in biographical collections

Women and Politics

Politics comes from the Greek polis, which means city-state. In Greek city-states, people interacted with each other in order to achieve prosperity (goodness, according to Aristotle) in life. It is when people try to determine their position in society, when they try to achieve personal prosperity through the available resources, or when they try to influence others to accept their views, then they are busy with an activity that we all call politics.³⁹

The Ancient Greeks, especially Plato and Aristotle, named politics *en dam onia* or the good life, this naming has the intention that politics aimed to protect and achieve the goals of a prosperous society. Harold Lasswell and David Easton defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values for society or the allocation of values in an authoritative manner, based on the authority and for society.⁴⁰

Politics can be interpreted as affairs, actions, or policies regarding the government of the country. Politics also means policies and ways of acting in dealing with problems, both related to society and others. The Quran talks about politics through its many verses, especially those that use the *law* terms.⁴¹

One of the heated debates for discussion among many members of the Islamic community is the involvement of women in politics that is related to state and community affairs. Islam's recognition of the importance of women in the social order is evidenced by the granting of political rights to women which shows that the position of

³⁷ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 110.

³⁸ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 110.

³⁹ Carton Clymer Rodee, et.al., *Pengantar Ilmu Politik*, cet. 5, (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2002), p. 2-3. In Seta Basri, *Pengantar Ilmu Politik*, (Yogyakarta: Indie Book Corner, 2011), p. 2.

⁴⁰ Ramlan Subakti, *Memahami Ilmu Politik*, (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2010), p. 6.

⁴¹ M. Quraish Shihab, *Perempuan*, (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2018), p. 372.

women is dignified and noble. The political rights of women are the right to speak or express opinions.⁴²

Even so, many arguments are put forward by opponents of women's rights, both by interpreting the verses of the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet as well as by pointing to some things that they consider to be women's weaknesses that prevent them from carrying out these rights.⁴³ For example, they refer to the verse:

الرجال قوامون على النساء

“Men are the caretakers of women” (Q.S. an-Nisa : 34)

The base of the debate is the word *qawwam*. Classical narrators and some modern commentators define this word as: the person in charge, having the power or authority to educate women, leaders, physically and morally fully guarding, rulers, who have advantages over others, and men being the managers of women's problems. The Ministry of Religion's team also interpreted it the same way. From the meaning above, it is clear that men are in a superior position, while women are in an inferior position.⁴⁴

They understand the verse in narrow understanding, in fact, understanding the verse above in a special sense that is domestic life; it is more suitable for the context of the description of the verse. Moreover, the verse continues to emphasize the cause of leadership, that is because men are obliged to cover the living expenses of their wives/families.⁴⁵

Regarding the rejection of women's leadership which refers to the hadith, "A people/society will not prosper if its leadership is left to women (*Lan yufliha qaumun imra'atan*)." Fatima Mernissi conducted careful research on the hadith by investigating the moral quality of the hadith narrator and re-examining people who continued the story (dual research). Mernissi questioned this hadith by raising several questions: In what context and momentum did it appear? Who is the narrator of this hadith? Why do the narrators of the hadith feel the need to bring back the hadith?⁴⁶

From the investigation conducted by Mernissi, there were several findings: First, the hadith was spoken by the Prophet Muhammad to describe the Persian state which was nearing the verge of collapse when it was led by a woman who did not have adequate qualities. Second, this hadith was reiterated by its narrator, Abu Bakrah, when he saw signs of division among Muslims because of the *Siffin* (camel) war between Caliph Ali and Siti Aisha. At that time, he was faced with a dilemma: should he side with Ali who was the legitimate leader (caliphate) or Aisha, the wife of the Prophet? For Abu Bakrah, siding with one of the two was not a wise choice, so he used the gender argument as a tool to avoid conflict by recalling the words of the prophet delivered 23 years after his death. Third, the hadith was narrated by only one person, namely Abu Bakrah. According to hadith experts, if a hadith is only narrated by one person (had hadith), then its authenticity must be doubted.⁴⁷

The Female Image of the Ruling Elite

There is not much evidence related to women influencing the political and military decisions of the Prophet Muhammad. Since the Prophet did not define the nature or change of leadership in Muslim society after his death, the influence of Aisha and other wives on the relationship with the Prophet who was about to pass away

⁴² Anifatul Kiftiyah, “Perempuan dalam Partisipasi Politik di Indonesia”, in *Jurnal Yuridis* VI, No. 2, December 2019, p. 60.

⁴³ M. Quraish Shihab, *Perempuan*, p. 373.

⁴⁴ Neng Dara Affiah, *Islam, Kepemimpinan, dan Seksualitas*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ M. Quraish Shihab, *Perempuan*, p. 373.

⁴⁶ Neng Dara Affiah, *Islam, Kepemimpinan, dan Seksualitas*, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Neng Dara Affiah, *Islam, Kepemimpinan, dan Seksualitas*, p. 8.

resulted in the Prophet's eventual decisions containing political dimensions. His daughter, Fatimah, was also said to have participated in fighting for the political interests of Ali, her husband. The succession and patterns of power within the Islamic state were determined amidst various political and military conflicts and religious debates in later generations. Aisha put her influence on the early political conflicts until the faction associated with her was defeated in the Camel War (36/656). Aisha then withdrew from political life, although her authority in religious life did not diminish.⁴⁸

A small number of women handled or influenced the state affairs through male rulers who were their relatives, and a few became de jure rulers of Islamic countries. The biographical collections contain some of these women, but the events of their rise to political power were only discussed indirectly. Studies based on multiple sources from each historical period covered the unique factors that enabled women to have influence in political life, the limits of their power, and the attitudes of Muslim writers to these phenomena. An overview of the various dimensions of this phenomenon (from biographical sources as well as secondary sources), put every woman who wielded political power in the right historical perspective.⁴⁹

Experts who traced the history of Islam found that there were women in every dynasty in Islam who had political influence through their husbands, sons and sometimes brothers. They also found several other female rulers in their records. Of course, it is only in rare and exceptional circumstances that women become rulers in Islamic countries, as in most other societies.⁵⁰ Some of the female rulers in Islamic history will be discussed in detail below.

Women Rulers in Islam

1. Queen Balqis

Queen Balqis lived during the time of Prophet Solomon (Sulaiman). The story of Queen Balqis was enshrined in the Quran Surah an-Naml verses 23-44. This story began when the Hud-hud bird flew away and found a great kingdom.⁵¹ As Allah state:

إني وجدت امرأة تملكهم وأوتيت من كل شيء ولها عرش عظيم

The word *imra'ah* in the verse indicates a woman and is mentioned in a *nakirah* (general) manner, and her name is not clearly stated in the verse, because it only uses *dhamir* (pronoun). The commentators agree that *imra'ah* in this verse is Balqis bin Surahail, the queen of Saba.⁵²

The Quran describes the characteristics of Queen Balqis' leadership in leading the kingdom of Saba as a wise and democratic leader, a diplomatic and peace-loving leader, and a smart and conscientious leader.⁵³

2. Sitt al-Mulk

Sitt al-Mulk was a daughter of Abu Mansur Nizar al-Aziz billah (975–996 AD).⁵⁴ Maulana Al-Aziz was known to really appreciate differences. This

⁴⁸ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 198.

⁴⁹ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 200.

⁵⁰ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban*, p. 208.

⁵¹ Hamid Ahmad ath-Thahari, *Kisah-kisah in Al-Qur'an*, (Bandng: Irsyad Baitus Salam, 2012), p. 200.

⁵² Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, (Beirut: Darul Makrifah), p. 401.

⁵³ Syafieh dan Nurbaiti, "Potret Karakteristik Kepemimpinan Perempuan (Analisis Semiotika Surat an-Naml: 23-44)", in *Jurnal at-Tibyan* III, no. 1, June 2018, p. 48-52.

principle was also learned by Sitt. However, Al-Aziz's kindness was exploited by Jewish and Christian officials who were appointed by the king, so instability emerged. Finally, Al-Aziz handed over the reins of the kingdom to Sitt's brother, Al-Hakim, who was still 11 years old. Al-Hakim's reign did not last long. Chaos became even more intense during the reign of the young caliph. A number of ministers from Judaism and Christianity governed the kingdom's economic authority, including zakat and taxes.

Sitt, who received leadership training from his father, could not remain silent. She took the initiative to take over the government from his brother. However, the Fatimid dynasty did not recognize a female-led caliphate. Therefore, Sitt who took over the government only had the regent title. To get around this, Sitt's son, Az-Zahir, was appointed to become a caliph. Az-Zahir was only 16 years old at that time. Az-Zahir's leadership was immediately accompanied by his mother, Sitt, who held the title of regent and queen mother. With this position, Sitt could control the government through his son. She kept the dynastic traditions and did not break the rules, but in essence, all affairs in the caliphate were governed by Sitt. She was very good at taking care of everything regarding the dynasty even though she was only a regent. She earned the title "Our Naib Sultanat."⁵⁵

3. Syajarat ad-Durr

According to Duncan, Syajarat ad-Durr was the daughter of the caliph al-Musta'shim's brother named Fatima. Syajarat ad-Durr first appeared in historical records in 636/1239 as an inmate of the harem in the palace of al-Musta'shim.⁵⁶ She was the wife of the Egyptian sultan of the Ayyubid dynasty, Sultan al-Malik al-Saleh or al-Salih Ayyub. A historian named Al Maksiri stated that the sultan was so in love with his wife, that he always took her to the battlefield. Shajarat became the most influential military adviser because all her opinions were considered decisive for victory. After her husband's death, the dynasty was ruled by Turan Shah (al-Salih's eldest son by his first wife), but the state conditions became uncertain, making the queen's role even more important. So, in 1250 she was appointed to become a sultana, and this marked the end of the Ayyubid rule and the start of the era of the Mamluk dynasty.⁵⁷

4. Sultanah Aceh

The power of women in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam lasted for almost 60 years and was held by four queens or sultanates consecutively from 1641-1699 AD. The four queens were Tajul Alam Safiatuddin Syah (1641-1675 AD), Nurul Alam Nakiyatuddin Syah (1675-1678 AD), Inayat Shah Zakiyatuddin Shah (1678-1688 AD) and queen Kamalat Shah (1688-1699 AD). The queens ruled successively and inherited the royal throne from each other to the queen afterwards.⁵⁸

The reign of Queen Safiatuddin which lasted approximately thirty-five years was a time of trials. The queen had to work hard to maintain the glory of the previous kings and continued to develop in all aspects prevailing in society.

⁵⁴ Nuraini H.A. Manan, "Dinasti Fatimiyah di Mesir (909-1172): Kajian Pembentukan dan Perkembangannya", in *Jurnal Adabiya XIX*, No. 2, August 2017, p. 130.

⁵⁵ Sitt al-Mulk, Pembawa Kedamaian Dinasti Fatimiyah", in *Republika*, 10 October 2014.

⁵⁶ Ahmad Chirul Rofiq, Kontroversi Kepemimpinan Politik Perempuan Periode Pertengahan: Kasus Pemerintahan Syajarat ad-Durr, in *Jurnal Kodifikasia VI*, No. 1, 2012, p. 140.

⁵⁷ Didin Saepudin, in a lecture of History of Islamic Civilization, on 18 May 2022.

⁵⁸ Fitriah M. Suud, "Perempuan Islam dalam Sejarah Kerajaan Aceh Darussalam (1641-1699 M)", in *Jurnal Serambi Tarbawi III*, no. 1, January 2015, p. 26.

History admitted that the leadership of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah was able to maintain and overcome the problems that occurred in several conquered areas.⁵⁹

The second queen was Ratu Nakiatuddin. The queen made developments in building the kingdom by forming three Aceh regions called Aceh Lhee Sagoe (Aceh three sagi). The three sagi were sagi XXII mukim, sagi XXV mukim, and sagi XXVI mukim. Ratu Nakiatuddin ruled for 24 months.⁶⁰

The third queen was Queen Zakiatuddin. Important events emerging during the reign of Queen Zakiatuddin were the arrival of the delegations from Mecca who visited Aceh in 1683 AD, and the arrival of the British. The Meccan delegations saw the Acehnese kingdom as great development even though it was ruled by a woman. It is said that when ruled by Queen Zakiatuddin the Aceh kingdom was in a stable condition and did not experience any setbacks.⁶¹

The fourth queen who held the reins of power was a woman named Puteri Punt, who became Queen with the title Sultanah Kamalat Syah. During the reign of Queen Kamalat Syah, some parties began to feel displeasure with women's leadership, so conflicts arose not only during the reign but also during the appointment as a queen. This was because two large conflicting groups emerged; one accepted a woman as a leader and the other rejected a woman leader. This incident lasted until the fall of the Queen from the royal throne to men.⁶²

5. Queen Kalinyamat

Queen Kalinyamat was the third daughter of Prince Trenggana. Her nickname was Retna Kencana. The name Kalinyamat was given because after Retna Kencana married Raden Toyib, she got a place in the Jepara and Kudus regions called Kalinyamat. After Sultan Trenggana died, the territory of the Kingdom of Demak was divided among his son and daughter. Sunan Prawata got the Prawata area as his territory while Queen Kalinyamat got Jepara with the centre of government in Kalinyamat. Queen Kalinyamat implemented the *commenda* system in conducting trade and shipping cooperations in the 16th century. The *commenda* system, which was applied to trade and shipping in the 16th century including in the Jepara region, instructed that kings or rulers in the coastal area through their representatives in Malacca had to invest in ships, both in domestic and foreign ships that would sail to carry out trade with other regions.⁶³

Under the leadership of Ratu Kalinyamat, the development of the port of Jepara was more focused on the strength of the trade sector. Queen Kalinyamat also carried out developments in the military sector by establishing cooperation through several maritime kingdoms, such as Banten, Cirebon, Johor, Aceh, and Maluku. The invasion of the military power of the Kingdom of Demak to the Malacca region to expel the existence of the Portuguese (1574) was one proof of her military and political capabilities.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Fitriah M. Suud, "Perempuan Islam ...", p. 27.

⁶⁰ Fitriah M. Suud, "Perempuan Islam ...", p. 29.

⁶¹ Fitriah M. Suud, "Perempuan Islam ...", p. 30.

⁶² Fitriah M. Suud, "Perempuan Islam ...", p. 31.

⁶³ Anas Sofiana, "Ratu Kalinyamat Penguasa Wanita Jepara Tahun 1549-1579", in *Jurnal Avatara* V, No. 3, October 2017, p. 1070-1073.

⁶⁴ Suyekti KInanthi Rejeki, "Peranan Ratu Kalinyamat dalam Perkembangan Kota Jepara (1549-1579)", in *Jurnal Sosio e-kons* XI, No. 2, August 2019, p. 175.

Conclusions

Before Islam came, women suffered a lot and did not have the freedom to live properly. Then Islam came, expanded the role space, and fulfilled women's rights perfectly by respecting humanity, nobility, and degrees, and acknowledging women's involvement with men in all aspects of life.

There are factors that make women's history writing neglected and relatively slow. The first is the erroneous paradigm of women's history. Many opinions assume that everything related to women's problems is domestic problems. Meanwhile, scientific affairs are considered to be related to the public world which is identical to the world of men. The second is about methodology. There are many wrong perspectives about women's world that are very influential on other factors. Among them are issues of methodology and sources. That is because women are considered to be only dealing with private issues, while documents deal with public issues which are dominated by men's world.

The decline in the number of women recorded in biographies can also be explained by theories stating that the status of women in Islamic society is getting worse due to ecological reasons and economic changes and as a result of various foreign cultural influences.

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