

**A HERMENEUTIC COMPARATIVE STUDY ON AMINA  
WADUD'S AND MOHAMMED TALBI'S INTERPRETATION  
OF Q. 4:34**



**THESIS**

Submitted to Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought  
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requirements to obtain a Bachelor Degree

Sarjana Theologi Islam (S. Th. I)

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**2016**

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*Assalamu'alaikum wr. wb.*

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Sincerely yours.

*Wassalamu'alaikum wr. wb.*

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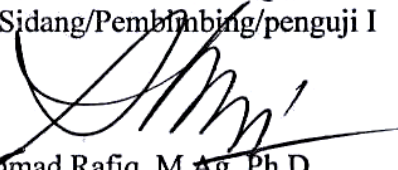
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## **DEDICATION**

*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved father, mother,  
brothers, sister and all of my families.*

## **MOTTO**

*Great Effort Will Never Betray You*

*Surga Tidak Hanya di Telapak Kaki Ibu,  
Seluruh Jiwa dan Raganya adalah Surga*

## TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration system: Arabic-Latin transliteration used in this thesis is based on collective predetermined letter of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia, No. 158, Year 1987 and No. 0543b/U/1987.

### Consonants

ء	'	ر	r	غ	g
ا	not symbolized	ز	z	ف	f
ب	b	س	s	ق	q
ت	t	ش	sy	ك	k
ث	ṡ	ص	ṣ	ل	l
ج	j	ض	ḍ	م	m
ح	ḥ	ط	ṭ	ن	n
خ	kh	ظ	ẓ	و	w
د	d	ع	'	ه	h
ذ	ḏ			ي	y

### Vowels

Long: Fathah + alif	ā	Short: Fathah	a
Fathah + ya'	ā	Kasrah	i
Kasrah + ya'	ī	Ḍammah	u
Ḍammah + wawu	ū		

Diphtlongs:	اي	ai
	او	au

**Double consonants caused by *tasydīd***

متعددة *muta‘addidah*

عدة *‘iddah*

***Ta’ marbūṭah* (ة) in the end of a word**

حكمة *ḥikmah*

جزية *jizyah*

**Notes:**

Consecutive short vowel in a word is separated by apostrophe, for example:

أنتم *a‘antum*

*Alif lam* (ال) is written by *al*, for example:

القران *al-Qur‘ān*



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اللَّهُ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

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I do realize that my thesis is not perfect and sophisticated. There might be many shortcomings within, thus what I expect from readers is constructive critics and suggestions.

Yogyakarta, May 23, 2016

Author,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Afifur Rochman Sya'rani', written in a cursive style.

**Afifur Rochman Sya'rani**

## Abstract

This research focuses on examining comparatively the interpretations of Amina Wadud and Mohammed Talbi of Q. 4:34. Most of classical Muslim exegetes employ the verse to acknowledge the superiority of men over women. Meanwhile, both Wadud and Talbi interpret the verse based on gender equality principles. However, they have different intellectual background, approach and method in interpreting the Qur'an. The questions are to what extent the similarities and differences of both Wadud's and Talbi's interpretation of Q. 4:34 and how far their interpretations reflect their respective objectives, perspective and intention? This research would study three major questions: what are the main points of Wadud's and Talbi's interpretations of Q. 4:34? What are the similarities and differences among their interpretations? What experiences influencing their interpretations and how is the hermeneutical dialectic of their interpretations?

This research will use literature studies in collecting the data. Its primary references are Wadud's work: *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1999) and Talbi's work: *Ummat al-Wasat* (1996). It employs an explanatory-comparative-analytical method which aims to understand comparatively their respective interpretations. In order to derive a comprehensive understanding, this research uses Gadamer's hermeneutics by investigating their socio-historical context, intellectual background, thoughts on the nature of Qur'anic interpretation and Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Both Wadud and Talbi argue that the verse does not establish the superiority of men and women, but it acknowledges duties division and mutual responsibility among married couple. They are in line that it reflects particular context in which it was revealed and thus requires a contextual reading to be applied in contemporary context. The difference among their interpretations is on the status of marriage relationship. The marriage relationship in terms of Wadud's interpretation preferably reflects co-dependent partnership while that of Talbi's interpretation preferably reflects care-taker or dependent partnership. In terms of Gadamer's hermeneutics, the difference of Wadud's and Talbi's interpretation is a result of their different horizons which also explains their different hermeneutical situation and pre-understanding. Wadud largely involved and participated in women's organizations advocating gender equality and women's rights while Talbi is largely influenced by French scholars and thoughts in the science of history. Such different hermeneutical situation among them provides great deal in conceptualizing and defining pre-understanding to the Qur'an. This could be observed through their thoughts on the nature of Qur'anic interpretation and hermeneutics. Wadud establishes "a female inclusive reading" and hermeneutics of *tawhid*, a holistic method of Qur'anic interpretation. Meanwhile, Talbi establishes "a historical reading" on the Qur'an which examines Qur'anic socio-historical context in detail, in order to derive the *maqasid* of particular Qur'anic verse. Both Wadud's and Talbi's interpretation represent their respective hermeneutical situations and the way they define ontologically the nature of Qur'anic interpretation and Qur'anic hermeneutics affect on producing the meanings of the verse.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Within human history, sex difference has resulted in injustice against women with regard to their marital, social, cultural, economical and political domain. Women are still deemed as second class citizens, so they less play their role within social life. Yet, dehumanization and violence actions against women frequently occur even up to the recent days. These gender problems finally result in discriminative actions and marginalization against women.

According to Abdul Mustaqim, there are several factors in which women would gain gender injustice as follows; (1) the domination of patriarchal culture within the society; (2) political situation which does not fully take side to women; (3) capitalistic economical system which often exploits women; (4) the interpretation of religious texts which are gendered bias.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth factor above designates that religion might be the cause of gender injustice and discrimination against women. The interpretation of religious texts, which is gendered bias has created social construction upon the society that puts men' superiority over women. Such interpretation, however has made religion, as a means to justify gender injustice, thus, the society will believe that gender difference is a destiny or God's intention that must be accepted.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Mustaqim, *Paradigma Tafsir Feminis*, (Yogyakarta: Logung Pustaka, 2008), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Inayah Rohmaniyah, "Gender dan Konstruksi Perempuan dalam Agama", *Journal of Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, vol. 10, July 2009, p. 217.

A prominent Qur'anic verse that discusses gender relationship is al-Nisā':

34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ  
فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ  
وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ فَإِنِ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ  
عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

(Husband) are the protectors and maintainers of their (wives), 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 you 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 (annoyance): for Allah is Most High, Great (above you Allah).<sup>3</sup>

Within traditional Qur'anic exegesis, most of classical Qur'anic exegetes interpret the verse in terms of justifying the superiority of men over women.<sup>4</sup> For example, al-Zamakhshari argues that men are leader of women. Like a king's order upon his society, they can command and prohibit women, because Allah has given preferences to men over women. Prophets and scholars also are men. The husbands are also obligated to pay marital cost as either paying dowry (*mahar*) or financing the wives.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This translation is taken from 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2007), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Irsyadunnas, *Hermeneutika Feminis dalam Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer*, (Yogyakarta: Kaukaba, 2014), p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> Mahmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kasysyāf*, (Riyadh: Maktabah al-'Abīkan, 1998), vol. 2, p. 67.



Such traditional interpretation becomes a great challenge for Islamic feminists.<sup>6</sup> They question whether Islam justifies gender inequality and discrimination against women or it contradicts with the principle of equality and justice explained in the Qur'an. They deconstruct such traditional Qur'anic interpretation, by reinterpreting Qur'anic verses regarding women in the light of gender equality. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Amina Wadud, Mohammed Talbi, Ashgar Ali Engineer, Riffat Hasan and Asma Barlas are among them, to mention some.

Among those scholars, this research will comparatively examine the interpretation of Amina Wadud and Mohammed Talbi of Q. 4:34. There are several reasons why their interpretation is important to be compared. First, both Wadud and Talbi interpret the verse to acknowledge and advocate gender equality in Islam.<sup>7</sup> Besides, they are in line that the Qur'an, in order to make it relevant to any place and time, must be contextualized in the light of contemporary context.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Wadud and Talbi have different approach and method in interpreting the Qur'an. Wadud establishes "a female inclusive reading" on the Qur'an which includes women's experience and perspective. She also establishes

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<sup>6</sup> Margot Badran defines the term Islamic feminism as a discourse of women and equality in which its paradigm and understanding are derived from the Qur'anic interpretation. See: Margot Badran, "Islamic Feminism Revisited", *al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 9-15 February 2006, issue No. 781, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archieve/2006/781/cu4.htm>. Nevertheless, the term is still highly debated among scholars. I will discuss more this issue in the next chapter.

<sup>7</sup> See: Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman, Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xii-xiii. See also: *Muhammad Talbi, Ummat al-Wasaʿ*, (Tunis: Sarar li al-Nasyr, 1996), p. 115-117.

<sup>8</sup> See: Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, p. 5. See also: *Muhammad Talbi, Ummat al-Wasaʿ*, p. 118.

“hermeneutic of *tawhīd*” which means a holistic method.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Talbi acknowledges a historical reading on the Qur’an (*qirā’ah tarīkhiyyah*) by which one must examine the socio-historical and anthropological context of particular verse, in order to derive its *maqāṣid al-syarī’ah* (the substantive values/objectives behind a verse).<sup>10</sup>

Second, arguably, their respective approaches and methods in interpreting the Qur’an also imply on their interpretation of Q. 4:34. For instance, Wadud is quite detail to examine the syntactical structure of the verse and thematically link it to the other verses. According to Wadud, such analysis is significant to derive the Qur’anic *weltanschauung*. She actually also takes the socio-historical context of the verse in to account, but she does not provide a detailed explanation.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, Talbi reluctantly examines the linguistic dimensions of the verse. For him, such analysis seemingly does not provide meaningful understanding of the verse. Therefore, he provides more and detailed analysis on the socio-historical context in which the verse was revealed to derive the *maqāṣid al-syarī’ah*.<sup>12</sup>

The question that arises with regard to this research is to what extent the similarities and differences of both Wadud’s and Talbi’s interpretation of Q. 4:34 and how far their interpretations reflect their respective objectives, perspective and intention? In order to reach a comprehensive understanding, this research uses

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<sup>9</sup> Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Talbi, *Ummat al-Wasaṭ*, p. 118-119.

<sup>11</sup> Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman*, p. 69-70

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Talbi, *Ummat al-Wasaṭ*, p. 120-125.

Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy to comparatively understand the context of Wadud and Talbi in their respective interpretations. Gadamer's hermeneutics would be applied to understand the plurality of interpretation of a text. According to Gadamer's hermeneutics, a meaning is not only produced by a text, rather it is produced through dialectical process between reader, text and context.<sup>13</sup> Gadamer's hermeneutic can be used as a perspective in understanding one's interpretation of a text, by investigating its process and assumptions which involve in the process of interpretation, including the context surrounding and influencing its process.<sup>14</sup>

## **B. Research Question**

Based on the reasons above mentioned, this research would study:

1. What are the main points of Amina Wadud's and Mohammed Talbi's interpretations on 4:34?
2. What are the similarities and differences among their interpretations?
3. In terms of Gadamer's hermeneutics, what experiences influencing their interpretations, and how is the hermeneutical dialectic of their interpretations?

## **C. Objective and Significance**

The objectives in undertaking this research are:

1. To explain the interpretation of Amina Wadud and Mohammed Talbi on 4:34.

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<sup>13</sup> F. Budi Hardiman, *Seni Memahami Hermeneutik dari Schleiermacher sampai Derrida*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2015), p. 163-164.

<sup>14</sup> Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Tema-Tema Kontroversial*, (Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2011), p. 9.

2. To analyze the similarities and differences among their interpretation.
3. To analyze the cause of their variety of interpretations on 4:34.

Meanwhile, the significances of this research are as follows:

1. This research will academically give significant contribution on the development of Qur'anic studies.
2. In the middle of debate among Islamic scholars on hermeneutics, this research contributes to explain that Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy is compatible as a perspective or approach in understanding a work of *tafsīr*.
3. This research explains that in the process of interpretation, the socio-historical context of each exegete (*mufasssīr*), their ontological view on *tafsīr*, Qur'anic hermeneutics, and assumptions or prejudices that used in the process of interpretation will influence in determining the meanings.

#### **D. Prior Research**

Several researches with regard to the interpretation of Q. 4:34, Talbi's and Wadud's thought have been done before. I classify the prior researches in relation with this issue into three categories as follows:

##### **1. On Amina Wadud**

Anne Johanna Tuppurainen's dissertation entitled "*Challenges Faced by Muslim Women: An Evaluation of the Writings of Leila Ahmed, Elizabeth Fernea, Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud*" discusses what challenges that Muslim women actually face in contemporary era, and how their strategies in facing them. It examines the works of four Islamic feminists: Leila Ahmed, Elizabeth Fernea,

Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud. According to Tuppurainen, they deeply undertake critical research on women's struggle against injustice. Their objectives are to formulate the solutions and strategies in the light of modern debate. Besides, in formulating their thought, they use historical, anthropological, socio-political and hermeneutical approach.<sup>15</sup>

Hibba Abugideri's article entitled "*The Renewed Woman of American Islam: Shifting Lenses Toward Gender Jihad?*" discusses the view of three American Muslim feminist on the debate of women leadership in Islam: Amina Wadud, Amira Sonbol and Sharifa al-Khateeb. According to Abugideri, those scholars represent American Muslim women that propose a new model of women leadership in Islam, not only in public space, but also in religious space. Abugideri calls the scholars' objectives and struggle as "*gender Jihad*". Although they have different interests, they altogether reinterpret the Qur'an to formulate their thoughts and ideas.<sup>16</sup>

Irsyadunnas' book entitled "*Hermeneutika Feminisme Dalam Pemikiran Tokoh Islam Kontemporer*", comparatively study on two scholars' thought: Amina Wadud and Asghar Ali Engineer, and focuses on the epistemological and methodological issue of Qur'anic exegesis. He concludes that feminist hermeneutics proposed by Wadud and Engineer is different from the epistemology of traditional Qur'anic exegesis. Their epistemology consists of

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<sup>15</sup> Anne Johanna Tuppurainen, "*Challenges Faced by Muslim Women: An Evaluation of the Writings of Leila Ahmed, Elizabeth Fernea, Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud*", dissertation of Faculty of Religious Studies, University of South Africa, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Hibba Abugideiri, "The Renewed Woman of American Islam: Shifting Lenses Toward Gender Jihad?", Journal *The Muslim World*, Vol. 91, 2001.

nature, method, source and validity of *tafsīr* that more orients on universal humanity issue, such as justice and equality.<sup>17</sup>

Achmad Ainur Ridha's article entitled "*Hermeneutika Qur'an Versi Amina Wadud Muhsin*" discusses the construction of Amina Wadud's interpretation which includes her view on *tafsīr*; method of interpretation and its application on certain verse. He concludes that Wadud's Qur'anic hermeneutics is relevant to reinterpret several Qur'anic verses deemed as gendered bias. Nevertheless, according to Ridha, her Qur'anic hermeneutic is not entirely new, because it has been proposed by Fazlur Rahman.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. On Mohammed Talbi

Ronald L. Nettler's article entitled "*Gagasan Muhammad Talbi tentang Islam dan Politik: Konsep tentang Islam untuk Dunia Modern*" explains analytically and critically about Talbi's thought on Islam and Politics. One of Nettler's remarks with regard to Talbi's thought is that he does not explain explicitly his methodology in reading and understanding traditional historiography sources. He also does not take the debate among Western scholars on this issue into account. Nevertheless, his thought on revitalizing Islamic values such *syūrā*

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<sup>17</sup> Irsyadunnas, *Hermeneutika Feminis dalam Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer*, (Yogyakarta: Kaukaba, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Achmad Ainur Ridho, "Hermeneutika Qur'an Versi Amina Wadud Muhsin", in the book entitled *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an dan Hadis*, (Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2010), p. 175-204.

in its ethical-universal form has exceeded the boundaries of traditional Islamic thought.<sup>19</sup>

Ilyas Daud's article entitled "*Hermeneutika al-Qur'an Muhammad Talbi*" focuses on Talbi's method of Qur'anic interpretation and its application on certain verse. Other than that, Daud explains Talbi's position among other modern Qur'anic scholars. However, this article is very simple because it does not discuss the construction of Talbi's interpretation. Besides, he does not directly refer on Talbi's works, but on Nettler's article.

Nor Elsyah Rahmawati's thesis entitled "*Penafsiran Muhammad Talbi tentang Ummatan Wasatan dalam al-Qur'an*" discusses about Talbi's interpretation of the phrase *ummatan wasatan* in the Qur'an. She concludes that *al-qira'ah al-maqāṣidiyah* which he proposed could minimize ideological reading on the Qur'an. According to Talbi, *ummatan wasatan* is people with certain characters: performing mandate, caring, doing *da'wah*, fulfilling the basic need of human being, preserving divine word (the Qur'an), believing in the prophethood of Muhammad and conveying his teachings to the others. According to Rahmawati, Talbi consistently applies his historical reading on the Qur'an by examining the socio-historical context of particular Qur'anic verse.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald L. Nettler, "Gagasan Muhammad Talbi tentang Islam dan Politik: Konsep tentang Islam untuk Dunia Modern", within the book entitled *Pemikiran Islam dari Sayyid Akhmad Khan hingga Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd*, trans: Wakhid Nur Effendi, (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2002), p. 130-159.

<sup>20</sup> Nor Elsyah Rahmawati, "Penafsiran Muhammad Talbi tentang *Ummatan Wasatan* dalam al-Qur'an". Thesis of Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 2014.

An article that involves Wadud's and Talbi's interpretation of Q. 4:34 is Rachel M. Scott's article entitled "*A Contextual Approach to Women's Right in the Qur'an: Readings of 4:34*". It examines three Muslim thinkers' interpretation of Q. 4:34 which are represented by Fatima Mernissi, Muhammad Talbi dan Amina Wadud. Scott discusses their thought of contextualizing the Qur'an and their Qur'anic methodology.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. On Classical Interpretation of Q. 4:34

Most of classical Muslim exegetes interpret the verse to justify the superiority of men over women. Al-Ṭabari, Ibnu Kaṣīr, Zamakhsyari, al-Rāzi and al-Qurṭūbi are the examples. By relying on several narratives, al-Ṭabari concludes that the first phrase of verse explains that men have the right to discipline the women and arrange their affairs. His rationale is that men are obligated to finance women, as either to pay dowry (*mahar*) or spend their property for women during marriage.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Rāzi provides more detail explanation in interpreting the phrase *al-rijālu qaḥwāmūn ala al-Nisā'*. He argues that the phrase acknowledges that men have the authority to discipline women and take over their affairs. Furthermore, he even states that Allah creates men as the leader and executor of women's affairs.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Rachel M. Scott, "A Contextual Approach to Woman's Right in the Qur'an: Readings of 4:34", *The Muslim World Journal*, Vol. 99 January, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Ibnu Jārīr al-Ṭabary, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'An Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'an*, (Kairo: Markāz al-Buḥūs wa al-Dirasāt al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), vol. 6, p. 687.

<sup>23</sup> Fakhruddin al-Rāzi, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1981), vol. 10, p. 90-91.



Zamakhsyari depicts the leadership of men over women as a king's command upon his society. Thus, men can command and forbid women.<sup>24</sup>

Qurṭubi analyzes the word *qawwām* semantically. He explains that it is intensive form of *qiyām* which means conducting something, having an authority to manage and effort to guard. In terms of this definition, Qurṭubi concludes that men must manage women's affairs, discipline them, guard them in the house and forbid their appearance in the public space. Meanwhile, women must obey their husband and fulfill their demand as long as it is not wrongdoing (*ma'siyah*).<sup>25</sup>

Both Zamakhsyari and al-Rāzi compromise that the authority of men over women is caused by two following conditions: what preference has been given (*bi mā faḍḍalallāh ba'ḍukum ala ba'ḍ*) and what they spend of their property (*bi mā anfaqū min amwā lihim*). Analyzing the word *faḍḍala*, they categorize men's preferences into two categories: essential nature (*ṣifāt ḥaqīqīyah*) and Islamic law (*ahkām syar'iyah*). The essential natures of men are cleverness, strength, archery, horsing, writing, sincerity and seriousness while the examples of Islamic law giving men's preferences are *jihād*, summon prayer, *i'tikāf*, witness, inheritance and trusteeship (*al-wilāyah*). Besides, the Prophets and scholars are men.<sup>26</sup>

Ibnu Kaṣīr provides general statement summarizing the interpretation of the other exegetes on the word *qawwām* and *faḍḍala*. He argues that men are the

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<sup>24</sup> Mahmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsyari, *al-Kasysyāf*, (Riyadh: Maktabah al-'Abīkan, 1998), vol. 2, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li al-Ahkām al-Qur'an*, (Muassat al-Risalah), vol. 6, p. 280.

<sup>26</sup> See: Fakhruddin al-Rāzi, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, p. 91. Mahmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsyari, *al-Kasysyāf*, p. 67.

leader, senior, commander and educator of women. Furthermore, he states that men are preferred and better than women. Therefore, the prophecy and great king are specialized for men. To support his interpretation, Ibnu Kāsīr then quotes Hadith explaining the collapse of a community caused by women leadership.<sup>27</sup>

Classical Muslim exegetes above mentioned explain shortly the second condition of men's preference over women. Ibnu Kāsīr, Zamakhsyari and al-Rāzi, for example, state that the phrase *bi mā anfaqū min amwālihim* affirms the obligation of men to finance women as either to pay dowry (*mahar*) or spend their property for women during marriage.<sup>28</sup> Ibnu Kāsīr concludes that these two conditions result in the preference of men over women in terms of their essential nature.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the other exegetes, Qurṭubī explains the implication of the second condition. According to him, if the men are unable to finance their wives, they are not *qawwām* over women. Therefore, a woman is allowed to cancel her marriage contract (*'aqd al-nikāh*), because the objective of marriage is not fulfilled.<sup>30</sup>

Regarding the phrase describing pious women, al-Ṭabari interprets the word *qanitāt* as the obedience of women to Allah and their husband. Nevertheless, later classical Muslim exegetes such as Ibnu Kāsīr, Zamakhsyari

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<sup>27</sup> Ibnu Kāsīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-'Aẓīm*, (Giza: Maktabah Aulād al-Syaikh li al-Turās, 2000), vol. 4, p. 20

<sup>28</sup> See: Ibnu Kāsīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-'Aẓīm*, p. 21. Fakhrudin al-Rāzi, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, p. 91. Mahmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsyari, *al-Kasysyāf*, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> Ibnu Kāsīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-'Aẓīm*, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li al-Ahkām al-Qur'an*, p. 280-281

and Qurṭubī interpret *qanītāt* as the obedience of women only to their husband.<sup>31</sup> Ibnu Kaṣīr underlies his interpretation on the narrative of Ibn. ‘Abbas.<sup>32</sup>

Al-Rāzi acknowledges that the meaning of *qanītāt* is obedience to Allah while the meaning of *ḥafizāt li al-Ghaib* is fulfilling husband’s rights. Nevertheless, he then concludes that *qanītāt* describes a condition in which a wife obeys her husband when he is present. However, al-Rāzi’s interpretation affirms that the obedience is to the husband. He argues that the usage of *alif* and *lam* in the word *al-ṣālihāt* implies on that all pious women must obey their husband.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, according to al-Rāzi, the phrase *ḥafizāt li al-Ghaib* affirms the obligation of a woman to obey her husband when he is absence.<sup>34</sup> Such interpretation is also proposed al-Ṭabari, Ibn. Kaṣīr, Zamakhsyari and Qurṭubī. They argue that when the husband is absence, women must keep themselves from adultery (*zina*) and keep the house and husband’s property.<sup>35</sup>

From several works above mentioned, there has not been a work that discusses comparatively the interpretation of Amina wadud and Muhammad Talbi on Q. 4:34 in the light of Gadamer’s hermeneutics. The objective of this research is to comparatively understand their respective interpretation of Q. 4:34.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibnu Kaṣīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Aẓīm*, p. 22. Mahmūd bin ‘Umar al-Zamakhsyari, *al-Kasysyāf*, p. 68. ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li al-Ahkām al-Qur’an*, p. 281.

<sup>32</sup> Ibnu Kaṣīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Aẓīm*, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Fakhruddin al-Rāzi, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, p. 91.

<sup>34</sup> Fakhruddin al-Rāzi, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, p. 92.

<sup>35</sup> See: Ibnu Kaṣīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Aẓīm*, p. 22. Mahmūd bin ‘Umar al-Zamakhsyari, *al-Kasysyāf*, p. 68. ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li al-Ahkām al-Qur’an*, p. 281. Ibnu Jārīr al-Ṭabari, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘An Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’an*, p. 692.

However, I would take those works into consideration as secondary sources of this research.

### **E. Theoretical Framework**

Hermeneutical philosophy focuses on the philosophical-phenomenological dimension of interpretation.<sup>36</sup> Unlike hermeneutical theory that more focuses on how to derive the objective meanings of a text, this kind of hermeneutic more focuses on the epistemological assumptions of interpretation by investigating the historical dimension of interpretation not only within the text's horizon, but also the author's and reader's horizons.<sup>37</sup> According to Fahrudin Faiz, hermeneutical philosophy could be called as a hermeneutical model in understanding one's interpretation of certain objects. It means that this kind of hermeneutic is an effort to understand one's interpretation by investigating its process and assumptions including its context that involve in and influencing the process interpretation.<sup>38</sup>

Gadamer's hermeneutic can be categorized as hermeneutical philosophy, because it more discusses about philosophical dimension of interpretation rather than methodological aspect. For Gadamer, hermeneutic is not a method, rather it is the ontology and phenomenology of comprehension. According to Gadamer, the truth could not be reached through the method, because it often neglects

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<sup>36</sup> There are three model of hermeneutic, namely hermeneutical theory, hermeneutical philosophy and critical hermeneutic. See: Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*...., hlm. 7-9.

<sup>37</sup> Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*....,p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an*....,p. 7.

historical phenomenon of certain object. Besides, it often imposes the object to adjust within the method.<sup>39</sup>

The keywords in understanding Gadamer's hermeneutic are experience and dialectic. He argues that within dialectical process, the chance in proposing question freely is might much possible rather than methodological process. The intention of hermeneutic is no to make the requirements and regulations to obtain the comprehension which is 'truly objective', rather to obtain the comprehension itself as broad as possible.<sup>40</sup>

The main theories of Gadamer's hermeneutics could be summarized as follows:<sup>41</sup>

### **1. Historically Effected Consciousness**

Historically effected consciousness theory means that each exegete (reader) is influenced by certain hermeneutical situation surrounding them: tradition, culture, education and experience of life. Therefore, an exegete must realize in doing an interpretation that his socio-historical-intellectual context, tradition, culture and experience of life surrounding him/her consciously or not, also play a role in the process of interpretation.

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<sup>39</sup> Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutika Teori Baru Mengenai Interpretasi*, translator: Musnur Hery (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), p. 255. See also E. Sumaryono, *Hermeneutik Sebuah Metode Filsafat*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999) p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutika...* p. 255. See also: E. Sumaryono, *Hermeneutik...*, p. 69.

<sup>41</sup> Sahiron Syamsuddin, "Hermeneutika Hans Georg Gadamer dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur'an dan Pembacaan al-Qur'an pada Masa Kontemporer", within the book entitled *Upaya Integrasi Hermeneutika* dalam kajian Qur'an dan Hadis, (Yogyakarta: Lembaga Penelitian UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2011), p. 36-41

## **2. Pre-Understanding**

The existing of effected history within the exegetes' consciousness shapes what is called by Gadamer as "pre-understanding" in their cognition. According to Gadamer, the existing of pre-understanding is a requirement for reader in interpreting a text, so that there will be dialectical process between reader and text. Without it, a reader will be difficult in understanding a text well. Nevertheless, an interpreter must be open-minded to criticize, renew and correct his own pre-understanding, when he/she realizes that it is not in accordance with the intention of text in order to avoid misunderstanding to the text's message. The critics and corrections on pre-understanding will subsequently result in the perfection of pre-understanding.

## **3. The Fusion of Horizons and Hermeneutical Circle**

In the process of interpretation each interpreter must understand and consider two horizons: the horizon of text and the horizon of reader. Those two horizons always present in the process of interpretation. An interpreter has his/her own horizon as the first basis in producing interpretation, but a text also has its own horizon that might be different with his/her horizon. Gadamer calls the interaction among those two horizons as "hermeneutical circle".

## **4. Application**

Application theory means that in doing interpretation an interpreter must not restrict to the literal meanings of text which is resulted through understanding of the historicity of text. However, he/she must further apply the comprehension or meaning that more relevant or meaningful to the era in which the text is

interpreted. In other words, the applied meaning is more than the literal meaning, namely what is called by Gadamer as “meaningful sense”.

## **F. Research Methodology**

This research will use literature studies in collecting the data. The reference of this research is divided into two categories, namely primary and secondary references. The primary references are Amina’s works: *Qur’an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective* (1999) and *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women’s Reform in Islam* (2006); and Talbi’s works: *Ummat al-Wasaṭ* (1996) and *‘Iyalullāh: Afkār Jadīdah fī ‘‘Alaqaṭ al-Muslim binafsihi wa bi al-Akharīn* (1992).

Meanwhile, the secondary references are *A Contextual Approach to Woman’s Right in the Qur’an: Readings of 4:34* (Rachel M. Scott, 2009), *Hermeneutika Feminis dalam Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer* (Irsyadunnas, 2014), *Gagasan Muhammad Talbi tentang Islam dan Politik: Konsep tentang Islam untuk Dunia Modern* (Ronald L. Netler, 2002) and the other works related with the issue of this research.

The method of this research is explanatory-comparative-analytical method. The purpose of this method is to explain how the interpretation of Amina and Talbi on 4:34 is. Subsequently, their interpretation will be compared and analyzed in order to understand their construction of interpretation, similarities and variety of interpretations, as well as the cause of their variety of interpretations.

This research uses Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy as an approach to analyze and understand the cause of the variety of interpretations among their interpretation of 4:34. By using this approach, I will take the socio-historical context of both, their ontological view on *tafsīr*; Qur'anic hermeneutic, assumptions and pre-understanding involved in the process on interpretation into account.

The methodological steps of this research are formulated as follows:

1. Collecting and selecting the data regarding the thoughts of Amina Wadud and Muhammad Talbi and the interpretation of 4.34 in several exegetical works (*tafsīr*).
2. Explaining Amina's and Talbi's socio-historical context, their ontological view on *tafsīr*; Qur'anic hermeneutics and assumptions involved in the process of interpretation. Subsequently, I will explain the interpretation of both on 4:34.
3. Comparing and analyzing their construction of interpretation by using Gadamer's hermeneutical approach.
4. Making the conclusion.

### **G. Research Outlines**

In order to reach the purpose of this research systematically, the discussions of this research will be divided into five chapters. Chapter I provide the background, question, the objectives and significances, prior research, theoretical frame, methodology and outline of this research. Chapter II discusses a brief over view on feminism discourse and Qur'anic interpretation which aims to



provide a brief introduction to understand the notion of gender equality arising in Muslim world through Qur'anic interpretation.

Chapter III discusses the biography of Wadud and Talbi. In order to understand the hermeneutical situation that involves in the process of their interpretation of Q. 4:34, this chapter will provide their socio-historical context and intellectual background. Besides, to understand the construction of their interpretation, this chapter also discusses their ontological view on *tafsīr* and Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Chapter IV focuses on comparing their interpretation on Q. 4:34 with Gadamer's hermeneutical perspective. The similarity and difference of their interpretation are also taken into account. In this chapter, the cause of their variety of interpretations will be analyzed. Chapter V is final chapter of this research that consist concluding remark and suggestions that might be useful for further research in relation with this topic.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### A. Conclusion

1. According to Amina Wadud, the Qur'an does not establish inherent values adhered on men and women. Rather, it acknowledges that both of them have equal consideration and equal potential. Therefore, Q. 4:34 could not be employed as a justification of men's superiority over women. For Wadud, the verse acknowledges a functional relationship for men and women within the society. Men are responsible to sustain the necessity of their wives and children while women are responsible to bear children. Regarding the second part of the verse, according to Wadud, the Qur'an never commands a wife to obey her husband. The verse explains a marital disorder among married with hierarchical solutions. She argues that the first solution: verbal advice is the best, because it is in accordance with Qur'anic principles. Meanwhile, according to Mohammed Talbi, the verse acknowledges that Allah obligates the existence of a leader within family, and that is men. However, men's leadership is not absolute. He argues that the verse explains duties division among the married couple. It also acknowledges the obligation of men to sustain the necessity of family. However, it also does not mean that Allah obligates women to do merely the housework, and likewise, prohibits them to work in the same manner as men. On the contrary, working for sustaining the necessity of family is

not obligated for them comparing to the men. According to Talbi, the verse certainly does not mean the superiority of men over women, because all human beings are equal before Allah. Both men and women have their respective preferences which are complementary. Like Wadud, Talbi insists that the second part of the verse acknowledge a marital disorder with hierarchical solutions. For him, the first solution is the best because it is in accordance with humanity principles. He argues that by understanding the socio-historical and political context of the verse, God does not intend beating women. the *maqāṣid* of the verse is to elude marital disorder among married couple.

2. Both Wadud and Talbi compromise that the verse does not establish the authority of men over the women. Rather, it acknowledges duties division and mutual responsibility among married couple. As a result, they make several key terms of the verse: *faḍḍala*, *qawwām qanitāt*, *nusyūz* and *ḍaraba* into neutral terms and interpret those in the light of egalitarian perspective. They also acknowledge the significance of contextualization in understanding the last part of the verse. They are in line that it reflects particular circumstance in which it was revealed and thus requires contextual reading to be applied in modern-contemporary context. The difference among their interpretation is on the status of relationship among married couple. Wadud interprets the verse towards full of gender equality, not only in the context of family, but also in the social context. It can be observed through her interpretation on the word *qawwām* and *ṭā'ah*. Thus,

she does not acknowledge the concept of men's leadership over women in the family. She tends to argue that both men and women have equal status and rights in the family. The relationship of marriage in terms of Wadud's interpretation preferably reflects co-dependent partnership. Compared to Wadud, Talbi reluctantly acknowledges full of gender equality among married couple in the family. He acknowledges the concept of men's leadership over women within marriage relationship. Accordingly, in terms of his interpretation, the relationship of marriage preferably reflects care-taker or dependent relationship in which men as the head of household and women as being headed. Nevertheless, Talbi argues that the authority of men over women is not absolute.

3. In terms of Gadamer's hermeneutics, Wadud's and Talbi's interpretations are the result of their different horizons which also explain their different hermeneutical situations and pre-understandings to the Qur'an. Wadud largely involves and participates in women's organizations advocating gender equality and women's rights. She was also raised in the context of second wave of feminism. Meanwhile, Talbi is largely influenced by French scholars and thoughts, particularly on the science of history. Such different hermeneutical situations among them provides a great deal in conceptualizing and defining pre-understanding to the Qur'an. This could be observed through their thoughts on the nature of Qur'anic interpretation and hermeneutics. Wadud establishes "a female inclusive reading" on the Qur'an which includes women's experience and perspective. She also

establishes “hermeneutic of *tawhīd*” which means a holistic method. Meanwhile, Talbi establishes a historical reading on the Qur’an (*qirā’ah tarīkhiyyah*) by which one must examine the socio-historical and anthropological context of particular verse, in order to derive its *maqāṣid al-syarī’ah* (the substantive values/objectives behind a verse).

## **B. Suggestion**

The discourse of the Qur’an and gender equality has been highly developed in recent Qur’anic scholarship. However, this research does not comprehensively cover the complexity of the discourse. Therefore, several issues alluded in this research is certainly possible to be developed. For instance, although both Wadud and Talbi acknowledge that Q. 4:34 establishes duties division and mutual responsibility, they do not propose how to manage and conceptualize those in terms of marriage relationship. Since the Qur’an claims to be universal for all human being and any circumstances, the verse is possible to be contextualized in the light of diverse Muslims’ contexts all over the world.

In the ongoing debate among scholars over the compatibility of Western hermeneutics with Muslim’s Qur’anic hermeneutics, I agree with several progressive Muslim scholars that Muslim scholarship should consider Western hermeneutics to be integrated with *‘ulum al-Qur’an* and *tafsīr* towards sophisticated methodology. Therefore, this issue should be developed and examined in search of a form of compatibility between Muslim and Western hermeneutics, particularly hermeneutical philosophy which is not well developed within Muslim’s intellectual tradition.

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