

Hadji Agus Salim's Islamic Feminism Thoughts and Its Contribution to Contemporary Islamic Studies

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Abstract

This article explores the discourse on Islamic feminism through the perspective of Hadji Agus Salim. Using a descriptive-analytical method and an Islamic feminist approach rooted in harmony and justice—distinct from Western notions of equality—the study examines Salim's works as primary sources, supported by secondary materials such as books, journal articles, and online resources discussing his thought. The findings reveal: (1) Salim advocates for equality in rights and responsibilities between men and women, particularly in education; (2) he approaches the hijab with a contextual and historical understanding, considering *asbab al-nuzul*; (3) he views the veil not merely as a piece of cloth but as a potential symbol of oppression; (4) he favors monogamy over polygamy, emphasizing the challenges of achieving justice and the historical specificity of certain rulings; and (5) he acknowledges the inevitability of women assuming leadership roles. This study highlights Salim's nuanced stance on gender issues within an Islamic framework.

Keywords: Islamic Feminism, Gender, Islamic Studies, Justice, Harmony, Hadji Agus Salim.

Introduction

Studies on feminism, much like the Minangkabau saying, "immortal by heat, not weathered by rain," are timeless and enduring. They continue to evolve and remain dynamic, adapting to the progress of human civilization. One of these figures is Hadji Agus Salim (subsequently written as H. Agus Salim), who is also one of the founding parents of the Republic of Indonesia. Please note that Salim was a cousin of Rohana Kudus and lived during the same era as R. A. Kartini, Rahma El Yunusiah, Rohana Kudus, and

Rasuna Said. This period marked the first wave of the feminist revolution in the early 20th century, which significantly influenced the idea of women's emancipation.¹ Unfortunately, there is limited discourse on Salim's thoughts, particularly regarding gender studies or issues related to feminism, despite his progressive interpretations of Islamic principles. This gap may stem from the predominant focus on his roles as a diplomat² and nationalist leader³ and the overshadowing influence of contemporaries like Kartini in the feminist domain⁴. Furthermore, his nuanced approach, which sought to harmonize Islamic teachings with modern social realities, may have been underappreciated in an era when binary views on gender roles were more prominent⁵. Addressing this oversight could enrich contemporary Islamic feminist discourse by showcasing Salim's balanced and contextual perspectives on gender justice.

This is understandable because what is always highlighted about his figure is that he was an accomplished Muslim scholar and diplomat who was even nicknamed "The Grand Old Man" by Westerners at that time. Salim was a prominent intellectual and contemporary of Tjokroaminoto, whose ideas on blending Islam and socialism greatly influenced him.⁶ He was not only idealistic and critical of moral deviations, particularly during the Dutch colonial era in Indonesia, but also a humble and down-to-earth figure. His remarkable diplomatic skills, progressive Islamic thought, and mastery of nine foreign languages earned him widespread respect, even from his opponents. He was invited to give a lecture at Cornell University, United States in 1953.⁷

Salim presented Islam in a straightforward manner and far from being apologetic or conservative, including the controversial issue of jihad and women's issues which became a urgent topic of discussion among orientalist at that time.⁸ There are no adequate references regarding the reasons why Salim considers it necessary to discuss the issue of Islam and women as recorded in his 30th lecture. There are two possible indications. First, there was a request made to him, and second, Salim himself saw the need to present his views on women in Islam. If the second possibility occurs, Salim can be categorised as an Islamic figure who was perfect in initiating ideas about independence, equality and justice.

The author's literature review shows that few studies explore Islamic feminist thought or gender issues from H. Agus Salim's perspective. H. Agus Salim, as Syafii Maarif highlights, supports the principle of equal rights and responsibilities for men and women, particularly in education, though his thoughts are often explored only in fragments rather than in their full complexity. Moh. Roem also explained that H. Agus Salim emphasized the need for mutual understanding and understanding between men and women, as well as mutual respect. In this way, conformity and harmony can be achieved in building the ark of domestic life.⁹

Siti Ruhaini in her writing explains that the recommendation for Muslim women to lengthen the hijab (head covering) which is commonly worn by free women is interpreted culturally. This is to emphasize their identity which differentiates them from slaves who culturally do not wear a headscarf.¹⁰ Furthermore, in Ruhaini's view, he explained that H. Agus Salim interpreted the issue of the veil in the context of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. who have different positions and roles from other women.¹¹

Based on some of the supporting literature above and the results of a collection of lectures (lecture materials) at Cornell University, United States which were successfully recorded and printed by Mizan publishers in 2011 with the title *Hadji Agus Salim: Pesan-Pesan Islam*, there are at least some sparks of H. Agus Salim's Islamic feminist thoughts which can be further classified in the results and discussion chapters. In this way, this research will contribute to developing contemporary Islamic studies into a more inclusive, progressive and gender-free Islamic scientific discourse.

Research Method

This study's descriptive-analytical methodology incorporates an Islamic feminist perspective¹² that prioritizes justice and harmony over equality in the West. It emphasizes complementary gender roles rooted in divine design and moral responsibility, rather than seeking identical roles. H. Agus Salim, a key thinker in Indonesia's Islamic reform, addressed gender roles through a religious lens. His ideas align with the Islamic feminist approach: First, contextual fit. Salim's views are based on Islamic philosophy, making Western feminism less relevant to assess his contributions. Second, religious ethics. Salim integrated Islamic teachings into social structures, especially in his ideas on women's roles in family and nation-building. This concept can be demonstrated through: First, analyzing Salim's Writings. Explore his themes on gender, morality, and ethics, comparing his ideas with the Islamic feminist focus on justice and harmony. Second, case studies. Show examples, like his advocacy for women's education, to highlight the balance between empowerment and spiritual values. Third, evaluating other narratives. Compare Salim's views with Western feminism to highlight the distinct features of Islamic feminism. Importance of this Approach: First, preserves religious authenticity. Ensures research stays rooted in Islamic values, reflecting Salim's worldview. Second, avoids cultural reductionism. Goes beyond "modern" vs. "traditional" frameworks by using an Islamic perspective. Third, promotes contextual relevance. Respects Indonesia's religious and cultural dynamics, central to Salim's contributions and Islamic feminism. H. Agus Salim's writings served as this study's main data source. Books, journal papers, and other websites that explain the ideas of H. Agus Salim serve as secondary data for this study. First, qualitative analysis, a research approach that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the topic being researched, will be the data analysis technique employed in this study. Descriptive analysis comes in second. This study uses descriptive analysis to characterize Islamic feminism in modern Islamic studies from H. Agus Salim's point of view.

Tracing the Roots of Gender Equality as a Formula for Islamic Feminism

Gender is derived from the English gender, which denotes "sex". Men and women are labeled by their gender. Gender is often defined as the distinctions that are observed between men and women in terms of behavior and ideals. Gender differences are regarded as differences that are not inherent in God's nature or biology. It is important to distinguish between the terms gender and sex (gender), which refer to the concept of gender itself. According to Saladin¹³, "feminism and gender are synonymous because there are a lot of negative stereotypes associated with feminism." Thus, by coining more compassionate terminology like "gender harmony," feminists are inspired to develop fresh approaches to defending women's rights.¹⁴ It need not be equal to be harmonious. Since equality, much less sameness, is not necessary for harmony, Peace both within and outside the individual is the result of harmony, which also fosters strong bonds and total integration. Gender harmony, therefore, results from variation and diversity. Everyone positions themselves and performs in accordance with their abilities.¹⁵

Currently, society's definition of gender differs from what it originally understood. By demonstrating their strength in any situation, most men believe being a man is difficult. Being a woman is also neither simple nor easy for women. Such circumstances render women helpless and reliant on men.¹⁶ Women and men are not compatible, based on gender and nature, due to the nature that has been predetermined since birth by Allah SWT. Islam, with its beliefs, treats women differently. Women are free to live the lives they want. Because society believes that women will always be inferior to males, it occasionally restricts the independence of women. Women were seen as simply useful beings, even in the time before Rasulullah SAW. Women are viewed as the second sex in a number of faiths and

philosophical systems.¹⁷ When religion forms a perception, it typically considers the issue as it is, not as it should be. When we observed the phenomenon of women becoming more prominent in social life, we became concerned.

A commentator interprets women in the al-Qur`an in light of their experiences and social background, which are thought to have cornered women in their place in society at a period when there is no sense of fairness, particularly in the applications of sharia or fiqh.¹⁸ Since women and men are equal in harmony, women in the Islamic religious sciences have a powerful, distinct, and unwavering role in defending the religion.¹⁹ Chairil and Saladin elucidated that the pursuit of harmony, fairness, and equal rights through the prism of the Islamic worldview necessitates a moral foundation that places a premium on the ethical evaluation of human life. A legal theory that solely takes into account one's gender would never be able to capture the spirit of justice.²⁰

On the other hand, gender and feminist thinkers put forward the fact that since the beginning the discussion about women has been unequal, unfair and marginalized. Women have historically been discussed with various biases—whether political, ideological, or gendered—when considering themselves, their roles, or their thoughts. These biases ultimately appear to be about women and for women's interests, but in practice, they benefit men and harm women, both implicitly and explicitly. For example, discourses that are familiar in society, such as how women's bodies are constructed as a symbol of purity, are then used as propaganda to confine women to the house and keep them away from public access. At first glance, it looks like protecting or guarding women from the "dirty" outside world, but it reduces the development of women's potential to take part in society.

One of the most debated biases in the discourse around women's issues stems from religion, including not just Islam but all major world religions.²¹ In Islam, for example, women are included in special discussions because, in many verses, the al-Qur`an discusses women on certain topics, such as topics regarding inheritance, marriage, and leadership. Considering that the al-Qur`an is the main reference in determining legal rules in Islam, women automatically become the object of discussion of Islamic law. This brings the conversation about women to a singular point as humans. At the same time, she contains different assumptions from men and specifically has her world which is later known in various references to Women's fiqh.

This is where the "tension" begins between genderists and feminists in understanding the instructions or rules in Islamic law. The struggle of genderists and feminists, or the women's movement which seeks to remove women from the inequality and injustice created by men's interests, are "accused" of not recognizing the differences between men and women or that women do have their world. The women's movement, which had a significant impact on many women, particularly those in the Islamic world, was perceived as an external threat, which the West later blamed for this. Not as a result of education in the nations of the world which has implications for social change.

Muslim feminism, the term given to the movement advocating for women's liberation within the Islamic world, was initially perceived as an internal challenge that required a distinct approach. The most common occurrence is that they are often accused of heresy or unbelief. However, what transpired is that many Muslim feminist ideas have served as a turning point in interpretive discourse within the Islamic world. The "fight over" the legitimacy of the interpretation of the verses of the al-Qur`an is inevitable. Debates on interpretation and understanding involving various viewpoints from scientific disciplines have given rise to many interesting discussions. In fact, from this gender study, a typology of Hadith emerged which is called Hadith which tends to lack respect or lower the level and dignity of women. This is a Hadith cluster that has not been discovered in the Scholastic era.

Referring to the aforementioned issue and drawing on Abdullah's views, two primary approaches to interpreting and understanding verses can be identified: the textual approach and the contextual approach. Each of them gave birth to a lot of thoughts which were then grouped into literalist, moderate and progressive groups. Readiness and unpreparedness to face these developments are what is important to use as a measuring tool to prove how close and how far the Islamic world is facing the challenges of the times which are caused, among other things, by the education process (education for all; co-education). In the scholastic era, no female interpreters came to the fore, because women did not have access to education, did not have the opportunity to study, go to school, let alone research as well and evenly as is found today.²²

In responding to these ongoing changes, Amin Abdullah emphasized the need for a meeting point between religion and feminism which would lead to position taking both of which should no longer be show of power or conflict with each other, but look for a common ground for negotiation (consensus). These meeting points can give rise to the possibility of reconstructing established meanings starting in families, institutions and society. Furthermore, the Islamic concepts of justice and harmony transcend their factual and material contexts. However, it also includes features of duty, mutual support, rights and obligations guaranteed, and spiritual elements. Islam does not view men and women as distinct, rival, and independent beings. It is not possible to view the existence of differentiating rights, obligations, and *rukhsah* (relief) provisions in the Shari'a as discriminatory or prioritizing practices. This indicates that Islam promotes gender equality and peace between men and women, free from prejudice and discrimination.²³

Feminist theory argues that gendered language reflects and reinforces hierarchical gender relations, legitimizing discrimination against women. In Islamic studies, the deconstruction of gendered language aims to promote interpretations of Islam that are inclusive and equitable for women.²⁴ The al-Qur'an itself emphasizes principles that align with gender harmony and justice:²⁵

First, men and women are equally servants of God: Both genders are fundamentally equal in their role as servants to God, meaning they are both accountable to Him for their actions, worship, and ethical conduct. Secondly, both sexes are equally caliphs (vicegerents) on Earth: Just as men are viewed as stewards of the Earth, women share this responsibility. The term "caliph" refers to a vicegerent, or someone entrusted with the task of governing or managing the affairs of the world in accordance with God's will. Third, the primordial covenant is accepted by both men and women: This refers to the concept in Islamic theology that, before human beings were sent to Earth, they made a covenant with God to worship Him and uphold His commands. Both men and women, as part of humanity, accepted this covenant equally. Fourth, both sexes actively participate in the cosmic drama: The "cosmic drama" refers to the overarching narrative of existence, including creation, the test of life, and the ultimate return to God. Both men and women have an active role to play in this divine narrative, contributing to the unfolding of God's plan on Earth. Fifth, both sexes are capable of achieving success: Success in this context refers to fulfilling one's purpose in life by living in accordance with God's will. Both men and women are equally capable of achieving this success through faith, good deeds, and devotion to God.

Short Biography of H. Agus Salim

H. Agus Salim is both a national hero and a person of great intelligence. At the base of Mount Singgalang, in District IV Koto, he was born in Koto Gadang, which is divided from Bukittinggi by the precipitous Sianok Gorge. From this area, many scholars were born. This is because of the community's encouragement as well as the availability of superior seeds. On October 8 1884, Salim was born here.

Agus Salim, originally named "Masyhudul Haq", was the fifth son of five brothers. His father was Sutan Muhammad Salim, a chief prosecutor who once served in Tanjung Pinang (Riau). His mother's name was Siti Zainab, while Sutan Muhammad Salim's father or Masyhudul Haq's grandfather was named Abdurrahman Dt. Rangkeyo Basa was also the chief prosecutor in Padang for 50 years.²⁶ Agus Salim's childhood was filled with a happy atmosphere even though he had many siblings, all of them were still able to go to school. Agus Salim is an intelligent child and is good at getting along with his family, friends and village people. Thus, Mashhudul Haq came from an educated and bureaucratic family at that time. Therefore, he and his fourteen siblings received a decent education.²⁷

At the age of 7, he entered the ELS (Europesche Lagere School) school in his village, which only accepted European students. Even though he was forced to study a foreign language, he was able to attend the school because he was the son of a prosecutor and was considered to be in the same position as Dutch children. At school, Agus Salim always showed his intelligence, as evidenced by his being a class champion at that time. Agus Salim was not only able to compete with the intelligence of his fellow Indonesian children but also Dutch children. Agus Salim's intelligence at school does not mean he obtained it without studying as people have said, but rather he obtained it through tenacious struggle, as was once said to the late H. Zainal: People's assumptions are wrong, people's praise that I am smart is an advantage because maybe they never saw me studying at home.²⁸ After graduating from ELS he passed the entrance exam for HBS (Hoogere Burger School), a Dutch secondary school in Jakarta, with excellent scores. HBS is an education that was implemented using the Western (Dutch) education system for 5 years which had a big influence on Agus Salim, who increasingly did not believe in the teachings of the Islamic religion. The name change from Masyhudul Haq to Agus Salim occurred when he was at HBS, and he lived in the house of one of T.H. Kock's families, one of the teachers at HBS. In that family, he was looked after by a servant who came from Java. The waiter called him "Gus", means a good son. Then they called him Agus, then called him by his father's name so he became "Agus Salim".²⁹

At HBS Salim was also noted as a smart student who was able to finish school with the best grades of all HBS in the Dutch East Indies at that time in 1903. He wanted to continue his education in the medical field in the Netherlands, but that was his dream. foundered due to a lack of funds. He also tried to get a government scholarship, but in the end, he couldn't get that assistance, so Salim's formal education only ended at HBS. Even the teachers' efforts so that Salim could continue his lessons at *School Totoploiding of Inlandesce* (STOVIA) also failed. Finally, he went to Riau, where he worked as a translator and notary assistant.³⁰ The news of Salim's failure was heard by R.A. Kartini (1879-1904), Kartini advised the Dutch government, that the share of the scholarship obtained was delegated to Salim. This proposal was well received by the government and was then offered to Salim. But Salim considered Kartini's methods to be an insult to him. In the end, he refused to accept the offer, saying "If the government sent me because of Kartini's recommendation, not the government's wishes, it would be better not to." So since that incident, he decided not to continue school.³¹

Salim stopped going to school and that doesn't mean he stopped learning because he was blessed with an intelligent brain where one of his features was the ability to understand and use foreign languages, such as Dutch, English, German, French, Japanese, Arabic, Turkish, in addition to other languages. regional languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, and others. When he was 22 years old, precisely in October 1906, Salim accepted an offer from the colonial government to become an employee of the Dutch Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.³² With a heavy heart and family considerations, Salim accepted the offer and left for Jeddah as an employee of the Dutch Consulate. For Salim, disappointment

with his ideals being thwarted by political discrimination in obtaining a scholarship has given rise to an attitude of antipathy towards the Dutch colonial government.³³

Meanwhile, for his family, the offer as an employee of the Dutch Consulate in Jeddah, apart from having a job with quite high prestige, was also a golden opportunity for Salim to increase his knowledge of religion. It was hoped by his family that Salim would learn from his uncle, Shaykh Ahmad Khatib, who had lived in Mecca since 1879 and had held the position of imam and teacher at the al-Haram Mosque.³⁴ During his five years working as an employee of the Dutch Consulate in Jeddah, apart from work, Salim spent a lot of time studying Islamic teachings with his uncle, Sheikh Khatib. Armed with extensive experience and knowledge, especially knowledge of religion and Arabic, he returned to Indonesia in 1911. Upon arrival in his homeland, Salim worked at the Public Works Service (BOW) office in Jakarta and was active in journalism and political activities. His activities in the field of journalism continued until he finally became *Baroe Indies Daily Leader* in Jakarta. Then set up the *Fadjar Asia newspaper*. Next as Editor *Moestika Daily* in Yogyakarta City and opened an office at *Advice and Information Bureau Penerangan Oemoem* (AIPO).³⁵

Several written works by H. Agus Salim, including *Riwayat Kedatangan Islam di Indonesia, Dari Hal Ilmu Qur'an, Muhammad voor en na de Hijrah, Gods Laatste Boodschap, Keterangan Filsafat Tentang Tauchid, Takdir dan Tawakal, Jejak Langkah Haji Agus Salim* A collection of Agus Salim's works compiled by his colleagues, October 1954). Apart from that, H. Agus Salim also translated several well-known works, such as *Menjinakkan Perempuan Garang* (from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*), *Cerita Mowgli Anak Didikan Rimba* (from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*), dan *Sejarah Dunia* (from E. Molt).

In his political career, in 1915, Salim joined Sarekat Islam and became the second leader after Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto, and was actively involved in the political arena in Indonesia, one of which was participating in the founding of the Indonesian Sarekat Islam Party and the Awareness Movement Party.³⁶ A participant in the Volksraad (1921–1924) and the Committee of Nine in the Investigative Body for Preparatory Efforts for Independence, which drafted the 1945 Constitution, were among Salim's roles during the Indonesian independence fight, Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 1946 Sjahrir II Cabinet and the 1947 III Cabinet, opening Indonesia's diplomatic relations with Arab countries, especially Egypt in 1947, in the 1947 Amir Sjarifuddin Cabinet, Minister of Foreign Affairs; in the 1948–1949 Hatta Cabinet, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Between 1946–1950 he was like a bright star in Indonesia's political upheaval, so he was often nicknamed "The Grand Old Man". He also served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia in the presidential cabinet and from 1950 until the end of his life was trusted as Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 1952, he served as Chairman of the Honorary Council of the Indonesian Journalists Association. Despite his sharp pen and harsh criticism, H. Agus Salim is known to still respect boundaries and uphold the journalistic code of ethics.³⁷

Following his political retirement, he penned the book *Bagaimana Takdir, Tawakal dan Tauchid Harus Dipahamkan?* in 1953, which was then changed to *Keterangan Filsafat Tentang Takdir, Tawakal, and Tauchid*. Which was then corrected to become *Keterangan Filsafat Tentang Tauchid, Takdir dan Tawakal*. He died on November 4 1954 at RSU Jakarta and was buried in the Kalibata Heroes' Cemetery, Jakarta. Salim in the history of the national movement and the struggle to win the independence of the Indonesian nation and state, is something real and undeniable. He was a great figure who was able to give birth to future leaders of the nation and state, such as Muhammad Roem and Muhammad Natsir. As a great figure and accomplished diplomat, Salim has been very instrumental in bringing the Indonesian nation to the international arena as a nation that has integrity, self-respect, principles, and a clear and outgoing vision in global relations. Apart from that, Salim is also a national figure who has a

far-sighted view. He also has a clear vision and thoughts, such as his desire to make the Indonesian nation a country that still adheres to the basic principles of Islam.³⁸ In this connection, Madjid said that Salim was known not only as a national figure and freedom fighter but also as a modernist Islamic thinker.³⁹

The socio-cultural background of Minangkabau played a significant role in shaping Salim's intellectual character, given its traditions of Islamic education in *surau* (prayer houses), the value of deliberation, and the adaptability of its customs. In the context of the *kaum tua* (traditionalists) and *kaum muda* (modernists) dynamic, as discussed by Abdullah, Minangkabau served as a ground for dialectics between tradition and reform, influencing Salim's thought.⁴⁰ Hamka's work, "Adat Minangkabau Menghadapi Revolusi", highlights the ability of Minangkabau traditions to adapt to changing times, akin to how Salim blended traditional values with Islamic modernism. The culture of deliberation and the significant role of women in Minangkabau's matrilineal system also enriched his personality, particularly as a skilled diplomat.⁴¹ In summary, Minangkabau provided the cultural and religious foundation that shaped Salim into a dynamic and adaptive figure, deeply rooted in tradition while responding to the challenges of modernity and colonialism.

H. Agus Salim's Islamic Feminist Thoughts and Contributions to Contemporary Islamic Studies

First, the issue of women's position in society, especially regarding education. Quoting from one of Buya Syafii Maarif's writings about *Sosok Idealis yang Selalu Mencari* contained in the ontology book *H. Agus Salim (1884-1954) tentang Perang, Jihad, dan Pluralisme* explained that H. Agus Salim, as a modern Muslim thinker, would undoubtedly support the idea of women and men to have equal rights and responsibilities, particularly in the area of education. This can be traced in one of Salim's quotes in the newspaper *Neratja* (4 September 1917), where he explained his views:

"When a girl grows up and has left school, then in the opinion of many people, she should have a husband, that is, she does not need to earn a living like a boy. Therefore, women do not need to be taught as much as men. However, in our opinion, this thought is simply misguided."⁴²

In addition, he further stated:

"Even if we assume that all women get a mate, there is no less need for intelligence, and skill. The husband has to work to earn a living for his wife's children, but the wife is the one who has to handle the shopping, run the household, and educate and teach her children. So, in general, earning money and paying for the household is easier than holding money and driving the household."⁴³

Salim then concluded that:

"Men and women must understand each other, respect each other, and at all times each person doesn't need to prioritize himself or his party. In this way, conformity and harmony can be achieved, which is very necessary to become a reason for living together, towards and pursuing the same goal, which must be for every human being: Personal abilities must be used to achieve the needs of the public interest and benefit."⁴⁴

Second, regarding the issue of the *hijab* or headscarf. Quoting from one of Yatin writings with the title *More Advanced Than Kartini's View* contained in the ontology book *H. Agus Salim (1884-1954) on War, Jihad, and Pluralism* explains that in surah al-Ahzab verse 59 regarding the issue of the *hijab* or headscarf, Salim also hints at a more contextual understanding through a historical approach taking into account *asbabun nuzul* that verse. The recommendation for Muslim women to lengthen the *hijab* (head covering) which is commonly worn by free women is interpreted culturally. They are advised to keep their headscarves long so they can be easily recognized and not disturbed. H. Agus Salim strengthens

his argument by explaining that previously in Arab times Ignorance that there was a group of "free" women (meaning not slaves) who went out at night to "desire" in the middle of the desert.⁴⁵

When they returned home they were teased by a group of young men. They complained to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. about the event. When reprimanded by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the young men said that they did not know that they were free people. In dark conditions, it was very difficult to distinguish between free women and slaves. The suggestion to lengthen the *hijab* is intended to emphasize their identity, distinguishing them from slaves who culturally do not wear the *hijab*.⁴⁶ This means that here Salim provides a rational ethical understanding behind a text of the al-Qur`an which contains commands, obligations or prohibitions and cannot be separated from *asbabun nuzul* so that Muslims can avoid blind obedience.

Third, the problem of veils or barriers. In the notes of Collin Brown (a British political journalist) in his book *Soekarno: Women and the National Movement*, Salim once tore the veil that separated men and women at events *Young Islamic Association* (JIB) in 1927. According to Salim, the *tabir* is not just a piece of cloth, but contains a symbol of "oppression".⁴⁷ Furthermore, he explains that it is not only the oppression of women by men as a disguise for following "tradition", but more broadly the oppression of the new by the old, of evolution by orthodoxy. This is certainly unacceptable.⁴⁸ Salim interprets the issue of the veil in the context of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad SAW., who have different positions and roles from other women.

These privileges include the inability to marry after the Prophet Muhammad SAW. death, namely the veil that separates them from other Muslims and the type of clothing they wear indicates the freedom of movement and activities of other Muslim women. In other words, things specifically addressed to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. cannot be generalized to apply to other women. Salim hereby shows a very progressive and contextual attitude by "localizing" this verse according to its scope, namely as a "barrier" between Muslims and the wives of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. He emphasized that this trend no longer applies to Indonesia. Salim also rejects the association of this veil with the problem of "lust", as claimed by conservatives and fundamentalists, who argue that the veil serves as a safeguard against societal moral corruption and a means to control women's modesty in public spaces. For example, al-Albani emphasizes that the *hijab* is a religious obligation to protect women from being a source of temptation and to maintain societal morality.⁴⁹ In his tafsir, Quthb discusses the necessity of the *hijab* as a means to ensure modesty and prevent societal chaos stemming from unregulated interactions between men and women.⁵⁰ Maududi argues that the veil functions to preserve societal harmony by minimizing distractions caused by physical attraction and emphasizing the separation of gender roles.⁵¹

All issues related to gender are always associated with "lust" which disrupts worship, including the issue of the veil, both in study programs and rows in prayer. Salim shifts the classical view of the *tabir* by highlighting the "spirit of the times and tajdid" as well as the cultural context of the *tabir*'s presence in the Prophet Muhammad SAW's home, which is merely a question of "social appropriateness". Fourth, the problem of polygamy. The issue of polygamy is enough to invite serious polemics between two groups, both those who are pro and those who are against. In this condition, Salim first put forward a view regarding the postulates of polygamy which some Islamic jurisprudence scholars echoed at that time. As in surah an-Nisa' verse 3 regarding men who marry one, two, three, or four women.⁵²

For Salim, in the context of this verse, it is intended for certain specific people, and not for just any man to marry two, three, or four wives, as is the norm in other societies. Because the meaning of "doing justice" here is not only interpreted as being fair in the definition of materialistic (physical) calculations or purely biological needs. However, things are non-materialistic (non-physical). It is certainly quite a

dilemma to measure "fair dealing." What mostly happens is that it benefits men more than women. Apart from that, the polygamy argument must be known first *Asbabun Nuzul* well; otherwise, it will just be a mere argument for justification. Salim said: "Islam does look at the marriage of a couple, that is between a husband and a wife, as an ideal marriage. And every pious Muslim truly strives to adhere to this understanding. And when he strives for this, he will experience it, indeed this is the most noble marriage."⁵³

From this, it can be seen that Salim prefers monogamy to polygamy because the benchmark of "doing justice" is still a polemic and dilemma and there are "social-historical aspects" that only apply at that time, but are not necessarily relevant to current developments. Fifth, The topic of women's leadership in the home and in society comes last. On this issue, Salim has a fairly accommodating view of the inevitability of women as leaders. One of them is due to the widespread progress in education and various political and public sphere involvement. He gave an example in various Islamic countries where women have power as kings, such as the Sultanate of Ternate, which was once headed by a female king.⁵⁴ However, he slightly forgot to refer to the leadership of Queen Balqis, who is recorded in the al-Qur`an as a great and wise leader who brought her country to prosperity.

Many people forget that this ideal image of a country came into being from the wise hands of a woman. There is ambiguity about women's leadership in the home, despite the fact that Salim offers progressive, reasonable, and consistent ideas. He asserts that men occupy the primary leadership role in the home. Because, according to him, "There is a division of power in the husband-wife relationship. The husband has the main position in social affairs, but in household matters (private space), the wife holds the main position. This is firmly stated in the Hadith of the Prophet SAW, namely that a wife is the chief executive of her husband's household affairs, and she is the one who is responsible for the things in the house and for the people she takes care of."⁵⁵

This argument certainly seems contradictory and problematic when faced with a situation where a woman is both a wife and head of state. This partial and selective argument has the potential to degrade Islam to uphold a patriarchal culture amidst the incessant wave of democratization. However, this ambivalence should not be used to give judgement who excessive his thoughts, because he belongs to his time. Fragmentary results of his progressive, moderate and actual thoughts from the figure of Salim are an example and role model for the nation's future generations.

Conclusion

In carrying out the theme of Islamic feminism as one of the studies in Islamic Studies, it is necessary to emphasize the meeting point between Islam and feminism which leads to position taking the two of them should no longer be in conflict with each other, but should be looking for a common ground of consensus. These meeting points can give rise to the possibility of reconstructing established meanings starting in families, institutions and society. In addition, the Islamic concepts of justice and harmony transcend their factual and material contexts. However, it also includes features of duty, mutual support, rights and obligations guaranteed, and spiritual elements. Islam does not view men and women as distinct, rival, and independent beings. Permission (relief) under the Shari'a does not imply discrimination or priority because of the variations in rights, obligations, and conditions. This indicates that Islam promotes gender equality and peace between men and women free from prejudice and discrimination. This is where H. Agus Salim's contribution to thinking about gender equality based on Islam was not only ahead of the times, the conservative walls of the *ulama* which he fought in a very brave way,

because he had the authority to do so, but he also went beyond his time. Without harmony and suitability between men and women, it will be impossible for a nation to achieve progress.

Endnotes

- ¹ Ema Pratama Agustiniingsih, "Pergerakan Perempuan di Minangkabau: Kiprah Rohana Kudus dalam Nasionalisme Tahun 1912-1972," *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 3, no. 2 (2019): 261, <https://doi.org/10.22437/titian.v3i2.8180>.
- ² Haidar Musyafa, *Hadji Agus Salim: Diplomat Nyentrik Penjaga Martabat Republik* (Tangerang: Imania, 2019), 30.
- ³ Wildan Insan Fauzi and Neni Nurmawati Hasanah, "DIPLOMAT DARI NEGERI KATA-KATA (Diplomasi Haji Agus Salim Pada Inter Asian Relation Conference dan Komisi Tiga Negara)," *HISTORIA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Penelitian Sejarah* 2, no. 2 (2019): 116, <https://doi.org/10.17509/historia.v2i2.16625>.
- ⁴ Siti Ruhaini Dzuha Yatin, "Lebih Maju dari Pandangan Kartini," in *H. Agus Salim (1884-1945) Tentang Perang, Jihad, dan Pluralisme*, ed. St. Sularto (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2004), 76.
- ⁵ Sarifa Suhra, "Kesetaraan Gender dalam Perspektif al-Qur'an dan Implikasinya terhadap Hukum Islam," *Jurnal Al-Ulum* 13, no. 2 (2013): 373, <https://journal.iaingorontalo.ac.id/index.php/au/article/view/193>.
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- ⁷ Fauzi and Hasanah, "Diplomat dari Negeri Kata-Kata (Diplomasi Haji Agus Salim pada Inter Asian Relation Conference dan Komisi Tiga Negara), 111.
- ⁸ Yatin, "Lebih Maju dari Pandangan Kartini, 76"
- ⁹ Mohammad Roem and et al, *Jejak Langkah Haji A. Salim* (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1954), 28.
- ¹⁰ Yatin, "Lebih Maju dari Pandangan Kartini, 77"
- ¹¹ Brown Collin, *Soekarno: Perempuan dan Pergerakan Nasional*, Terj. Tubagus and Arie Rukmantara (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 1990), 35.
- ¹² Henri Shalahuddin, *Ideologi Gender dalam Studi Islam: Klarifikasi & Solusi* (Jakarta: UNIDA Gontor Press & INSISTS, 2022), 3-4.
- ¹³ Mufidah Cholil, *Bingkai Sosial Gender: Islam, Strukturasi, dan Konstruksi Sosial* (Malang: UIN-Maliki Press, 2010), 53.
- ¹⁴ Shalahuddin, *Ideologi Gender dalam Studi Islam: Klarifikasi & Solusi*, 56.
- ¹⁵ Henri Shalahuddin, *Indahnya Keserasian Gender dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Insists, 2020), 47.
- ¹⁶ Lilis Fauziah Balgis, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam al-Qur'an Perspektif Adil Gender," *Mumtaz: Jurnal Studi al-Qur'an dan Keislaman* 6, no. 1 (2022): 130, <https://doi.org/10.36671/mumtaz.v6i01.279>.
- ¹⁷ Putri Alya Nurhaliza et al., "Peran Sosial Perempuan dalam Perspektif al-Qur'an," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2021): 132.
- ¹⁸ Eni Zulaiha and Busro, "Prinsip Liberalisme dalam Metodologi Tafsir Feminis: Pembacaan pada Karya Karya Husein Muhammad," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora* 18, no. 34 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v18i1.3527>.
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- ²⁰ Aisyah Chairil and Henri Shalahuddin, "Studi Kritis Feminist Legal Theory Menurut Perspektif Islamic Worldview," *Mimbar Hukum* 33, no. 1 (2021): 189, <https://doi.org/10.22146/mh.v33i1.1948>.
- ²¹ Fatema Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (New York City: Basic Books, 1992), 38-39.
- ²² M. Amin Abdullah, "Gender dalam Studi Keislaman," in *Kata Pengantar dalam Feminisme Muslim di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2019), ix.
- ²³ Henri Shalahuddin, "Konsep Kesetaraan dalam Kesaksian Perempuan: Antara Perspektif Wahyu dan Perspektif Gender," *TSQAFAH: Jurnal Peradaban Islam* 12, no. 2 (2016): 375-376, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v12i2.761>.
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- ²⁵ Suhra, "Kesetaraan Gender dalam Perspektif al-Qur'an dan Implikasinya terhadap Hukum Islam, 385."
- ²⁶ Syofian Ras Burhany and et al, *Riwayat Hidup dan Perjuangan 20 Ulama Besar Sumatera Barat* (Padang: Islamic Centre Sumatera Barat, 1981), 77.
- ²⁷ Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1991), 54.
- ²⁸ Suhatno and et al, *Tokoh-tokoh Pemikir Paham Kebangsaan* (Jakarta: Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumen Sejarah Nasional, 1995), 67.
- ²⁹ Musyafa, *Hadji Agus Salim: Diplomat Nyentrik Penjaga Martabat Republik*, 112.
- ³⁰ Bustomi Menggugat, *Salimisten; Pemikiran Politik (Luar Negeri) Haji Agus Salim* (Surabaya: Saga, 2016), 43.
- ³¹ Suradi, *H. Agus Salim dan Konflik Politik dan Syariat Islam* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1997), 62.
- ³² Intan Setianingsih and Nurrohm, "Telaah Historiografi terhadap Buku Hadji Agus Salim: Diplomat Nyentrik Penjaga Martabat Republik Karya Haidar Musyafa," *Jurnal Sejarah Islam* 2, no. 2 (2023): 34, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jsij.v2i02.9608>.

- ³³Panitia Buku Peringatan, *Seratus Tahun Haji Agus Salim* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1984), 28.
- ³⁴Tim Penyusun, *Ensiklopedi Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Djembatan, 1994), 36.
- ³⁵Mukayat, *Haji Agus Salim: The Grand Old Man of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Pembinaan Sekolah Dasar, 1985), 41-42.
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- ³⁹Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam dan Politik Pergerakan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Jurnal Paramadina, 2003), 84.
- ⁴⁰Taufik Abdullah, *Sekolah dan Politik; Pergerakan Kaum Muda di Sumatera Barat, 1927-1933* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah2, 2018), 85.
- ⁴¹Hamka, *Adat Minangkabau Menghadapi Revolusi* (Depok: Gema Insani Press, 2021), 68.
- ⁴²H. Agus Salim, "Hak dan Kewajiban antara Laki-laki dan Perempuan," *Neratja*, 1917.
- ⁴³Ahmad Syafii Maarif, "Sosok Idealis yang Selalu Mencari," in *H. Agus Salim (1884-1945) Tentang Perang, Jihad, dan Pluralisme*, ed. St. Sularto (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2004), 13-14.
- ⁴⁴Roem and et al, *Jejak Langkah Haji A. Salim*, 28.
- ⁴⁵Yatin, "Lebih Maju dari Pandangan Kartini, 76."
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷Panitia Buku Peringatan, *Seratus Tahun Haji Agus Salim*, 29.
- ⁴⁸Collin, *Soekarno: Perempuan dan Pergerakan Nasional*, 35.
- ⁴⁹Muhammad Nasir al-Din Al-Albani, *Hijab Al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah Fi al-Kitab Wa al-Sunnah* (Al-Maktab al-Islam: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1987), 21.
- ⁵⁰Sayyid Quthb, *Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Qur'an di Bawah Naungan al-Qur'an*, ed. Trans. As'ad Yasin (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2003), 17.
- ⁵¹Abu A'la Maududi, *Purdah and the Status of Woman in Islam* (Chicago: Kazi Pubns Inc, 1991), 64.
- ⁵²H. Agus Salim, *Pesan-pesan Islam: Rangkaian Kuliah Musim Semi 1953 di Cornell University Amerika Serikat*, ed. J. Taufik Salim (Bandung: Mizan, 2011), 96-97.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*

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