A Study on the Quality of *Mashhur Ghairu Istilahi* Hadith: Reconsidering the Stereotype of Misogynistic Hadiths

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Abstract

Hadith serves as the second authoritative source of Islamic teachings after the Qur'an, functioning either to elucidate the Qur'an or to supplement aspects not explicitly addressed within it, thereby guiding the religious practices of Muslims. The Mashhur Hadith is classified as a hadith transmitted by three or more narrators in each level of its chain but does not reach the level of Mutawatir. Despite not achieving the status of Mutawatir, Mashhur Hadiths are considered valid for legal determinations. In contemporary discourse, the term "Mashhur Hadith" extends beyond its technical classification by Hadith scholars to include hadiths that have gained popularity among the general populace ('inda lisān al-nās), referred to as Mashhur Ghairu Istilahi. This article aims to examine hadiths that are prevalent among feminists, particularly those perceived as misogynistic. Muslim feminists, in their scholarly pursuits, often utilize hadiths as foundational texts. They compile hadiths they believe contradict the principles of gender equality—labeling them as misogynistic—and conduct takhrij studies to critically analyze these hadiths, seeking arguments to support the notion of feminism within Islam.

Hadits merupakan sumber otoritatif kedua ajaran Islam setelah al-Qur'an. Ia dapat berkedudukan sebagai penjelas al-Qur'an atau menambahkan apa yang belum disebutkan oleh al-Qur'an berkaitan dengan aplikasi keberagaman umat Islam. Hadits Masyhur adalah hadits yang memiliki posisi kualitas kelas dua dibandingkan dengan Hadits Mutawatir, meski demikian hadits ini dapat dipakai pula dalam aplikasi penentuan hukum. Dalam wacana kontemporer istilah Hadits Masyhur ternyata tidak hanya diberikan kepada

hadits-hadits yang menurut Ahli Hadits memiliki perawi hanya tiga, tetapi juga dipakai untuk menggolongkan hadits-hadits populer di antara manusia *('inda lisān al-nās)*, yang kemudian disebut Masyhur Ghairu Istilahi. Berdasarkan teori tentang hadits Masyhur Ghairu Istilahi tersebut, tulisan ini mencoba untuk menguraikan hadits-hadits yang populer dikalangan para feminis. Para feminis dari kalangan umat Islam dalam melakukan kajian feminismenya menggunakan hadis sebagai landasan pemikiran mereka. Mereka mengumpulkan hadits-hadits yang menurut mereka bertentangan dengan semangat kesetaraan gender yang mereka sebut sebagai hadits misoginis, kemudian dilakukan kajian *takhrij* terhadap hadits-hadits tersebut sehingga dapat ditemukan argumentasi dalam menguatkan pendapat mereka tentang feminisme dalam Islam.

INTRODUCTION

After the Qur'an, hadith occupies a crucial position as a source for the religious practices of Muslims. This significance stems from hadith being a direct account of the ideal implementation of Islamic teachings by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), also referred to as the *Sunnah*.

Unlike the Qur'an, not all hadith transmissions are *mutawatir*—narrated by more than three individuals at each level of the *sanad* (chain of transmission). The majority of hadiths, in terms of their transmission, fall into the category of *Ahad* hadiths, including *Mashhur*, *Aziz*, and *Gharib*. In their role as sources for legal derivation (*istimbat*), the treatment of *Ahad* hadiths differs when compared to *Mutawatir* hadiths and the Qur'an, which hold the status of *Qath'i al-Wurūd* (absolute in their authenticity). *Ahad* hadiths occupy a secondary position as *nash dzaanni al-Wurūd*, indicating that their authenticity is considered relative (Nurkholidah 2014, p. 78).

The slogan "return to the Qur'an and *Sunnah*," popularized by certain Islamic groups, calls for aligning Islamic religious practices with hadiths deemed credible based on studies in the science of hadith. However, efforts to return to the Qur'an and *Sunnah* by "forcing" contemporary phenomena to conform strictly to classical scholars' interpretations, without considering other surrounding implications, have sparked debates within the Muslim community. Consequently, some contemporary scholars strive for critical reinterpretations of hadith to align with the spirit of the current era.

Critical analysis of hadith is necessary not only to obtain legitimate religious justification for a Muslim's actions but also due to the diverse backgrounds of Muslims themselves. The spread of Islam worldwide, integrating into various social cultures, requires a critical understanding to suit the conditions in which Muslims live, without abandoning the essence of Islamic teachings. To achieve this, the Prophet's *Sunnah* should not be understood solely textually but through contextualization, following its methodology and substance (Hairillah, 2015).

Therefore, the understanding of hadith ultimately influences the religious practices of diverse Muslim communities globally. It can be said that the development of hadith studies and understanding is an effort to engage with hadith as a source of religious teachings evolving within each Muslim community (Yuslem 2014, p. 194).

Hadiths circulating among various Muslim communities often do not strictly adhere to the standards of hadith sciences (*ulumul hadits*). Some sayings considered hadith and popular among Muslims are, in fact, not hadith but merely statements of scholars. For instance, the phrase حب الاوطان من الايمان (*love of the homeland is part of faith*) is a popular 'hadith' (*Mashhur*) used to foster nationalistic sentiments among Indonesian Muslims, especially during the revolutionary period against colonialism (Masyhud 2017, 158), even though this expression is not a hadith of the Prophet. However, according to the *Bahtsul Masail Himasal* Team (Tim Bahtsul Masail Himasal 2018, p. 15), this expression correlates with the understanding of a hadith narrated by al-Bukhari:

عَنْ أَنَس أَنَّ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّه عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا قَدِمَ مِنْ سَفَر فَنَظَرَ إِلَى جُدُرَات الْمَدِينَة أَوْضَع نَاقَته ، وَإِنْ كَانَ عَلَى دَابَّة حَرَّكَها مِنْ حُبّها

"Narrated by Anas, that the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), when returning from a journey and seeing the walls of Medina, would hasten his camel. If he was on an animal (camel/horse), he would move it quickly out of his love for Medina." (Narrated by Bukhari)

This hadith describes Anas's account that the Prophet, upon returning from travel and seeing the walls of Medina, would quicken his camel's pace, and if riding an animal (like a horse or camel), he would urge it forward as an expression of his affection for Medina. The Prophet's expression reflects a natural human love for one's homeland; thus, according to Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, this hadith serves as evidence of love for one's homeland and longing for it (Al-'Asqalani n.d., p. 6).

Beyond discussions of love for the homeland, the development of democracy and human rights in Muslim-majority countries has opened new discourses on the social life of Muslim societies. One such discourse pertains to the role and status of women in Muslim communities, often perceived as subordinate, implying that women's positions are beneath men's. This has given rise to the discourse known as feminism, which spans various fields of study, including hadith studies.

This paper seeks to discuss the status of misogynistic hadiths within Islamic scholarship and how Islamic feminists respond to interpretations that position the Prophet's hadiths as tools for subordinating women. Fatima Mernissi, a prominent Islamic feminist, refers to hadiths with the potential to subordinate women as misogynistic hadiths. Mernissi and Riffat Hassan categorize misogynistic hadiths in Sahih al-Bukhari into six groups: 1) women as the majority inhabitants of hell due to ungratefulness and deficiency in intellect, 2) women as causes of prayer invalidation, 3) women as sources of bad luck, 4) women created from a crooked rib, 5) women unfit to be leaders, and 6) women as servants to their husbands (Muqtada 2014, p. 90).

Mernissi fundamentally acknowledges and believes that all hadiths originate from the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him); thus, it is inconceivable that the Prophet would discriminate against his followers, especially women. Based on this perspective, if a hadith appears misogynistic (disparaging towards women), it necessitates re-examination (Sauda 2014, p. 296). Therefore, according to Mernissi, the emergence of religious behaviors that discriminate against women is partly due to failures in understanding the Prophet's hadiths. To avoid such misunderstandings, a reinterpretation of hadiths is required. In other words, if women's rights pose issues for modern men, the problem does not lie with the Qur'an, the Prophet's hadiths, or Islamic tradition, but rather with the male elite's opposition to those rights (Sauda 2014, p. 303).

In her hadith studies, Mernissi employs hermeneutics, historical analysis, and sociology. Her feminist studies aim to demonstrate that Islam is a religion friendly to women, contrary to Western perceptions of Islam as misogynistic and often violent towards women. In practice, Mernissi undertakes what is known as the method of *matn* criticism of misogynistic hadiths (Dadah, 2018).

This study aims to discuss the issue of the prevalence of popular hadiths within Muslim communities and how these widely circulated hadiths (known as *mashhur*) influence the social development of contemporary Islamic societies, particularly

among Islamic feminists. However, the discussion in this article is limited to hadiths that pertain to the concepts of female leadership and the creation of women. These two themes are addressed because they are often used as arguments to stigmatize women as having a lower status compared to men. Additionally, these hadiths are frequently employed as politico-religious justifications by political elites when opposing female political adversaries.

Theoretical Framework

Hadiths, based on the number of transmitters, are classified into *Mutawatir* and *Ahad* categories. A *Mutawatir* hadith, according to hadith scholars, is a report derived from sensory evidence, narrated by a number of transmitters such that it is inconceivable for them to have conspired to fabricate it. In other words, *Mutawatir* hadiths are transmitted through numerous independent chains of narrators, making agreement upon falsehood impossible (Rozani 2019, p. 74).

Regarding *Ahad* hadiths, opinions differ among the schools of jurisprudence. Imam Abu Hanifah asserted that if the narrator is trustworthy, such hadiths can only serve as evidence in practical matters, not in theological or scientific domains. Accordingly, the majority of scholars affirm that Abu Hanifah relies primarily on *Mutawatir* hadiths (Hamang 2011, p. 94). Imam Malik maintained that *Ahad* hadiths could establish legal rulings not found in the Qur'an, provided they take precedence over speculative analogy (*qiyas dhanni*) and do not contradict the practices of Medina's scholars (Hamang 2011, p. 95). Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal accepted *Mutawatir, Ahad, Mursal*, and even weak (*Dha'if*) hadiths as evidence, often prioritizing weak hadiths over *qiyas* (Hamang 2011, p. 97). Imam al-Shafi'i stipulated that an *Ahad* hadith is valid as evidence if its narrator fulfills four criteria: (a) intelligence, (b) retention or perfect memorization, (c) direct hearing from the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), and (d) consistency with the views of other hadith scholars (Hamid 2012, p. 115).

Within the classification of *Ahad* hadiths lies the concept of *Mashhur* hadiths, also known as *Mustafid*. Linguistically, *mashhur* means "widely circulated" or "popular," while *Mustafid* signifies "broadcast or spread widely." Technically, *Mashhur* or *Mustafid* hadiths are those narrated by three or more transmitters at each level (*tabaqah*), though they do not reach the level of *Mutawatir* (Rozani 2019, p. 76). The presence of three narrators in each level of transmission (*tabaqah*) is

observed (علي رون n.d., p. 164). Nevertheless, some scholars argue that the rank of *Mustafid* hadith is higher than that of *Mashhur*, although it does not reach the degree of *Mutawatir*. Books that compile *Mashhur* hadiths include: *Al-Maqasid al-Ḥasanah fī Ma Isythara 'alal Alsinah*, by al-Sakhawi; *Kasyful Khafa' wa Muzilul Ilbas fī Ma Isythara min al-Ḥadits 'ala Alsinati al-Nās*, by al-Ajluni; *Tamyizut Thayyibi minal Khabitsi fī Ma Yuduru 'ala Alsinati al-Nās min al-Ḥadīts,* by Ibn Daiba' al-Shaibani.

Similar to *Mutawatir* hadiths, *Mashhur* hadiths can also serve as evidence in determining matters of faith (*aqidah*), as stated by Imam Abu Hanifah. Imam Abu Hanifah utilized approximately forty *Mashhur* hadiths as evidence. These treatises were compiled by Imam Kamaluddin al-Bayadhi al-Hanafi in his book, *Isyarat al-Maram min 'Ibarat al-Imaām*. However, hadiths ranked below *Mashhur* cannot be used as evidence in establishing the attributes of Allah (Hawassy 2020, p. 14).

An example of a *Mashhur* hadith is: "A Muslim is someone whose tongue and hands do not harm other Muslims" (narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi). This hadith is widely known and often used to promote the formation of Islamic character. In the study of the number of narrators, this hadith, from the first level (*tabaqah*) of companions of the Prophet to the level of compilers like Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi, is transmitted by no fewer than three narrators at each level (Hadi 2014, p. 77).

Another example of a *mashhur* hadith is related to performing a ritual bath (*ghusl*) before the Friday prayer: "Performing *ghusl* on Friday is obligatory for anyone who has experienced a nocturnal emission (*ihtilam*)" (narrated by Bukhari, Muslim). In the first level of transmission, this hadith was narrated by three companions: Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abu Sa'id al-Khudri. Another *Mashhur* hadith states: "Indeed, Allah does not remove knowledge by extracting it from the hearts of His servants but by taking away the lives of scholars. When no scholar remains, people will appoint the ignorant as leaders, who will give fatwas without knowledge, leading themselves and others astray" (narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi) (Al-Qathathan 2013, p. 113).

Mashhur Ghairu Istilahi

Mashhur hadiths, as defined above, are those transmitted by three or more narrators at each level (*tabaqat*) of the chain of narration (*sanad*) but do not meet

the criteria for *Mutawatir*. This type of hadith is referred to as *Mashhur Istilahi*. However, there are also *Mashhur* hadiths that fall outside this technical definition, known as *Mashhur Ghairu Istilahi*. These are hadiths popularized in spoken discourse, particularly among scholars, without definitive requirements for the number of narrators, even if the narrators are fewer than three (Rozani, 2019, p. 78).

Mashhur Ghairu Istilahi hadiths can be further categorized into those with chains of narration (*sanad*) and those without any chain at all (Al-Qathathan, 2013, p. 114). Examples include: 1) *Mashhur* among hadith scholars specifically, such as the hadith of Anas: "Indeed, the Messenger of Allah performed *qunut* for one month after rising from bowing, praying for the destruction of Ra'l and Dhakwan" (narrated by Bukhari and Muslim); 2) *Mashhur* among hadith scholars, other scholars, and the general public, such as the hadith: "A Muslim is someone whose fellow Muslims are safe from his tongue and hands" (narrated by Bukhari and Muslim); 3) *Mashhur* among jurists (*fuqaha*), such as: (ابغض الحلال إلى الله الطلاق) "The most disliked permissible act to Allah is divorce" (narrated by Abu Dawud and authenticated by al-Hakim; 4) *Mashhur* among scholars of *usul al-fiqh*, such as: "My community has been pardoned for mistakes and forgetfulness…" (narrated by al-Hakim and Ibn Hibban); 5) *Mashhur* among grammarians (*nahwu*), such as: "The best servant of Allah is Suhaib; even if he did not fear Allah, he would not disobey Him" (نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ صَهِيْبُ لَوْلَمْ يَخَفُ اللهُ يَعْصَهُ); 6) *Mashhur* among the general public, such as: "Haste is part of the devil's work" (narrated by al-Tirmidhi) (الخمسي n.d., pp. 217–18).

The Quality of Mashhur Hadiths

In terms of quality, *Mashhur* hadiths vary significantly, ranging from *Sahih* (authentic) and *Hasan* (good) to *Dha'if* (weak) and even *Mawdu'* (fabricated). An example of an authentic *Mashhur* hadith is: "Whoever intends to perform the Friday prayer should take a bath" (narrated by al-Jama'ah). A *Mashhur* hadith classified as *Hasan* is the one emphasizing the obligation of seeking knowledge: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim." This hadith is closer to *hasan li ghayrih* due to its multiple weak (*Dha'if*) chains of narration. A *Mashhur* hadith considered *Dha'if* or even *Mawdu'* is the one popular among Sufi scholars: "Whoever knows himself truly knows his Lord" (مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ).

Analyses (*takhrij*) reveal that this hadith is weak or fabricated due to the

absence of any chain of narration in authentic hadith collections, it holds significant importance in Sufi cosmology and practices. In *Kimiya al-Saʿadah*, al-Ghazali states that this saying aligns with the Quranic verse, Q.S. Al-Fushilat (41:53):

$$سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ$$

"*We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.*"

Although al-Ghazali does not mention its narrators, and Abu Muzhaffar bin al-Samʿani confirmed its disconnection from the Prophet (Al-Ghazali n.d., p. 124), Sufi scholars continue to accept it. This acceptance aligns with the Sufi tradition of receiving hadiths through unveiling (*mukashafah*), such as dreams of meeting the Prophet.

ʿAziz and Gharib Hadiths

In addition to *Mashhur* and *Mustafid*, another classification of *Ahad* hadiths includes *ʿAziz* hadiths. These are hadiths narrated by two or three narrators at any level (*tabaqat*) of the chain, even if only at one level. This definition, proposed by Ibn Salah, is also followed by Imam Nawawi (Rozani 2019, p. 76). An example of a ʿAziz hadith is: "We are the last to come in this world but the first to be judged on the Day of Resurrection" (narrated by Hudhayfah and Abu Hurairah). Although the hadith was later transmitted by several narrators, it remains *ʿAziz* because only Hudhayfah and Abu Hurairah narrated it at the first level.

The lowest category within *Ahad* Hadith is the *Gharib* (isolated) Hadith. A *Gharib* Hadith is one that is narrated by only one individual at a specific level of its chain of transmission (*thabaqah*). It is termed as such because it appears solitary, seemingly isolated from other narrations, or far from being classified as widely known (*Mashhur*) or *Mutawatir* (widely transmitted) (Rozani 2019, p. 76). For instance, a hadith narrated solely by one companion of the Prophet, even if subsequently transmitted by numerous narrators, would still fall under the category of *Gharib* Hadith. An example is the hadith on intentions, which originates from a single companion, Umar ibn Khattab, through the *sanad*: (...انما الأعمال باالنيات).

Research indicates that although this hadith has been transmitted by several prominent hadith scholars, such as Bukhari, Muslim, and others, its initial chain of transmission includes only one companion of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him),

namely Umar ibn Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him). Similarly, the second level of the chain features a single *tabi'i*, Al-Qomah bin Waqash. Therefore, this hadith is classified as *Gharib* (Hadi 2014, p. 79). Although the hadith is neither *Mutawatir* nor widely known, it has gained significant popularity within the Islamic community over generations.

This popularity stems from the community's consistent need for legitimate guidance in both religious practices (*ibadah*) and social interactions (*muamalah*). Certain hadiths, such as the hadith on intentions, are regarded as highly significant in providing justification for legal rulings in *fiqh*, ethical behavior, and social practices. Its widespread acceptance is evident, as many Muslims refer to it without being aware of its narrators.

Previous Research

The concept of *Mashhur* Hadith has been previously addressed by Maftah Rozani in his article "Hadith Evaluated Based on *Sanad* Quality in the Process of Legal Derivation (*Istinbath al-Hukm*)." Rozani elaborated on the validity (*hujjiyah*) of *Mutawatir, Mashhur,* and *Ahad* Hadiths, categorizing *Mashhur* Hadiths into two types: *Mashhur Istilahi* and *Mashhur Ghayru Istilahi*. The latter refers to hadiths popularized through frequent oral citation by scholars, without meeting the definitive criteria of *Mashhur Istilahi*. These include hadiths recognized only within specific disciplines such as hadith studies, *fiqh, usul al-fiqh*, Arabic grammar, or general public discourse (Rozani 2019). However, no research has specifically explored *Mashhur Ghayru Istilahi* Hadiths within feminist circles.

Mashhur Hadiths in Islamic Feminist Discourse

Advancements in knowledge have also influenced the epistemological perspectives of Muslims regarding the sources of Islamic law, particularly hadith. Discourses on human rights and gender equality have revived debates surrounding hadiths deemed misogynistic by scholars like Fatimah Mernissi. One contemporary issue widely discussed by feminists concerns women's leadership in public and domestic spheres.

Fatimah Mernissi's critical approach to Islamic traditions, particularly hadith, was driven by her effort to counter negative perceptions of women in public spaces—a narrative often propagated by Muslim intellectuals themselves. Mernissi criticized

the historian Sa'id al-Afghani's book about Aisha and Politics, which blamed Aisha bint Abu Bakr for engaging in political affairs and confronting Ali ibn Abi Talib, leading to significant Muslim casualties. Mernissi viewed Al-Afghani's work not as a historical account but as a reflection of male elite biases seeking to obscure the true meaning of history (Mernissi 1991, pp. 5–10).

Islamic feminist activists demand a reinterpretation of misogynistic hadiths, which they argue have been understood through a narrow, textual lens. They contend that such hadiths, when interpreted literally, are outdated and irrelevant in the contemporary context of democracy and human rights (Yuslem 2014, pp. 196–97). Therefore, a new understanding is needed that aligns with the spirit of the contemporary era, emphasizing democracy and human rights.

Hadiths criticized by Fatimah Mernissi are as follows:

1. The Hadith on Women's Leadership

عن ابي بكرة قال لقد نفعني الله بكلمة سمعتها من رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلّم أيام الجمل بعد ما كدت أن الحق بأصحاب الجمل فأقاتل معهم قال لمّا بلغ رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلّم أنّ أهل فارس قدْ ملّكوا عليْهم بنت كسري قال لن يفلح قَوم ولوا امرهم امرأة (رواه البخاري)

From Abu Bakrah, he said: Allah guided me through words I heard from the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) during the days of the Battle of the Camel. I was close to joining those who fought in the battle, but the Prophet's words deterred me. When it was reported to the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) that the people of Persia had appointed the daughter of Kisra as their ruler, he said: 'A nation that entrusts its affairs to a woman will never prosper.' (Narrated by Bukhari).

For feminists, the hadith is viewed in terms of its content and wording as *khabariyyah* (narrative), meaning it is merely a report conveyed by the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) which, from the perspective of *usul fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), does not carry legal implications. Therefore, the hadith is not binding (*ghair mulzim*). If it is interpreted as a binding legal rule prohibiting women from occupying strategic positions in public life, this would contradict the principles of Islam itself, which uphold equal rights and potential for all individuals (Yuslem 2014, p. 201).

In addition to being critical of the textual interpretation of hadith, Fatimah Mernissi also critiques the narrators of such misogynistic hadiths. She argues that the chain of narration (*sanad*), particularly involving figures like Abu Bakrah, needs to be examined in light of their backgrounds, as they are suspected of frequently exhibiting discriminatory attitudes toward women. Furthermore, Abu Bakrah, along with other narrators such as Abu Hurayrah, who were companions of the Prophet, are also suspected of engaging in discriminatory behavior against women (Zakariya n.d., p. 126).

Mernissi's critique of Abu Bakrah includes the following points: (a) Abu Bakrah's credibility as a former slave is difficult to trace due to the lack of a clear lineage. In the Arab tribal and aristocratic tradition, individuals without clear lineage were not socially recognized; (b) Abu Bakrah was subjected to *qadzaf* punishment because he failed to provide sufficient evidence for his accusation of adultery against al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʻbah and the other witnesses during the caliphate of ʻUmar ibn al-Khaththāb. For Mernissi, this fact serves as a strong basis to reject Abu Bakrah's narration, as it demonstrates his involvement in false accusations, resulting in punishment; (c) In the historical context, Abu Bakrah recalled the hadith during the aftermath of Aisha's defeat in the Battle of the Camel, where she fought against Alī ibn Abī Thālib. Initially, Abu Bakrah maintained a neutral stance in the conflict. Why, then, did he later invoke the hadith in a manner that seemingly undermined Aisha? Based on this observation, Mernissi argues that, although the hadith is included in Sahih al-Bukhari, a collection widely regarded as possessing the highest degree of validity among hadith compilations, its content (*matn*) remains open to interpretation and debate. Therefore, using this hadith as a basis for excluding women from participating in public decision-making processes is unacceptable (Zakariya n.d., p. 131).

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Mernissi further observes that, during the final years of Khalîfah Alī ibn Abī Thālib's leadership, various factions sought to legitimize their positions as the most righteous. One of the most effective and powerful strategies in this context was to

invoke the name of Rasulullah (Peace Be Upon Him) in support of their claims (Sauda 2014, p. 296).

In response to Fatimah Mernissi's analysis of the hadiths narrated by Abi Bakrah, Ja'far Assegaf offers a different perspective. According to Assegaf, although the hadiths is *khabariyyah* (informative), scholars of *ushul* argue that it possesses characteristics that could serve as evidence for the incompetence or unsuitability of an individual to assume leadership. Princess Kisra or *Putri Kisra* referenced in the hadiths, was not prepared to become a public leader of a government such as the Persian Empire. Forcing her into the position of Kisra would inevitably have detrimental consequences for the empire. However, Assegaf notes with regret that the *fiqh* derived from this hadiths generalized its interpretation, deeming all women unfit for leadership. This generalization ultimately led to the perception that women's inability to assume leadership roles is due to their gender rather than their competence or knowledge (Mubarok, 2021).

At this point, Ja'far Assegaf also argues that Fatimah Mernissi fails to provide inductive data about Abi Bakrah, particularly regarding the incident where his testimony was rejected in the case of a fornication accusation involving Al-Mughirah ibn Syu'bah. In this event, three witnesses were presented in the trial of Al-Mughrah ibn Sy'ubah. Abi Bakrah and another witness testified that Al-Mughirah had committed fornication, but the third witness, Ziyad bin Abihi, stated that the woman with Al-Mughirah was his own wife, and thus, no fornication had occurred. Interestingly, the judge in the trial chose to believe Ziyad's testimony over that of the other two witnesses, including Abi Bakrah. Ja'far Assegaf attempts to examine the power relations and political interests that may have influenced this decision. This is significant because if Abi Bakrah had been a liar, Hasan al-Bashri (21-110 AH/642-728 CE) would not have stated that one of the noble companions who entered the city of Basrah was Abi Bakrah. Additionally, Abi Bakrah is a narrator of hadiths on the dangers of false oaths, so logically, he could not have testified falsely. In his analysis, Ja'far Assegaf explores the relationship between Abi Bakrah and Ziyad bin Abihi. As previously mentioned, Abu Bakrah had been a slave before converting to Islam. At one point in Ta'if, where Abi Bakrah and his mother were slaves, Abu Sufyan—before his conversion to Islam—approached the master of Abi Bakrah and requested that he give Abi Bakrah's mother to him. Abu Sufyan's power as a leader of the Quraysh from the Umayyad clan extended beyond Makkah, even reaching Ta'if, which allowed him to gain easy access to whatever he desired. This led to an

affair between Abu Sufyan and Abī Bakrah's mother, resulting in the birth of Ziyad bin Abihi. Consequently, Ziyad bin Abihi was a half-brother to Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan. According to Arab-Islamic law, a child born of fornication is not considered legitimate, so Ziyad could not carry his father's name (Abi Sufyan). Nevertheless, Ziyad remained loyal to Mu'awiyah and supported his brother throughout his efforts. Likewise, Al-Mughrah ibn Sy'ubah was also a supporter of Mu'awiyah, which explains why Ziyad bin Abihi testified in favor of Al-Mughirah. Ja'far Assegaf clarifies that the influence of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, from the Umayyah clan, had been strong since the caliphate of Umar bin Khattab, particularly in the judicial field. Logically, the testimony of two witnesses should have been more accepted than that of a single witness in the trial of Al-Mughirah, but the opposite occurred (Mubarok 2021).

Based on Ja'far Assegaf's analysis, Fatimah Mernissi's personal rejection of Abī Bakrah is considered inappropriate. However, Ja'far Assegaf still offers critical insights into the textual interpretation that generalizes women's inability to lead based on this hadith. For Ja'far, the appropriate response to the hadith is to return to the spirit of the jurists and the context of the hadith's time, which indicates that the inability of *Putri Kisra* to assume the throne was due to her lack of preparation and education on how to become a leader. With this understanding, the hadith can also be used as evidence that women can be leaders if they possess the knowledge, insights, and skills necessary to assume leadership. Conversely, the hadith can also serve as a basis for rejecting leadership positions for those who lack the necessary competence.

Ja'far's interpretation aligns with the intellectual framework proposed by Fazlur Rahman with his concept of double movement. According to Rahman, when interpreting a text, one must first discern the spirit or intended message behind the text at the time it was revealed. Once this spirit is understood, the text should then be interpreted within the contemporary epistemological context (Nurmila 2020, p. 212). In relation to the hadith narrated by Abī Bakrah, without casting a negative stigma on Abī Bakrah—such as being unjust or a former slave—the spirit of the hadith can still be extracted: a prohibition against appointing leaders who lack competence. Therefore, if this spirit is applied to the contemporary era, the prohibition against appointing weak and incapable leaders can be extended to men as well. With this understanding, both women and men are entitled to leadership positions as long as they are capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of leadership.

This analysis aligns with the political thought of Ibn Taymiyah in *Al-Siyasah al-Syar'iyyah fī Islaḥ al-Ra'iy wa al-Ra'iyyah*. In his political theory, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the responsibility of public leadership must be entrusted to individuals who meet two criteria: strength (*al-quwwah*) and honesty (*al-amanah*). Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah contends that even if an individual appointed as a leader is a *fājir* (a sinner), if they possess these two qualities, they are more beneficial to the community than appointing a righteous person who is weak in character (Ibn Taimiyah 1428, pp. 19–23).

Based on this reasoning, if a woman meets the criteria outlined by Ibn Taymiyyah, she is more qualified to lead than a man who lacks leadership abilities. Regarding the *al-quwwah* criterion, in a democratic context, strength should not only be understood as physical power but also as public support, leadership capabilities, negotiation skills, managerial abilities, and more.

2.   Women Are Created from the Rib of Man

In addition to the issue of female leadership, the hadiths that are well-known among feminists also include those related to the creation of women from the rib of man. Faisal Haitomi has traced the chain of transmission (*sanad*) of these hadiths. According to his analysis, in the first tier, these hadiths were narrated by three companions of the Prophet: Abu Dzar, Abu Hurairah, and Samurah bin Jundub. Based on this *sanad* analysis, these hadiths are classified as "*Mashhur*" (well-known) (Haitomi and Syachrofi 2020, p. 42).

For feminist activists, the hadiths concerning the creation of women (Hawa) from the rib of man (Adam) contain deeply discriminatory implications. Riffat Hasan, a Pakistani feminist, critiques these hadiths from two perspectives: the *sanad* and the *matn* (content) of the hadiths. Concerning the *sanad*, Riffat criticizes three points: *first*, all of these hadiths were narrated by Abu Hurairah,[1] a companion of the Prophet who is considered controversial by many Islamic scholars, including Imam Abu Hanifah. *Second*, all of these hadiths are classified as "*Gharib*" (weakest in classification) because some of the narrators are considered solitary reporters. Third, these hadiths are regarded as "*Dha'if*" (weak) because some narrators are deemed unreliable (Untung 2013, p. 42).

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[1]   In Faisal Haitomi's study, the chain of transmission (*sanad*) of Abu Hurairah is found to be the most extensive compared to the chains of Abu Dharr and Samurah bin Jundub. Furthermore, the hadith collections regarded as having the highest credibility in terms of authenticity, namely Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, include hadiths narrated through Abu Hurairah's chain of transmission.

From a different perspective, Rifat Hasan's rejection of the narration stating that women were created from the rib of a man is also reflected in Murtadha Muthahhari's more philosophical view. According to Muthahhari, both men and women were created from the same essence. This is explained in the interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisa verse 1:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱتَّقُواْ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَآءً ۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِى تَسَآءَلُونَ بِهِۦ وَٱلْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

Muthahhari interprets *nafs wahidah* adalah ''one essence'' and thus the phrase ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا means "… *(God) created you (both men and women) from one essence and created from it (that same essence) your partner…".* Based on this understanding, Muthahhari rejects the notion that women were created from a variety lower in quality than men, or the claim that Adam's partner was created from one of Adam's left side parts (Muthahhari 2015, 106).

Regarding Rifat Hasan's accusation against Abu Hurairah, which was considered controversial by Abu Hanifah, it is unfounded. This is because the Hanafi school accepts hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, such as those regarding the takbir when rising from sujud and the hadith about washing vessels licked by dogs as sources for Abu Hanifah's fatwas. Similarly, the claim that there are unreliable narrators in this hadith is also incorrect, as al-Dzahabi, the source for Rifat Hasan's claim, did not make such a statement (Untung 2013, 42).

Thus, the rejection of the narration about the creation of women from a man's rib based on the hadith's chain of narration is weak. However, this does not mean that the existence of such a hadith renders women inferior to men. In fact, since both men and women were created from the same essence, the creation of women, even if not metaphorical, does not imply that women should be existentially subordinate to men.

When interpreting Q.S. An-Nisa verse 1, Quraish Shihab explains that earlier scholars understood *"nafs wahidah"* as referring to Adam, which led them to interpret the word (زوجها) *zaujahā* meaning "his partner," as referring to Adam's wife. By interpreting *"nafs wahidah"* as Adam, earlier scholars thought that Adam's wife was created from him. This interpretation then fostered the negative assumption that women are part of men. This interpretation was further reinforced by various narrations about the creation of women from a crooked

rib (narrated by al-Tirmidzi through Abu Hurairah). Quraish Shihab asserts that this hadith should be understood metaphorically, meaning that a man should act wisely when dealing with women, as the nature and characteristics of men and women are different. This inherent nature cannot be changed. If someone attempts to alter it, the consequences will be severe, just like trying to straighten a crooked rib (Shihab 2002, p. 331).

An intriguing concept related to the narration about women created from a man's rib is found in the mysticism of Ibn 'Arabi, a 12th-13th century Andalusian Sufi. In Ibn 'Arabi's mysticism, the relationship between man (Adam) and woman (Hawa) is ontologically one of longing because Hawa originated from Adam's rib. God created Hawa for Adam with a sense of 'hunger' for her, as Adam no longer felt emptiness with her presence. When Adam longs for Hawa, he is also longing for himself, because Hawa is a part of him. Similarly, Hawa feels longing for Adam because he is her homeland. Hawa's love is a love for her homeland, while Adam's love is a love for himself. Therefore, men do not feel satisfied except by uniting with women, the women created from them and according to their image (Hakim 2021).

The acknowledgment of women's roles and their spiritual, intellectual, and legal equality can also be seen in Ibn 'Arabi's background, as he was spiritually guided by a female Sufi. Furthermore, Ibn 'Arabi's theology of the Unity of Being, which holds that the material world or universe is an emanation of God and ultimately part of the divine essence, sets him apart from other Islamic scholars in patriarchal societies, who consider worldly matters, including women, as obstacles to reaching God. In contrast, for Ibn 'Arabi, everything material—including women and the human body—is a means to connect to the Divine (Dovel 2017).

Reconsidering the Misogynistic Hadith Stereotypes

Based on the discussion above, the rejections made by Islamic feminists using the *sanad* criticism or *rijāl al-ḥadith* critique have weak arguments. Therefore, misogynistic hadiths can be understood justly, without subordinating women, while still respecting the position of the Companions as noble individuals who received direct guidance from the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

Regarding the potential for female leadership, for instance, this hadith can

be understood as a spirit that emphasizes the importance of preparing a leader, regardless of gender, with adequate knowledge and leadership mentality. In certain cases, as noted by Samsul Anwar et al., female students have a greater chance of completing their studies faster than male students(Anwar et al. 2019). Thus, the development of intellectual capacity in each individual is more dependent on their efforts to improve their intellect, not their gender.

Furthermore, contemporary scholars now understand the hadiths about the creation of women from a man's rib as metaphorical. These hadiths emphasize that the nature of men and women is inherently different, and thus a man should act wisely toward women, especially those who are his partners, as stated in Allah's command: وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ, *"and live with them in kindness" (Q.S. An-Nisa verse 19)*. Attempts to force one's will on women will only result in harmful consequences for both parties.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the study of hadiths remains an open field for research in the contemporary era. This is reflected in the efforts of Islamic feminist activists who attempt to reinterpret hadiths that contradict the spirit of democracy, human rights, and gender equality. In general, besides using phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches, Islamic feminists, such as Fatimah Mernissi and Rifat Hasan, also employ hadith verification methods, such as the science of *rijāl al-ḥadith*, to challenge the authority of hadiths they deem misogynistic. However, sometimes the struggle for women's rights inadvertently falls into the trap of stigmatizing certain groups. For example, Fatimah Mernissi argues that the credibility of Abu Bakrah in narrating hadiths is questionable because he was once a slave. This stigma contradicts the very spirit of human rights, which is the primary source of the feminist movement. Therefore, caution is necessary in determining the meaning of any hadith, as forcing an interpretation to align with a specific paradigm or ideology will only lead to imperfect interpretations.

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