

RIYĀḌ AL-ṢĀLIḤĀT AND THE CIRCULATION OF GENDER CONSERVATISM AMONG URBAN MUSLIMAH IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

In 2014, a mushaf named Ummul Mukminin was published by a Quran publisher in Bandung, Indonesia. It targets female Muslim, as its cover suggested by self-claiming “Qur’an Terjemah untuk Perempuan”. It contains official translation of the Quran by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2009 edition) and some additional texts in the back, including a “chapter” under the title “20 Wasiat Rasulullah untuk Perempuan”. This part contains text and translation of twenty hadiths from the Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt Quṭūf Tarbawiyya min Bustān al-Nubuwwa by Badawī Maḥmūd al-Sheikh. This research shows that out of twenty hadiths, only seven come from the Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt while the rest have no roots in the very book. It also finds that the gender narrative conveyed the chapter in particular and the paratext as a whole, contains subordination, domestication, and attempts to maintain certain stereotypes on women—all being part of conservative gender paradigm. Observation and interviews I conducted shows that the narrative has successfully penetrated the minds of urban Muslimahs. This research also raises a hypothesis that Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt is likely to be part of a bigger family of popular Islamist literature.

Keywords: Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt, gender conservatism, urban Muslimah, Islamist literature.

1. Introduction

This article delves into a mushaf named Ummul Mukminin. It was published by a Quran publisher in Bandung in 2014. While the logo says that the publisher’s name is Penerbit Wali, the tanda tashih says that the name is rather Mikraj Khazanah Ilmu. It clearly targets

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Muslimahs (female Muslim), as its cover suggested by self-claiming “Qur’an Terjemah untuk Perempuan”. This muṣḥaf contains Quran translation and has paratext in the back of it. This paratext is what makes it important to be a research subject. The paratext becomes the selling point of the product and contains explanations about women.

The paratext is divided into four “chapters”, one of which, the third, contains several “subchapters”. The first chapter is entitled “Riyadus Salihat: 20 Wasiat Rasulullah untuk Perempuan (Riyadus Salihat: 20 Testaments of the Prophet [Muhammad] for Women)”; the second chapter is entitled “Islamic Law on Women”; the third chapter is entitled “Women’s Position in the Qur’an”; the fourth and the last chapter is entitled “Women in the Qur’an”. Following the last chapter is the marāji’ that contains a list of cited literature.

If we look at the list of references at the very back, we will find that Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt referred to in this muṣḥaf is Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt Quṭūf Tarbawiyya min Bustān al-Nubuwwa by Badawī Maḥmūd al-Sheikh. The title of this book is interesting because it is similar to the title of a very popular book among Indonesian Muslims, Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn. With that title, Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt seems to say that it is Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn for women.

Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt contains more than one hundred hadiths with brief explanations of foreign, difficult words or phrases and explanations of the content of the hadith. However, Ummul Mukminin only mentions twenty hadiths in the first chapter of the paratext. Are the twenty hadiths selected from Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt? What do these hadiths say to the reader? Furthermore, what does this paratext as a whole explain to the reader? This article will answer these questions.

Discussing a muṣḥaf that identify itself as targeting women, this article joins the discussion with researches on muṣḥaf for women. In addition, since the muṣḥaf contains a translation of the Qur’an, this article will also have a wedge with research on the translation of the Qur’an.

2. Literature Review

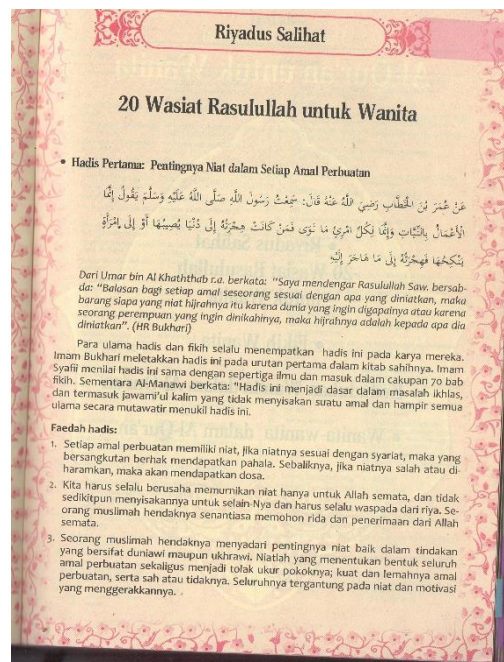
2.1. Is “20 Prophets’ Testaments for Women” the Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt?

The first chapter of the paratext of Ummul Mukminin is entitled “Riyadus Salihat: 20 Wasiat Rasulullah untuk Perempuan”. This chapter contains twenty-two hadiths that explain twenty points regarding the character of a Muslimah, pious and righteous woman. Two of these twenty points of explanation contain two hadiths of the same context which also appear side by side in the books of hadith. As the rule says, these hadiths do not have a complete chain of chains.

They appear as mu'allaq hadith. Only one or two names from the chain of transmission appear in the text. However, the second narration that appears in the same point gets the chain of sanad mentioned in full form, from the youngest transmitter (the direct informant of the author of a hadith book) to the last, oldest informant from the generation of companion (ṣaḥāba). This exception, as I will explain later, turns out to be problematic in the aspect of 'ulūm al-ḥadīth.

At each point, there is a phrase that appears as the title (not “subsection”) and explains the gist of the point to be explained. The Arabic text then appears, followed by a free translation into Indonesian which ends with a description of the source in brackets. In different quantities and depths, Tim Penyusun (a group of authors of the paratext) explains the hadith and sometimes relates it to the lives of the women that the Tim witnesses. The last part of each point mentions, in numeric pointers, lessons learned from the hadiths and explanations that have been presented previously. In this section, the Tim also sometimes relates it to the lives of women the Tim witnesses. Text Appendix of 20 Prophet's Testaments for Women as shown on

Figure 1. Text Appendix of 20 Prophet's Testaments for Women



With such a composition, under the chapter heading, readers will think that these twenty points come from a book entitled Riyadus Salihat (riyāḍ: gardens, ṣālīḥāt: righteous women). They are translations or summaries of the explanations contained in the kitab Riyāḍ al-Ṣālīḥāt.

However, based on my source search, only seven (fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth, twelfth, thirteenth, nineteenth hadith) are actually mentioned in the book, although sometimes with different wording variations from those chosen by the kitab. Three hadiths (seventh, eleventh, and sixteenth) pick a text different from that in the kitab though they both discuss about the same theme. The remaining ten are nowhere to be found in the book.

From the first category, muṣḥaf “correct” the text of the hadith to be more faithful to the source book—with this term I mean books of hadith collection, be it al-kutub al-sitta, tis’a, or beyond. We can see this in the thirteenth hadith. In the kitab, we find this text. In this text, the kitab mentions ba’d al-ruwāt, while the source book mentions ghair Musaddad. Muṣḥaf choose a text that is more faithful to the source book.

In other case, twelfth hadith, the kitab and muṣḥaf choose different wording of the text. The kitab mentions the text that We can find this version in Sunan Abī Dāwūd. However, the version chosen by the muṣḥaf is also found in the same source book.

Having the explanations in the kitab and the muṣḥaf compared, I did not find a part that would help make sense of the choice. This is different from the case in the ninth hadith in which muṣḥaf prefers a text from al-kutub al-tis’a to replace a text from al-kutub al-sitta—another category that ranks higher in the hierarchy—chosen by the kitab.

This text is chosen by the kitab. It comes from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. Yet, muṣḥaf replaces it with a text from Musnad Aḥmad. Aḥmad’s text has fa-inna kunna akthar ahl Jahannam yaum al-Qiyāma (you are the majority of the inhabitants of Hell on the Day of Judgment). The kitab mentions no clue nor allusion about this phrase. However, in the muṣḥaf, this point is even mentioned as part of the lessons learned from this hadith. Having this in mind, I argue that this shift in selection was for the sake of argument, without which muṣḥaf would not have a basis for raising such an argument.

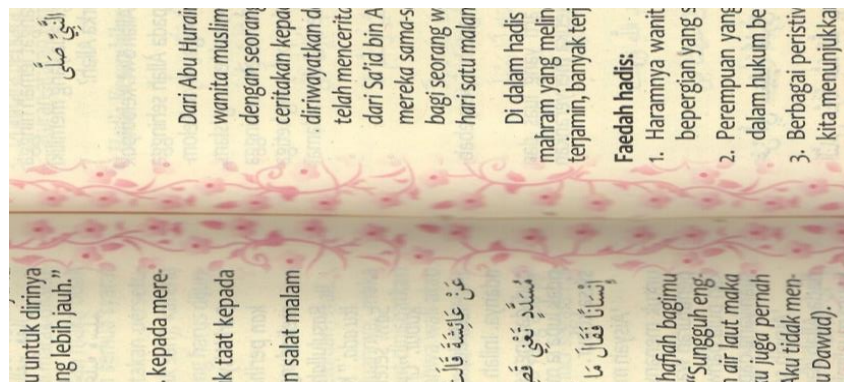
A similar motive also occurs in the second category, where the muṣḥaf chooses texts that relate different contexts. The text that muṣḥaf chooses is not an alternative wording of the same context, but rather a hadith that describes a different context. We can see this in the sixteenth hadith. The kitab mentions a relatively short hadith. “Khairu masajidi an-Nisa buyutuhunna”. (Aḥmad wa al-Hakim).

Yet, the muṣḥaf chooses another text from the very source book, Musnad Aḥmad, but concerns a completely different context.

The the muṣḥaf emphasizes the argument that women are strongly encouraged to pray in the most private places in their homes. The kitab, on the other hand, tends to explain the conditions that must be met if women are to pray in the mosque, as well as the dos and don'ts. Thus, it is likely that the shift happens because the second text articulates the point much more clearly (ṣarīḥ) than the first.

In these two categories, there are two cases where the muṣḥaf replaces the text with two hadiths instead of one as in the previous cases. One case occurs in the first category (where the muṣḥaf only chooses another wording version of the same context), another case occurs in the second category (where the muṣḥaf chooses a text that describes a different context). In these two cases, as I have mentioned above, the second mentioned hadith has the isnād displayed in full. Both hadiths with full isnād happen to have taḥwīl al-isnād. The serious fault in the muṣḥaf in both cases is the omission of the very information. As a result, two names that come from different paths are seen as teacher-student of a longer chain of chains, as shown in the Figure 2.

Figure 2. Error muṣḥaf omission of information

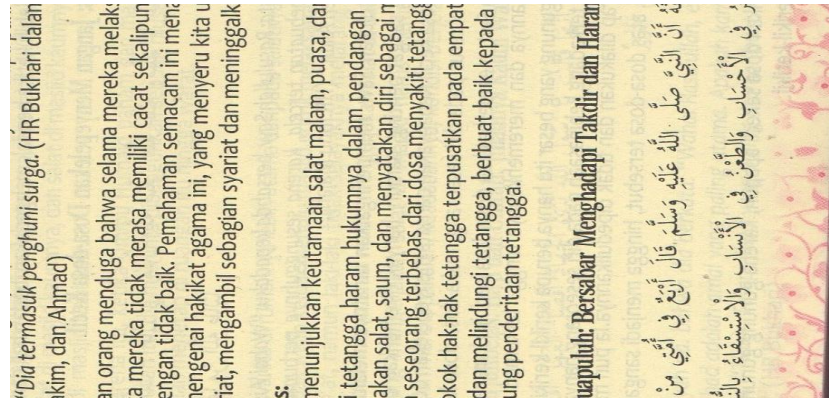


In the image, Mālik seems to receive the hadith from al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī. Nevertheless, according to the source I mentioned beforehand, we know that al-Ḥasan is mentioned after the symbol of taḥwīl al-isnād. Thus, it shows us that Mālik is the informant of ‘Abdullāh b. Maslamah, al-Nufailī, and Bishr b. ‘Umar. Mālik’s informant in the isnād is Sa’īd b. Abī Sa’īd, not al-Ḥasan as the image falsely might inform. This shows that a (technical?) error by Tim had a serious impact on the aspect of hadith criticism.

Another error is the omission of one word that marks the name category. In the nineteenth hadith, the name that should appear is Abū Yahyā, but the muṣḥaf only mentions Yahyā. The omission of this one word, ab, drastically changed the category of Yahyā’s name, from

kunyah to 'alam. This (technical?) error also has a serious impact on the aspect of hadith science, as shown in the Figure 3.

Figure 3. Technical Error in the Omission of a Word



2.2. Gender Construction in the Chapter

The complexity of the dynamics of the hadith texts as seen in the previous section is not found when we try to read the gender narrative conveyed in the chapter “Riyadus Salihat: 20 Wasiat Rasulullah untuk Perempuan”. With various explanations, the narrative leads to four points; passive role of women, active obedience to husband, domestication, and stereotypes. These four axes are spread over twenty points from the three categories of hadith texts that I have described in the previous section.

What I mean by the passive role of women is an attitude of acceptance and restraint. In many points, gender narrative emphasizes that women must be patient to accept the fate. One could understand this as an advice to be patient with any condition a woman lives in. As will be seen in the next section, this point of patience is emphasized in various ways and through various media, especially hadith and anecdotes. The attitude of restraint appears as a teaching of shame; that shame is the character of righteous Muslimah. If a woman has no restraint or shame, “tidak ada lagi kebaikan dan takwa di hatinya (there is no more virtue and faith in her heart)”. Women, thus, are in a subordinate and inferior position.

Women can only play an active role as long as it is in the form of obedience to their husbands. She must actively keep her husband's room secret, seek for husband's *ridā*, because "a Muslim woman is not considered to have fully fulfilled the rights of Allah before she fully fulfills the rights of her husband." This narrative touches even the most basic level of a Muslimah's religiosity; *taqwā*. It defines *taqwā* as an effort to achieve the *ridā* (pleasure) of Allah and husband because husband is heaven and hell for the wife.

The next axis is domestication. Although in some parts of the narrative encourage women to seek knowledge and mention the high curiosity of female companions (ṣaḥābiyya), but they emphasize more that women should not leave the house without a maḥram for any purpose. The narrative even justifies it with an allusion to today's situation. It says "the various events that we encounter and the phenomena that occur in the society show the relevance of the hadith of the Prophet pbuh. in prohibiting women to leave the house without a muhrim at all times and places."

The last axis of the narrative is the strengthening of stereotypes about women. One of them relates "as is known, women are known to talk a lot." This is an introduction to the encouragement for women to do ḡikr. At the same time, this also explains (and justifies) why this hadith only commands women to do ḡikr. Another stereotype is that women are the majority of the inhabitants of hell. This brings about inferiority and insecurity into women's minds and it turn set up a psychological condition that makes women willingly accept the teachings that the narrative articulates.

2.3. The Paratext of Ummul Mukminin

Right after the chapter Riyadus Salihat follows a chapter entitled "Fikih Wanita". It has several subchapters, one of which concerns the issue of "mencari nafkah dan bekerja di luar rumah (earn a living and work outside the home)". In this subchapter, the narrative gets more conservative. It says that women are allowed to work outside the house if certain conditions are met. It regards that working is may only be carried out in an urgent situation. "If the life necessities have been met, then (she) must immediately get out of it and return to (her) main duties as a housewife."

Another part of the narrative places women as the source of fitnah—a standard understanding in the patriarchal paradigm. The focus of this section is woman's voice and fragrance. "Working women have to lower their voices ... because women's voices are 'aurat. Islam does not tolerate women to raise their voices." "Women who work are not allowed to wear perfumes because one of the things that can be a source of fitnah is the smell of fragrance."

In this section the narrative also alludes its "opponent". In the form of a warning, it says that "A Muslim woman should not consider going out of the house to work as entertainment and to relieve fatigue or to fill her spare time, or mainly because of the drive for emancipation or to achieve freedom in the economy." We have two keywords to identify the "opponent" that it counters; emancipation and freedom. These two keywords often appear in the narratives of women's rights advocates.

If we look at the common threads from several quotes within this sub-chapter, we find it arguing that women's domestic roles are the rule and women's careers are the exception. The subsequent chapter, "Kedudukan Wanita dalam al-Qur'an" has a core argument that Islam has revived the rights of women that were "killed" during the jāhiliyyah period, especially economic and social rights. Women's economic rights concern the issue of inheritance. Their social right constitutes the right to object, a right preserved in Q. 58 (al-Mujādila):1 through the story of Khaula bt. Tha'laba. With all these rights, women do not need to do more than Islam has prescribed. If Islam has laid down the rule that women have a domestic role, they must only do that and need not to worry about anything because Islam has given them the rights they deserve.

This narrative needs a point that leads women to accept the teachings to complete the scenario. Therefore, we find the next chapter, "Wanita-wanita dalam Al-Qur'an", emphasizing on the patient and submissive attitude of women. The stories of Sarah (Ibrāhīm's wife), Siti Asiyah (or 'Aisha bt. Muzāḥim, Fir'aun's wife), Maryam the mother of 'Īsā, and Khadijah and Aisyah ummul mu'minīn emphasize the patience that Muslim women must imitate. In order to make the narrative stronger, it has a portrayal of the insecure world. "In today's context, when a woman walks with someone who is not her husband, it will not cause a big fitnah like it would have done at the time of the Prophet because of the moral decadence that has been so severe."

3. Research Method

3.1. Penetration of Gender Conservatism on the Lives of Urban Muslimahs

The gender paradigm that leads to subordination, domestication, and the strengthening of stereotypes as explained above has confirmed that it brings in itself gender conservatism. With their mass production and circulation, the possibility of public consumption of these texts became quite large. Muṣḥaf Ummul Mukminin is available in various bookstores in big cities and is available in the online market. A bookstore clerk states that the majority of consumers of these products are young women with an urban lifestyle. On this ground, I conducted interviews with two Muslimah who read Ummul Mukminin in two cities, Yogyakarta and Kudus. The two subjects I interviewed live in urban areas in their respective locations. I also made observations on a group of pengajian (religious teaching) for young Muslimahs in an urban area in Surakarta. In this group, the muṣḥaf to be read is not necessarily Ummul Mukminin.

From the interviews I conducted, I found that the two Muslimahs from Yogyakarta and Kudus do not have as high intensity as the female santri in a pesantren. Not every day they read the Qur'an. Anytime they read the Qur'an, the number of verses they read is not that much, only three or five verses. They put more emphasis on understanding the verses they read. Because they work, they don't have time to take part in group of Qur'an recitations and choose to do it individually. In this situation, the Qur'an translation helps them. However, do they also read the paratext in the back of the muṣṣḥaf? Are they satisfied with the Qur'an translation? Two of my subjects admitted that they did not read the entire paratext. Only when they get curious, they read the text. However, they found points of subordination and domestication of the gender narrative. This shows that the strategy of the Tim Penyusun is working quite well. Even for non-persistent readers, some points from the main axis reach the reader's mind.

My observation in Surakarta leads to the same conclusion. The group has scheduled to gather and read the Qur'an together twice a week. Its being a community helps members to read more verses than my previous two subjects. After reading the verses together, they have a short discussion about the lessons they learned from the verses. The sources they use to talk in discussions are their life experiences, readings, and the Qur'an translations. These members also did not fully read the paratext in their muṣṣḥaf. However, again, they managed to find points of subordination and domestication.

This confirms Eva Nugraha's argument about the commodification of the Qur'an and at the same time adds to it. The additional point I put forward here shows that the commodification of the Qur'an has been successful for urban Muslim women. Not only do the Muslimahs become a consumer in the sense of buying a product, but they also consume the narrative conveyed by the products. Having articulated this argument, I support the arguments of Akbar, Khalil, and Luthfillah.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt and Islamist Movement? a Discussion

I must say at the outset that this section is a preliminary hypothesis and requires serious and in-depth further research to test it. This hypothesis has clues that have not been fully connected or provided a complete picture of the argument. It concerns the possibility of Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt being part of the Islamist Movement. The basis of this hypothesis is the history of the publication of this kitab, it being on the same list with several Islamist literatures, and its reception which merges with the opinions of Islamist figures.

In my short investigation, I always find this kitab appears as a translated book into Indonesian. The oldest track I can trace is its emergence as a translated work published by Pustaka Azzam (Jakarta, 2005). Its next appearance—although not necessarily mean the loss of the first track—was in 2009, then 2010 and 2011. It still appears as a translated work, but this time the publisher was Mizania (Bandung), one of the prominent publishers of Islamic books in Indonesia.

It is noteworthy that Pustaka Azzam adalah the most important Salafi publishing house in Indonesia. It was born from the womb of al-Sofwa foundation, founded by Muhammad Yusuf Harun, one of the LIPIA lecturers who received training and degrees from Ibn Sa'ud University. The foundation was inspired by and very likely to have certain relation with Pesantren Al-Turats Al-Islami, the Islamic Centre Bin Bāz, and other movements run by Abu Nida, a Yogyakarta-based, important Salafi figure in Indonesia.

Although never officially inclined to certain Islamist movement, Mizania is included in the list of publishers that produce literature across ideologies. The literature it publishes conveys motivation, public piety, and general Islam—and popular Islamism is no exception. This makes sense of Mizan being part of a group of publishers that put *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt* into circulation.

The fact that *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt* is the product of these two major publishers shows that it is on the same list as other Islamic literature. In this *muṣḥaf* *Ummul Mukminin*, it is also on the list of *marāji'* along with *Jilbab Wanita Muslimah Menurut Al-Qur'an dan as-Sunnah* by Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (published by Pustaka at-Tibyan), *Shahih Fikih Wanita* by Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaimin (published by Pustaka Ibn Katsir), *Fataawaa an-Nisaa'* (Edisi Terjemah) by Ibn Taimiyyah (no note on publisher).

Apart from being on the same list of *marāji'*, this kitab, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt*, was also received and explained with the ideas brought by Islamist leaders. What I mean here is that this book is consumed, processed, and rearticulated by the audience; in the process, it throngs around with the ideas of Islamist leaders. In *Ummul Mukminin*, for example, the hadiths of *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt* are explained through the fatwas of Ibn al-Qayyim.

5. Conclusion

Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt is used as one of the main references in the *muṣḥaf* *Ummul Mukminin* published by Mikraj Khazanah Ilmu, Bandung and becomes a “chapter” heading in the paratext at the back of the *muṣḥaf*. This chapter is entitled “20 Wasiat Rasulullah untuk

Perempuan (20 Testaments of the Prophet [Muhammad] for Women)”, leading the audience to think that the hadiths are selected from *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt*. Yet, reality does have a surprising amount of detail.

This passage, despite having that title, is not wholly derived from *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt*. Of the twenty hadiths, only seven (the fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth, twelfth, thirteenth, nineteenth hadith) are actually mentioned in the book, although sometimes with wording variations different from those chosen by the book. Three hadiths (seventh, eleventh, and sixteenth) concern the same theme but have different context. The remaining ten are nowhere to be found in the book. All these hadiths—except those to be mentioned later—have only one (and sometimes two) names of the transmitters attached to them.

The seven hadiths that find their roots in the book are also explained in a direction that is sometimes quite different from the kitab’s argument. In some parts, *muṣḥaf* replaces a narrative with a new one that reinforces stereotypes about and domestication of women. This emphasis sometimes goes hand in hand with the shift in wording variation. When the kitab chooses the wording variation A, the *muṣḥaf* chooses variation B because this latter variation has additional points that support the emphasis the *muṣḥaf* wants to articulate.

In addition to supporting the narrative, there are cases where the *muṣḥaf* chooses a text to “correct” the text related in the kitab. However, despite showing its faithfulness to textual sources, the *muṣḥaf* also made a serious mistake in the aspect of ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth by omitting the description of *taḥwīl al-isnād*. As a result, two names that are actually in different chains appear to be connected as informants-transmitters of a long chain of chains. In other cases, the *muṣḥaf* omits the word *ab* and thereby changes the status of the transmitter’s name from *kunyah* to ‘alam.

These twenty hadiths convey an understanding that women must play a passive role in domestic life. Women’s shyness and patient attitude are the main characters of a righteous, pious Muslimah. Women are only allowed to be active to show obedience to their husbands. Another part of the narrative presented here reinforces stereotypes about and attempts to domesticate women. This paradigm is supported by the subsequent three chapters. In short, the paratext leads to marginalization, domestication, and strengthening the stereotype

Such a conservative gender paradigm turns out to be something that lives. The interviews I conducted with two Muslimahs living the urban life, show that the narrative has successfully penetrated their minds. My observation on a group of young Muslimahs in Surakarta reinforces

the inference. Along with the Qur'an translation, the paratext plays a role as their guidance to get lessons learned from the verses.

The last part of my findings concerns the possibility of *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥāt* being part of the Islamist Movement. The basis of this hypothesis is the history of the publication of this kitab, it being on the same list with several Islamist literatures, and its reception which merges with the opinions of Islamist figures. It was first published by Pustaka Azzam, the most important Salafi publisher in Indonesia. Its next appearance was supported by Mizania, a publisher of literature across ideologies. The kitab is consumed by groups of Muslim that put it on the same list with the works of Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaimin, and Ibn Taimiyyah. However, to make a further argument on this, one needs a separate, serious, and in-depth research.

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