

## Fatimah in Nusantara

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### ABSTRAK

*Tokoh Fatimah, anak Nabi Muhammad, isteri kepada Ali bin Abi Talib dan ibu Hasan dan Husain adalah contoh unggul tradisional bagi wanita Muslim. Dari segi politik, Fatimah adalah anak keturunan Nabi dan ibu kepada imam-imam mazhab Shi'ah. Beliau juga disanjung sebagai contoh kerohanian kerana sifat penyayang dan belas kasihan kepada orang di sekitarnya. Sehubungan itu, banyak teks manuskrip Melayu dan Indonesia mempunyai cerita tentangnya. Teks-teks itu ditulis semasa Islam disebarakan ke Kepulauan Melayu sehingga bermulanya tradisi cetak pada sekitar tahun 1920. Rencana ini akan menceritakan perkembangan teks-teks mengenai Fatimah di Nusantara.*

*Kata kunci: Fatimah, etika wanita, sastera manuskrip, Shisme, Islam*

### ABSTRACT

*Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet, wife of Ali and mother of Hasan and Husain presents the perfect traditional model of a Muslim woman. Politically, she continued the Prophet's blood line and is the mother of the imams of Shi'ism. She is also held up as a spiritual example for her virtues of patience and compassion to those around her. Most Islamic manuscript literatures of Malaysia and Indonesia contain texts which tell of these virtues. The texts entered the archipelago with Islam itself and were preserved up to the beginning of print culture around 1920. This article describes the history of texts dealing with Fatimah in Nusantara.*

*Key words: Fatimah, women's ethics, manuscript literature, Shi'ism, Islam*

The traditional ideal of the virtuous woman is a broad cultural discourse in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago which has been identified but not yet explored for its own sake (Andaya 1993: 24-29). I am interested in the Islamic variant of this discourse and in particular, in that associated with Fatimah, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter. I believe that the figure of Fatimah formed the earliest and chief focus of women's ethics in the manuscript literatures of the major Muslim populations of the area. If this is so, one is struck by Fatimah's relative loss of significance today. Now, she is not singled out as special; her story appears as only one among many of the righteous Muslim women fit for

emulation in the many printed pamphlets now available in bookshops in Malaysia and Indonesia. In this article, I shall outline of the appearance, distribution and disappearance of certain texts concerning Fatimah in the manuscript traditions of Nusantara.

## ORIGINS OF TEXTS ABOUT FATIMAH

### THE FATIMAH OF EARLY ISLAM

The portrayal of Fatimah begins with references to her in Arabic records at the time of the founding of Islam. These are not too numerous, and for my purposes, secondary Western scholarship based on them and summarised in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1965) has been sufficient to develop a conception of her life. Three themes are salient to the discussion:

1. Fatimah's human existence as daughter, wife and mother
2. Fatimah's exemplary actions and her spiritual qualities
3. the division between Sunna and Shi'ah in Islam.

I shall return to them in the course of this article. The Fatimah of early Islam recreated by Western scholarship is not an engaging personality, for hers was not a happy life. The picture painted is of a timid, retiring woman, painfully thin and physically ailing, modest in habit and comportment and easily moved to tears. Fatimah lived in privation, "on the fringe of the great events of the early years of Islam" and was often a drudge for her husband and her father. According to eye witness accounts, she frequently bewailed her fate (*EI* 1965: 841).

A year after the migration from Mecca to Medina in 622, the Prophet gave Fatimah in marriage to his cousin, Ali bin Abi Talib. Fatimah is reported to have been distressed on receiving the news of the impending marriage, either because of her deep attachment to her father and her reluctance to leave his side, or because of Ali's poverty and gruff manners. The match did indeed prove to be incompatible, which caused the Prophet grief, yet the union lasted until Fatimah's death in the year 633 and produced two sons, Hasan (b. 624) and Husain (b. 625) and two daughters. Ali was an often indifferent husband. He sought to exercise the option of polygyny, which the Prophet checked, so that he did not take another official wife during Fatimah's lifetime (*EI* 1965: 842-3).

Of the recorded events in Fatimah's life, the most significant was her marriage to Ali. She is the link between the Prophet, who had no surviving male child, and lines of later descent, through Hasan and Husain, of the Shi'i Imams and the Sunni *sayyids*. Emphasis is placed on Ali, Hasan and Husein as the political founders of the Shi'ah branch of Islam, while the Prophet and his

House comprised of Ali, Fatimah and their two sons, the *ahl al-bayt*, are the central characters of devotional Shi'ism (*EI* 1965: 844).

#### THE FATIMAH OF LEGEND

For all Muslims, Fatimah is regarded as the perfect daughter, wife and mother. These roles have been compounded to create the ideal Muslim woman. Fatimah's unhappiness in her life at Ali's side has been transmuted by believers into the virtues of wifely fidelity and an unshakeable fortitude in the face of hardship. Such ideals are to be found in the summaries of texts given in the Appendix.

Fatimah bears the honorific title *al-Zahra*, 'The Radiant', after the halo of light which is said to have enveloped her while reciting the *Al-Qu'ran* and at prayer (*EI* 1965: 841). She was also known also to be steadfast in praying for the souls of martyrs fallen in battle for the cause of Islam, a practice she took up after the defeat of the Muslims at the Battle of Uhud in 625, caring for her father's wounds and being charged to clean his and Ali's bloodstained swords (*EI* 1965: 843). All of these attributes are known and represented in the Muslim manuscript traditions of Nusantara.

Both major branches of Islam, the Sunni and the Shi'iah, respect Fatimah, but the Shi'ah venerate her especially and developed a hagiography of her, employing the motifs of her radiance and her virtue. Fatimah's marriage to Ali has given rise to the genre of "bride lessons" or admonitions to young wives in the archipelago. Their wedding, which according to the classical sources was an exercise in material humility, celebrated in a most modest fashion, has become the stuff of religious legend. So, in contrast to the original historical facts, in legend it is told how the marriage was also contracted in heaven, with the attendance of angels and *houris*, and a bride-price which included half the earth, with heaven and hell added as well. Fatimah's trousseau included costly, rare clothes and the wedding feast included fruits from the garden of Eden. Precious gems were scattered before the bride in her honour (*EI* 1965: 846). There are Malay accounts of the wedding of Fatimah and Ali in this legendary style; for example, there is a *Hikayat Ali Kawin* in which 'archipelagaic' conventions of sumptuous celebration replace the Middle Eastern characteristics (Brakel 1975: 84).

#### FATIMAH IN NUSANTARA

##### FATIMAH ADMONITIONS

We can find images of both the Fatimah of classical Islam and the Fatimah of legend in our region. Examples of a Fatimah hagiography appear as short accounts, or as references embedded in larger narrative texts. However, in this article I am interested in the homilies which go under the rubric "The Prophet

Muhammad instructs his daughter, Fatimah”, or the “Fatimah Admonitions.” The instructions are concerned with the duties of a good wife towards her husband; they are purportedly set in the time of the Prophet and it is Muhammad himself who delivers the teachings. They are expository texts, cast in direct speech and their ethical message is addressed to all Muslim women. They present a man’s view of a totally dependent woman for whom he is materially and morally responsible under his religion. The duties of women as wives are described. If these are properly carried out, heaven is the woman’s reward; if they are not, then most horrible punishments will be meted out in hell. The awful images presented are, however, in keeping with other eschatological texts of the time and similar punishments await Muslim men who neglect their duties in life.

The Fatimah Admonitions are short texts, usually only several pages of hand-written *Jawi* script. I shall not address the many Malay examples of these texts here because of constraints of space, and because they are quite well known. Instead, I have consulted three more distant examples which demonstrate the wide spread of this textual tradition: two hand-written Romanised versions from West Java (Kern Sundanese Collection MS 1673, Nos. 106 and 119) and a longer printed version from Aceh (Harun 1985). These are all summarised in the Appendix.

#### THE ARRIVAL OF FATIMAH TEXTS IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

I believe that representations of Fatimah in the manuscript traditions of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago are as old as Islam itself there. The evidence for this is both broadly historical and philological, in a narrower sense. For the sake of my argument in this article, I shall work from the most obvious hypothesis, that the representation of Fatimah originated among adherents to Shi’ism who venerated her, and reached Southeast Asia via Persian transmission.

First, some brief historical background. If a Fatimah discourse was present at the earliest stage of Islamization of Nusantara, then it came late in the Islamic world, appearing some seven hundred years after the events at Medinah. Fatimah had died in 633. Ali bin Abi Talib had become the fourth Caliph of Islam in 656, though not without opposition, which led to his murder in 661 in the Iraqi city of Kufa. The Caliphate returned to Sunni hands under Mu’awiyah. Hasan withdrew from political life and died, possibly poisoned, in 669. In 680, Husain, refusing to recognise Mu’awiyah’s successor, Yazid, sought refuge in Kufa, where he could still count on a number of supporters. He set out from Medinah, travelling north-east, to meet his famous death as a martyr at the Battle of Kerbala on October 10. His surviving son, Ali Asgar Zain al-Abidin was taken captive by Yazid’s forces and thus the hopes of the Shi’ah, the ‘party’ of Ali, on central power in Islam were extinguished (Brakel 1975: 1-2).

The links between the Shi’ah and Iran, where Shi’ism became the religion of the state, were forged early and remained strong. Ctesiphon, the capital of

the Sasanids, fell to Islam in 638. Husain is believed to have married Shahrbanun, the daughter of the last Persian Sasanid King Yazdgerd III. The geographical proximity of Kerbala to Iran was also an important factor and Persian elements became absorbed into the observance of the first ten days of the Muslim calendar as the days of the martyrs Hasan and Husain (Brakel 1975: 4).

Back in Medinah, Ali had been survived by a son, Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyah, born to a woman of uncertain status, probably a slave. Though not a descendant of the Prophet's line, al-Hanafiyah was proclaimed Mahdi, formed a rallying point for the Shi'ah, and came to assume cultic status among the Shi'is of Iraq. He played no actual active political role, yet his cult, resting on tales of victories in putative battles to avenge the tragedy of Kerbala, developed in Persia after his death in 700 and eventually passed into the Indonesian archipelago in the form of the well-known heroic romance, the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyah* (HMH) (Brakel 1975: 3, 6). Lode Brakel (1975: 56), who prepared a critical edition of this text, believes the story was composed under Shi'ah cultists in North-Eastern Iran and quickly travelled to the archipelago:

The HMH can be assumed to have originated in Persia in the middle of the fourteenth century and to have been translated into Malay in one of the coastal centres of North Sumatra not very much later.

The story also spread into India, where the Shi'ah were well integrated under the Sunni Moghuls, Persian becoming the learned language of most of North India and the Moghul territories. The scholar of Indian Islam, Anne-Marie Schimmel (1980: 125) makes this significant observation about its distribution:

Stories of Islamic origin were told and retold – the impressive pictures painted under Akbar for the tellers of the *Hamzanama*, the story of the Prophet's heroic uncle, show how popular these tales were in all strata of society. And not only Hamza, but also *Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah*, a son of Ali by a wife other than Fatima... who plays a prominent role in early Islamic sectarian discussions, became the hero of stories that were told in Urdu and the regional languages of Indo-Pakistan.

In the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, a Persian influence can be found during what Reid terms the "Age of Commerce" from the 15th through the 17th centuries. There were Persian *ulama* in the archipelago and direct trade links with Persia; for example, quantities of benzoin were exported there in 1630. Persian Shi'is came to dominate trade offices in Thailand. Shahr-i-Naw (in Persian, the 'New City') the name by which Ayuthia, the ancient capital of Siam was known among foreigners, was under Shi'i rule in 1540 (Reid 1993: 33, 134, 190). It is also well known that the great North Sumatran mystic and poet of the late sixteenth century, Hamzah Fansuri, attained enlightenment through the Wujudiyah *tarekat* in that city (Drewes and Brakel 1986: 4).

Accounts of the earliest Islamic presence in the archipelago by Johns (1980) also convey the picture of a “quarantine” stage during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when communities of foreign Muslims were “tolerated as a commercial minority, but with little expectation that they should either convert or be converted by the host population” (Johns 1980: 163-165). Reid describes the Islamic cities of the region as a collection of rich houses and compounds around the Sultan’s square with his palace, the market, mosque and *alun-alun* (1993: 85-89). From such houses, our two *hikayats* were read, recited, copied and finally, when the conversion to Islam of the archipelago’s harbour states gained pace from the sixteenth century, disseminated into the wider community. Persian influences on the repertoire of stories in classical Malay are also well acknowledged.

#### DATING FATIMAH TEXTS IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

Around the time referred to in Schimmel’s observations above on the narratives in popular use in Moghul India, we find the Malay *Hikayats* of *Amir Hamzah* and *Muhammad Hanafiyyah* mentioned – both in the same breath – in Nusantara as well. I am referring to the famous incident in the *Malay Annals* when, in 1511, on the night before battle, while the Portuguese lay at anchor off Malacca, the heroes of the Malay court approached Sultan Ahmad to request a reading of the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah* to stiffen their valour for the following day. Copies of both the great heroic epics were brought out and recited. This scene is accepted as the earliest record of the presence of the two epics (Winstedt 1969: 86-7; Brakel 1975: 9-10). Recently, the Sundanese literary critic, Ajip Rosidi has re-read the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* as a conversion text, both in the content of its heroic stories and in the social purpose to which the text was put. Rosidi believes it was recited in communities newly converted to Islam as a celebration of the new profession of faith, the text thus passing, historically, from the “quarantine” to an active proselytizing phase in its use (1995: 339-44).

But, what have these two heroic epics, which deal with the exploits of men warriors in battle, to do with Muslim women’s ethics? For this, we must turn to the second set of evidence for the origins of Fatimah texts in the archipelago, the philological question of manuscript collocation. Since the Fatimah Admonitions are short texts, they are normally grouped with others in folder bundles or in codices (manuscript books) in the libraries. These groupings of manuscripts may faithfully reflect scribal provenance and can be crucial to the interpretation of texts. Campbell Macknight has drawn our attention to the fact that the folder or codex environment is often “not random. It is usually possible to perceive some common interest” (1984: 105-6). Similarly, Ding Choo Ming argues that a codex-based approach to manuscript bibliography must be adopted, or important connections between texts will be overlooked (1987: 438).

Fatimah Admonitions have been found associated with the two epics of Shi'i origins. In the library of the Ethnografisch Museum of Breda, The Netherlands, a Malay rendering of the *Story of the Prophet Instructing his Daughter Fatimah* is attached to Brakel's text K, nr. 458 (2) of the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah* (Brakel 1975: 79-80). Dated 1780, it is possibly the oldest extant version. Another text, the *Story of Fatimah Talking to the Sword Dzulfakar* is attached to a version of the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* held in Cambridge, MS ADD 3784 (Ding 1987: 443-4).

Further evidence of these Shi'i affinities is supplied in an example from West Java. It is a late Sundanese rendering of the tales of the Koranic Prophets, an important genre in Islamic manuscript literatures. It was written by the Sundanese man of letters, Haji Muhammad Musa who flourished in the 1890s and was closely associated with a Dutch planter in the Priangan and colonial Advisor on Native Affairs, K. F. Holle. These two men were the first to collect a number of Sundanese manuscripts and to popularise them in print. The title of the text is *Wawacan Sajarah Ambia* (Verse Tales of the Prophets) encoding quite conspicuously a synthesis of the traditions of the Sundanese (*wawacan*, a long poem in *tembang* metres), Malay (*Sejarah*) and Javanese (*Ambia*, from the Arabic *Qissas al-Anbiya*) which it incorporates. I consulted a transliterated, printed version of this text (Musa 1981) which I found in the Menzies Asian Library of The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

Volume 7 of the *Wawacan Sajarah Ambia* tells of the times of the Prophet in Medinah in legendary style. It begins with the funeral of his uncle, Amir Hamzah. Among the mourners is Hamzah's daughter, Dewi Kuraesin, or perhaps Quraysh (van Ronkel 1898: 229) who, since her mother was a *jinn* and her father a champion in battle, is a formidable fighter for the cause of Islam, which distinction she shares with Ali. In due course, the Prophet gives permission for Ali and Dewi Kuraesin to marry and from this union is born the son, Muhammad Hanafiah. Much is made in the narration of Fatimah's acceptance of Ali's secondary wife and of her affection for their son! It is told that the three boys, Hasan, Husain and Muhammad play happily together and the reader or audience is explicitly alerted to the fact that Muhammad Hanafiah is destined to avenge the deaths of his two elder brothers, the martyrs of the Shi'ah (Musa Vol. 7 1981: 50-51; cf. Brakel 1975: 67-8). Thus this Sundanese text draws upon and rationalises the collective legendary material of the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* and the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah*.

Shi'i affiliations can be found in yet another consistent pattern in Malay manuscripts. An early Shi'i repertoire of stories of the Prophet, the oldest in the archipelago, has been identified by Winstedt. They are the accounts of the *Mystic Light of Muhammad*, the miracle of the *Splitting of the Moon*, the *Shaving of the Prophet* and the *Death of the Prophet* (1969: 100-105). These stories all contain a mention of divine light, a motif strongly associated with Shi'ism and an attribute which Fatimah, as *al-Zahra*, also possesses. Fatimah

Admonitions appear in clusters with these four stories of the Prophet. To cite only a couple of examples, in the National Library of Malaysia, MS 681 contains *The Prophet Admonishes his Daughter Fatimah*, *The Story of the Prophet's Death* and *The Story of the Splitting of the Moon*, while MS 1420 contains versions of *The Marriage of Fatimah and Ali*, *The Prophet Admonishes his Daughter* and *The Mystic Light of Muhammad* (*Katalog Induk* 1993: 64, 104).

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND VARIATION IN THE FATIMAH ADMONITIONS IN NUSANTARA

### REGIONAL VARIATION

Most major Islamic Malay and Indonesian manuscript collections contain texts of the Fatimah Admonitions. Malay is by far the best represented, and it can generally be assumed that texts in other languages are translations of Malay originals. Acehnese and Sundanese are well represented, with Javanese less so, according to Pigeaud's catalogue (1970: 341-2). A Buginese version has been noted (van Ronkel 1895: 248). The contents of the texts are not by any means immutable, in fact there is a high degree of variation. I cannot say at this stage, however, whether differences have emerged under regional conditions over time, or if the Malay originals themselves varied. Variety within a corpus usually indicates a tradition of long standing.

### THE CORE OF THE ADMONITIONS

The common 'core' of the *Fatimah Admonitions* is the affirmation that a woman must be faithful to her husband in all things and always considerate of his comfort. This fidelity is both a virtue and a duty which will be rewarded in the hereafter. Dereliction of the duty by women is described as a sin as grave as the neglect of the *ibadat*, the duties to God (prayer, fasting, the giving of alms, the pilgrimage to Mecca and a striving for right in religion). The texts also describe, in varying degrees of horrifying detail, the torments of hell which await the impious woman (see Appendix).

### FATIMAH IN ACEH

The Acehnese text which I consulted with the help of a native speaker (Aslam 1996) seems to have connections with militant Islam and its resistance to Dutch colonial control. Millenarian revivalist tracts were a feature of late nineteenth century Islam and were a manifestation of anti-imperialist sentiment in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Known as *wasiat Nabi*, or "admonitions of the Prophet" among the people, they were watched carefully by officials of the Netherlands East Indies government and were collected to be used in evidence



in the court prosecution of Islamic insurgents. The long war between Aceh and Batavia (1873-1908) was such an occasion for their use. As documents, *wasiat* usually recited a dream vision in which the Prophet appeared to a believer, enjoining his community to adhere more closely to the laws of Islam and to avoid the company of the ungodly and non-believers. Such *wasiat* have also been reported in circulation among other Muslim communities under colonial rule (Snouck Hurgronje 1906: 182-183).

Certain texts of the Prophet's Admonitions to Fatimah may have been among the *wasiat Nabi* in circulation, since an Acehnese manuscript, undated but recently romanised and printed, goes under precisely this title (Harun 1985). It is attached to a retelling of the story of Nabi Ibrahim. The text was copied in Pidie, Aceh in 1962 and was acquired for publication in 1983 from a scribe, Ishak Peuteua Gam, who at the time was still able to earn his living from copying manuscripts and composing works in a traditional style (Harun 1985: 5). The *Wasiat Nabi* is in verse and 18 pages long in its transliteration.

#### ZULFAKAR, THE SPEAKING SWORD

In this Acehnese version, the Admonitions are linked to the incident of the Prophet's battle sword, Zulfakar, which was inherited by Ali and to which legend has accorded the miraculous power of speech. The incident occurs at some time in the marriage. Fatimah is overheard by Ali in conversation with Zulfakar inside her apartment. She asks the sword how many souls of the enemies of Islam it has claimed and the sword replies that they are countless. Ali wrongly suspects Fatimah of adultery, thinking she is entertaining a man within, and takes his complaint to the Prophet. On investigation, Fatimah is vindicated as blameless and Ali is rebuked. Even so, she is then reminded about her duties to her husband. The *Wasiat Nabi* corresponds closely to Snouck Hurgronje's summary of the *Hikayat Peudeueng*, the 'Story of the Sword' presented in his famous study, *The Acehnese* (1906: 176) and recalls the Cambridge manuscript mentioned above. Judging by its contents, this version is quite old, with its emphasis on the depiction of the torments of hell. Its spirit is certainly worthy of a *wasiat*. The latter part, however, becomes pleasant and encouraging to the believer, and specific to Nusantara in its imagery. It offers a scene of heaven of unbounded rice-fields and streams flowing with milk and red palm sugar (refer to Appendix).

#### FATIMAH IN SUNDA

In West Java, the Fatimah Admonitions appear to have been put to more staid social purposes. There, they are courtesy books for the families of the aristocracy and *priyayis* in the native ranks of the colonial civil service. The texts which I consulted were copied and transliterated into Roman script in 1925 and 1926 from the collection of Sundanese manuscripts of the Batavia Society for Arts

and Sciences under the orders of R. A. Kern, Advisor on Mohammedan Affairs to the colonial government. They are now held in the collection which carries his name, the Kern Collection, MS 1673 of the National Library of Australia in Canberra. In these texts, the framing event is not the story of the sword, but the wedding of Fatimah and Ali instead. In MS 106 (three pages in length), it is stated that the Prophet delivers the Admonitions before the ceremony, when Fatimah is still under his roof; while MS 119 (seven pages in length) has it that Fatimah, newly married, is refusing to join her new husband in the marital bed. This is called *pista* in Sundanese, which is behaviour typical of virgin brides. Fatimah's reluctance also recalls the classical Arabic account of her behaviour on her marriage to Ali. So, even within these two very closely associated texts, some variation can be observed with regards to the narrated circumstances of the delivery of the Prophet's advice.

Certain changes around the structural 'core' are also found. Both the Sundanese Admonitions of MS 1673 present wifely faithfulness as *ibadat*. But, while MS 106 stresses the punishments awaiting immorality, as in the Acehnesse admonitions, MS 119 has a benign tenor and is extended by a section on social etiquette and good housekeeping, a dimension of *mu'amalat*, or good works. I have summarised all three texts to demonstrate their similarities and differences in the Appendix.

## THE PRESERVATION AND END OF THE FATIMAH ADMONITIONS

Today, Malaysia and Indonesia adhere universally to the Sunni laws of Shafi'i jurisprudence. It is generally understood by scholars that a long process of 'de-Shi'itization' over three centuries, through the sixteenth to the nineteenth, worked to expunge traces of Shi'ism from social and ritual practice in the archipelago (Brakel 1975: 58-63). The orthodox zeal of Arab immigrants from the Hadhramaut in the nineteenth century and reformist, or Kaum Muda ideas from the Egypt were most effective in completing this process. What then are we to make of the continuing evidence of early Shi'i texts? Literature appears to have escaped censorship to a certain extent, because it is precisely during the last phase of manuscript production, namely the nineteenth century, that the Fatimah Admonitions have been collected. We are moved to ask how the Admonitions, indeed the Shi'i repertoire itself, have been preserved. Could it be by the sheer weight of the antiquity of the literature and the value traditionally given to texts as cultural artifacts? In India, as a comparison, the fundamental religious lessons of the period of conversion were quickly set and fixedly retained thereafter. Anne-Marie Schimmel (1980: 106) again tells us:

The customs, rites and rituals that crystallized in the first centuries of Islamic rule in India were to remain more or less unchanged for the centuries to come...on the whole the life of Indian Muslims...

But, is this paradigm strong enough to account for so many texts featuring Fatimah in so many language traditions? One might equally argue in favour of the proposition that a text had to demonstrate its social usefulness to survive. The great popularity of the epics, the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyyah* in Malay and the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, which go under the title of the Menak stories in Javanese and Sundanese, may have carried the Fatimah Admonitions along with them in popular appeal. What is more, as the Islamic communities of the archipelago grew in number, so did the libraries of texts governing the life of Muslims and within it, the regulation of marriage was especially pertinent (Johns 1980: 166). We can assume that women were in the audience listening to the texts being recited or sung, or that young women studied the texts within some form of a girls' curriculum of Islamic instruction. It is also likely that they were performed during the celebration of weddings.

It seems, however, that Fatimah Admonitions did not survive as a productive genre much beyond the end of the manuscript tradition and the rise of print literacy in both Indonesia and Malaysia, around 1920. I have not been able to find printed versions of them on the shelves of the new bookstores today in Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur. What is, perhaps, most interesting in this respect is the fact that the works to which I have had access, living in Canberra and using only the libraries there, do not represent the chief tradition of Fatimah Admonitions, which is in Malay. They are peripheral examples and yet, in one way or another, they have proved to be surprisingly resilient and adaptable, and they attest to a fascinating tradition.

## APPENDIX

ACEHNESE TEXT, *WASJET NABI*, HARUN (1984, 244-264)

Fatimah is brought before the Prophet by her angry husband, Ali who accuses her of adultery, having overheard her talking with the speaking sword, Zulfakar. The Prophet exonerates her while ordering her to beg her husband's forgiveness, then instructs her as follows:

Obey your parents and your husband. Do not use his possessions without his permission. Pray always for his well-being.

If he comes home tired and you bathe him, it is equal to a sacrifice of 1,000 sheep and 100 camels, or to feeding hundreds of people in need.

The woman who perishes in childbirth dies a martyr's death. There is no salvation for woman who is unfaithful to her husband; hell is her portion.

When your husband sets out to travel, let him leave happily and greet him cheerfully when he returns. This equals the merit of ten Great Pilgrimages.

Three rewards await the good woman: she will know God's mercy; her virtue is as if she has sacrificed ten camels; she is assured of heaven.

For the sin of infidelity, the punishment is hell. The angel Zabaniah pours boiling water into the bodies of unfaithful women.

It is a sin for women to answer roughly to their husbands' questions – though such women be as plentiful as grass in the fields. For harsh words uttered, a fishing hook is clipped into those women's mouths, and for insults to husbands, boiling water is poured into their throats.

In heaven, all is bright as if lit by the full moon. A cool breeze blows gently over most beautiful scenes. Lovely women sit in pavilions while violins play softly behind. All beings are close to God.

But those in hell wail and lament. The angels weep over women who have been lazy and dirty in their speech, and over adulterers, thieves, opium eaters, slanderers, gamblers and those who enjoy carousing with singers of *pantun*. And over those who have been careless in bathing, going to the stream any time of day, or not even at all.

Hell stands upon the feet of four giants. It is vast enough to contain a pounding ocean, its torments are of all kinds imaginable. No-one can find the way out; the angel Jabaniyah stands guard, castigating evil-doers with a mighty voice. There are high mountains there, and drains in which foul water flows, and worms and scorpions to fill rotting skulls. And other things that we cannot know of, and fierce, venomous vipers, breathing fire.

A swarm of scorpions surrounds the sinners. Their bodies are wood for the hell-fires. No-one has wealth enough to bribe his way out.

But believers are loved and enter heaven rejoicing. There stretch rice-fields, more than plenty, and sweet streams flow with milk, palm-sugar sweet, while lovely gardens beckon.

All of heaven's people have their desires satisfied, and coloured carpets are spread about. The halls are well-lit and inlaid with gemstones. We cannot recount all the delights of heaven.

As for the good wife who urges her husband to attend the Friday prayers at the mosque, her face shines like the full moon. She who kisses her husband and turns a sweet face to him has all her sins forgiven.

Women who dress immodestly and mix freely with men, and paint their hands and feet with henna: men should avoid such women, or they too will weep in hell.

The virtuous woman encourages her husband to virtue and serves him. This is *ibadah*, God's Law. Women who have neglected this duty will beg for their time on earth again to repair their ways, especially those always busy with a mirror in one hand and lip colouring in the other.

Women! Do not quarrel, or neglect your husband. When he arrives home, wait with clean water to wash away his sweat, then serve him food.

Women! Let religion be the main pillars of your house and your good works its walls. Neglect of the prescribed prayers casts a stain on you, and disregard of the Prophet's words is a pollution of all your body.

Remember! You must leave your worldly goods behind, and your heirs will come and help themselves. Do not be so busy with the world that you neglect the prescribed prayers.

SUNDANESE TEXTS FROM THE KERN COLLECTION, THE NATIONAL  
LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

i. Ms 106, *Wawatjan Nabi Moehammad keur moeroek poetrana  
awewe djenengan Dewi Patimah*

The advice of the Prophet to his daughter Fatimah, while still living in his house, on how to be saved from the torments of hell.

1. The worst act a woman can commit is to be unfaithful to her husband. Her body will be burned in hell, and its pus will give off a foul odour.
2. If she hides from her husband's company or refuses him her favours when he asks, the angel Jabaniyah will open the door to hell for her.
3. When called to his bed, she should join him straightway. The signs of a virtuous woman are her fasts, her prayers and her reading of the Koran.
4. The woman who demands divorce will have her lips cut off with scissors and hung up in hell.
5. The woman who refuses to take a husband is not pleasing to God.

6. Do not put on perfume without your husband's express consent; it incites evil desire in others.
7. It is an act of treachery to be called home by your husband and not to return straight away.
8. Finally, let no outsider see you immodestly dressed, or you shall be bound around your breasts, hands and feet and shackled in hell.

ii. Ms 119, *Nabi Moehammad keur ngawoeroek poetrana Dewi Patimah*

The Prophet admonishes his daughter who has refused sexual union with her husband, which is a great sin. The angels will weep and open the door to hell for her.

1. The worst things a woman can do is to be unfaithful to her husband. Her body will be burned in hell and the stench will fill the earth.
2. Should she refuse to come to her husband when he calls her, the angel Jabaniyah will push her into hell. Observance of the prayers will not save her.
3. The woman who asks for divorce from her husband will be cut into pieces with scissors and hung up in hell.
4. The woman who does not take a husband in this life will receive no rewards in the hereafter.
5. She who wears perfume without her husband's consent will be consigned to hell for a thousand years.
6. She who sets out from her house without first informing her husband commits a great sin.
7. Women! When darkness falls, if you do not supply light to your kinsfolk, this is a sin.
8. If you dress immodestly, your hands and feet will be bound in hell.
9. The woman who likes to gossip with her friends and stays outside her house, avoiding her husband, commits a grave sin.
10. If you tell a lie to your husband, your lips will swell up to the size of mountains.

Fatimah! You must present your body freshly bathed to your husband. Though you be beautiful as a heavenly nymph, still serve your husband.

Prepare his food and drink. Have his *sarung* always ready for him to wear to the mosque.

Be patient with your husband. Contribute your wedding endowment to the household's needs.

The performance of the five daily prayers keeps the Devil away.

Keep your husband's clothes clean and in good repair. Retain an affection for his family and show hospitality to his guests. Be kind to all those around you. Do not neglect the ritual prayers. Prepare light, food and drink for the household on Fridays.

Feed reciters of the Koran. Give food and clothing to your neighbours when they are in mourning.

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