Female Imams and Mosques: Revealing Amina Wadud's Thought in Understanding the Word "Ghulam"

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article will refute Amina Wadud’s thesis on the permissibility of women becoming prayer leaders on the hadith narrated by Ummu Waraqah. Then contextualise it at the level of houses of worship or mosques. Methods: This researcher adds a language approach in literature study. Findings: The result of this research lies in Amina Wadud’s mistake in interpreting the word ghulam (غِلَامٌ) in the Hadith of Ummu Waraqah which has been interpreted as a boy by Amina Wadud and other feminist figures. We found in several dictionaries and mu'jam literature that the meaning of the word ghulam (غِلَامٌ) with various arguments leads to the meaning of a slave, slave or boy who has not reached puberty. Implications: The finding presents a counter-argument to the arguments of feminists who only look at the hadith of Ummu Waraqah in terms of the validity of its sanad, as well as corroborating the views of previous scholars and researchers who prohibit women from becoming Imams of adult male prayers. Originality: This research provides a counter-argument to the viral phenomenon in June 2023 in Indonesia about the permissibility of women leading mixed male and female congregational prayers in mosques.

Keywords: Female imams; Mosque; Amina Wadud; Hermeneutics.

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A. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, recently a controversial phenomenon has re-emerged related to the opinion of Panji Gumilang, who is the leader of the al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, which states that women can be khotib and imam prayers for a mixture of men and women. But actually this phenomenon has appeared before in the range of late 2005 a muslim feminist figure named Amina Wadud had argued the same thing even Aminan Wadud herself had led friday prayers and acted as Khotib also at that time which occurred on 18 March 2005 in a Cathedral in the American Territory.

In fact, the intellectual anxiety experienced by Amina Wadud led her to produce many works as a result of her thoughts that voice the injustice in people’s lives. With her enthusiasm, Wadud tried to reconstruct the methodology of interpreting the Qur’an and hoped to give birth to a new interpretation that was gender sensitive and just. Dismantling patriarchal thinking, that men dominate so that feminist thought does not develop. The narrow area of women interpreters is caused by gender bias and the dominance of male interpreters so that the thoughts carried are also male thoughts. This is the background for Amina Wadud to dedicate herself to dismantling gender-biased interpretations. Some of the things highlighted by Amina Wadud in her interpretation that she considers gender-biased include inheritance which she considers gender-biased about the division that prioritises men over women, then about human history related to the creation as if women are just complements, then about Nusyuz and the last one about women’s leadership which in this case reaches the discussion of Imam prayer. In her discussion, she tries to demand equality between men in these matters (Wadud, 2008).

In addition to Amina Wadud, there are several feminist figures who try to see the other side of male superiority over women: M. Sarour, Kholid M. Abu el Fadl, Fatima Mernissi, Fazlur Rahman, Nurcholish Madjid, Hassan Hanafi, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Sayyid Qutb, Mohammad Arkoun and Asghar Ali Engineer. These figures are keen to voice their views on gender equality by re-reading religious texts that they consider gender biased, which tend to harm women in all aspects of life (Völker, 2021). The perspective of these figures was actually born from the western style of thought that gave rise to a new style of interpretation that they considered more holistic and fairer called Hermeneutic interpretation.

In Islam itself, women from the beginning of their creation are equal to men, because Allah has decreed that there is no difference between men and women; and each differs only in the level of devotion. Women also have the same rights and duties as men. They have the right of reward for good deeds, and punishment for bad deeds, and have the same obligations of worship (Wadud, 1999). Even Carolyn Rouse in her research on African-American Sunni Muslim women stated that almost all the Muslim women she researched recognised that Islam was the first and only monotheistic religion to carry feminist elements or respect and honour women. Even for the sake of glorifying women, it is not uncommon for religious texts to be made specifically for women and document the existence of women in Islam. For example, one of the names of a letter in the Quran is Surah An-Nisa, which means woman (Karim, 2006).

According to Sheikh Mutawali Sha’rawi, if the Quran has clearly mentioned something in the Quran that shows a real existence and will never be duplicated, such as when the Quran mentions the name of
Maryam giving birth without a husband, then it will never be repeated and will only be the only one in world history. It is also intended that the face of justice for women will appear when Islam is born on earth (Roald, 2016).

“O mankind, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Indeed, Allah knows best.” (Qs, al-Hujarat: 13)

The verse also shows how God has never seen any difference in his servants in terms of creation unless the difference is only from the point of view of piety. Biological differences (differences in body shape) actually also have different functions but do not at all indicate that he who has a large and strong body has more majesty than those who are small and weak, but it is more about the functions and portions of each. Leaders are not more noble than subordinates just as men are not more noble than women, it's just that both have different duties and responsibilities and also cannot demand equality (Rumi, 2014).

This seems to be in line with the views of Shihab (2015). in his book Bride of the Quran which explains that differences in terms of creation do exist but that does not mean showing differences in status of glory but rather differences in functions where each other needs each other, like night and day, dark and light, heat and cold pacul and soil, needle and cloth and others. Or in other languages we can liken it to the philosophy of Yin and Yang which shows the meaning of the balance of the word (Murata, 1999). Yang as if to say that, it is useless for the day to show off its bright existence, it will never be considered valuable if there is no darkness at night, it is useless for the sky to acknowledge its greatness and height if there is no Earth from which people are able to witness the height of the sky, it is useless for you to claim you are hot which actually will not be needed if it is not cold. That is how the differences in creation between women and men are illustrated. And this is very clearly supported by the verse of the Qur'an itself, where when Allah mentions that men are Qowwamun but still coupled with ala an-nisa which seems to indicate that the power of men is very dependent on the woman herself.

From the views of these scholars, it is actually clear that emancipation, respect for women, and the glorification of women have been discussed since the beginning of Islam on this earth. Unfortunately, the biological superiority of men in practice is often regarded as an authoritative nature that symbolises authoritarian power and can be used to use women and make them as tools and reproductive machines (Wadud, 1999). Even worse, they are only used as a means of satisfying men’s biological needs, actually gender differences are not a problem for anyone for both women and men as long as these differences do not cause negative aspects, such as injustice, but not infrequently even practices in society are considered to always cause social inequality and lead to intolerant and unfair actions such as stereotypes, marginalisation, subordination, discrimination, acts of violence and workloads for women (Sumbulah, 2006). As a result of this male domination, the women’s emancipation movement emerged, which started from the inequality and disadvantage of women in all fields, and they demanded freedom from male support (Wadud, 1999).

There are several relevant studies related to this research. Among them are as follows: The first
research was conducted by Muzani (2014). In his article entitled "Women Becoming Prayer Imams, Discourse in the Perspective of Gender Equality. The result of this study is to allow women to become prayer leaders, even for a mixture of men and women. The difference with this study is that the researcher looks at the hadith from the perspective of the context of the hadith, the meaning of the words in the hadith so as to produce a more comprehensive conclusion. Whereas in his research Muzani (2014) only looked at and analysed the Hadith of Ummu Waraqah in terms of the validity of the Hadith and compared it with the Hadith about the male imam and saw the Hadith only from the text.

Second, As'ad (2014) results of this study indicate that women becoming Imams of prayer is karahah tahrim (makruh which is close to haram). In his study, Misbahuddin used the method of comparative analysis of the opinions of the scholars who came to the conclusion that most of the scholars stated that it was forbidden and some of them allowed it. This research is almost similar to the research that the researcher discussed, it's just that the researcher focuses more on studying the meaning of words and the context of the hadith which according to the researcher still needs to be studied more deeply.

Third, research conducted by Bullock (2022). In a study entitled "Women as Imams: Classical Islamic Sources and Modern Debates on Leading Prayer". This research is also similar to the research of Ahmad Muzani which allows women to become prayer leaders and the basis of analysis used is the validity of the hadith. The results of his research show that the hadith that mentions women as prayer leaders in this case is ummu waraqah is the most valid hadith compared to the hadith about men being prayer leaders. This research is different from the approach that researchers take, where researchers look at the Hadith of Ummu Waraqah from the point of view of linguistics, linguistic context and examine in depth the meaning of each word in the Hadith, thus producing a comprehensive research. The purpose of this research is firstly to describe Amina Wadud's method of interpretation. Second, to analyse Amina Wadud's understanding of gender hermeneutics. Third, to describe the application of Amina Wadud's interpretation. Fourth, to analyse the polemics over the meaning of the word ghulam in Ummu Waraqah's hadith.

B. METHODS

Researchers do not use varied methods and approaches, only that researchers add a language approach as a tool to help researchers in analysing the problems of this research both secondary and primary data sources in order to get maximum and complete research results. Primary sources in this research are books, journals and works from Amina Wadud including; Women In Quran, Inside The Gender Jihad, Women's Reform in Islam, etc. While the secondary sources of this research are all writings and works related to gender, and women's emancipation, etc. The analysis method in this study uses an interactive analysis method by analysing data systematically and consistently from the start of data collection to completion. This was done by the process of data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2012).
C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are several research results in this study which include the following: First, Amina Wadud's method of interpretation. Secondly Amina Wadud's Gender Hermeneutics. Third, the application of Amina Wadud’s interpretation. Fourth, the polemics over the meaning of the word *ghulam* in Ummu Waraqah's hadith.

1. Amina Wadud's Method of Interpretation

Amina Wadud sees that so far there has been no truly objective method of interpretation. This is due to the perspective of the mufassirs towards a Qur'anic text. Cultural background also influences the understanding and interpretation of the mufassirs, Amina Wadud calls it Prior texts / pre-texts. With epistemological and hermeneutic approaches, Amina Wadud's method of thought is known as the "Double Movement" theory and the thematic approach of Fazlur Rahman, a pioneer of contextual interpretation. This is the basis of Amina Wadud's interpretative method. The context of beliefs, general morals of the Arabs in the 7th century needs to be revisited so that it can be appreciated in new ways in accordance with the life of modern society (Rahman, 1982). According to Fazlur Rahman's view, the history that surrounds the verses of the Qur'an in general and specific circumstances, in a certain period of time. Therefore, the mandate of the Qur'an cannot be reduced by the conditions at the time of revelation alone. It is a challenge for Muslims after the Prophet to be able to interpret the relevance of the Qur'anic explanations at the time of revelation and to determine the meaning of the principles contained therein.

The method and understanding of the Qur'an, said Fazlur Rahman, needs to be studied more deeply in every Islamic scientific ethic. Because the substance of classical Islamic science has bequeathed interpretations that fail to describe messages comprehensively and coherently. The tendency towards the use of verses in an authoristic manner is caused by the rules of interpretation per verse. In general, weltanschauung/worldview becomes the basis of mufassirin and Muslims in interpreting the cohesiveness of the Qur'anic will (Rahman, 1982). Amina Wadud sees the interpretation of gender verses that should reflect justice in Islam, instead becoming gender biased that does not defend women. Therefore, patriarchal culture is felt to be in accordance with pure texts but in fact different from the real context of life. Including the sanctity of other texts is also questioned by other feminists such as Fatimah Mernissi, that the position of women in Islam is still ridden by patriarchal bias (Agustina, 2002).

In reality, existing truth claims cannot actually see the context of life and now there has been a cultural shift. For example, in the past in terms of education, women did not get much education equal to men, but nowadays many women get an extraordinary education and are even involved in organisations and politics. Therefore, Amina Wadud considers the intersubjective world to be an important asset that must be considered in the never-ending problem of gender bias.

2. Amina Wadud's Gender Hermeneutics

Through her observations, Amina Wadud argues that there are three groups of interpretations, including: 1) traditional 2) reactive and 3) holistic. The first category is traditional interpretation. This model of interpretation, the ability of the interpreter is tested according to his interests and abilities in
certain subjects, such as law (fiqh), nahwu, shorof, history, and sufism. The discussion model in this interpretation is partial, namely from verse to verse and not thematic. It can be said that it negates the application of hermeneutics in interpretation which is partial, not connected between ideas, syntactic structures or similar topics, thus making readers fail to understand and cannot capture the weltanschauung of the Qur’an.

The exclusivity of traditional tafsir is very obvious, because it is only written by men. So it is not surprising that men’s consciousness and experience dominate. Whereas supposedly, the experiences, visions, and perspectives of men can be accommodated with the perspectives of women so as to avoid patriarchy that can foster gender injustice in domestic life and society. But on the other hand, Azyumardi Azra revealed that the non-involvement of women in matters of early Islamic science including tafsir is not due to gender bias but rather the ability and capacity of women who do not fit the existing provisions to become a tafsir expert (Ismah, 2016). The second category, reactive interpretation, is an interpretation that grows from the reaction of modern women thinkers to the obstacles they experience. The issues discussed in this reactive interpretation are a reaction to the ideas promoted by feminists and rationalists, but are analysed as a whole from interrelated verses. Although the spirit promoted is liberation, there is no apparent connection to the ideological and theological sources of Islam.

The third category is holistic interpretation, which is an interpretation that uses a comprehensive method and collaborates between social, moral economic, political issues, as well as women’s issues that grow in modern times. These things become Amina Wadud’s field in interpreting the verses of the Qur’an. In the holistic category, Amina Wadud’s interpretation of the Qur’an uses several approaches; 1) interpretation must be based on the principles of philological analysis, namely analysing language, linguistic studies, the meaning of words and expressions in the text of the Qur’an; 2) thematic analysis/maudhu’i interpretation, which is collecting separate verses of the Qur’an from letters with similar themes both in lafadz and law, and interpreting them so that they lead to the same understanding; 3) interpretation with social analysis/context of verses; 4) interpretation with analysis of women’s perspectives (Wadud, 1999).

3. Application of Amina Wadud’s Interpretation

There is an interpretation of Amina Wadud that is considered too excessive, namely the interpretation in legalising women as imams of prayer for mixed and male audiences. The Hadith that forbids women to become Imams for men is the Hadith narrated by Ibn Majah in Sunan Ibn Majah (1995) from the Prophet Muhammad. "Never let a woman lead the prayer for a man, a Bedouin Arab, for the Muhajirin, and an evil person for a believer". (HR. Ibn Majah).

However, the above tradition is very weak in terms of its narrators even though it is well known and there is one narrator who is considered to be ignorant, namely Musa b. 'Atiyah al-bahili 'Abdullah b. Muhammad al-Adawi (Muhammad, 2001). From the argumentation of the text, it can be concluded that the only text that prohibits women from becoming Imams for men is a weak text / evidence, so the argument is legal status to be used and also may not be used referring to the understanding of Hadith
This is in accordance with what Husein Muhammad, the author of the book Fiqh Perempuan as well as the caretaker of Darut Tauhid Islamic Boarding School in Cirebon, argues that if two texts are found that reject and justify the female imam, using the theory of assessing the quality of the hadith, the hadith that justifies the female imam is more valid than the one that prohibits it (Abubakar, 2020). Amina Wadud's interpretation, of course, is very curious about the scholars in viewing the issue of women becoming prayer leaders for men. Among these scholars are divided into 3 views. First, scholars who prohibit absolutely. The second prohibits not absolutely. The third allows absolutely.

The absolute prohibition is explained by the agreement of the four imams on the ruling on women leading men. All the Imams of the four schools of thought do not allow it, even to the extent of absolutely forbidding it, based on their reading of the religious texts (Zuhaili, 2004). Almost all of the majority of scholars are of the opinion that it is forbidden for a woman to be a male imam. This prohibition is not without basis but the result of an examination of the arguments in this case the Prophet's hadith about the prohibition of women becoming Imams for men. Furthermore, the scholars who prohibit it are not absolute, as quoted in the book by Ibn Qudamah, which states that some of the prophet's companions allowed women to become imams for men in tarawih prayers in their homes, but on condition that the woman must be good at reading the Qur'an and the man is an Ummi-cannot read the Qur'an (Al-Maqdisi, 1984). This is based on the Prophet's statement that the Imam of a people is the one who is best able to read and understand the Qur'an.

The general Dhomir indicates that there is no concrete restriction on who can and cannot be the Imam of prayers, and analysing the incident of Ummu Waraqah who allowed him to lead prayers in her house makes a strong basis also that women can be Imams for men in this view. Next, the scholars who allow it absolutely are al-Muzani, Abū Saur, at-Ṭabarī, all three of whom are of the view that it is valid for a woman to be the Imam of the prayer for men absolutely without any restrictions. This is taken from the generality of the Prophet's words about the most suitable person to be the Imam in the congregational prayer.

4. Polemics over the meaning of the word Ghulam in Ummu Waraqah's hadith.

Narrated by al-Hasan bin Hamad al-Hadrami, from Muhammad bin Fudhail, from al-Walid bin Jumayyi' from Abdurrahman bin Khallad narrated from Umi Waraqah bint Abdullah bin al-Harist this hadith and the first hadith is more perfect, saying: "That the Messenger of Allah. Once visited the house of Umm Waraqah and gave her a muezzin to call her to prayer and made her (Umm Waraqah) imam for the residents of her house". Abdurrahman said: I actually saw that the mu`azhin was an old man. (Reported by Abu Dawud and authenticated by Ibn Huzaimah). From the point of view of the quality of the above Hadith, almost all Hadith scholars agree that the Hadith is saheeh so that it is able to legitimise the law that women can lead the prayers of men.

As-Shan'any commented that the Hadith is lafadih but needs to be studied in meaning, that on the occasion of the Prophet allowing Ummu Waraqah to become an imam at that time there was a Jariyah.
(slave girl) and *ghulam* (which means son) and an old man (*muadzin* / caller to prayer) while all men who deserve to be prayer leaders are going to jihad (As-Shan‘ani, 1960). In religious studies it is actually very clear that there is no difference of opinion for women who lead slave women or lead women, but the problem contained in the Hadith is that there are two men who are considered to be makmum, The first is the son of *ghulam* (*غُلَام*), there are differences in understanding of the word *ghulam* (*غُلَام*) which in meaning is often interpreted as a boy, the second is Muadzin, an old man who was asked by Ummu Waraqah to the Prophet to announce the call to prayer in his house this is also what makes the legitimacy of Islamic Feminists consider that women can lead men.

For the first problem related to the meaning of *ghulam* (*غُلَام*), researchers explored the meaning in several dictionaries, for example, first munawwir, in the munawwir dictionary researchers found the meaning of the word *ghulam* is 1. boy 2. male slave 3. *Kacung*. 4. errand boy (Al Munawwir, 1997). Second from the book Misbahul munir researchers found the meaning of *ghulam* (*غُلَام*) with the meaning of a small child or male slave (Al-Fayumi, 1987). Thirdly, from the AL-Munjid dictionary, we found the meaning of *ghulam* (*غُلَام*) in you is *اﻟﻌُدَو أو ﺍﻟْمَوَد* which if translated into Indonesian means Slave or mate. From the meanings of the sentences contained in these dictionaries, researchers consider the appropriate meaning for the meaning of *ghulam* (*غُلَام*) is male slave or male servant.

Based on the discovery of the meaning of the word, researchers synchronised it with the life history of ummu waraqah. After researchers searched from several historical sources the fact that researchers found was that Ummu Waraqah was an independent woman who did not have a husband because from several historical sources written about the life history of ummu waraqah there were no quotes that told about the husband, children and family of ummu waraqah. so from there researchers concluded that Ummu Waraqah might not have children. This is also in accordance with the facts of ummu waraqah’s life which state that ummu waraqah died because she was killed by her slave boy and slave girl, as if this fact shows that ummu waraqah basically lived with the two slaves and there was no one else in the house considering that ummu waraqah died while she was sleeping (Al-Istanbuli & Ash-Shilbi, 2005).

Next is the Muadzinz, an old man whom Ummu Waraqah asked the Prophet to call the azan in her house. However, none of the narrations clearly mention that the Muadzinz became the Makmum of Ummu Waraqah, so making this a proposition is also considered flawed by some scholars, namely Ali Mustafa Yakub, supported by other opinions that say even though at that time women could become Imams of Prayer, of course Ummul Mukminin (the Prophet’s wife) was the most entitled person to be the prayer leader at that time.

Ali Mustafa Yakub, who was once a professor of hadith science at IIQ Jakarta, argues that the Hadith about Ummu Waraqah being the Imam of the prayer still has a debate about who is behind Ummi Waraqah, whether slaves, whether men or only women who pray, so according to the Ushul Rules if an argument is still a lot of doubts and possibilities then the argument cannot be used as a source of law. Even if the evidence is Sahih, it is considered *Ghurur*. So that from all the opinions above, it strengthens the researcher’s view of Amina Wadud’s misunderstanding in interpreting a hadith.
The results of this research can certainly be a recommendation to the general Muslim community regarding the issue of a woman becoming an Imam for a male or a mixture of men and women, which most scholars, both salaf and contemporary scholars, strongly disagree with Amina Wadud’s interpretation that allows a woman to become an Imam for men or a mixture of men and women. In addition, the research results from language studies by researchers are also very helpful in addressing the intended meaning in the redaction of the hadith from Ummu Waraqah.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Uncovering Amina Wadud’s thinking in understanding the word *ghulam* from the Hadith of Ummu Waraqah turns out to be a holistic and comprehensive contribution in providing interpretative studies on gender issues. This also provides a new reconstruction or building in understanding the study of hadith texts that so far still seem to only follow subjective interpretations without examining more deeply the meaning of each word that can be explored with various existing interpretations. The researcher also recognises the limitations in this study which only includes 4 findings. Therefore, the researcher provides space for other researchers to be able to add to the perfection of research in the field of understanding the hadith text comprehensively.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

A provided the initial concept, collected the data and wrote the introduction and selected portions of the results. The AJS team subsequently enhanced the results through rigorous scrutiny and comprehensive review of numerous articles. MAH undertook the correction of spelling errors, adaptation of the manuscript according to the template and post-submission revisions. AFSH acted as the last author, translating the text into a different language, and integrating a comprehensive discussion of the findings.

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