

New Grounded Feminist Approach to Islam in Indonesia: A Textual Analysis of Rahima and Fahmina's Publications

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Abstract

This article aims to offer a textual analysis of Rahima and Fahmina's publications. Rahima and Fahmina are two Non-Government Organizations founded in 2000 by a young generation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of the largest moderate Muslim organizations in Indonesia. There are more similarities than differences between Rahima and Fahmina because the persons involved in the organizations are close friends and, in fact, the same persons even though both are based in two different cities. Since their foundation, both Rahima and Fahmina have published many books and magazines. This article argues that both Rahima dan Fahmina publications offer a new grounded feminist approach to Islam, which counterbalance the dominant male-biased normative approach to Islam in most Muslim societies. These publications are based on their feminist activism and community engagement with the grass-root level of many Nahdlatul Ulama *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools). The topics of their publication cover many current issues such as *fiqh* of women's reproductive rights and empowerment, *fiqh* of the daily life of migrant workers, *fiqh* of anti-trafficking, prevention of child marriage, violent extremism and religious pluralism. As a result, the progressive nature of their publications negates the existing label of NU as the traditionalist organization.

Key Words

Rahima, Fahmina, women's rights, Islam, *pesantren*, feminist approach

Introduction

Rahima, the Center for Education and Information on Islam and Women's Rights, and Fahmina, a non-government organization that promotes pluralism, were founded soon after the end of the Suharto-led New Order regime in Indonesia (1966-1998). The New Order is well-known for its

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repressive, militaristic, and authoritarian regime, in which women were constructed to fulfill the expectation of the patriarchal system: to be a good housewife and mother. The regime did not give much room for women's organizations which did not support this state construction of femininity. This has led to the flourishing formation of many organizations that are against the New Order unification of ideology soon after this regime ended in 1998, including the foundation of Rahima and Fahmina, which argue for women's rights in Islam.

This article analyzes Rahima and Fahmina's publications since their foundation until 2014 in supporting women's rights within Islam. It argues that both Rahima dan Fahmina publications offer a new grounded feminist approach to Islam, which counterbalance the dominant male-biased normative approach to Islam in most Muslim societies. In what follows, the article, first, starts with the brief "herstory" of Rahima and Fahmina, and then provides a textual analysis of their publications.

Herstory of Rahima

The seed of Rahima was initially planted in P3M (*Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat* [The Association for the Development of *Pesantren* and Society]). P3M was an NGO founded on 18 May 1983 which aimed to be a forum for communication, consultation, and cooperation for *pesantren* and other national NGOs to develop *pesantren* and its surrounding communities (Yafie 2010:10). In the 1990s, P3M turned its direction from community development into the strengthening political civil rights by having critical and massive social movement. Being interested in P3M's engagement with critical studies that problematize injustice and domination of the elite over the *pesantren* community, Lies Marcoes joined P3M. Her presence at P3M filled in the gap of the absence of gender analysis in the P3M's critical study of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), which led P3M to have a division of *Fiqh al-Nisa'* (Islamic jurisprudence on women's issues, which was initially part of *Fiqh al-Siyasah* [Islamic jurisprudence on political issues]), and helped P3M to survive financially because Lies Marcos could connect P3M with the new funding source from Ford Foundation after P3M lost its earlier funding source (Yafie 2010:18-19).

The *Fiqh al-Nisa'* division educated *pesantren* communities by providing training and workshop to critically read gender-biased religious texts, mainly *kitab kuning* ("the yellow books": classical Islamic books in Arabic, which are usually printed on yellow paper) studied in many *pesantrens* and reconstruct the texts into new *fiqh* that is pro-women. These

training sessions resulted in the publication of new *fiqh* which empowers women, written by the Director of P3M at that time, Masdar F Mas'udi, under the title *Islam dan Hak-hak Reproduksi Perempuan: Dialog Fiqih Pemberdayaan* (Yafie 2010:20).²⁷

The *Fiqh al-Nisa'* division promoted women's reproductive rights within Islam to *pesantren* communities such as *kyai* (*pesantren* leaders) and *nyai* (female *pesantren* leaders or the wives of *kyai*) to counter the New Order family planning which tends to control and take away women's reproductive rights. Due to the shortage expertise on gender, the promotion of gender perspective in reading classical *fiqh* text was assisted by gender activists at Kalyanamitra, the second feminist NGO in Indonesia (the first was Yasanti in Yogyakarta), which was founded in 1985. During the promotion process, they were resisted by the *pesantren* communities who saw gender as Western imported ideas which contradict Islam and they saw that the concept of gender tried to deconstruct the whole structure of Islamic teachings, especially because those who introduce gender perspective were secular feminists who had never been engaged with *pesantren* communities and did not wear a veil. However, slowly but surely, this *Fiqh al-Nisa'* division could build gender awareness among *pesantren* communities, which previously had patriarchal culture. This program has given birth to the progressive *pesantren* leaders who become active in promoting gender equality in Islam such as Kiayi Husein Muhammad and KH Muhyiddin Abdusshomad, Nyai Djudju Zubaidah, Ruqoyyah Ma'shum, Syafiq Hasyim, Hamdanah Halim and Ema Marhumah (Yafie 2010:22).

In its peak period of success, however, the *Fiqh al-Nisa'* division was struck by the fact that the Director of P3M practiced polygamy. This practice is considered contradictory with their struggle for equality between men and women and therefore has led the *Fiqh al-Nisa'* division to separate from P3M and founded a new institution named Rahima, which continued to educate *pesantren* communities with women's reproductive rights (Yafie 2010:22).

The name Rahima is derived from the word *rahim*, which means "womb", or *rahiim*, which means "the most compassionate". It is also taken from the *rahim* forum, a discussion forum of *Fiqh al-Nisa'* division. Rahima was founded on 5 August 2000 and started to have activities at the end of February 2001. Rahima has two main activities: 1) education; and 2) information dissemination about Islam and women's rights through public forums such as regular discussion, dialogue, seminar, and the publication of books, the *Arham* brochure, and the *Swara Rahima* magazine.

Rahima initially focused its activities on *pesantren* communities, but then it expanded its activities into broader audiences such as university

students, religious teachers, local religious figures, local religious gathering members, and Muslim women's organizations (Yafie 2010:vi). Besides, Rahima expanded its focus, not only on women's reproductive rights but also on other general issues such as incest, domestic violence, women's poverty, and political issues (Yafie 2010:33). This is in response to the strong patriarchal culture which subordinates women and sees women only as domestic persons; to global capitalists which tend to exploit women; and to the state ambiguity, which produces women's friendly policies but did not show any serious effort in implementing these policies (Yafie 2010:43-44).

Furthermore, Rahima expanded its network nationally such as with JKP3 (*Jaringan Kerja Prolegnas Pro Perempuan* [Working Networks of Pro-Women's National Legislation Program]), Women's Health Forum, Cedaw Working Group Initiative (CWGI), Alimat (women scholars), and internationally such as with Coalition on Sexuality and Bodily Rights in Muslim Communities (CSBR) (Yafie 2010: vii).

In education, Rahima undertook Women Scholar Education (*Pendidikan Ulama Perempuan* [PUP]). This was suggested by Kiayi Husein Muhammad, who was inspired by a woman who spoke eloquently and argumentatively about women's issues in *Musyawah Alim Ulama NU* (Nahdlatul Ulama Scholars' Assembly) in Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat, in 1997, in which she showed her understanding of the classical religious knowledge and women's issues. Based on this observation, Husein Muhammad believed that women could express better their own issues than men and therefore women should be equipped with the required knowledge and be given an opportunity to speak in the legitimated forums like *MUI* (Indonesian Ulama Consultative Body), *Bahtsul Masa'il NU* (Nahdlatul Ulama Consultative Assembly) and *Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Consultative Assembly). To prepare female scholars to do so, Rahima selected PUP candidates with the criteria that the women can read classical Arabic texts written in the yellow books, are aware of the current reality and are pro-women. The selected candidates were trained to increase their gender sensitivity and social organization. It is expected that these female scholars can be the main agents who spread their ideas about justice and equality between men and women from the Islamic perspective. Furthermore, they are expected to change the culture which does not allow women to express and actualize their interest and to support state policy that is pro to women's interests (Yafie 2010:48-50).

Moreover, Rahima organizes gender sensitivity training for local religious figures, either male or female, and activists in certain organizations

started in 2004. Knowing how important the role of Islamic education teachers is at school in spreading an equal gender perspective, Rahima facilitated gender training for teachers, most of them also religious figures in their residence. Rahima has also trained university students (students of UIN Jakarta) just like they trained female scholars, but it was regarded to be less successful because students were busy with their university schedule and they did not have a community to be engaged with. Thus, Rahima has female scholars, local religious figures, activists, and Islamic education teachers to help achieve Rahima's aims for women's rights in Islam to counter radical and fundamentalist Islam which tends to marginalize women (Yafie 2010:50-53).

[His]story of Fahmina

Fahmina was founded in Cirebon, West Java, in November 2000, but only started to be known to the public in February 2001. It was founded by a group of young *pesantren* graduates to empower marginalized groups such as the poor, migrant workers, petty traders, and farmers, in which many of them are women. The founders of Fahmina are Kiayi Husein Muhammad, Affandi Mukhtar, Marzuki Wahid, and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. Fahmina was initially based in the house of Husein Muhammad, the leader of Pondok Pesantren Dar al-Tauhid, Cirebon, but it then moved to the City of Cirebon after its promotion to the public.

Fahmina is derived from the Arabic word "*fahmina*" which means "our understanding". In Fahmina's understanding, Islam aims for social justice. To implement this Islamic value of social justice, Fahmina founders combine their intellectual engagement with social activism (*praxis*). As *pesantren* graduates, they re-read the classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) contextually to produce new Islamic knowledge, which empowers the marginalized groups (the poor and the women) and to stand for social justice. They see that within patriarchy, women have been regarded as powerless objects, and therefore are vulnerable to all forms of violence such as domestic violence and human trafficking. They promote Islam which is friendly to women and stand for gender justice, enlighten the community by having religious study group fortnightly, advocate for the conservation of cultural sites and heritages as well as for the rights of the poor to access education and health services, encourage public participation to ensure good and clean governance, and conducted community empowerment for political victims of 1965-1966 (the "cleansing" of people being labeled or associated with communist party). They also publish newsletters to educate the mosque community, religious study group, and *pesantren* community

so that they have collective awareness and ability to see social injustice resulted from social, economic, and political interests (Fahmina 2008).

Since many women are part of the marginalized group, Fahmina aims to achieve gender justice. This is implemented not only through their publication but also by conducting Islam and Gender Training for two different groups: (1) women's activists who do not know much about Islam to enlighten them about Islamic religious arguments for gender justice; and (2) *pesantren*-based communities who have rich knowledge about classical intellectual tradition to enlighten them about re-reading this classical intellectual tradition from an equal gender perspective. As a result of this training, Fahmina published *Modul Kursus Islam dan Gender: Dawrah Fiqh Perempuan* (2006), which has been re-published in 2007 and 2011 and translated into English. This module is used to train many more Muslim women activists, not only throughout Indonesia but also abroad such as Sisters in Islam (SIS), Malaysia, and Nisa'ul Haq Fi Bangsa Moro, the Philippines (Fahmina 2008).

Through Islam and Gender training, Fahmina has successfully arranged 'difficult' marriage between secular feminists who previously believed that Islam subordinates women and *pesantren* communities as the important agents in perpetuating a patriarchal system which tends to subordinate women. The result of this 'marriage' is the excitement of secular feminists who were surprised that Islam can be used to promote gender justice (personal communication with Abdul Kodir in 2007) and the increasing number of *pesantren* communities who can re-read classical texts from an equal gender perspective. Fahmina has had a close connection with Indonesian famous feminists such as Saparinah Sadli, Kamala Chandra Kirana, and Debra Yatim, who were involved in its first Islam and Gender Training in 2004. Husein Muhammad even continued his activism nationally by being one of the commissioners of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan [KP]) for two terms (2005-2009 and 2010-2014). The inclusion of Husein Muhammad in this state institution seems to be encouraged or invited by Saparinah Sadli, the first leader of KP, and Kamala Chandra Kirana, the leader of KP after Saparinah Sadli.

Fahmina also promotes religious pluralism in which people from various religious and ethnic backgrounds can sit together, communicate, and respect each other. This is not an easy task for Fahmina because, in reality, they face many serious challenges especially in defending the rights of ethnic and religious minorities such as Chinese, Dayak, and Christian as well as Muslim groups who have been labeled as deviant Muslims such as Ahmadiyah.

Furthermore, Fahmina expands its network not only with individuals and institutions within Cirebon such as Gerbang Informasi dan Dewan Kesenian Cirebon, but also with institutions outside Cirebon which have been previously engaged in intellectual and social activism such as PP Lakpesdam NU, Rahima, LKiS, and Desantara. As an independent non-government institution, Fahmina opens its membership to any community regardless of their ethnicity, gender, and religion.

Rahima and Fahmina Publications

As a result of their intellectual engagement and social activism, Fahmina and Rahima have published many books, magazines, and newsletters. Tables 1 and 2 below enlist Rahima publications (Rahima 2014; 2019) and Fahmina publications (Fahmina 2014; 2019), which I will describe some of their contents and analyze their approach to Islam. These publications are Fahmina and Rahima responses to the challenges of fundamentalist and radical Islam, and violence experienced by the marginalized groups such as women, migrant workers, petty traders, *becak* driver, and religious minority groups. These works were published based on Rahima and Fahmina's experiences of promoting gender equality within the *pesantren* communities and women's activists.

Table 1
Rahima's Publications

No	Title	Author(s)	Date of Publication
1	Fiqh Perempuan	K.H. Hussein Muhammad	2001
2	Tubuh, Seksualitas dan Kedaulatan Perempuan	Abdul Muqsit Ghozali, Badriyah Fayumi, Marzuki Wahid, Syafiq Hasyim	2002
3	Bergerak Menuju Keadilan	Ust. Faqihuddin Abdul kadir, M.A.	2006
4	Umat Bertanya, Ulama Menjawab	K.H. Muhyidin Abdussomad, Dra. Badriya Fayumi, Ust. Faqihuddin Abdul kadir, M.A., Nyai Hj. Siti Ruqoyyah Ma'shum, Marzuki Wahid, Alai Nadjib, MA., Dra. Afwa Mumtazah, Luluk Farida Muchtar, M. Pd. I.	2008

5	Keluarga Sakinah	K.H. Husein Muhammad, Ust. Faqihuddin Abdul Kadir, MA., Dra. Badriyah Fayumi, Nur Achmad, M.A., Daan Dini Kharunida, S.Ag., A.D. Kusumaningtyas, M. Si., Farha Ciciek, M. Si., Leli Nurrohmah, M. Hum.	2008
6	Pelajaran Agama Islam Kelas I SLTA	Suparman, S.Ag., Abdussama, S.Pd., Moh. Faisol, S.Si., M.Hi., Drs. Mahrus Usman, Misbahul Munir, Dhiya'ul Fuad, Nurul Imam, Aryudi A Razak	2008
7	Pelajaran Agama Islam Kelas II SLTA	Suparman, S. Ag., Abdussama, S.Pd., Moh. Faisol, S.Si., M.Hi. Drs. Mahrus Usman, Misbahul Munir, Dhiya'ul Fuad, Nurul Imam, Aryudi A Razak	2008
8	Pelajaran Agama Islam Kls III SLTA	Suparman, S. Ag., Abdussama, S.Pd., Moh. Faisol, S.Si., M.Hi., Drs. Mahrus Usman, Misbahul Munir, Dhiya'ul Fuad, Nurul Imam, Aryudi A Razak	2008
9	Perawan: Kumpulan Fiksi Pembela Perempuan	A.D. Eridani, S.H.	2009
10	Modul Keluarga Sakinah	A. Dicky Sofyan, A.D. Eridani, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Leli Nurrohmah, Maman A. Rahman, Nur Achmad	2009

11	Rahima dalam Pandangan Para Mitra	Abd. Rahman, Mas'ud, Ahmad Suaedy, Afwah Mumtazah, Anwar Hidayat, Cecep Jayakarama, Evi Sofia Inayati, Firliana Purwanti, Imam Tholkha, Iswanti, Kamala Chandrakirana, Maria Ulfa Anshor, M. Ikhsanudin, Mohammad Syarifuddin, Najmatul Milla, Neng Hannah, Nihayatul Wafiroh, Ninuk Mardiana Pambudy, Norhayati Kaprawi, Nur Hidayah, Pinky Saptandari, Rena Herdiyani, Saparinah Sadli, Yuniyanti Chuzaifah	2010
12	The Rahima Story	Hilmy Ali Yafie	2010
13	Modul Panduan Pendidikan Hak & Kesehatan Reproduksi	A.D. Eridani, S.H., Dinah Muhidin, S.S., Farha Ciciek, M.Si., Dr. Nur Rofiah, Leli Nurrohmah, M. Hum.	2010
14	VCD Shalawat Kesetaraan	Rahima	2010
15	Kesetaraan, Kemajemukan & HAM	Leli Nurohmah, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Nur Achmand	2011
16	Ijtihad Kyai Husein	K.H. Husein Muhammad	2011
17	Modul Pengkaderan Ulama Perempuan	Ust. Imam Nakhai, Dr. Nur Rofiah, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Maman Abdurrahman	2011
18	Modul Pendidikan Guru Agama Islam	Ust. Imam Nakhai, Dr. Nur Rofiah, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Maman Abdurrahman	Oktober, 2011

19	Panduan Konseling untuk Konselor BP4 Perspektif Kesetaraan	Drs. H. Tulus, Dra. Hj. Fadilah Ahmad, M.M., Drs. H. Najib Anwar, M.H., Dr. Hj. Nurhayati Djamas, M.A., Prof. Dr. Hj. Aliyah Hamka, M.M., Dra. Hj. Zubaidah Muchtar, Dra. Radhiya Bustan, M. Psi., Drs. H. Kadi Sastrowirjono	2012
20	Peran BP4 dalam Mewujudkan Keluarga Sakinah: Hasil Penelitian di 6 Wilayah.	A.D. Eridani, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Anis Fuadah, Fadilah Ahmad, Fatimah, Maman A. Rahman, Noor Rohman, Nurhayati Aida, Pera Sopharianti, Rahmat Supena, Riri Khariroh, Titin Kurniawati	2013
21	Merintis Keulamaan untuk Kemanusiaan: Profil Kader Ulama Perempuan Rahima	Rahima	2014
22	Profil Kader Ulama Perempuan Rahima	Tim Rahima (A.D. Eridani, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Mawardi, Maman Abdurahman)	2014
23	Pendidikan Kesehatan Reproduksi Penguatan Guru Kelas X	Tim Rahima	2014
24	Profil Kader Ulama Perempuan Rahima	Tim Rahima (A.D. Eridani, A.D. Kusumaningtyas, Mawardi, Maman Abdurahman)	2014
25	Majalah <i>Swara Rahima</i> Edisi 1-55	Rahima	2001-2019

Table 2
Fahmina's Publications

No	Title	Publisher	Author(s)	Date of Publication
1	Modul Kursus Islam dan Gender: Dawrah Fiqh Perempuan	Fahmina Institute	K.H. Husein Muhammad, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Lies Marcoes Natsir, Marzuki Wahid	2006, 2007, 2011
2	Spiritualitas Kemanusiaan: Perspektif Islam Pesantren	Pustaka Rihlah dan Fahmina Institute	K.H. Husein Muhammad	March 2006
3	Post Tradisionalisme Islam: Wacana Intelektualisme dalam Komunitas NU	Fahmina Institute	Rumadi	March 2006
4	Bukan Kota Wali: Relasi Rakyat- Negara dalam Kebijakan Pemerintah Kota	Kutub Fahmina	Dewi Laily Purnamasari, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Ipah Jahrotunnasipah, Obeng Nur Rosyid	March 2006
5	Fiqh Anti Trafficking: Jawaban atas Berbagai Kasus Kejahatan Perdagangan Manusia dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam	Fahmina Institute	Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Abd. Moqsith Ghazali, Imam Nakha'i, K.H. Husein Muhammad, Marzuki Wahid	Nov 2006

6	Nalar Politik Perempuan Pesantren	Fahmina Institute	Maria Ulfah Anshor	December 2006
7	Hadith and Gender Justice: Understanding the Prophetic Traditions	Fahmina Institute	Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. Translators: Fikri Sulaiman Ismail and Ted Thomson	February 2007
8	Nalar Islam Nusantara: Studi Islam ala Muhammadiyah, al-Irsyad, Persis dan NU	Fahmina Institute	M. Mukhsin Jamil, Musahadi, Choirul Anwar, Abdul Kholiq	March 2008
9	Islam Pesantren dan Pesan Kemanusiaan	Fahmina Institute	K.H. Syarif Utsman Yahya	January 2008
10	Bertahan dalam Ketidakpastian	Fahmina Institute	Lies Marcoes Natsir	August 2008
11	Kajian Islam dalam Ragam Pendekatan	Fahmina Institute	Marzuki Wahid, Adnan, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Naqiyah Mukhtar, Septi Gumindari	2010
12	Reformasi Peradilan Pasca-Orde Baru: Pengadilan Agama di Indonesia dan Keadilan Bagi Masyarakat Miskin (Terjemahan)	Institut Studi Islam Fahmina (ISIF)	Cate Sumner dan Tim Lindsey. Penerjemah: Mia Hapsari Kusumawardani	February 2011

13	Peta Gerakan Perempuan Islam Pasca-Orde Baru	Fahmina Institute	Lies Marcoes Natsir, Marzuki Wahid, Mahrus El Mawa, Nur Rofi'ah, Ida Rosyidah, Khariroh Ali, Testriyono, Nunung Sulastri, Nurul Huda S.A., Alimah, Nurun Nisa, Ali Mursyid	January 2012
14	Islam dan Jurnalisme Kemanusiaan: Membangun Gerakan Masyarakat Sipil Berbasis Radio Komunitas	Fahmina Institute	Ade Duryawan, Ali Mursyid, Nur Khalik Ridwan, Obeng Nur Rosyid, Vera Sovaryanti	January 2012
15	Fiqh Keseharian Buruh Migran: Jawaban atas Pelbagai Masalah Keagamaan yang Dihadapi Buruh Migran	Institut Studi Islam Fahmina (ISIF)	Imam Nakha'i, Marzuki Wahid	January 2012
16	Ragam Kajian Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga	Institut Studi Islam Fahmina (ISIF)	Afwah Mumtazah, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Lia Aliyah, Mimin Mu'minah, Nina Mariani Noor, Rosidin, Sadari, Sahiron Syamsuddin, Tatik Hartati, Tohir Laila Sholeh	January 2012

17	Kurikulum dan Silabi Ahwal Syakhshiyah	Institut Studi Islam Fahmina (ISIF) dan Fahmina Institute	Nur Khalik Ridwan, Nurrohman, Marzuki Wahid, Nurul Huda SA	January 2012
18	Manba' al-Sa'āda fī Usus Husn al-Mu'āshara fī Hayāt al-Zawjīyah	ISIF dan Fahmina Institute	Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir	2012
19	Panduan Hak Asasi Manusia bagi Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja	Fahmina Institute dan Institut Studi Islam Fahmina (ISIF)	Mufti Makaanim A dan Papang Hidayat	January 2012
20	Toleransi Islam: Hidup Damai dalam Masyarakat Plural	Fahmina Institute	K.H. Husein Muhammad	2015
21	Menangkal Siaran Kebencian: Perspektif Islam	Fahmina Institute	K.H. Husein Muhammad dan Siti Aminah	2017
22	Liputa Media: Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia	Fahmina Institute	Satori, <i>et al.</i> Penyunting: TIM KUPI	2017
23	Diskursus Keulamaan Perempuan Indonesia	Fahmina Institute	Satori, <i>et al.</i> , Penyunting: TIM KUPI	2017

24	Proyeksi Masa Depan Ulama Perempuan Indonesia: Kumpulan Tulisan Refleksi tentang Kongres Ulama Perempuan	Fahmina Institute	Satori, <i>et al.</i> , Penyunting: TIM KUPI	2017
25	Anak Muda Memaknai Perbedaan: Pengalaman Mengelola Sekolah Cinta Perdamaian	Fahmina Institute	Alifatul Arifiati. Editor: Abdul Rosyadi	2017
26	Menggagas Fiqh Ikhtilaf: Potret dan Prakarsa Cirebon	Fahmina Institute	Alifatul Arifiati. Editor: Marzuki Wahid	2017
27	Sunnah Monogami: Mengaji al-Qur'an dan Hadits (reprinted edition of Memilih Monogami with additional information on the interpretation of divorce after polygamous marriage)	Umah Sinau Mubadalah (USM)	Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir	2017
28	Pendar-endar Kebijakan	Fahmina Institute	K.H. Husein Muhammad. Editor: Wawan Kurniawan	2018

29	Manual Mubadalah: Ringkasan Konsep untuk Pelatihan Perspektif Kesalingan dalam Isu Gender dan Islam	Umah Sinau Mubadalah (USM)	Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir	2019
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Textual Analysis of Rahima Publications

Each Rahima's publication has its own background and was in response to certain circumstances. For example, three books of *Pelajaran Agama Islam* (2008) for Senior High School Grades I-III were published after Rahima engaged with school religious teachers who saw their needs for teaching materials that support their struggle for gender equality. Also, to facilitate its educational process for various audiences, Rahima published several training modules such as *Modul Keluarga Sakinah* (2009), *Modul Panduan Pendidikan Hak dan Kesehatan Reproduksi* (2010), *Modul Pengkaderan Ulama Perempuan* (2011), and *Modul Pendidikan Guru Agama Islam* (2011).

Furthermore, as a result of Rahima's cooperation with Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) in their effort to create a happy family, Rahima researched the role of marriage counselors to create a happy family resulting in the publication of *Peran BP4 dalam Mewujudkan Keluarga Sakinah: Hasil Penelitian di 6 Wilayah* (2013). Rahima also undertook the training of gender sensitivity for the marriage counselors of MORA which resulted in the publication of *Buku Panduan Konseling untuk Konselor BP4: Perspektif Kesetaraan* for them to refer to in the counseling process. *The Rahima Story* (Yafie 2010) was published in response to Rahima staff's ideas to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Rahima. I mainly relied on this book in writing herstory of Rahima since its birth from P3M, development, and programs. Similarly, *Rahima dalam Pandangan Para Mitra* (Rahima 2010), a compilation of the views of Rahima partners about Rahima, was published at the same time with *The Rahima Story* to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Rahima. VCD *Shalawat Kesetaraan* was the product of Rahima's creativity which was initially inspired by Rahima partners who mostly come from NU background and like to sing Arabic songs before any events. It contains Arabic songs that promote gender equality.

Rahima has a quarterly magazine, *Swara Rahima*, which is published since 2001. Up until June 2019, Rahima has published 55 editions of *Swara*

Rahima. Each edition consists of about 40 pages with similar content of various contemporary issues such as women's poverty, education, formalization of *shari`a*, domestic violence, sexuality, prevention of child marriage, rural development, prevention of violent extremism, face veiling, reciprocal reading of the Qur'an (*qira'ah mubadalah*) and women's political rights, not merely on women's reproductive rights. Each edition has sections of "Tafsir Al-Qur'an" (Qur'anic Interpretation), "Dirasah Hadis" (The Prophet's Tradition Studies), "Cerpen" (Short Story) and "Tanya-Jawab" (Question and Answer), in addition to other sections such as reflection, information, opinion, and interviews with certain figures of gender activists. This magazine looks like a simple magazine decorated with comic types conversation to simplify the content of the magazine. However, the content of the magazine is packed with progressive ideas which can raise consciousness to the existing gender inequality, critically deconstruct patriarchal knowledge and reconstruct it with new knowledge which is friendly to women, empowering and in accordance with the spirit of Islam as the religion of kindness to all humans and environment. Even though the topics of the magazine are not simple, its content can be easily understood by general readers.

Rahima also has four books published as a compilation of writings taken from certain sections of *Swara Rahima* magazine. These are *Bergerak Menuju Keadilan* (2006), a compilation of Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's writings previously published in "Dirasah Hadis" section; *Umat Bertanya, Ulama Menjawab* (2008), a compilation of "Tanya Jawab" section; *Perawan: Kumpulan Cerpen* (2009), a compilation of short stories written by various writers; and *Ijtihad Kyai Husein*, a compilation of Husein Muhammad's writings published in "Tafsir Al-Qur'an" section. These publications are beneficial especially for general readers who do not have access to *Swara Rahima*.

Bergerak Menuju Keadilan contains various topics covered by each edition of *Swara Rahima* such as women's rights for education, their participation in politics, the right of a woman to marry off herself, domestic violence, reproductive issues, women as *aurat* (things need to be covered) and the empowerment of HIV/AIDS victims. Like Husein Muhammad, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir shows his expertise on classical Islamic knowledge, especially *hadith* (the Prophet Muhammad's Sayings). By using content analysis of the *hadith* (the study of *matan*), rather than its chain of narration (the study of *sanad*), Abdul Kodir counters the use of *hadith* to justify women's subordination such as the *hadith* that states that women are created from the male's rib; that women are *aurat* and

fitnah (source of social destruction); that women cannot marry off herself and others; that women cannot travel unless accompanied by her *mahram* (male relatives that she cannot marry); and that women should obey her husband and stay at home.

In contrast to the patriarchal and literal understanding of *hadith*, Abdul Kodir understands the *hadith* contextually. For example, he explains that women in the Prophet Muhammad's era expressed their anxiety about social injustice and asked the Prophet to spare his time to teach the women, and then the Prophet responded positively to their anxiety and provided his time to teach the women. The lesson learned from this *hadith* for Indonesian current context, according to Abdul Kodir, is that everybody, including the women, has the rights for education and therefore, the state should facilitate the fulfillment of this right. Affirmative action should be provided to marginalized groups such as women to ensure the fulfillment of this right. Abdul Kodir also argues that the intended message of the *hadith* which requires a woman who travels to be accompanied by her *mahram* is not to prohibit women to travel but to require the state and its society to provide a security system which allows women to travel safely and free from violence.

Unlike other Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002), who tend not to use *hadith* in their struggle for gender justice due to the questionable validity of the hadith, Abdul Kodir sees the importance of using *hadith* to counter the existing use of *hadith* to support women's subordination. In doing this, he critically looks at the problematic nature of the chain of narration to show readers that many of the *hadiths* which are used to justify women's subordination are problematic in their chain of narration. In addition, he dismisses these *hadiths* by showing that the content of the *hadith* is contradictory to *hadith* with better quality or the content of the Qur'anic verses. For instance, in response to the *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurairah compiled in the *Shahih Bukhari* which states that "There are three things which cause bad luck: horse, women and house", Abdul Kodir refers to *Syarh Shahih Bukhari* which tells that Aishah, the wife of the Prophet, rejected the above *hadith* because she considered its content to be contradictory with the Qur'an Chapter Al-Hadid (57), Verse 22 (Abdul Kodir 2006: 29-30).

In response to the literal reading of the *hadith* that women are *aurat*, Abdul Kodir looks at the context when the *hadith* was narrated. He explains that at that time, women were vulnerable to being raped or kidnapped by the enemy of the women's group. This act of rape and kidnapping could humiliate the clan or group the women belong to and therefore women

should be protected. Abdul Kodir disagrees with the use of this *hadith* to domesticate women because the Qur'an gives equal mandates for men and women to instruct the good deed and to forbid wrongdoing. He offers a new interpretation that the *hadith* "the women are *aurat*" in the current era means that women still easily become the target of physical abuse and violence in the domestic and public sphere and therefore they should be protected by the state such as by creating security system or law to protect women. Or *aurat* of women in the current context, according to Abdul Kodir (2006: 226), can be in the form of women's backwardness, poverty, and low level of education and this should be "protected" (solved and alleviated) by providing education and empowerment for women. The methodology of Abdul Kodir's *ijtihad* (the use of reason to distill the intended message of the Qur'an or Hadith) is similar to the hermeneutical approach of Fazlur Rahman's double movement (1982). Abdul Kodir has moved from the current era to the time when the Qur'an was revealed or when a *hadith* was narrated to distill the intended message of the Qur'an or a *hadith*, then he moves back to the current era to apply the spirit or the intended message of the Qur'an or *hadith* in the current Indonesian context.

Umat Bertanya, Ulama Menjawab (2008) is the second easiest book to understand after the compilation of short stories below. It contains short questions from Rahima's partners and Rahima scholars' answers to the questions on issues of women's career, marriage, and family. The main difference between this book and other mainstream books is that the answers use an equal gender perspective and, therefore, the answers tend to be pro-women and not victimizing the victims. This book not only shows Rahima's engagement with the grass-root level of the society but also its approach to knowledge is grounded, based on the reality of the everyday life of women.

Even though it is a fiction, *Perawan: Kumpulan Fiksi Pembela Perempuan* (2009) is a Rahima publication that is inspired by the current realities and issues being discussed in each edition of *Swara Rahima*. It raises consciousness and builds empathy for the current issues facing women such as the situation of women who became victims of the formalization of *shari`a*, the high maternal mortality during childbirth, and women's poverty. Besides, the stories not only raise consciousness but also motivate readers to do something in dealing with injustice toward women, a powerful tool for social change.

Perhaps, *Ijtihad Kyai Husein* (2011) is the "heaviest" book to understand in comparison to the three other books published as a

compilation of *Swara Rahima* section. Abdul Kodir's book on *hadith* is easier to understand than Husein Muhammad's book on *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis). However, both are similar in their approach to the interpretation of Islamic texts: a substantive, contextual, and feminist approach to Islam resulted in pro-women knowledge to counter the mainstream misogynistic and male-biased knowledge. Both Husein Muhammad and Abdul Kodir show expertise on classical Islamic knowledge that they often refer to in their struggle for gender justice and in dealing with the current problems facing many women. For example, in response to the current situation in which marriage can be the source of disaster for some women, especially those who become victims of domestic violence and polygamy, Husein Muhammad emphasizes the reciprocal relationship in marriage by semantically explains the meaning of *mawaddah wa rahmah* (love and mercy). Quoting Muqatil bin Sulaiman (d. 150H), one of the earliest Qur'anic exegetes, Husein Muhammad points out that *mawaddah* has three meanings: Love, advice, and strong relationship. Based on this, he argues that the Qur'anic concept of marriage is the tie that can produce a relationship in which the couple love, advise, and respect each other. Such a strong relationship should be free from abusive words and treatment. Also, quoting Al-Raghib al-Ishfahani, Husein Muhammad explains the meaning of *rahmah* as the delicate nature of heart which requires the person to treat his/her spouse well (Muhammad 2011:8-9). This shows Husein Muhammad's rich knowledge of the classical Islamic knowledge that he can take advantage of in promoting gender equality among NU *pesantren* communities, who prefer classical Islamic knowledge instead of the word "gender", which some of them consider it to be Western imported knowledge they should resist. This also shows that even though much classical Islamic knowledge is misogynistic and male-biased, some of them are pro-women, which Husein Muhammad and Abdul Kodir often use to promote gender equality.

On polygamy, Husein Muhammad argues that Islam does not invent or initiate polygamy. Rather, it is a pre-Islamic patriarchal tradition. Using a gradual and accommodative approach, Husein Muhammad argues that Islam transformed the practice of polygamy from an unlimited number of women that men could marry without any regulation into the condition in which men could treat their wives justly. This transformation, according to Husein Muhammad, is an Islamic criticism and disagreement with the existing practice of polygamy. It is an Islamic response to the existing injustice toward powerless women at the time of revelation (Muhammad 2011:27-28). In contrast with the mainstream interpretation which tends

to use Qur'an 4: 3 as justification to allow polygamy, Husein Muhammad argues that as the efforts to gradually abolish slavery, mentioned in the Qur'an, a necessary step to gradually abolish polygamy should be taken. Husein Muhammad quotes some *ulama* who argue that reducing the number of wives done by Islam should be continued from a long time ago, from four to three, to two and then one (Muhammad 2011:46-47). There are many other issues dealt with in this book such as female-led family, women's human rights, and female scholars which I cannot discuss further here.

In the early stage of its development, Rahima in cooperation with LKiS and Ford Foundation published *Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai atas Wacana Agama dan Gender* (2001). In 2007, this book was reprinted four times. There is still a demand for this book today, but there is none in the market. The book argues that the context or social, economic, and political reality should be the main basis and consideration in producing *fiqh* or understanding religious texts in order religious teachings can be contextual, not ahistorical (*shalih likulli zaman wa makan*). Like other books by Husein Muhammad, this book offers grounded, contextual and feminist approaches in reading Islamic texts (Qur'an and Hadith). It calls for a reinterpretation of the texts which tend to be unjust to women because, he argues, that religion including Islam cannot tolerate any injustice or bad treatment against women. Religion must always bring kindness and justice. Based on this belief, Husein Muhammad offers new *fiqh* which is friendly to women such as the *fiqh* which allows women to lead prayer for both male and female, reveals various opinions on the variety of limits of female *aurat*, argues against under-aged marriage, allows women to exercise their rights to choose their prospective husband, emphasizes the importance of protecting women's reproductive rights, suggests to treat women with kindness, argues for women's leadership in domestic and public spheres, condemns the perpetrator of rape, and criticizes Nawawi's *Uqud al-Lujain*, a manual book of marriage, which is popular among Indonesia Muslims, that tends to subordinate women.

The strength of *Fiqh Perempuan* lies in its revelation of many classical "hidden" knowledge that can be used to support gender equality. Husein Muhammad's rich knowledge of classical Islamic heritage allows him to present various opinions of classical *ulama*, criticize their patriarchal opinions that are no longer relevant to Indonesian current context, and use the classical opinions that are pro-women and still relevant with contemporary Indonesia. For example, on women's political leadership, he quotes several male-biased *tafsir* such as from *tafsir* Al-Razi, Al-

Zamakhshari, Al-Thabathaba'i, Al-Qurthubi, Ibn Kathir, Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Thahir bin Asyur that tend to undermine women's leadership ability due to their belief of the natural superiority of men over women physically and intellectually. This kind of *tafsir*, Husein Muhammad argues, is no longer relevant to the current context, where the reality shows that many women can do the tasks that were previously dominated by men. Besides, according to him, there have been female governors and executive leaders in their profession. This reality shows that male superiority is not biologically given, but socially constructed. This world, in his view, is not stagnant but is changing into a more civilized, rational, and open society (Muhammad 2001:197-198).

Textual Analysis of Fahmina Publications

Fahmina's publications reflect Fahmina's vision "to create critical, open, dignified and just social structure and societies" (Fahmina 2013). Fahmina adopts critical thinking by not taking for granted what is written in the classical *fiqh* to be applicable in the current Indonesian context, but by critically looking at the context where this *fiqh* was produced before it is applied in the current Indonesian context.

Like Rahima publications, almost all Fahmina publications are based on their social activism and are in response to the existing contexts before its publication. For example, *Islam, Pesantren dan Pesan Kemanusiaan* (2008) by K.H. Syarief Utsman Yahya, a senior pesantren leader of Khatulistiwa in Kempek, Cirebon, was written in response to several public acts of violence to religious and ethnic minority committed by radical Muslim organizations such as *Front Pembela Islam* (the Front of Islamic Defender). The book argues for the fundamental teaching of Islam that Islam is a religion of kindness to all humans and the environment (*Islam rahmat li al-'alamin*) and, therefore, no violence or environmental destruction can be justified by Islam. If there is any violence or destruction by using any justification, according to Yahya, Islam should move and act appropriately in response to them. The book uses a substantive approach to Islam, which allows flexibility to adopt Indonesian local culture. This might be in response to a certain political party that tends to Arabise Indonesian Muslims such as by adopting Pakistani or Arabian clothes. Similarly, unlike Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia that adopts *khilafah* as a state political system, this book argues for *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (NKRI; The Republic of Indonesia as One Nation State), claiming that "We are Indonesians who are Muslims" (Yahya 2008:85). The book also acknowledges and respects plurality and shows its partiality to the marginalized group. As a

NU leading figure, Yahya expects young NU generation to rejuvenate its organization to function well in dealing with social and political problems such as violence, corruption, human trafficking, and social injustice. Yahya disagrees with the formalization of *shari`a* and criticizes the phenomenon of the increasing number of Indonesians who frequently go to pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), but at the same time, the incidence of social crimes also increase.

Similarly, Husein Muhammad in his book *Spiritualitas Kemanusiaan: Perspektif Islam Pesantren* (2006) uses the esoteric approach that emphasizes human spirituality. This book is a compilation of short reflective views of Husein Muhammad about the current realities and lessons learned from the past stories, which show his rich knowledge about the classical Islamic tradition and his engagement with current realities. This book not only supports progressive thinking, which encourages *ijtihad* (the use of reason to understand God's intended message of the Qur'an) but also respects religious differences, encourages social solidarity, cares for the environment, and support gender equality. Unlike male-biased writings which tend to blame and subordinate women, this book believes that Islam respects women; that men and women are equal in their ability and potential; that women who lived during the Prophet era participated freely in public and were intellectually active. However, the patriarchal system, according to Husein Muhammad, has subordinated and domesticated women. In response to domestic violence against women and rape, he does not blame women as those who are inviting men to rape them by not covering their bodies as many people believe, but rather he blames the perpetrators for their destructive mentality, poverty, and low educational level. Husein Muhammad is a male writer who is pro-women and a strong advocate of treating women in respected ways.

Like other books written by Husein Muhammad and Abdul Kodir, *Modul Kursus Islam dan Gender: Dawrah Fiqh Perempuan* (2006) offers grounded feminist contextual approach in understanding the Qur'an and Hadith, critically reads patriarchal *fiqh* and offers a feminist reconstruction of pro-women *fiqh*. For example, in response to the absence of valid *hadith* on female circumcision, the book highlights the possible influence of pre-Islamic tradition and argues that Islam cannot allow the practice that is harmful to the body. It emphasizes women's rights to choose their prospective husband in response to the practice of forced marriage. It quotes many *hadiths* that are friendly to women such as the *hadith* that says "The best of you are those who treat their wife well" in response to the misogynistic *hadith* like the one that narrates that "Never prosper the

society who entrust their affairs to women”. This discourse is empowering and enlightening for many women who previously believe that Islam supports women’s subordination.

Similar to Husein Muhammad’s *Fiqh Perempuan*, Abdul Kodir also wrote *Hadith and Gender Justice: Understanding the Prophetic Traditions* (2007) based on his expertise on *hadith*. This book calls for a critical and contextual reading of *hadith* with justice as the principle of understanding the text because Abdul Kodir believes that the prophetic mission is to call for justice and equality. With this principle in mind, someone cannot just take for granted a *hadith* which tends to subordinate women. Moreover, Abdul Kodir counters the discourse that *hadith* has often been used to justify women’s subordination by publishing *60 Hadits tentang Hak-hak Perempuan dalam Islam: Teks dan Interpretasi* (Abdul Kodir 2017). This book is beneficial for many readers to support the argument that the Prophet Muhammad was a feminist who supported women’s rights. Recently, Abdul Kodir published his new approach to reading the Qur’an called *mubadalah* approach (reciprocal reading), to produce a progressive interpretation of the Qur’an for gender justice (2019). This book helps readers to see gender justice brought in the Qur’anic verses.

In 2017, Fahmina published three books on (1) media coverage of Kongress Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Female *Ulama* Congress) conducted in April 2017 at Pesantren Kebon Jambu Cirebon, which had international media coverage as it was the first female *ulama* congress in the world attended by about a thousand attendants from all over Indonesia and international speakers and observers; (2) the issues discussed at the congress; and (3) the compilation of opinions on the congress. Overall, Fahmina’s publications promote gender justice and religious pluralism to make Indonesia a peaceful country.

Conclusion

The article has shown that Rahima and Fahmina are two Islamic institutions established in 2000 that are concerned with the development and empowerment of *pesantren* communities. Both Rahima and Fahmina started to be concerned with general issues of social injustice and *pesantren* development. But, then Rahima focused on women’s reproductive rights and other rights in Islam after its independence from P3M. In contrast, Fahmina continued its concern with general issues of social justice including gender justice. Although both Rahima and Fahmina claim that they are not NU-affiliated organizations and open to non-NU membership, they mainly consist of young NU members and their concern is also

with NU-based *pesantren* communities. The progressive nature of both Rahima and Fahmina's publications negates the existing label of NU as the traditionalist organization.

Both Rahima and Fahmina combined their social activism with intellectual engagement (*praxis*). They have contributed to the advancement of women's rights within Islam in Indonesia and in countering the increasing influence of radical, literalist, and formalist Islam that tend to subordinate women and pro-patriarchal system. In contrast to the dominant normative patriarchal discourse of women, derived mostly from the classical *fiqh*, Rahima and Fahmina have offered a grounded, substantive and contextual approach to Islam. They have provided space for critical thinking of the tradition, deconstruct the existing patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith, and reconstruct new knowledge that is pro-women by using an equal gender perspective.

Interestingly, the main actors for this intellectual engagement are Kiayi Husein Muhammad and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, both of them are male. This shows that biology is not determinant of patriarchal attitudes. Either male or female, without critical engagement with patriarchal injustice, can unconsciously perpetuate and support this patriarchal system. In contrast, with critical engagement and equal gender perspective, either male or female can support the struggles for gender justice.

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Notes

¹ See Saskia Wierienga (2002) for the New Order eradication of Indonesian women's movement, Gerakan Wanita Indonesia (Gerwani), for its affiliation with communist party and for its radical and political movement for women's rights. See also Suryakusuma (2011) for the New Order construction of women to be good mother and housewife, which she calls "state ibuism". Kalyanamitra was one exception for the non-government organization (NGO) which was founded on 28 March 1985 and survived during the New Order period. This NGO could exist within the New Order period might be because Kalyanamitra focus more on providing information or academic (research and publication) engagement, rather than social activism (Kalyanamitra 2014).

² This book was published by Mizan, Bandung, in 1997 and then re-printed several times.

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