ASMA BARLAS AND ABDULLAH SAEED’S QUR’ANIC INTERPRETATIONS: A STUDY OF HUSBAND’S AUTHORITY OVER HIS WIFE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO FACULTY OF USHULUDDIN AND ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR OBTAINING BACHELOR DEGREE OF SARJANA AGAMA (S.Ag)

BY:
MUHAMMAD LUTHFI DHULKIFLI
Student Number: 14530069

SUPERVISOR:
Dr. INAYAH ROHMANIYAH, S.Ag, M.Hum, MA.

DEPARTMENT OF QUR’ANIC STUDIES AND EXEGESIS
FACULTY OF USHULUDDIN AND ISLAMIC THOUGHT
SUNAN KALIJAGA STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
YOGYAKARTA
2018
LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Dr. Inayah Rohmaniyah, S.Ag, M.Hum, M.A.
Lecturer of Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought
Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University
Yogyakarta

OFFICIAL NOTE
Thesis Agreement

Dean
Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought
Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University
in - Yogyakarta

Assalamu’alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh

After having read, researched, and revised to whatever extent is necessary, we, as supervisor, hereby agree that this thesis:

Author : MUHAMMAD LUTHFI DHULKIFLI
Student Number : 14530069
Title : Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed Qur’anic Interpretations: A Study of Husband’s Authority Over His Wife

Could be submitted in a partial fulfilment of requirements to obtain a bachelor degree in Qur’anic Sciences and Tafsir, and be defended immediately.

We thank for your attention.
Wassalamu’alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh

Yogyakarta, March 21st, 2018
Supervisor,

Dr. Inayah Rohmaniyah, S.Ag, M.Hum, M.A
OIN. 19711019 199603 2 001
STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has never been submitted to obtain a degree at any other university, and to my knowledge does not contain the work or opinion ever written or published by others, except the writing which is clearly referred to in this manuscript and mentioned in the bibliography.

Yogyakarta, March 21st, 2018

[Signature]

Muhammad Luthfi Dhulkiifli
SN: 14530069
MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
SUNAN KALLIJAGA STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF USHULUDDIN AND ISLAMIC THOUGHT
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto Phone. (0274) 512156 Fax. (0274) 512156 Yogyakarta 55281

APPROVAL PAGE
No: B-797/ UN.02/DU/PP.05.3/04/2018

Thesis Entitled: ASMA BARLAS AND ABDULLAH SAEED’S
QUR’ANIC INTERPRETATIONS: A STUDY OF
HUSBAND’S AUTHORITY OVER HIS WIFE

Name: Muhammad Luthfi Dhulkiifli
Student Number ID: 14530069
Was defended on: April 3rd, 2018
Score: 97 (A)

Has been approved by Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, Sunan Kalijaga State
Islamic University.

Defend Committe
Chair/Examiner I

Dr. Inayah Rohmaniah, S.Ag, M.Hum, M.A
OIN. 19711019 199603 2 001

Examiner II
Lien Ifah Nafatu Fina, M.Hum
OIN. 19850605 201503 2 002

Examiner III
Dr. Phil. Sahiron Syamsuddin, M.A
OIN. 19680605 199403 1 003

Yogyakarta, April 3rd, 2018
Dean Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought
Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University

Dr. Ahin Roswanto, M.Ag.
OIN. 19681206 199903 1 005
MOTTO:

“With Allah by Your Side Nothing is Impossible”

K. H. M. Halimi Musta’in. Lc, AH (September, 2015)

“Keep Up the Good Work”

Abdullah Saeed to me (April, 5th, 2016)
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

The best woman whom I’ve (ever and forever) found in this world, My mother

All the best for you...

I believe you’re in the arm of the angel,

May you find some comfort there...

In memoriam, March 18th, 2006.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praise to Allah SWT for the blessing and mercies that helped me in finishing this thesis. Within this thesis, I have had many meetings for discussion and receiving encouragement from variety friends or lecturers that develop and shape my ideas. This thesis is submitted to Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining a bachelor degree in Qur’anic Studies and Exegesis. There are many people contributed to this thesis. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge my special gratitude to them:

1. Prof. Dr. Yudian Wahyudi as the Rector of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.
2. Dr. Alim Roswantoro: Dean Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought and his staffs, also for Dr. H. Abdul Mustaqim M. Ag: Chief Department of Qur’an Studies and Exegesis and also his vice: Dr. Afdawaiza.
3. Dr. Inayah Rohmaniyah, S.Ag, M. Hum, MA: my thesis’ supervisor who always provides time for consultation. Thanks for your great patience and kindness. “One day I felt that I didn’t deserve to conduct this thesis, but you still convince me. It means everything.”
4. All lecturers of Qur’anic Studies and Exegesis department and some of my impressive lecturers: Dr. M Alfatih Suryadilaga, M.Ag: my academic consultant, Dr. Phil. Sahiron Syamsuddin, Ahmad Rafiq Ph.D.; Drs. K. Mohammad Mansur; Prof. Suryadi, Dr. Saifuddin Zuhri, Pak Abdul Jalil, Bu Subkhani Kusuma Dewi, Bu Fitriana Firdausi, etc.
5. All administrative officials and university’s library, especially Pak Muhadi who always help me in my administrative business.

6. My Father, Suyatman, who devoted his life to support my academic endeavors and teach me much of life values.

7. The best woman I’ve ever seen, my mother, Hidayah. “My ten years with you is the best life for me.”

8. For my great teachers: K.H.R. Muhammad Najib A.Q AH and his wife: the most humble teacher that I’ve ever met; K.H.M Halimi Musta’in Lc AH and his wife: my first teacher who brings me to the ‘another level’.

9. Lek Mashudi A.H and lek Karyati who supported everything for my “nyantri” life in Demak. Some of Demak’s family: Mbah H. Maskan and Hj. Sukin; De Mujtahid and his wife; Mbak Ibah and her husband, Fahrur Rozi AH, and all of Demak’s family who has given me their worth time.


viii
12. Bu Lien Iffah Na’atu Fina, M.Hum: “the most inspiring lecturer that encourage me to learn English harder and go around the world”. Thanks for the meticulous correction, good sharing, and constructive feedbacks.


15. All member of “Keluarga John”: Irul, Ari, Deva, Afifah, Dewi, Arini, Zahra, and Evi. “No matter how bad we felt, thanks for every moment we spent together, that means so much”

16. Everyone who makes sense in my life: May Allah give all the best and guide us, Aamiin.

Yogyakarta, March 22nd, 2018

Muhammad Luthfi Dhulkifli
**TRANSLITERATION**

This thesis uses the transliteration’s system of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia, No. 158, Year 1987 and No. 0543b/U/1987.

**Letters of The Alphabet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Romanization</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Romanization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ا</td>
<td>Not Symbolized</td>
<td>ض</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ب</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>ط</td>
<td>ئ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ت</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>ظ</td>
<td>ؤ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ث</td>
<td>š</td>
<td>غ</td>
<td>‘(ayn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ج</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>غ</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ح</td>
<td>ḫ</td>
<td>ف</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خ</td>
<td>kh</td>
<td>ق</td>
<td>q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>د</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>ك</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ذ</td>
<td>ž</td>
<td>ل</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ر</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>م</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ز</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>س</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>و</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ش</td>
<td>sy</td>
<td>ه</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ص</td>
<td>š</td>
<td>ي</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vowels and Diphthongs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Fathāh = a</th>
<th>Fathāh + alif = ā</th>
<th>Kasrah + ya’ = ī</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Kasrah = i</td>
<td>Fathāh + ya’ = ā</td>
<td>Alif + wawu = au</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Ḍammah = u</td>
<td>Ḍammah + wawu = ū</td>
<td>Alif + ya’ = ai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

x
General Rules:

1. Alif lam (ال) is written by al- with the following word for example: القرآن al-Qur’an. The definite article is always romanized al-, whether is it followed by a “sun letter” or not.

2. Hamzah in the initial position is not romanized; when medial or final it is romanized (‘), e.g. مسألة, mas’alah, خطى’, khaṭī’ā.

3. Ta’ marbūtah: in the end of the word by: h, e.g. صلاة, salah, الرسالة البهية, al-Risālah al-bahiyyah.

4. Consecutive short vowel in a word is separated by apostrophe e.g أَنْتُمْ, a’antum.

5. Tasydid is romanized by doubling the letter e.g عَدَّة, ‘iddah.
ABSTRACT

The interpretation of Q. 4:34 is a crucial point in relation to husband’s authority over his wife in the family matter. The classical and textual interpretation of Q. 4:34 that supported by Sayyid Qutb, Ibnu Kasir, al-Jašā, and al-Zamakhshyari give husband’s authority over his wife. For some contemporary scholars, these interpretations are textual and indicated as bias against women. Therefore, it needs an appropriate methodological framework to reinterpret Q. 4:34 in the Muslim context today. Among some contemporary scholars, Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed suggest an appropriate method on reading Q. 4:34. Barlas focuses on recovering egalitarian voice of Islam and Saeed suggests a contextual approach. Barlas and Saeed’s approaches of reading Q. 4:34 was aimed to debate the classical interpretation that relies only on linguistic approach and is considered bias against women.

This research focuses on Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed Qur’anic interpretations as the representation of the contemporary scholars with their modern approaches. It is a comparative library research. The primary data includes Asma Barlas’ book on Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’an and Abdullah Saeed’s book on Interpreting the Qur’an: Toward Contemporary Approach and Reading the Qur’an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contemporary Approach. This research analyzes Barlas and Saeed’s interpretation of Q. 4:34 in case of husband’s authority over his wife based on Max Weber and Khaled Abou Fadl authority’s framework. In concern to the authority discussion, these frameworks give a deep exploration of husband’s authority of Q. 4:34. At the end, this research try to analyze Barlas and Saeed’s frame understanding of Q. 4:34 on Gadamer’s hermeneutic concept.

This research concludes that Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed reject the traditional and coercive authorities within the patriarchal culture of the early Muslim period. They also reject the idea of charismatic authority as there is no parallel relation between God and husband. They share the interpretation of husband’s obligation to provide economic resources for the family. According to them, equal authority should be the principle to create a mutual relationship between husband and wife in the family. Although Barlas and Saeed have a similar argument on authority’s framework, they use a different approach to understand Q. 4:34. Barlas did not refer to pre-modern Qur’anic commentaries like Saeed did. Otherwise, Saeed who masters Arabic used several Qur’anic commentaries to cover his interpretation. From the hermeneutic perspective, the rule of Islamization in Pakistan during 1980 and being highly educated woman in the United States encourage Barlas to struggle for women’s right. Meanwhile, Saeed’s critical method of Qur’anic reading was developed since his move to Australia and Fazlur Rahman inspires most of the content of his book.
# TABLE OF CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTER OF AGREEMENT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL PAGE</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTTO</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSLITERATION</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Research Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Research Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Research Objectives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Review of Previous Works</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Research on Women and Qur’anic Interpretations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research on Asma Barlas</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research on Abdullah Saeed</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Theory of Authority</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theory of Gadamer’s Hermeneutics</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F. Research Methodology ................................................................. 14

1. Research Design......................................................................... 14

2. Types of Data ........................................................................... 14

3. Data Accumulation Techniques ............................................. 15

4. Technique of Data Analysis .................................................... 15

5. Chapter Organization ........................................................... 16

CHAPTER II - ASMA BARLAS AND ABDULLAH SAEED’S
CONCEPTS OF READING THE QUR’AN ................................. 17

A. Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s Biographies .................. 17

1. Asma Barlas’ Life and Educational Background ................ 17

2. Abdullah Saeed’s Life and Educational Background......... 18

B. Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s Masterpieces ............... 20

1. Asma Barlas’ Books and Influential Writings ................. 20

2. Abdullah Saeed’s Books and Influential Writings .......... 21

C. Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s Readings of the Qur’an .... 22

1. Asma Barlas’ Concept of Qur’anic Reading ..................... 22

   a. Reading Liberation ....................................................... 22

   b. Reading Qur’anic Hermeneutic .................................. 23

   c. Epistemology and Methodology .................................. 25

2. Abdullah Saeed’s Concept of Contextualization .......... 27

   a. Ethico-Legal Content and Contextual Approach ......... 28

   b. Hierarchy of Values .................................................... 31

   c. Model of Interpretation ............................................... 34
CHAPTER III - ASMA BARLAS AND ABDULLAH SAEED’S
QR’ANIC INTERPRETATIONS OF Q. 4:34 ON HUSBAND’S
AUTHORITY .................................................................................. 38
A. Sharing Power of Husband and Wife......................................... 38
   1. Rejecting Traditional Authority of Patriarchal Culture...... 38
   2. Husband Charismatic Authority Versus Tauhid Concept... 42
   3. Husband and Wife’s Legal Authority................................. 44
B. Husband and Wife’s Right................................................................. 46
   1. Coercive Authority: A Misinterpretation of Q. 4:34 ............. 46
   2. Moral Values of Q. 4:34: Equal Authority.......................... 51
C. Concluding Remarks.................................................................. 54

CHAPTER IV – THE ANALYSIS OF ASMA BARLAS AND
ABDULLAH SAEED’S QR’ANIC INTERPRETATIONS OF Q.
4:34 ................................................................................................... 56
A. Historically Effected Consciousness and Pre-understanding.... 56
   1. Life in Muslim Countries........................................................... 57
   2. Being Muslim Scholars in the Western Context....................... 59
B. Horizons of Qur’an, Interpretations, and Context .................... 63
   1. Ideas of Qur’anic Reading ........................................................ 63
   2. Historical Aspects of Gender Issues........................................ 68
   3. Muslim Contemporary Issues ................................................ 71
C. Concluding Remarks.................................................................. 73
CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 75

A. Conclusion ...................................................................................... 75

B. Recommendation .......................................................................... 76

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................... 77

CURRICULUM VITAE ................................................................................. 86
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

In a marriage relationship, the husband and wife should be able to protect each other. Quoting some great commentators of the Qur’an such as al-Tabari, al-Gazali, and al-Razi, Quraish Shihab emphasize principles of equal responsibilities in the marriage. A married couple shares a responsibility to build a harmonious life with truth, justice, and equality. Within this responsibility, a harmonious relationship built on love and mercy emerges. The harmonious relationship plays a significant role to avoid divorce, particularly relating to husband’s authority over his wife.

The husband’s authority over his wife disrupts the marriage relationship and often lead to divorce. The Directorate General of the Religious Courts (Badilag) shows a high percentage of the divorce case and

---

1 The Qur’an suggests the husband to ma’ruf toward his wife for getting a degree (darajah). The husband behavior over his wife should be well-treating with a patience in her anger and full of politeness. It is necessary for the spouse to respect each other. See Quraish Shihab, Wawasan al-Qur’an: Tafsir Maudhu’i Atas Berbagai Persoalan Umat, (Bandung: IKAPI, 1996), page 209.

nearly 70 percent are proposed by wives. The most common reason for the divorce is a disharmonious relationship, resulted from husband’s authority over his wife. It relates to the wife’s submission under her husband’s power.

There are three factors contribute to divorce that related to husband’s authority over his wife: first, the existence of patriarchal culture, second, the unequal power of the family and third, patriarchal readings of the Qur’anic verse. One of the patriarchal readings is the interpretation of Q. 4:34.

The divorce proposed by wives commonly known as ‘Cerai Gugat’ in Indonesian law. ‘Cerai Gugat’ is asserted to maintain a superior right of the husband in an act of divorce. The words cerai gugat imply that a wife cannot divorce her husband but instead can only ask her husband to divorce her. See Euis Nurlaelawati, Modernization, Tradition, and Identity: The Kompilasi Hukum Islam and Legal Practice in the Indonesian Religious Court, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010) page 121.

The various reasons for divorcement by wives are disharmonic relations, disresponsibilities, dishonest, and economic factors. The comparison of women filed are 268.381 cases and men filed are 113.850 cases in 2014. See Kementerian Agama RI, Ketika Perempuan Bersikap: Tren Cerai Gugat Masyarakat Muslim, (Jakarta: Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2016) page 3.

Most of the Indonesian wives were taught to submit, silent, and devote their lives to the well-being of the family. In Indonesian patriarchal society, men were the acknowledges heads of the households. The women just accepting their fate and accentuate to the domestic sphere. Although education was valued for women, marriage and raising a family was still seen as their primary life. See Fatahillah A. Syukur, Mediasi Perkara KDRT (Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga) Teori dan Praktek di Pengadilan Indonesia, (Bandung: Mandar Maju, 2011) page 26-36.

Out of a total of 6.000 verses in the Qur’an, it has been argued that only six establish some kind of man’s authority over women. One of the most critical Qur’anic passages is Q. 4:34. Shaheen Sardar Ali identifies the verses that indicated establish man’s authority: Q. 2:221, 2:228, 2:282, Q. 4:3, 4:34, and Q. 24:30. See on Judith E Tucker, Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) page 24.
“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in (the husband’s) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next) refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all)”.7

Sayyid Qutb interprets Q. 4:34 by providing husband privilege for being the leader for the wife.8 Some commentators of the Qur’an such as Ibnu Kašır9, al-Jašāš10, and al-Zamakhshyari11 also give the similar interpretation of wife’s inferiority toward her husband. In fact, these interpretations are textual and bias against women. Women are constructed in the texts as

9 The men are maintainers of his wife because they are stronger and better than the women, see Ibnu Kašir, Taḥṣīr Al-Qur’an Al-‘Aţīm, (Kairo: Dar Ta‘yibah li al-‘Aṣr wa al-Tauzi’, 1999) part 4 page 20.
10 God was preferred men over the women. Therefore, a wife must obey her husband because See Al-Jašāš, Aḥkām Al-Qur’an, First Edition (Beirut: Dar Iḥya‘ al-Turas al-‘Arabi, 2000) part 3 page 148 in Maktabah Syamilah al-Rawdah 3.48.
11 Zamakhshyari argues that “Men are in the charge of the affairs of the women”. See Zamakhshyari, al-Kasyāf, (Riyadh: 1998) part 2 page 67. See also Amina Wadud, Qur’an and Woman, page 71.
deficient and under husband’s authority. As Amina Wadud argues, any interpretation which narrowly applies the Qur’anic guidelines only on the textual interpretation does injustice to the text. Therefore, it needs an appropriate methodological framework to understand Q. 4:34 in the Muslim context today.

Some contemporary scholars such as Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed offers an appropriate methodological framework in order to understand Q. 4:34. For Barlas and Saeed, the classical interpretation of Q. 4:34 is not relevant to contemporary concerns and situations. Both Barlas and Saeed try to challenge the classical interpretation of Q. 4:34 to protect women’s rights more adequately. Barlas and Saeed suggest different approaches on reading Q. 4:34. Barlas focuses on recovering the liberating and egalitarian voice of Islam. On the other hand, Saeed suggests a contextual approach in the light of the context which was revealed, interpreted, and applied. Barlas and Saeed’s approaches of reading Q. 4:34 was concentrated to debate the classical interpretation that normative and is considered bias against women.

12 The early commentators of the Qur’an often impute superior intellectual capacity to men when reading Q. 4:34 by expressing in terms of men’s purportedly greater “knowledge (‘ilm) and discernment (tamyīz), intelligence (‘aql) and managerial abilities, or capacity to make judgments. See Aisha Geissinger, Gender and Muslims Constructions of Exegetical Authority: A rereading of Classical Genre of Qur’an Commentary, (Leiden: Brill, 2015) page 43-44.

Asma Barlas examines the Qur’anic classical interpretations which are indicated as bias against women in Western philosophical style. Barlas is a Muslim woman scholar who had been engaged in a study of women’s issues from a non-patriarchal Qur’anic framework. On the other hand, Abdullah Saeed is categorized as a contemporary Muslim scholar who holds a strategic position on advocating the method of Western style but has a personal devotion to the classical interpretation of Qur’an. Basically, Barlas and Saeed’s two different methods of Qur’anic reading was constructed from horizons that frame their understanding.

B. Research Questions

Considering the research background, several questions arise:

1. What is the interpretation of Q. 4:34 according to Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed in case of husband’s authority over his wife?
2. What is the analysis of Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s interpretation of Q. 4:34?

C. Research Objectives

This research is expected to:

1. Understand the interpretation of Q. 4:34 and its relation to the discussion of husband’s authority over his wife.
2. Analyze Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s construction that frame their interpretation of Q. 4:34.
The result of this research will have both academic and practical contributions. Academically, it contributes to the contemporary discourse of Qur’anic studies. It will also be a reference for some academic research, especially in the discussion of Islamic modern thinkers and critical literature studies. Practically, this thesis submitted for obtaining a bachelor degree from the department of Qur’an and Tafsir studies, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga.

D. Review of Previous Works

The purpose of a prior research review is to help researcher familiar with the work that has already been conducted in the selected topic areas. There were many numbers of familiar research that will divide into three parts:

1. Research on Women and Qur’anic interpretations

   Eva Meizara and Basti on their article analyze the differences in the intensity of marital conflict on married couples who live together and living separately. This article uses the quantitative method with 74 samplings of wives. The next, Dien Sumiyatningsih observes the practice of article 34 of Marriage Laws No.1/1974 that associated with

---


child nurturing from gender equity. Another research is Nurhasanah and Rozalinda’s work that showed the divorce case by woman proposed in Padang religious court that has a significantly increased around 62 - 67 percent in all case and the factors influencing.

In relation to the Qur’anic interpretations, there is Manuela Marin’s article. Marin shows that the assumption of male superiority and the necessity to discipline deviant wives are assumptions common to all diversity approach of Q. 4:34. This diversity reflects the fluid and sometimes conflicting nature of scholarly debates that reveal unexpected views of social practices in Islamic societies. Also in arguing Q. 4:34, there is Shannon Dunn and Rosemary B. Kellison that identify a debate among Qur’anic interpreters, as premodern and contemporary scholars argue for and against the use of individual reason (ijtiḥād) in their rulings dealing with the role and status of women. The last, there is a thesis of Muammar Zayn Qadafi shows Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd’s feminist thought

---


such women witness, leadership, inheritance, and a balanced principle of men and women.  

2. **Research on Asma Barlas**

Fauziyah in his article concluded that according to Barlas, the family is not a patriarchal concept because it is not about the privilege or power of men.  

Ahmad Shadiq on his said that Barlas’ construction of woman liberation readings is a proof that Qur’an is an anti-patriarchy book.  

Nurkhalis’ article gives a glimpse of hermeneutic discussion by some modern scholars included Asma Barlas that has led the development of Qur’anic interpretation.  

Vanessa Rivera in his article discusses a feminist hermeneutics in an effort to establish discourse of gender justice from Muslim women’s voice.  

Then, Aysha A. Hidayatullah gives some arguments on the Qur’anic reinterpretation in order to recover principles

---


of male-female equality by studying the works of Riffat Hassan, Azizah Al-Hibri, Amina Wadud, and Asma Barlas.\textsuperscript{25}

3. Research on Abdullah Saeed

A large number of Abdullah Saeed’s thought are made in journal, thesis, article, news, or book review. Some found writing is Lien Iffah Naf’atu Fina’s research. This research shows Abdullah Saeed’s effort in developing a contextual interpretation. Although the ideas are inspired by Fazlur Rahman, Saeed has completed the issues with determining the universal and particular meaning.\textsuperscript{26} The next, Aan Najib explores the methodology of contextual approach by Abdullah Saeed and particularly his hierarchy-values concept.\textsuperscript{27} Also in the discussion of Abdullah Saeed’s method, Shahzadi Pakezaa and Ashgar Ali Chishti gives a highlight of some modern approaches and particularly Abdullah Saeed’s thought to reach the more relevant understanding of Qur’an.\textsuperscript{28} The last, thesis of


Ahmad Rizza Habibi concluded that reorientation through Q. 4:34 can be applied by both husband and wife for the leadership of the family.²⁹

There are several reasons why this research is something new and give the contribution of knowledge. *First*, this research will analyze from the perspective of authority’s framework and the Qur’anic interpretation. *Second*, this research will directly combine (or compare) Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s Qur’anic interpretation that has never been conducted.

**E. Theoretical Framework**

The function of theory is to rich a source of hypotheses that can be examined empirically. This theory brings the researcher to an important point that should not be glossed over.³⁰ This research will use two theories: The first theory uses to analyze the interpretation of Q. 4:34. The second theory uses to explore of Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s background of Qur’anic reading.

---


1. Theory of Authority

Authority is the power or right to give orders and make others obey.\(^{31}\) The concept of authority is clearly attested in the Qur’an but is not imparted by a single term or expression. The most common Arabic word for authority is \textit{sultān}. \textit{Sultān} occur frequently in the Qur’an, although solely as a verbal noun with an abstract sense. According to the classical exegetes, \textit{sultān} denotes the meaning of “proof” or “argument”.\(^{32}\) \textit{Sultān} only occasionally seems to mean authority and mostly in association with “proof”. Other terms which denote some form of authority are \textit{quwwa} (power)\(^{33}\), \textit{amr} (command)\(^{34}\), \textit{ḥukm} (judgment or decision)\(^{35}\) and \textit{mulk} (sovereignty, possession or power)\(^{36}\). With the


\(^{32}\) \textit{Sultān} occurs thirty-three times in the Qur’an. This term most commonly signifies proof or evidence to support the prophets’ positions and arguments. \textit{sultān} refers to ultimate and absolute authority. It is also a title of the ruler who possesses and exercises absolute authority, power, and dominion. See Rafik Berjak, “\textit{Burḥān, Baina, Sultān}” in Oliver Leaman, \textit{The Qur’an: an Encyclopedia}, (New York: Routledge, 2006) page 126.


\(^{34}\) \textit{Amr} means order, authority, instruction, power, decree, ordinance, and many more. See on See Hans Wehr, \textit{A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic}, page 26.

\(^{35}\) \textit{Ḥukm} also means regulation, rule, provision, order, command, authority, control, power, regime, and so on. See Hans Wehr, \textit{A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic}, page 196.
exception of Q. 4:59,\textsuperscript{37} which might hint at political authority, the authority with which the Qur’an concerned is essentially religious with credal, theological, legal, eschatological and moral implications.\textsuperscript{38}

Max Weber defined authority as legitimacy exercised power. Authority is a part of the power which is included command and control. Weber distinguishes authority into three types i.e legal, traditional, and charismatic authority.\textsuperscript{39} First, Legal authority based on a belief in the legality of impersonal rules and in the procedures for making and applying rules. Second, Traditional authority rest on habitual attitudes and beliefs in the legitimacy of standardized and sanctified practices.

\textsuperscript{36} Mulk means rule, domination, supreme authority, power, kingship, holding, the right of possession, and so on. See Hans Wehr, \textit{A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic}, page 922.

\textsuperscript{37} Q. 4:59: O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Apostle, And those charged With authority among you. If ye differ in anything Among, yourselves, refer it To God and His Apostle, If ye do believe in God And the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable For final determination. This verse obliges Muslims to obey two things: first, they must obey God; second, they must obey the Messenger and those vested with authority (ulu al-amr). The arrangement of the words shows that the obedience of ulu al-amr might be regarded as having the same status and being as much obligatory as is the obedience to the Messenger because the Qur’an uses just one verb for both of them without repeating that verb. See Abdullah Yusuf Ali, \textit{The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary}, page 198. See also Oliver Leaman, \textit{The Qur’an: an Encyclopedia}, page 378.


Third, Charismatic authority is an unstable dynamism not to rules or traditions, but to a person of imputed holiness, heroism or some extraordinary quality. Legal and traditional authority is a stable and continuing relationship, but a charisma is short lived. Meanwhile, Khaled Abou Fadl divided authority into two parts: a coercive authority and a persuasive authority. Coercive authority is the ability to direct the conduct of another person to comply with the use of inducement, threat, or punishment so the people have no choice. Persuasive authority is the ability to direct the conduct of person because of trust. Persuasive authority does not mean the complete surrender of judgment or an unconditional surrender of autonomy. Otherwise, the complete surrender of judgment or autonomy often turns into a coercive authority.

2. Theory of Gadamer’s Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic concepts of Gadamer are: historically effected consciousness, pre-understanding, fusion of horizons, and application. According to Gadamer, the focus of philosophy is common sense, basic, and principle material. Then, Gadamer gives a discussion about specific methods to the expert in every single subject. See Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur’an*, (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawesea Press, 2017), page 78-84.

---


42 Khaled Abou Fadl, *Speaking in God’s Name*, page 56.

43 This classification considers on Sahiron Syamsuddin argument. Gadamer does not give a specific description to interpret the text. Gadamer does not want to bring hermeneutic in every social disciplinary subject as a universal idea. For Gadamer, the focus of philosophy is common sense, basic, and principle material. Then, Gadamer gives a discussion about specific methods to the expert in every single subject. See Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur’an*, (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawesea Press, 2017), page 78-84.
First, historically effected consciousness (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*) is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation. The effective history is work when we learn to understand ourselves and recognize it in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not. The interpreter’s understanding depends on the hermeneutical situation such tradition, culture, social or life experience.

Second, pre-understanding (*Vorverstandnis*). Pre-understanding is the first step of the interpreter when reading a text. The importance of pre-understanding is to dialogue between the interpreter and the text.

Third, fusion of horizons (*Horizont-versehmelzung*). The horizon is something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. The horizon in which the person understands lives and the historical horizon which he places is always in motion. The interpreter must conscious that the interpreter is at the intersection of the horizon of text and horizon of the reader.

Fourth, application (*Anwendung*) is the hermeneutical problem between the inner fusion of understanding and interpretation. The application should be an integral part of the hermeneutical process as the

---


understanding and interpretation. This theory will apply the text to be understood to the interpreter’s present situation. Regarding the large discussion of application, this research concern to see the historical background, pre-understanding, and horizons of the scholars that influence the result of their interpretation.

F. Research Methodology

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problems. The methodology of this research covered:

1. Research Design

This research is comparative research. It works with data already available and analyzes it to make a critical evaluation.

---


2. **Types of Data**

There are a primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data includes books of Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed i.e *Believing Woman in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur’an*, *Interpreting the Qur’an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* and *Reading the Qur’an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contemporary Approach*.

The secondary data are books and articles related to Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s Qur’anic interpretation. Barlas’ article includes Qur’anic Hermeneutics and Social politics; Women’s Reading in the Qur’an; The Qur’an and Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur’an’s Opposition to Patriarchy. Saeed’s books and articles include *The Qur’an: an Introduction; Islam in Australia; Contextualizing; Reading the Qur’an; and Some Reflections on the Contextualist Approach to the Ethico-Legal Text of the Qur’an*.

3. **Data Accumulation Techniques**

The analysis process of this research are: *first*, choose the material object which is Asma Barlas with a book on *Believing Woman in Islam* and Abdullah Saeed with a book on *Interpreting the Qur’an*. *Second*, analyze Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s interpretation of the authority concepts of Max Weber and Khaled Abou Fadl. *Third*, identify both figures interpretation on the Gadamer’s hermeneutic concept.
4. **Technique of Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis is holistic that the researcher observed and studied to understand as the complete entity.\(^{49}\) This research analyzes through an *integrated comparative method*.\(^{50}\) It compares the data in an integrated mode to give a dialectic and communicative research.

5. **Chapter Organization**

This research will be divided into five chapters: the first chapter is an introduction, including research background; research problems; the objection of research; prior research to see the difference between the others; theoretical framework as a basic research; research methodology; and data analysis techniques.

The second chapter talks about the short life background and conceptual interpretation of Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed. Chapter three covers Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s interpretation of Q. 4:34 and its connection to the authority concepts.

Chapter four traces the dialectical process of Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed’s interpretation in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. The last, chapter five contains a conclusion and the importance of this research. It will also contain a recommendation for readers to the next research.


CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

1. Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed reject the traditional and coercive authorities within the patriarchal culture of the early Muslim period. Barlas and Saeed also reject the idea of charismatic authority as there is no parallel relation between God and husband. They share the interpretation of husband’s obligation to provide economic resources for the family. For them, equal authority should be the principle to create a mutual relationship between husband and wife in the family. Nevertheless, Barlas and Saeed use a different approach on understanding Q. 4:34. Barlas did not refer to pre-modern Qur’anic commentaries like Saeed did. Otherwise, Saeed who masters Arabic used several Qur’anic commentaries to cover his interpretation. This approach leads to an assumption that Barlas is less capable of Islamic studies.

2. From the hermeneutic perspective, the rule of Islamization in Pakistan during 1980 and being highly educated woman in the United States encourage Barlas to struggle for women’s right. Barlas has no traditional background in Islamic studies and got her ideas from numerous women Muslim intellectuals in the contemporary period. Her major on philosophy brings about an interpretive insight of Paul Ricoeur who argued that all texts are open for liberating interpretation. That is why
Barlas uses the liberation concept of reading the Qur’an. Meanwhile, Saeed’s critical method of Qur’anic reading was developed since his move to Australia. One of the anxiety issues that brings the horizon of Saeed is the tragedy of September 11th attacks and the subsequent war on terror. The fact that the terrorist was Muslims have a consequence of many Australian became suspicious of both Islam and Muslims in Australia. Aftermath, Saeed published *Interpreting the Qur’an* which he intended to give a better understanding of Islam under the light of Qur’an. Fazlur Rahman inspires most of the content of his book, even though Saeed never became his formal student.

**B. Recommendation**

Recently, there are many contemporary scholars (Muslim and Non-Muslim) show their attempt to read the Qur’an by employing a modern approach. Contemporary scholars have often brought about a new trend in reading the Qur’an. At the same time, the development of Qur’anic studies has been massive in the academic field. Abdullah Saeed and Asma Barlas are among those contemporary scholars who employ modern approach. However, modern approach alone is inadequate to resolve the true problem in the contemporary Muslim society. It is important to explore more of the various Qur’anic reading from the other scholars.


Okland, Jorunn. “Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus: On the Relationship between Religious, Gender, and Space” in Ursula King (ed).


Journal and Thesis:


Shadiq, Ahmad. “Membeaskan Perempuan Dari Patriarki: Analisis Normativitas-Historisitas Pemikiran Asma Barlas” Thesis Faculty of
Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. 2016.


Other Sources:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ac6gA5kbzs&t=4s
(Asma Barlas – Women’s Right from Within the Qur’an)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E79GjaUU50Y&t=29s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHnR32JBqWo&t=1s
(Abdullah Saeed – Gender Equality and Islamic Norm (part 1 & 2))

(Curriculum Vitae of Asma Barlas and Abdullah Saeed)
CURRICULUM VITAE

Name : Muhammad Luthfi Dhulkifli

Place and Date of Birth : Demak, April 16th 1995

Sex : Male

Nationality : Indonesia

Marital Status : Single

Address : Ngino XII, Margoagung, Seyegan, Sleman, Yogyakarta, 55561.

Phone : 085729931282

Email : Luthfidhulkifligmail.com

Formal Educational Background:
- SDN Ngino XII, Margoagung, Seyegan, Sleman (2000-2006)
- MTs Qodiriyah Harjowinangun, Dempet, Demak (2006-2009)
- MA Qodiriyah Harjowinangun, Dempet, Demak (2009-2012)
- Department of Qur’an and Tafsir Studies UIN Sunan Kalijaga (2014-2018)

Non Formal Education and Achievements:
- Hafidh al-Qur’an from PP Manba’ul Qur’an Harjowinangun, Dempet, Demak (2012)
- Qira’ah al-Sab’ah learning of al-Munawwir Krapyak, Yogyakarta (2014-now)
- Scholarship of Language Center, Kampung English Pare, Kediri (2016)
- English Intensive Course Scholarship of UIN Sunan Kalijaga (2017)
- Second Best graduation student of MA Qodiriyah (2012)
- Best Graduation student of MTs Qodiriyah (2009)
- Best Graduation student of SDN Ngino XII (2006)

**Organization Experiences:**
- Teacher Committe of Yayasan Pondok Pesantren “Darussalam”, Margokaton, Seyegan, Sleman (2016-now)
- UKM Studi Pengembangan Bahasa Asing UIN Sunan Kalijaga (English Division) (2015)
- Teacher of SD IT Lukman Hakim International School Kotagede, Yogyakarta (2015)
- Member of “Jam’iyah Qurra’ wa al-Huffadh” Pokoh, Banyurejo, Sleman (2014-Now)

**Presenter of International Conference:**
- The Youngest Presenter of International conference “Contribution of Higher Education for Global Peace” hosted by UIN Walisongo and AIUA (Asian Islamic Universities Association) - 2016
- The Youngest Presenter of International Conference on Interdisciplinary Gender Studies “Reinventing Women Leadership in Local Context Toward Global Impact” hosted by STAIN Kudus and UKM Malaysia - 2017