

## REINTERPRETATION OF WOMEN'S DOMESTIC ROLES Saleh Darat's Thought on Strengthening Women's Roles in Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Roles of women in relation to domestic and public life are one of gender issues in many societies including Javanese people. Nevertheless, there are indeed figures who fought for improving women status are from java among them are Kartini and her teacher, a male '*Ulamā*' named Saleh Darat. Saleh Darat offered a new perspective regarding women's roles in his book, *Majmū'at*. He, in contrast to common views, granted domestic works high value and signified them with spiritual meaning so that women can also be elevated in status. In addition, he also promoted the right of women for education as well as the importance of women taking part in economic activities. Furthermore, he tried to integrate Javanese culture and the condition at the time, Dutch colonialism and its impact, in to his prescription. Therefore, some of his views might sound quite conservative in today's context but actually very progressive given the time and condition at the era of his life

**Keywords:** Saleh Darat, domestic role, spiritual value, economic activity.

### Introduction

Women and men in Islam posses a status as servants of God and caliph on earth. The status makes them obliged to be responsible for

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<sup>1</sup> This article is developed from the researcher's own research report with the title "Mitos Perempuan Kurang Akal dan Agamanya." (The Myth of Women as Less Intellectual and less Religious human Beings). The research was funded by IAIN Walisongo in 2013.

theirs duties before God. As the caliphs, men and women are responsible for the prosperity of the earth and maintaining its sustainability. Therefore, women and men are privileged to work and receive rewards from their work.<sup>2</sup> It is noted in the history of the Prophet Muhammad that Muslim women have played their roles both in the public and or domestic spheres. In this regards, one of the very well known women is Khadijah. She is popularly known as a merchant whose trading network reached the land of Sham. Another exemplary figure is Zaynab bint Jahsh who was known as a producer of leather craft.<sup>3</sup> In the field of science, there is Aisha who was very well-versed in the Qur'an, hadith, and jurisprudence.<sup>4</sup>

The role of women in public sector has undergone its dynamics as there are times where women enjoy and show significant public roles and there are other times where women show less or weak roles in public sphere.<sup>5</sup> Within the era of Dutch colonialism, women who work in the land which means that it is outside its domestic sphere were the subject to sexual harassment from the leaseholders of land. Sartono Kartodirdjo confirms that a regent, in the Dutch colonial era, had a policy to lease a land in the regent's territory to private parties (here usually Chinese and or Dutch). As the result, the leaseholder could get benefits from the leased land and employ its residents without payment (forced labors). Ironically, they also often commit sexual harassment against women.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, according to Vincent Houben, when the Dutch colonized Indonesia, there was an incident of sexual harassment committed by PFH Chevallier, A Dutch resident assistant in Yogyakarta and a translator named J. Dietree<sup>7</sup> to a noble woman of the Palace. This incidence shows the high risk of sexual harassment to women moreover to the non-noble women considering that the

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<sup>2</sup> Nashruddin Baidan, *Tafsīr bi al Ra'yi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> Baidan, *Tafsir bi Al Ra'yi*, p.33.

<sup>5</sup> Irene Sotiropoulou, "Women in Alternative Economy or What Do Women Do Without Official Currency", *Women's Studies International Forum*, Volume 47 (2014), pp. 339-348.

<sup>6</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru: 1500-1900 M*, Vol. I (Jakarta: Gramedia Pusaka Utama, 1993), pp. 299-301.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent JH Houben, *Kraton and Kompeni: Surakarta and Yogyakarta 1830-1870* (Leiden: KITLV Press), pp. 11-13.

perpetrators can even do it to a Prince concubine.

This historical note explains the motive behind the tradition imposed on Javanese girls that is the *pingitan* (seclusion). This tradition basically is keeping the girls from their 12 years old in the house and prohibit them from leaving the house. The idea is likely to protect the girls from risks of sexual abuse from the colonizers and their cronies. The prohibition would be ruled out by itself once a man proposed to her. As a consequence from the tradition, there was a process where women's domestic roles became even stronger as they were held within the basic household duties such as cooking, laundering and also serving the husband's needs including fulfilling the sexual needs. On the other hand, their male partners have the roles of earning livelihood and productive stuffs which are mostly public roles.

Nasaruddin Umar stated that the division of labor based on gender in various places always are various and diverse across culture and society. Nevertheless, women are generally given the domestic roles while men are on duties for public roles such as the economics, politics, education, and religion. This division actually is one of the main factors behind the ideology of superiority of men resulted in putting women as inferior.<sup>8</sup> This has happened in the past and still continue up to now. The roles division is even reinforced by several thoughts and articles that prescribed and preserved women to stay at home. For example, there is an article written by Ahmad Muhammad Jamali that mentions that women's fundamental duties that are in accordance with their nature are to be at home to educate their children and to serve their husbands.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, references used in the palaces among them is *Wulangreh* article, the writing of King Pakubuwana IV of the Surakarta Kingdom, also argued that the wives should regard the husbands as their masters and hence they are obliged to satisfy their wishes/needs.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, there are still, up to now, many articles written in this recent era that promotes the notion on women's marginal positions and their domestic roles in the family. Johan Hendrik Meuleman's research on books focusing on women circulated in Indonesia shows that a considerable number of authors

<sup>8</sup> Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Al Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), pp. 79-84.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmad Muhammad Jamal, *Problematika Muslimahdi Era Globalisasi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Mantiq, 1995), p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Sunan Pakubuwana IV, *Serat Wulangreh Putri*, chapter 3, verse 5.

still regard women as subordinates.<sup>11</sup>

Amid the abundant writings about women's domestic roles that cause women's inferior position, there is a religious figure who offered different ideas, Saleh Darat. As a matter of fact, his thought that signifies a new meaning to the domestic role of women that could elevate women status to be equal to men.

### **The Domestic Role and Social Status**

The construction of roles for women and men cannot be separated from the culture of a society. The role division is generally based on sex of a person since it is commonly associated with physical and psychological condition. Professions that require physical strength are assumed to be constructed for males because males are considered to be physically stronger than women are. Males are also considered to be braver in dealing with challenges and hence are positioned to play roles outside homes. On the contrary, women's physical and psychological states are considered weaker than men and therefore they are positioned to play roles within the household.

According to M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies, as quoted by Nasaruddin Umar, the role construction mentioned uses an *outside and inside* dichotomy. This pattern is called by Louise Lamphere as the public-domestic sphere. The so-called public sphere is the sphere outside homes which is considered as the men's working areas such as politics, education, economics, and religious affairs. Meanwhile, the so-called domestic one is the household sector which is considered women's working areas including cooking, cleaning, washing, giving birth, and taking care of children. The public roles benefit men for superiority image while the domestic ones brings inferiority stigma for women.<sup>12</sup> The labor division based on sex still goes on until nowadays among the agricultural and industrial society. This consequently has resulted in women's marginal position.

One of the causal factors of the low access and participation of women in employment is patriarchal culture. In Indonesia for example, society who observe the culture that position women in the domestic sectors with those specific roles of the household maintenance. This

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<sup>11</sup> Johan Hendrik Meuleman, "Analisa Buku-Buku tentang Wanita Islam yang beredar di Indonesia", Lies M. Marcoes, *Wanita Islam Indonesia dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual* (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), p. 183.

<sup>12</sup> Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender*, pp. 81-82.

position deprive women from having access to public area works or other formal sectors. The patriarchal culture also gives impacts to women subordination in education sector that leads to public opinion believing that girls have no need to achieve a high level of education. The logic is that since their roles are mainly at home, they do not need to continue their education like boys. In this regards, data from the ministry of education in 2009, collected from 11 provinces in Indonesia, shows that boys have more opportunity to continue their education than girls do. Around 10-23% of boys continue their study to a higher level. This education discrepancy has also influenced the job opportunity for girls. Data from Statistics bureau of Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) states that since 2011-2014 women have lower job opportunity than man do.<sup>13</sup>

The patriarchal culture also gives impacts to women subordination in education sector. The culture leads to a public opinion stating that girls have no need to achieve a higher educational level. Since their roles are mainly at home, they do not need to continue their education to the higher level of education, unlike their male siblings.<sup>14</sup>

### **Saleh Darat's Opinion on Women Position**

Muhammad Saleh bin Umar al Samarani or known as Saleh Darat (1820-1930 AD) was born in a religious family that put emphasize on children education. His father's name is Umar who was a well-known Muslim cleric, and was involved in Diponegoro war. He directed Muhammad Saleh in learning the religious subjects ranged from learning the basic knowledge to learning the more advanced ones such as Qur'anic exegesis, fiqh, and mysticism. The knowledge were gained from several Muslim religious teachers in Indonesia, Malay and *Haramain* (Mecca and Medina). After finishing his study in Mecca, Saleh spread his knowledge in Islamic boarding school, which belonged to his father in law in Melayu Darat village, Semarang. Therefore, he was famously called as Saleh Darat.

In Indonesian society, Saleh Darat is regarded as one of the Muslim religious leader who possess a significant power. He has criteria as a Kiai (clerics) or a Muslim religious teacher. Karel

<sup>13</sup> Edriana Noerdin et al., *Potret Kemiskinan Perempuan* (Jakarta: Women Research Institute, 2006), pp. 9-10 and p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14 and p. 21.

Steenbrink asserted that Saleh Darat was characterized as a virtuous person and a descendant from Muslim religious teacher. Furthermore, he had wide knowledge and many students.<sup>15</sup> In fact, there are several pivotal figures among his students who later played important roles in society and became founders of big Islamic organizations in Indonesia among them are Hasyim Asy'ari (the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama), Ahmad Dahlan (the founder of Muhammadiyah), and RA Kartini (fighter of women's action in Indonesia).

Interestingly, Saleh Darat had a different opinion from other religious scholars who tend to legitimate the patriarchal system and culture that subordinate women. He presented a more egalitarian view on women and men position. However, related to women's task in domestic field, Saleh Darat offered the same opinion with others but with different meaning. Saleh Darat explains the domestic roles with stressing on its spiritual values.

According to Saleh Darat, the indicator of women's equity with man lays on the balance of right and duty between man and women as Allah's servants. As Allah's servant, women also have duty to do Islamic association learning about jurisprudence like men. Particularly knowledge on women's affairs such as menstruation and childbirth. Actually, it is an obligation of a husband to provide the religious education for the wife. In the Saleh Darat opinion, knowledge about menstruation is an indicator for a man's readiness for marriage. This is because menstruation and the purification mechanism are vital to the rituals including prayer as of the fundamentals. Hence, a man as a house leader has to have knowledge regarding this and is able to teach her wife. As a consequence, Someone who has no knowledge about menstruation and the cleansing prescription actually married.<sup>16</sup>

Islamic teaching and examples of the Prophet promotes the notion of man-woman equality. For example, women's economic rights such as obtaining inheritance, dowry, and the rights for maintenance are given and granted by Islam.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Karel A Steenbrink, *Pesantren Madrasah Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994), p. 109.

<sup>16</sup> Syaikh Haji Muhammad Shalih Umar, *Majmū'at al Sharā'at al Kāfiyāt li al 'Awam* (Semarang: Toha Putra, n.d.), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

### Saleh Darat's Attention toward Women's Issues

Saleh Darat had a section in his *Majmū'at* that explains about women's role and position and offers ideas differ from other Muslim scholars at his era. This is a *fiqh* book that contains his notion on the equality between women and men in the right to gain guidance through knowledge, Qur'an and inner self. The equality between men and women before God is illustrated in the ways that they have equal right and opportunity to receive the God's guidance or so called *hidayah* regardless of their sexes.

It is important here to note that an article or ideas of a person cannot be separated from the situation and condition of culture and society in which any author lived. In this sense, Saleh Darat's thoughts recorded in the *Majmū'at* (1309H/1892M) were quite progressive at his era and at his culture and society.

The problem of gender equality has not finished until the recent era. It can be seen from the condition of women across the world who are still dealing with gender injustice such as violence. In 2000, there is 11,4% of Indonesian citizens who suffer from violence. There are also a high number of women in rural areas who still suffer from domestic violence.<sup>18</sup> In India, there is 8 out of 10 wives who have to face the violence at their household.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, research by Sri Suhandjati in 2002 in the religious court of Semarang Central Java, Indonesia shows that there is a high occurrence of violence towards wives that cause the divorces. Research result shows that most of the violence are physical violence (38%), followed by economic violence (36%), and then sexual violence (2%).<sup>20</sup>

In this era, many women in various countries have had participated in various roles in public spheres. However, there are still many gender-based injustice and problems. To give illustration, violence against women including domestic violence is still high in occurrence.<sup>21</sup> Besides violence, another gender problem is stereotyping. Women have been stereotyped in the ways that they are denied access to public

<sup>18</sup> Rita Serena Kalibonso, "Kejahatan itu Bernama Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga", *Jurnal Perempuan*, No 28 (December 2002), p. 9 and pp. 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> Yulia Cleves Mosse, *Gender dan Pembangunan*, transl. Hartian Silawati (Yogyakarta: Rifka AnNisa and Pustaka Pelajar, 1996), pp. 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> Sri Suhandjati, *Islam Menentang Kekerasan terhadap Isteri* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2004), p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

roles. They are portrayed as housekeepers and therefore do not belong to public sphere the labeling still exist in the society and is justified by religion. Due to that, Saleh Darat wanted to erase the injustice towards women through his *Majmū'at*. This jurisprudence book does have some significance on Muslims. This is because the book covers religious roles which regulates the religious matters both rituals and *mu'āmalah* (social affairs) referring to Qur'an and *ḥadīth* as well as *ijtihād* (individual interpretation and judgment). *Ijtihād* has special place in Islam. *Ijtihād* can be defined as a rigorous effort of a Muslim religious scholar aimed at to determining the legal status of various matters in life.

Saleh Darat can be regarded as one of *mujtahids* (those who conduct *ijtihād*) and here he offers answer to the problem related to women's role. His attention towards social problem, at that time, could not be separated from his role as a religious leader living in Darat village (Semarang city, Central Java). It is also due to his place of living, he is known as Saleh Darat. In his role, he definitely observed how the society and their life. His great knowledge about Islam religion and society culture in his neighbor gained from his father, Kiai Umar who was well-known as a Muslim religious teacher and was a fellow of Diponegoro Prince.<sup>22</sup>

Besides being taught by his own father, Saleh Darat also become a students from famous religious teacher around Semarang such as Kiai Syahid (Pati), Kiai Muhammad Shalih bin Asnawi (Kudus), Kiai Abu Abdillah Muhammad al hadi bin Baquni (Muslim religious teacher of celestial sphere who then became advisor on religious law for a region in Semarang). His spirit to pursue knowledge has pushed Saleh Darat to continue his study to Mecca. In the city believed as the holly city by Muslims all over the world, Saleh Darat studied from famous Muslim religious teachers such as Syaikh Muhammad al Maqri al Mashri al Makki and Syaikh Muhamad ibn Sulaiman Hasballah.<sup>23</sup>

Saleh Darat is a significant Muslim scholar in the history of Indonesian Islam and is still well respected until now. This is indicated by the fact that many people still read his books. In addition, his

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<sup>22</sup> Abdullah Salim, *Majmū'at al-Sharī'āt al-Kāfiyāt li al-'Awam Karya Kiai Saleh Darat; Suatu Kajian Terhadap Kitab Fiqih Berbahasa Jawa Akhir Abad XIX* (Unpublished Dissertation, IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 1995), p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp. 33-35.



mosque is now becoming an educational center for students and respected as one of his legacies. Not only that, his *haul*, a day commemorating his time of passing away, is attended by many people.<sup>24</sup>

Because of his higher social status at society, Saleh Darat was recognized to be one of the famous Muslim religious clerics whose statements were strongly listened to and obeyed. Generally, a Muslim religious teacher is also functioning as a leader among the society and is a reference to whom people come with their various problems. The problems range from daily problems to social and more serious problems. One great example is when the hunger was spreading among people around 1800<sup>th</sup>. As a result of hunger, which was likely due to forced labor, the farmers can not plant rice seeds and hence the famine happened in various places in 1843-1848M.<sup>25</sup> Farmers who are in hunger and pain were then coming to Saleh Darat in order to consult and seek for help and advise. In addition, when many people including children suffered cholera and other skin disease, he was asked by the colonial government to address the problem and solve it.. Here, the history records that through the participation of mass Muslim leaders, the disaster can be overcome.<sup>26</sup>

Saleh Darat performs quite a great role and gave contribution as a leader to help society seeking the ways out from the social problem they faced at the time. Among the problems that were faced by the Javanese society is the condition of women. In short, women in Java at the time can be said as quite backward and this is described and explained in Kartini letter to her friend Stella Zeehandelaar. She said that the purpose of life of Javanese women is marriage and this is caused by the Javanese tradition that placed women merely as housewives.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> His funeral was on 28<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan 1321 H/18<sup>th</sup> of December 1903 M. Yet, the commemoration of his death/*haul* is done every 10<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal in which the attendants of society come from various village to recall his commendable attitudes and speeches.

<sup>25</sup> Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru*, p. 312.

<sup>26</sup> Jan Breman, *Keuntungan Kolonial Dari Kerja Paksa*, transl. Jugiarie Soegiarto, Christina Suprihatin, and Indira Ismail (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014), pp. 190-191.

<sup>27</sup> Siti Soemandari Soeroto and Myrtha Soeroto, *Kartini Sebuah Biografi: Rujukan Figur Pemimpin Teladan* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2011), p. 47.

In this regards, Saleh Darat tried to eradicate the injustice problem by reconstructing interpretation on women domestic tasks through his writing. His thoughts were written in *Majmū'at* book. The book is a jurisprudence book containing prescriptions on matters related to *munakaḥāt* (marriage) and woman's role as wife. The result of this research confirms that there was no previous study on the roles of women explained in *Majmū'at*.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, this study can be said as the first aiming to explore the issue.

### **Saleh Darat and His Reinterpretation of Women's Role in *Majmū'at*.**

As mentioned previously, *Majmū'at* is a fiqh book. Yet, it is important to say that the book is quite different from other books because the discussion within the book offers contextual approach. One of the quite progressive opinions offered in the book is the importance of education for girls. Even though it might sound simple in today's context, this prescription in *Majmū'at* definitely was quite progressive given the condition at the time. Therefore, that prescription was also an answer for the social problem faced by Javanese society particularly the women and here included Kartini. Saleh Darat surely takes the problem into his consideration in writing the *Majmū'at* book and it also shows his attention towards women's issues at Javanese society during the Dutch colonialism. It was also definitely a significant support for Kartini's effort and struggle in advancing the position of women and promote education for girls. The support was needed due to the challenges encountered by her in her efforts for women.

Among the challenges at the time were coming from the proponent of Javanese tradition that placed women merely as the housewife or commonly called as "*koncovingking*" in Javanese term. "*Koncovingking*" literally means friend and colleague at the back. The

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<sup>28</sup> Among the results of research about *Majmū'at* was Abdullah Salim's dissertation entitled *Majmū'at al-Sharī'at al-Kāfiyāt li al-'Awam Karya Kiai Saleh Darat (Kajian Terhadap Kitab Fiqih Berbahasa Jawa Akbar Abad XIX)*. The research particularly focused on *ḥadīth* written in *Majmū'at*. The other dissertation was written by Muchoyar HS with the title "KH Muhammad Shaleh al Samarani: Studi Tafsir *Al-Rabman fi Tarjamah Tafsir Kalām Mālik al Dayyān*". See, Muchoyar HS with the title "KH Muhammad Shaleh al Samarani: Studi Tafsir *Al-Rabman fi Tarjamah Tafsir Kalām Mālik al Dayyān* (Unpublished Dissertation, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 1999).

term is used to address the wife whose main role and most routines are specific activities at the kitchen (cooking), laundering and bedroom (serving the husband sexual need). In order to change the paradigm of the socially prescribed traditional role for women that caused the discrimination Saleh Darat signified a religious meaning about wife role in *Majmū'at*. Another challenge to the fight for women's condition improvement is the fact that women were, in addition to the men, also suffering from forced labor particularly due the economic crisis that has threaten the territory of colonials. According to Jan Breman, in 1816 there was a landlord that there has been a quite massive inhabitant mobilization in Priangan territory for picking coffee. In this forced labor, all of the people including the elderly, children and women were mobilized to work in the coffee farming owned by the landlord.<sup>29</sup> Ironically, the forced labor on women was even worsened by the sexual abuses to the native women done by the people in power at the time.

Book of *Majmū'at al-Sharī'at al-Kāfīyāt li al-'Awām* is one of Saleh Darat's works. It is claimed to be the book frequently discussed by many people in Java, Islamic schools, both in academic and non-academic spheres. Because of that, the book that was written in 1309 H/1892M was re-printed over and over again. Among these publications are in Singapore in 1317 H / 1899 M, in Bombay at 1336 H / 1918 M, Cirebon press at 1374 H<sup>30</sup>. Recently, the printing of *Majmū'at* is still conducted by Thoha Putra Press in Kauman, Semarang, Indonesia. The transcript that is used in this research is the one published by Thoha Putra Press Semarang. Meanwhile, Kiai Cholil Family, the grandchild of Saleh Darat, saves the original manuscript.

The choosing of manuscript is based on the philological approach, among others collecting manuscript, doing external critics to determine the originality of manuscript, comparing the text and doing internal critics to determine text credibility, determining chosen text, doing correction of broken text, and doing transliteration<sup>31</sup>.

*Majmū'at* in this research is used as a primary source to trace Darat's thought in the history regarding women. Since it is written in

<sup>29</sup> Breman, *Keuntungan Kolonial Dari Kerja Paksa*, p. 181.

<sup>30</sup> Salim, *Majmū'at al-Sharī'at al-Kāfīyāt*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>31</sup> Siti Baroroh Baried et al., *Pengantar Teori Filologi* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1985).

*Pegon Arabic* letter, it is a must to understand the content by doing transliteration to Indonesian language. By philological approach, researcher can help preparing the manuscript resembling the original, interpretation of the content, as well as explanation on the context of the book writing from the social, cultural and thought aspects.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, to get the idea of Saleh Darat regarding domestic role of women, hermeneutics is employed. The idea of a person cannot be separated from the situation and condition of society of the person. Because of that, this research used history approach to collect source, criticize the source and doing data interpretation. Reinterpretation in this article is useful to understand Saleh Darat's thought and reconstruct his ideas written in *Majmū'at* in relation to women role in the domestic sphere.

To analyze historical facts, this article uses a socio-historical approach in order to understand the situation Saleh Darat coped with. Here, the social reality is expressed by comprehending religious, social, cultural, politic, economic, and educational dimensions.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the analysis views on cultural development influenced by religious understanding on new expressions about women's role. According to Uka Tjandrasmita, philology and history study have the same goals. Among the goals is to explore recent events that have relevancy with future event. Consequently, both of the studies can complement each other.<sup>34</sup> It has to be underlined that the history literatures can give benefit for education here includes moral, politics and so forth.<sup>35</sup> Through learning history, a person can gain knowledge that is beneficial for today's purpose as well as the future. History also acknowledges and appreciates a person and figure that has contributed in building and improving human civilization. In this regards, Saleh Darat also is one of the figures who has contributed to the development of human civilization and here particularly through his new concept about women's roles. By offering his new concept on women's role, he actually has promoted change and deconstruction on the socially and

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<sup>32</sup> Andries Teeuw, *Khazanah Sastra Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1962), p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Historiografi Islam Kontemporer: Wacana, Aktualitas, dan Aktor Sejarah* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002), p. 73.

<sup>34</sup> Uka Tjandrasmita, *Kajian Naskah-naskah Klasik dan Penerapannya bagi Kajian Sejarah Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Puslitbang Lektur Keagamaan, 2006), p. 22 and p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Kuntowidjoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1999), p. 19 and p. 35.

culturally prescribed role of women at the time. The roles that initially were limited from a housewife were reframed to wider scope of role. Due to that reason, Martin van Bruinessen takes *Majmū'at* into account as an important Javanese *fiqh* source.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, a study in order to understand the content of the book is needed so that the real ideas of the author can be understood across times and includes this recent time.

### **Saleh Darat and His Reinterpretation of Domestic Roles**

According to Umar, the division of labor by sex always exists in every culture and society in various places.<sup>37</sup> Generally, the domestic affairs at home were given to women while men are given the roles in the public sphere such as economic affairs, politics, education, and religion.<sup>38</sup> Such division is caused by the ideology believing in superiority of men over women.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, there is also common perception that view domestic is more inferior than the public. Women's domestic role as well as their domestic affairs at home has continued up to now because many women still play role as a stay at home mothers. The role of women in domestic sphere is not much publicized in mass media as private issues are considered unattractive to public in general. This is again due to a gender biased perspective. Unsurprisingly, statistics show that men are the ones dominate the media as there are more men work as journalists than the women in many countries.<sup>40</sup>

The construction of women as the second class human, whose task is primarily in the domestic region, is still mainstreamed to recent era in various spheres. Nevertheless, such construction was more severe in the past and here includes the era of Kartini and Saleh Darat. The impact of this can be seen in the social structure manifested in unjust system particularly on women which lead to many problems

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Fikih di Pesantren Indonesia dan Malaysia", *Pesantren*, no. 1, Vol VI (1989), p. 49.

<sup>37</sup> Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender*, p. 293.

<sup>38</sup> Ali Abbas J, "The Islamic Work Ethic in Arabia", *The Journal of Psychology*, Volume 126 (1992), pp. 507-519

<sup>39</sup> Katsue Akiba Reynolds, "Female Speakers of Japanese", *Feminist Issues* (1985) pp. 13-46.

<sup>40</sup> Gadis Arivia et al., "Jurnal Perempuan di Dunia dalam Angka Statistik", *Jurnal Perempuan*, Volume 28 (2003), pp. 49-53.

commonly called as gender problems range from subordination, marginalization, stereotype, violence, and double burden that are suffered by women. All these problems are the ones inspire Saleh Darat to do reinterpretation on women's role in order to support Kartini who was clearly passionate and put attempts in elevating women's condition. History records that these two figures met and had interaction intensively. This relation and the intensive meeting is also due to the fact that Kartini studied Islam from Saleh Darat. Kartini studied Islam in the hall of Demak regency. Kartini, at that time, visited her uncle, Prince of Adipati Ario Hadiningrat as the Rembang Regent. Accordingly, she learned how to understand the meaning of the Qur'an to Saleh Darat. During her Qur'an study, she frequently discussed with the teacher on women's issues particularly issue of the right of women for education that she has passionately wanted to advocate.

As figures that have concern with the situation and society under the Dutch colonization, Saleh Darat and Kartini used to discuss about many problems faced by the society. They also tried to seek for solutions and possible ways out. These intensive discussion and awareness on women's marginalization and subordination inspired Saleh Darat to offer new interpretation and deconstruction on women's role basing on Islamic point of view. With the new meaning, the domestic roles become productive works both from economic and religious point of view.

Aware of the fact that the paradigm and the discrimination existed at the society at time was partly due to the ways they understand interpretations of Islamic classical sources, Saleh Darat tried to offer a counter discourse in His *majmu'at*. He signified a religious meaning on wives' roles in *Majmū'at*. Interestingly, he delivered his thought by using local culture elements. This approach has made his writing contextual and also effective as the audiences or readers of *Majmū'at* were Muslims in Java. They were lay men and non-expert and this means that they did not know Arabic but could read *Arabic Pegon*. Therefore the book was written in the *Pegon Arabic* script using Javanese language. It was expected that the public would easily understand its contents.

As women at the time were viewed as inferior to men, in the family life, the wife had no right to argue or decide. Women were under the control of men and had to have and perform total obedience to .the

husband. This is mentioned in the scripts of the Palace for example in *serat Candrarini* written by Ranggawarsita. In this text, it was clearly explained that women have to be submissive and obedient to her husband reflecting her total submission to God.<sup>41</sup>

The idea offered by Saleh Darat was putting the emphasis on giving back the position for women to be equal with men by stressing that both male and female are God's servants. Interestingly, the integration of religion and culture proposed by Saleh Darat, appeared in the elucidation of women's role at home; covering beautifying themselves (*macak*), having children (*manak*) and cooking as well as preparing food (*masak*). In *Majmū'at* book, Saleh Darat promotes the notion of partnership and refers to Qur'an in order to improve women's positions in Javanese culture. The essence of their equality is based on their position as God's servant. Here, it is asserted that they have the same responsibility with men in worshipping the God. In addition, it is also highlighted in the *Majmū'at* that both of them, men and women, will get rewards in accordance with their deeds regardless of their sexes. Women and men have the same obligation to maintain their human dignity by keeping themselves away from destructive acts like committing adultery. After stressing these points, Saleh Darat then stated that women also have the right to acquire religious knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

Saleh Darat's thought emphasized that Islamic teachings are aimed at keeping the relationship between human and his God and between human with their fellow humans. Relationship with human beings are governed by religious norms manifested in moral conducts to create a harmonious relationship in human life. One of the aspects that will contribute to the harmony is the society culture. Thus, the behavior of a Muslim cannot be separated from religious and social norms. Admittedly, Saleh Darat still placed women's role in the domestic area and this is in line with the Javanese culture. However, it is worth noting that he re-framed the domestic tasks such as cooking (*masak*) and having children (*manak*) as not merely routine jobs for women but actually have spiritual values and this is line with Islamic values. For example, in relation to beautifying self or wearing make up, Saleh Darat argue that this has value as it is related to her reproductive roles or giving birth. Islam permits women to wear jewelry and silk in order

<sup>41</sup> Raden Ngabei Ranggawarsita, *Condorini*, verse 42, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Umar, *Majmū'at al Sharī'at al Kafīyat*, pp. 1-4

to attract her husband and expectedly having intimate relation afterwards. Rather than portraying this as a serve to husband only, Saleh Darat reframe this role as essential to preserve the human race with their children as the next generation. Furthermore, He then explain that having children is considered as a worship that has four benefits: *first*: keeping the human existence which serves the continuity of God's caliphs on earth to create peace and prosperity. *Second*: following the Prophet's advice to be having a large number of his followers (*ummah*) he can be proud of in hereafter. *Third*: educating the children so that they have strong faith and great charity is actually a noble act which will result in the continuous rewards for parents. *Fourth*: if the child died before adulthood, in the hereafter, the child would ask forgiveness for his parents.<sup>43</sup>

Another role that is also reframed by Saleh Darat is cooking. Instead of conceptualizing cooking as it is an unimportant work, He stressed the point that cooking and preparing food also has spiritual values as it is a form of helping others. Furthermore, the help is also a way to help other, namely husbands, to be able to perform God worshipping activities such as prayers. .<sup>44</sup>

Even though some might view his thoughts with criticism as he maintained the prescribed roles division, it is important to note that Saleh Darat's integrative thinking showed and promote the spiritual and sacred values contained within the domestic works that have been severely under estimated. Thus, there is a promotion to appreciate highly women's role and also to create equality between both male and female in term of value. Promoting and mainstreaming the spiritual values contained within the domestic works are expected to deconstruct the paradigm and views of society that tend to undermine and discriminate against domestic roles as well as the women. The notion of high value of domestic roles are also expected to be able to eliminate widely spread stereotypes at the society that degrade women among them is viewing women as "sexual maid" that potentially leads to harassment or sexual violence on women.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 183.



### Strengthening Women's Roles through Skill Education

Other main issues of women's problems at that era targeted by Saleh Darat were women's right for education and Women's role in economic field. In the economic field, women can try elevating their condition due to the fact that when they work, they will earn the results and rewards just like men get.<sup>45</sup> As a Muslim scholar with extensive religious knowledge, Saleh Darat understood that Islam actually allowed rooms for women to build the family welfare for at the time of the Prophet, and in accordance with the history of Muslim civilization, women had considerable roles in the economy.

Referring to the Islamic guidance and historical reality, Saleh Darat delivered his thought that women must be educated to be skillful. Among the skills suggested, and are in line with given time and situation, is the skill in sewing and making *batik*.<sup>46</sup> Saleh Darat's thought actually base on several considerations including considerations on conditions of Javanese society at time under the Dutch colonization. As mentioned previously, condition of the society especially women under the colonial situation were not safe. Because of the frequent conflicts and or violence including sexual violence at the time, Parents tend to save and keep their daughters inside the house to protect them from those risks. In addition, people also fear the widened moral damage that threatened women's dignity. Hence, they try to protect the women trough seclusion tradition that basically makes it mandatory for women to stay at home. The hope that by observing this tradition, they can protect their women from being targets of sexual harassment that, as Peter Carey argued, was conducted by high officials of Dutch and their cronies. Some of them were conducted by Dutch resident in Solo and Yogyakarta.<sup>47</sup>

Another issue at the time that leads to the seclusion tradition is the widespread of what Kartini called as 'moral decadence'. As recorded in history, Kartini share her views to Mrs. Abendanon about the promiscuity involving indigenous women and the Dutch men. There were many parties that involved alcohol and act that were indecent

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<sup>45</sup> Al-Qur'an, 16:97.

<sup>46</sup> Umar, *Majmū'āt al Sharī'at al Kāfiyāt*, p. 178.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Carey, *Asal Usul Perang Jawa: Pemberontakan Sepay dan Lukisan Raden Saleh*, transl. Pustaka Ahead team (Jakarta: Pustaka Ahead, 1986), pp. 39-42.

such as kissing and others judged by Kartini as uncivilized deeds<sup>48</sup>. This very condition is also one of factors why Saleh Darat encouraged parents to provide their daughters moral education so that they can protect themselves from the dangers of sexual harassment that occurred among the palace and community. Furthermore, there were also problems of alcohol and opium.<sup>49</sup> The drinking as well as the opium consumption definitely contradict Islamic teaching and, as history shows, cause people fallen in to poverty. Due to addiction, crimes also were increasing as people forced themselves to have money to buy the alcohol and or the opium.

To sum, in addition to the danger of risks of the sexual harassment, one big problem at the time was poverty. As Sartono Kartodirdjo stated, the colonizer network in exploiting the population is through the region of Regents who rented his land to private parties (this was either Chinese or the Dutch). As result, the tenant was entitled to gain advantage from the land and they could employ the people without paying anything.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the common people remained in poverty.

In order to overcome the poverty and the moral decadence at that time, Saleh Darat called for the education for the girls particularly in sewing and *batik* skills and moral education. These were aimed at allowing rooms for the girls and the women to have possible economic activities within the homes. In addition, Saleh Darat also stressed the importance of keeping the acts including interaction between men and women in line with Islamic guidance.<sup>51</sup>

Even though those thought might sound simple at today's era, Saleh Darat's ideas actually were quite progressive at the time as it tried to integrate the importance of character education with education on practical skills that have economic potential. In my opinion, he offered a new way to perceive Islamic spirituality that addresses real problems at the time and also promote the right of women for education and economic activities.

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<sup>48</sup> Pramudya Ananta Toer, *Panggil Aku Kartini Saja* (Jakarta: Lentera Dipantara, 2003), p. 156.

<sup>49</sup> Karel A Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke 19* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar Sejarah Indonesia Baru*, pp. 299-301.

<sup>51</sup> Umar, *Majmū'at al Sharī'at al Kafīyat*, p. 178.

## Strengthening Women's Roles in Family and Promoting Economic Independence

The widespread of poverty and moral decadence had pushed Saleh Darat to reconstruct women's domestic role since their role was perceived as resulting in the emergence of a fatalistic attitude and women's dependence on men. Furthermore, Javanese culture regarded women as the second class human who have no role in the economic field. To give illustration, there is a saying among Javanese people stating the condition of women in relation to the husband as "*Suwargo Nunut, Neroko Katu*". This literally means that wife's fate is tied to the husband's fate; if he goes to Heaven the wife will follow him to heaven and if he goes to hell then the wife will also go to the hell.

As explained previously, what Saleh Darat did then is reframing the domestic roles from undermined activities that often put women seen as servants to the highly spiritual works that elevates women to become equal with men in status as the servant of God. In addition, Saleh Darat also promote the right of women for education and economic activities to improve their condition.

Using arguments and perspectives from religion and culture to promote women's right in education as well as they rights in playing roles in economic field are proven to be quite effective.<sup>52</sup> To give illustration, Rohana Yusuf has done a research on business women in Kedah, Malaysia and the result shows that Islamic teachings have greatly influenced on women's success in the entrepreneur world. There is indeed a positive relationship between religious values and women contribution in entrepreneurship as Islam is adopted as a way of life <sup>53</sup>

One of the biggest issues in gender discourse is the roles division between men and women. Common roles division are public and domestic roles. This leads to another issue that is the ways domestic roles often overlooked and, since industrialization era, not rewarded directly with money the ways the public roles are. This, again, leads to

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<sup>52</sup> J. A. Badawi, "Islamic Teaching and Business", O. F. Williams (ed.), *Business, Religion and Spirituality New Synthesis* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> Rohana Yusuf, "How Religious Values Affect Entrepreneurial Behaviours among Muslim Businesswomen in the District of Pendang, Kedah", in *The New Journal: The Voice of the NAM Woman*, Volume 3 (December 2011), p. 25. The result of Rohana's research has been quoted by Sri Suhandjati in her book entitled *Perempuan dalam Literatur Melayu* (Semarang: IAIN Walisongo, 2013), p. 107.

another issue that is the potential discrimination against those who are doing the domestic roles. Ironically, due to some religious interpretation and tradition, women are the ones who are held with the domestic roles and hence they are the ones having to suffer from discrimination and subordination.

This is why Saleh Darat tried to reframe the ways domestic roles and grant them high value from the spiritual point of view. This is so that women were no longer seen as inferior and their works will be elevated in status. Interestingly, if we look at today's context, many of the domestic works that were usually seen as insignificant turn out to offer great opportunities for works with economic value. In this era, cooking activities (*masak*) can turn to be culinary business and a professional called chef actually is highly appreciated. In addition, make up, fashion and beauty business in general also are undeniably very profitable these days. Even the laundering also now becomes a big business opportunity. So, all these actually prove that the commonly and historically undermined works in the Domestic tasks have high values.

In addition to signifying the domestic roles with spiritual meaning, Saleh Darat did also allow rooms for women to take roles in economic field by encouraging them and the parent to take the skill development in sewing and or batik making. The examples might sound simple but the most important thing is the message he promoted that is the awareness on the importance of women gaining power in economic field. The awareness as well as skills of women to make economic contributions actually also lead them to be able to gain economic independence. Not only the economic independence will allow room for women to empower themselves in general and elevate their status, this will also be very beneficial in some conditions among them is times where the husband is absent and or the family needs more economic resources. Mohammad Irshad Khan interprets empowerment as realizing the identity and power. Reinforcement of women's roles among others is access towards knowledge and other beneficial sources, autonomy and power to make decision, and ability to plan their lives on their own and to control the influence of neighbors<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Md. Irshad Khan, *Empowerment of Muslim Women* (Birmingham, United Kingdom: Koros Press Limited, 2012), p. 1.

Furthermore, Saleh Darat also promote some ethics in socializing with others and as Rohanna Yusuf found in her research, social skills are arguably very important in determining the success of a person. Interestingly, these ethics actually seemed to be aimed at educating girls to prevent themselves from the influence of moral decadence at the time of the colonization while at the same time trying to be more educated and more economically active. Yet, the ethics offered are still relevant to today's context.

### **Conclusion**

There are many writings on historical figures who have fought for women. Saleh Darat is one of the important figures worth explaining. As a religious figure, he offers a new way to understand the study of women's role holds a new meaning presented by Saleh Darat's thought that integrates religion and local culture. His thought reflects a response to the poverty and moral decadence degrading women's dignity. To delineate women position as God's servants equal between men and women as taught by Islam, Saleh Darat has reconstructed the women's domestic role into a high value because that role has spiritual values. The reality of community indicates relationship between poverty and decadence, including sexual harassment that could destroy their dignity. Finally, women should have a role in the economic field and good morals in order to maintain the women and family honor. Spiritualization of domestic role has been developed by Saleh Darat as a solution needed by women in the global era, in which for some reasons they have to stay at home and have an obligation to earn money for their family. []

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