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THE PIONEERING CASE OF INDONESIA
IN A COMPARISON WITH PAKISTAN

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Ann Kull

Gender Awareness in Islamic Education: The Pioneering Case of Indonesia in a Comparison with Pakistan

Abstract: *This article analyzes the development of gender awareness in Islamic education in Indonesia and Pakistan in general, and the inclusion of a gender perspective in particular. The current situation in Islamic education is a result of larger national contexts, not least concerning the factors focused upon in this study — educational reform, intellectual milieu, female student enrollment, political development and women's rights movements. Traditionalist ulama and scholars educated in the Middle East have in both countries similarly questioned the Islamic knowledge and legitimacy of reformist scholars — women and men alike — and these opponents have been more influential in Pakistan than in Indonesia. The Indonesian gender regime in Islamic education is no longer fully male-dominated, and the patriarchal content in Islamic educational material is occasionally questioned and exchanged. However, in Pakistan the impact of women on the prevailing male-dominated gender regime and patriarchal content in Islamic education is at best seminal.*

Key words: gender awareness, Islamic education, gender order, gender regime, national context.

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas perkembangan kesadaran gender dalam pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Pakistan secara umum, dan keterbukaan perspektif gender secara lebih khusus. Situasi terkini dalam pendidikan Islam merupakan hasil dari konteks nasional kedua negara, setidaknya berkaitan dengan sejumlah faktor yang menjadi fokus studi ini—pembangunan pendidikan, lingkungan intelektual, data jumlah siswa perempuan, pembangunan politik, dan gerakan hak-hak perempuan. Ulama tradisional dan para sarjana yang terdidik di Timur Tengah di kedua negara mempertanyakan pengetahuan Islam dan legitimasi sarjana reformis, perempuan dan laki-laki, dan para penentang ini lebih berpengaruh di Pakistan ketimbang di Indonesia. Rezim gender dalam pendidikan Islam di Indonesia tidak lagi sepenuhnya didominasi laki-laki, dan kandungan patriarkhal dalam materi pendidikan Islam jarang dipertanyakan. Namun, di Pakistan pengaruh perempuan dalam mempertahankan rezim gender yang didominasi laki-laki dan konten patriarkhal dalam pendidikan Islam berkembang baik.

Kata kunci: kesadaran gender, pendidikan Islam, orde gender, rezim gender, konteks nasional.

الخلاصة: يبحث هذا المقال في تطور الوعي الجنسي في التعليم الإسلامي باندونيسيا وباكستان عامة وفي باكستان على وجه الخصوص، وتفتح الفوارق بين الجنسين بشكل أخص، إن الظروف الراهنة للتعليم الإسلامي تعد نتيجة للسياق الوطني في كلتا الدولتين، على الأقل ما يتعلق بعدد من العوامل التي تتركز عليها هذه الدراسة — تجديد التعليم والبيئة الفكرية والمعطيات حول عدد الطالبات والتنمية السياسية والحركات المطالبة بحقوق المرأة. إن نظام الجنسين في التعليم الإسلامي باندونيسيا لم يعد يسوده الرجال وكان محتوى الأبوية في المواد الدراسية للتعليم الإسلامي قد أصبح من النادر التساؤل عنها، ولكن بالنسبة لباكستان كان تأثير المرأة في الدفاع عن نظام الجنس الذي يسوده الرجال ومحتوى الأبوية في التعليم الإسلامي يشهد نموا كبيرا.

الكلمات الاسترشادية: الوعي الجنسي، التعليم الإسلامي، أمر بين الجنسين، نظام الجنس، السياق الوطني

This article discusses the development of gender awareness in general and, in particular, the inclusion of a gender perspective in Indonesian Islamic education. This is but one part of a much larger and prolonged process of educational and intellectual reform. Another important prerequisite for raising gender awareness is the steadily increasing enrollment of female students in Islamic education on all levels, and the subsequent increase in the number of female teachers, administrators and researchers. This study discusses the current situation in Indonesian Islamic education and, while concentrating on higher education, it also includes some material on *pesantren* (traditionalist residential schools). Furthermore, it gives a general overview of the current situation in Islamic education in Pakistan, aiming at a comparison between these two countries.

Indonesia and Pakistan are the most populous Muslim-majority countries in Asia, and the world. Despite this fact, they are also highly pluralistic countries with regards to religious affiliation and practice. By way of comparison, my aim is to figure out why pioneering developments in the field of gender and Islamic education have taken place in Indonesia while, at the same time, 'gender' has (almost) been a non issue in Islamic education in Pakistan. What are the reasons behind these two very different situations? I argue that the development and reform of Islamic education is not an isolated phenomenon but is part of a larger national development; an additional objective of this study is to describe and compare the two countries' broader national contexts – including educational reform, intellectual milieu, political environment and the women's rights movement. Hopefully, this can shed light on some facilitating factors as well as obstructive factors for the development of gender awareness in Islamic education. An optimal investigation would be to compare Indonesia with all Muslim-majority countries and countries with large Muslim minorities in South and Southeast Asia. However, this would be a huge task requiring a whole new study.

Methodologically, the study is built on a combination of fieldwork and text analysis. Several periods of fieldwork have been carried out in Indonesia between 2008–2011 in Bandung, Banjarmasin, Cirebon, Jakarta, Makassar, Pontianak and Yogyakarta — places chosen because of their geographical diversity and local variations in Islamic practice and tradition. The rather unique material utilized includes books,

course literature, researches, interviews and discussions. However, no fieldwork has been carried out in Pakistan and the author has relied on a selection of secondary sources in combination with some primary sources from e-mail conversations¹ and the Internet.

The concepts of 'gender order' and 'gender regime' — elaborated by R.W Connell in his book *Gender* (2002), and further developed by Kathryn Robinson in her book, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia* (2009) — inform the analysis of this article. As Connell explains, a gender order is the dominant pattern of gender arrangements and norms in a given society. With regards to Indonesia and Pakistan, these patterns are generally of a patriarchal and conservative nature. However, according to Connell, within a gender order there are many gender relations, or gender regimes, and he adds that "gender regimes are a usual feature of organizational life" in, for example, educational institutions. He further contends that "the gender regime of an institution can change — though change is often resisted". Finally, Connell argues: "It is possible for social practice to move gender orders in different directions" (2002: 53). However, according to Robinson, there is not one single gender order but rather many localized gender orders within the diverse Indonesian archipelago, not least due to the well-established influence of world religions, particularly Islam. There are also many gender regimes. One conclusion that can be drawn from Robinson's reasoning is that there is at least one Islamic gender order in Indonesia and, within this order, there are several gender regimes — one of them, I argue, being the gender regime of Islamic education. This gender regime is predominantly patriarchal and conservative in a similar way to the gender order/s discussed above. This reasoning can be equally applied to the Pakistani context.

Gender awareness and feminism are not necessarily the same, and this article is not about feminism as such. Several women and men active in the developments discussed here would not regard themselves as feminists, but would rather use other definitions to describe their engagement. However, according to Mina Roces, feminist movements have a long history in Asia and we find a number of locally colored feminisms in the region (2010: 6–7), including in Indonesia and Pakistan. The Islamic feminism discussed in the present article is one such example.

Indonesia: Educational Reform and Intellectual Milieu

Islamic education in Indonesia, according to Azyumardi Azra et al., is regulated by the state, but day-to-day operations are controlled by local Muslim scholars and heads of schools. Therefore, it is not homogenous, and local variations are sometimes considerable. Nonetheless, Indonesia's Islamic educational system "ranks among the most open and innovative in the world" (Azra, Afrianty & Hefner, 2007: 174). This is the result of a more-than-a-century-long development. In the late nineteenth century Malay-Indonesian Islamic scholars and pilgrims constituted a large group in the Islamic heartland of Mecca and Medina; many were also studying in Cairo. On their return home these scholars and pilgrims played a pivotal role in the nationalist independence movement, and also in voicing the aspirations of the movement to bring about a general reform of the educational system. At the same time many of them were active in the process of reforming Islamic thought and education, often inspired by the general educational reform which, in turn, led to willingness to structure Islamic educational programs in line with these modernizing ideals. Most Islamic learning institutions have added a general educational section with a modern pedagogical method, with many using the same modernized pedagogy. However, some schools that have adopted the general education and its pedagogy have retained a traditional, or informal, pedagogical method in their Islamic educational program. Similar educational reform processes were initiated by nationalists in other Muslim countries, but these were seldom as successful compared to Indonesia (Azra *et al.*, 2007: 173–175; Hefner, 2009: 25–27). In addition, a vast majority of Indonesian schools — including Islamic schools — are gender-mixed except for *pesantren*, which have segregated schools or departments for male and female students. Let us now go into some more detail of Indonesia's vast system of Islamic education and the impact of educational reform.

Pesantren and NGO Involvement

Indonesia has several varieties of Islamic educational institutions. First of all, in basic education there are the traditionalist residential schools named *pesantren*, *pondok*, *surau* or *dayah*, depending on the geographical location. These are the oldest Islamic schools in present-day Indonesia and all are, or at least were, led by an *alim* or *kyai* whose personal charisma, high social status² and religious ideas are central for

the educational milieu. Here we find the educational institutions of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). During the twentieth century these institutions went through processes of great change due to colonial directives of general education for native youth and the spread of Islamic *madrasa*³ across the country. Indonesian *madrasa* are Islamic schools that provide a double education — general educational courses and religious science. They also use modern teaching methods, emphasize the importance of educating girls and include sports and social engagement activities in the curriculum. Many traditionalist schools opened their own *madrasa* in order to meet these demands and challenges (Azra et al., 2007: 174–178).⁴ Another significant influence on *pesantren* occurred in the late 1970s–80s when various non-government organisations (NGOs) initiated community development programs in co-operation with *pesantren* to reach out to people at a grass-roots level. The co-operation was consolidated by an NU congress decision in 1984, and this long engagement between NGO activists, on the one hand, and teachers and students at *pesantren*, on the other, has often led to a broadening of the latter's worldview (van Bruinessen, 2008: 227–229). This development was further stimulated by Abdurrahman Wahid who highlighted the importance of human rights (including gender justice and reproductive rights), religious pluralism and democracy during his leadership of NU from 1984–1999 (Kull, 2009: 33).

The involvement of NGOs in *pesantren* education has continued, and Fahmina in Cirebon is an example of a very active and productive local organisation. The scope of its work and publications include issues directly related to gender and Islam, and also women's human rights in West Java on a more general level. Concerning publications of the former type, *Dawrah Fiqh Perempuan: Modul Kursus Islam dan Gender* is one example. This gender manual provides detailed instructions for all basic parts of Islamic education, as seen from a clear gender perspective, and is based on interpretations made by progressive Indonesian scholars of Islam. The methodological guidelines promote active participation and stress the importance of discussing 'problematic' and 'uncomfortable' topics (Muhammad, Kodir, Marcoes–Natsir & Wahid, 2007). *Fiqh Anti-Trafiking* (2006), *Fiqh HIV/AIDS* (2009) and a course manual on trafficking prevention published in 2009 are, on the other hand, examples of the latter kind of publication. The manuals, in particular, are used in education on various levels.⁵ Despite the fact that Fahmina

is locally oriented, its frontal figure, *kyai* Husein Muhammad, has been active in the field of gender and Islam since the late 1990s and is a well-known authority around the country.⁶ Rahima is another NGO working in the field of gender and Islam. Its number of publications is impressive and includes the monthly journal *Swara Rahima*. Although it is based in Jakarta, it has a nation-wide network of co-operation and provides local organizations all over Indonesia with books, copies of the journal and other course material. Rahima also educates *kyai* and teachers in *pesantren* on gender-related issues.⁷ Furthermore, Fatayat, the young women's branch of NU, explicitly started to apply a gender sensitive approach in the late 1990s (Arnez, 2010: 66).

Gradually, the role of women in the *pesantren* has expanded; the number of women active in administration has increased, and so has the number of *nyai*. Previously, *nyai* was the title of a woman married to a *kyai*, but today women can earn this title due to respect for their own religious knowledge (Hasyim, 2010: 325). This is not a completely new phenomenon, and Eka Srimulyani tells the stories of some extraordinary women who are pioneering *nyai* from three different generations with an outstanding knowledge of Islam and a high measure of self esteem (Srimulyani, 2008).⁸ From a large number of *nyai*, some pursue a critical gender perspective in their teaching by presenting new understandings of old texts. In addition, they raise issues of importance for promoting women's rights in Islam, including women's reproductive rights, marriage, polygamy and patriarchal structures in the *pesantren* (Zainab, 2002). Of special interest is the increased internal critique and questioning of '*Uqūd al-Lujayn*, a work from the nineteenth century by Syekh Nawawi Al-Bantani, a *kyai* from Java, regarded as very patriarchal and used by many *pesantren* as the standard reference for instruction on the role of women in Islam (Hasyim, 2010: 323).⁹ Syafiq Hasyim states that parents previously regarded a *pesantren* as a safe environment that protected their daughter's morals and made her a 'virtuous prospective wife'. It was not seen as a school where girls could obtain or deepen their Islamic knowledge. Due to internal and external factors in the past two decades, such as governmental non-segregating directives and civil society actors struggling for women's rights and gender equality, the *pesantren* has been turned into an educational institution for girls as well as boys — and sometimes even into a promoter of women's rights (Hasyim, 2010: 324). Robert Hefner says that "in Indonesia it

is not at all unusual to meet traditionalist thinkers and activists who promote gender-equitable interpretations of Islam” (Hefner, 2009a: 33). However, he also agrees with Azra et al. in that many *pesantren* still retain a conservative approach and some parents continue to regard *pesantren* primarily as a safe environment for adolescent girls (Azra, et al., 2007: 181; Hefner, 2009a: 33). According to Martin van Bruinessen, we find a rich ideological variety among Indonesian *pesantren* today. Still, a great majority are traditionalists — although reformed to a varying extent. Others, meanwhile can be characterised as being either modern, reformist, Islamist, radical or Salafi (Noor, Sikand and van Bruinessen, 2008: 26; van Bruinessen, 2008: 217).¹⁰ We can conclude that when it comes to gender awareness there is not one uniform situation in all *pesantren* today but a difference depending on the phase of reform, inclusion of general education, ideological affiliation, co-operation with NGOs and an increase in the number of *nyai* and female teachers. Nonetheless, considerable steps have been taken toward increased gender awareness and equality during recent decades, challenging the male-dominated gender regime in *pesantren* and, to some extent, the patriarchal content of the teaching material.

Higher Islamic Education

In the 1940s efforts to create institutions for higher Islamic education resulted in the establishment of the Sekolah Tinggi Islam (Islamic School of Higher Learning) in Yogyakarta 1946. Mohammad Hatta, Indonesia’s first vice-president, was a driving force in this development. He stressed the importance of having an ‘inclusive’ approach to Islamic education and a ‘contextual’ understanding of religious law. Already at this early stage evidence of the open mindedness that today is strong in many institutions of higher Islamic education can be discerned. However, it was not until the 1960s that a system of nation-wide Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Islamic Institutes, IAIN) was established. And, according to Fuad Jabali and Jamhari, by 1973 they numbered 112. Many of these institutions were of poor quality and in 1975 Mukti Ali and the Ministry of Religious Affairs administrated a thorough modernization of the institutions and reduced the number to 13. Mukti Ali, himself a graduate from McGill University in Canada, also initiated a program in order to educate officials within the Ministry of Religious Affairs and IAINs. They officials were sent for higher

education in the West, especially to McGill, and upon their return they received high positions within these institutions. Their task was to further modernize the curriculum and the state Islamic educational system at large. Harun Nasution, as rector at IAIN in Jakarta, played a crucial role in this development (Jabali & Jamhari, 2002: 17; Azra, *et al.*, 2007: 188–189; Kull, 2008: 57–58; Azra, 2011: 43–44).

Since the 1980s Nurcholish Madjid, Amin Abdullah, Azyumardi Azra and other younger scholars have continued this process, stressing the importance of a ‘context-based’ *ijtihad*¹, (taking the understanding of a problem in both its historical and modern context into consideration), as well as other forms of Islamic thought. A progressive and inclusive approach has dominated particularly in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, but has also spread unevenly throughout the country (Saeed, 1997: 284; Kull, 2009: 27–28). One important — although unintended — factor that enabled this later development to take place was the policy on religion carried out by the authoritarian Suharto regime (in power from 1966–1998). This policy restricted political activities in the name of Islam but, at the same time, supported cultural expressions of religion and individual practices. The regime also encouraged Islamic education on all levels, and it has expanded dramatically (Robinson, 2009). In this climate the ideas of progressive and liberal Muslim thinkers, who took a firm stand against Islamic party politics, flourished. Their original aim was to reform Islamic thought in Indonesia. According to them, it had stagnated due to a heavy focus on politically oriented ideologies and the establishment of an Islamic state (Kull, 2008). Instead, they — and particularly Nurcholish Madjid — argued that an important contribution of the great scholars of Islam was that they had managed to keep religious thinking fresh and relevant to their time, thereby contributing to the development of the societies in which they lived and worked (Federspiel, 2006: 81). These contemporary Indonesian scholars have all contributed towards a thriving Islamic discourse in Indonesia.

In 1988 the first Pusat Studi Wanita (Centre for Women’s Studies, PSW) was established at the IAIN in Jakarta. The other IAINs followed and today all have a PSW working for increased gender awareness in different ways (Kull, 2009: 29). The general gender mainstreaming policy introduced in 2000 during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid strengthened the role and position of all PSW, something that

has made them more active and self confident (Jubaedah, 2004; Arnez, 2010: 66). Of no less importance was the inclusion of a required course at all IAINs on democracy, civil society and human rights, including women's rights in 2003 (Azra et al., 2007: 189).¹² The development discussed above, in addition to leading to an increase in postgraduate research, has also led to an upgrading of IAINs to universities — Universitas Islam Negeri (State Islamic University, UIN) in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Makassar, Bandung and several other cities. These UIN also provide general education and have faculties for science, technology, medicine, psychology and economics — something that is in line with earlier educational reform policies in the country (Azra, *et al.*, 2007: 189–190). According to Azra: “The IAIN [UIN] is undoubtedly an end-product of Indonesian Muslims’ efforts to establish a modern religious institution of higher education” (Azra, 2011: 49). This development in Islamic education, more than a century in the making, provides a fertile milieu for further inclusion of new ideas, such as a gender perspective. Conservative scholars, often educated in the Middle East, have voiced objection throughout this development and currently they are trying to hinder the increasing awareness of gender issues. Yet, there is still much hope for a continued reform process along the course entered upon.

Female Enrollment and Additional Facilitative Factors

Another important factor in this process is the increasing number of female students enrolled in Islamic education on all levels, as well as the growing cadre of women teachers, administrators and researchers. A study on student enrollment from 2001–2002 showed that the gender ratio was almost equal on all levels in *madrassa*, except at the senior level where girls constituted 55 per cent (Azra et al., 2007: 180–181). In *pesantren* education, girls constituted 47.3 per cent of the entire number of students enrolled in 2002 (Hefner, 2009b: 63). A similar development of increased female enrollment can be seen in higher education, according to my own observations in the field; the gender ratio is often equal at these institutions. In the *Tarbiyah* (Education) Faculty female students clearly outnumber male students, and this will hopefully lead to an increased number of female religious teachers in the future.¹³ A remarkable development is that since 1957 women have been allowed to enter the Shariah Faculty and, therefore, can become judges — in this, Indonesia has been at the forefront in the Muslim

world.¹⁴ Since the 1970s there is also an increase in the number of young women who are active in Islamic predication (*da'wah*), and many of them are graduates from Islamic schools (Azra et al., 2007: 181). Generally speaking, female students in Indonesian Islamic schools are encouraged to work outside the home after graduation and many become teachers in Islamic schools on different levels (Hefner, 2009a: 23). Women also increasingly participate in leadership and decision-making positions, although the progress remains slow due to structural, Islamic and gender-related obstacles (Dzuhayatin & Edwards, 2010). However, one outstanding example is reported from UIN Yogyakarta where three out of seven Deans are female, which is the result of a gender mainstreaming strategic plan initiated by PSW in 2005 and a university leadership committed to gender equality (Dzuhayatin & Edwards, 2010: 205). The increased female enrollment in Islamic schools, a trend towards continued activity in the labor market and *da'wah* after graduation is resulting in an increased number female role models holding different positions in Indonesian society.

Let us now turn to some additional supportive factors in this education development and reform. Firstly, we have the women's rights movement that has generally been a strong force in Indonesian society, both before independence and in post-colonial Indonesia. This struggle was initially nationalist, secular and often left-wing oriented (Kull, forthcoming,¹⁵ 2012: 2). However, according to Saparinah Sadli women activists increasingly "became aware that in reality many of the issues addressed in the women's movement were more or less strongly influenced by religion" (Sadli, 2007: xi). Therefore, the women's movement and the reform within Islamic education have mutually supported each other, and have continued to do so. One important outcome of this symbiosis is the development of Islamic feminism, which received important influences in the late 1990s when Riffat Hassan, Ali Ashgar Engineer, Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Amina Wadud — all internationally well-known Islamic feminist scholars — were invited to workshops with Indonesian Islamic scholars. Most of the participating Indonesian scholars had a progressive and inclusive approach to Islam and were open for a continued reform of Islamic thought through context-based *ijtihad*, or more specifically, through gender-sensitive interpretations of Islam in favor of women's human rights. Also, some more traditionalist scholars like the above-

mentioned *kyai* Husein Muhammad took part in the workshops. These Indonesian Islamic feminists, both female and male, are often teachers and researchers at institutions for Islamic education on various levels (Kull, forthcoming, 2012: 7–9). In addition to this, most of them are active in Muhammadiyah or NU, and as activists in NGOs — a phenomenon which, according to Lies Marcoes–Natsir, is leading to the development of a specific Indonesian brand of Islamic feminism.¹⁶ This can be exemplified by Musdah Mulia, who is a noted Islamic scholar and is also the most outspoken representative of Islamic feminism. Musdah started her Islamic education at a *pesantren*, continued at IAIN in Makassar and finally graduated from IAIN in Jakarta as a Ph.D. graduate in Islamic political thought in 1997. She has been active in NU's female branch for over 30 years and was a long-time state employee at the Ministry of Religious Affairs where she directed a committee that was working on a reform of Indonesian Islamic Family Law. Musdah is also active in an NGO called the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP). In addition, she has published a number of books and articles on gender and Islam, including her 'magnum opus' *Muslim Woman Reformer: Female Renewer of Religiousness* (2005: presentation of author; Kull, forthcoming, 2012: 14).¹⁷ Although Islamic feminists are strong in Indonesia there are other feminists who are also active, as well as Islamist women who argue for women's rights from their perspective. Indeed, as pointed out by Susan Blackburn, Islamic and secular feminists often co-operate against common opponents, not least 'conservative' Muslims — women as well as men (2010: 29).

Secondly, we have the standpoint of Islam's role in society during the Suharto regime compared to that of the era of democratization. Since the 1970s Islam was increasingly depoliticized but, at the same time, the regime was supportive of private religion and Islamic education on all levels — for example, the number of *pesantren* grew more than 100 per cent from 1977–1997 — and women, especially, have become increasingly active as practitioners and students. The regime's approach, therefore, indirectly facilitated the development of an intellectual milieu in which both educational reform, female students and scholars have thrived. After the regime's fall in 1998 the subsequent democratization process included instruments for the empowerment of women, for example the policy of gender mainstreaming. However, democratic reforms also opened up the political arena for Islamist and scripturalist–

oriented proponents of Islam, making it increasingly problematic to advocate liberal interpretations of Islam (Azra, *et al.*, 2007: 178; Kull, 2009: 27–28; Kull, forthcoming, 2012: 5). In passing, it is thought-provoking that it was Abdurrahman Wahid, former leader of the world's probably largest Islamic organization, and not his vice-president (and later Indonesia's first female president) Megawati Soekarnoputri who launched the gender mainstreaming policy. Actually, according to Blackburn, Megawati was never particularly engaged in women's rights or gender issues during her presidency from 2001–2003 (2010: 26).

The Islamic feminists have been able to develop and promote their ideas despite this politicization of religion and the increasingly intolerant intellectual climate, marked by intolerance towards religious minorities and women's rights. We cannot take the continued development of Islamic feminism for granted. Although, my observations indicate that this intellectual tradition is thoroughly established in Indonesia. Pieterella van Doorn–Harder, in her study of women active in Muhammadiyah, NU, NGOs and *pesantren*, has come to a similar conclusion. She claims that: “Through their religious knowledge, they are uniquely prepared to protect authority against authoritarianism and against any development that attempts to undermine women's potential and empowerment” (2006: 21).¹⁸ I fully agree with her but also wish to raise our conclusions to yet another level by suggesting that these women, and like-minded men, might even pose a seminal challenge to the prevailing Islamic gender order/s in Indonesia.

Gender Awareness in Higher Islamic Education

Women's rights were first highlighted in higher Islamic education in the late 1980s. Increasingly initiatives were taken in the mid 1990s when the reconstruction of women's *fiqh* received attention, and discourses of Islamic feminism took form. This resulted in seminars and workshops and, in the long run, the production of books¹⁹ that were used in education — not least for the further education of teachers. Initially, this literature was of a general nature, like the *Methodological Reconstruction of the Discourse on Gender Equality in Islam* (Dzuhayatin, Munawar–Rahman & Umar, 2002). In 2003, *Introduction to Gender Studies* was published, discussing and analyzing various aspects of sex, gender, gender mainstreaming and feminism (Tim Penulis PSW UIN, Jakarta, 2003). Published by the PSW in Yogyakarta and

Jakarta respectively, these books can be regarded as starting points for engagement in gender issues on a larger scale within the field of higher Islamic education in Indonesia.

A self-critical institutional analysis was carried out in 2002–2003 at UIN (at that time, IAIN) in Yogyakarta. It focused on gender issues and female representation and participation, and resulted in 2004 with publishing of *The Necessity of Giving Priority to Gender in the Curriculum of IAIN*. This is a detailed guideline for 28 courses, including course literature covering areas such as Quran, Ḥadīth, shariah, history, Arabic, the psychology of religion, and philosophy. The suggested textbooks include works by progressive Indonesian and international scholars. In the foreword, the editor admits that there are difficulties to be overcome, both procedural and financial, but at the same time stresses the ambition to have a gender perspective in *all* subjects taught, as well as consistency in aims, lectures, methodology and textbooks (Aryani, 2004). This development was followed up during a visit to PSW in Yogyakarta in the autumn of 2010. Staff reported that there had been progress in the dissemination of the gender perspective in teaching religious sciences, and teachers were frequently evaluated in this task. Despite not being mandatory, it is highly recommended and all faculties join in discussions on the subject four times a year. The Shariah Faculty, in particular, has been successful in this aim; it has also carried out programs all over Indonesia aimed at increasing gender awareness in courts — something that has been very positively received by judges. However, the science, technology and medical faculties are exceptions to this gender-positive trend. Instead, they show a conservative attitude towards issues of gender and Islam, as well as toward reproductive health for medical students.²⁰ A similar development was reported by staff at UIN in Jakarta.²¹ This latter finding is not surprising as natural science milieus have, for a long time, and on a global level, provided a hotbed for Islamist ideas.

In 2005, PSW at UIN Jakarta published *Developing an Academic Culture with a Gender Perspective*, a book elaborating on aspects of gender in Islamic education, such as women-friendly study environments and gender-sensitive approaches and methodologies. However, the most important step was the publication also in 2005 of six textbooks on the Quran, Ḥadīth, *fiqh*, *kalām*, *taṣawwuf*, Islamic history and civilization, all with a consistent gender perspective. They are published in a special

series of textbooks with a gender perspective²² and used in the initial courses for *all* students at the UIN in Jakarta. The books are co-written by several authors who teach at UIN Jakarta and are specialists in their respective fields; most of whom are also active in PSW and a majority being men. This series has, according to staff at PSW, been very positively received and the books have been reprinted — there is even additional funding for further reprinting.²³ The development within book publication shows the steps taken from a general introduction of gender studies in the first books towards a complete inclusion of a gender perspective in Islamic textbooks in the latest publications. We can conclude that these textbooks are probably the most far-reaching attempt ever made at a gender perspective in Islamic education. However, all these steps are crucial in order to loosen the grip of the prevailing male-dominated gender regime and the patriarchal content of Islamic education. Nonetheless, it is also important to emphasize that not only women but also quite a few men are taking part in this development.

This study has examined six PSW and, among them, we find similarities as well as differences. All six of them work for a dissemination of a gender perspective among students and at teaching colleagues in Islamic education. Yogyakarta and Jakarta are probably the most successful in this endeavor, while the staff in Banjarmasin reported great hesitation and resistance among colleagues. Most of the PSW also work intensely outside their own institutions. PSW Makassar has, for example, carried out more than 250 gender-awareness courses at *pesantren* nationwide, and PSW Bandung has pursued similar activities among women's groups and female preachers (*muballighahs*). Many PSW cooperate with local NGOs, and some also with judiciaries. Only Jakarta and Yogyakarta publish books in the field on a larger scale, but all PSW publish journals or regular reports. In addition, all PSW — their staff and affiliated scholars and students — produce research with a gender approach. In Makassar and Banjarmasin important research on local conditions has been carried out. This research includes the role of female *ulama* and judges, surveys among teachers and *ustādh* on their view of gender justice and equality, and family planning programs.²⁴ According to members of staff at PSW, Pontianak is an area with a generally low awareness of gender issues. This is something that may be due, at least partly, to the focus on ethnic issues — the area's main societal problem.

PSW is the *only* association working on gender issues — no NGO is active in this field — and the staff recalled one gender progressive *alim* in Pontianak being the head of NU's local branch. However, the highly ambitious staff body at PSW carries out seminars, workshops and practical training within their own Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (Higher State Islamic School, STAIN), in other schools and in the wider community, including in the regional government.²⁵

To conclude, there are good reasons to join Robert Hefner when he states that women trained at Indonesia's institutions for higher Islamic education are "in the vanguard of efforts to rethink Islam and gender" (Hefner, 2008: 149), nationally and also internationally (Blackburn, 2010: 28). Those women and their like-minded male scholars constitute a severe challenge to the current patriarchal gender regime of Islamic education. What is needed though is closer co-operation between PSW through workshops and seminars, and in publications. Both the general and introductory books on gender as well as the detailed guidelines could be used by all PSW nationwide (the six most far-reaching books are also used in Bandung). We need to recognize, however, the importance of locally produced works for a more thorough claim to legitimacy. As reported by staff at PSW Yogyakarta and Jakarta in November 2012, the national network of PSW in higher Islamic education is finally working well after 10 years in operation.²⁶ This improved network might be able to facilitate the much-needed increase in co-operation.

Pakistan: Educational Reform and Intellectual Milieu

Of crucial importance in considering Pakistan is the establishment of the first Deobandi *madrasa* in 1869,²⁷ a school of thought that has since spread and established *madrasa* all over the Indian sub-continent. Although Deobandis are generally regarded as traditionalist, they also introduced some reforms to Islamic education — methodologically as well as in language of instruction. However, there was no ambition to provide Islamic education for women within these institutions (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2002; Zaman, 2007).²⁸ Today we find *madrasa*²⁹ from an additional four schools of thought or ideologies — Ahl-i-Hadith, Bareilwi, Jamaat-i-Islami and Shia — that have been established since the 1950s (Candland, 2005: 154–155). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century several

influential Muslim reformers and thinkers were active, including Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Ameer Ali and Muhammad Iqbal. A part of their endeavor was the establishment of modern educational Islamic institutions (Ahmad, 2008: 63–64; Yamane, 2011: 16). However, intellectual reform has not continued as smoothly with the coming of new generations in comparison to Indonesia. This is due, in general, to internal struggles between different schools of thought and severe resistance from Islamists and, in particular, Mawdudi and his influential organization *Jamaat-i-Islami* (Zaman, 2007: 71–72; Ahmad, 2008: 61–62). One result of this resistance was that Fazlur Rahman, a daring modernist thinker and reformer, fled Pakistan in 1969. He later became a prominent and internationally well-known professor of Islamic thought at Chicago University (Zaman, 2007: 72; Kull, 2008: 64–65). Governments have, over the years, repeatedly aimed at reforming Islamic education, but “the *ulama* have often been deeply suspicious of governmental efforts to reform their institutions” (Zaman, 2007: 79). Still, some reform of *madrassa* has taken place and this will be discussed below.

After partition and independence in 1947 Pakistan became a large Muslim-majority country, the second most populous after Indonesia, and was initially a secular republic. The early governments had an ambition to educate women and to integrate them into the development of society. A limited number of women, mainly from the rich and upper-middle classes, benefited from these efforts (Moghadam, 1992: 43). However, Pakistan has been increasingly Islamized over the years. As early as the 1960s, secular politics was influenced and weakened by Islamist assumptions and finally ended with the takeover of power by General Zia ul-Haq in 1977. The Zia regime carried out a systematic Islamization that included laws, public policy and popular culture (Nasr, 2008: 31–32). According to Valentine Moghadam, this Islamization process institutionalized patriarchy and the legal part of this process, in particular, “greatly diminished women’s rights, and had a class as well as gender target” (Moghadam, 1992: 44). At the same time there was strong resistance towards this process and many women’s rights movements were especially active (Moghadam, 1992: 45).

Since the death of Zia in 1988 there have been several shifts between democratic civil rule and military regimes. Islamization, or at least co-

operation with Islamists of various kinds, has been on the political agenda ever since (Nasr, 2008: 32–33). Governments have taken initiatives to reform *madrassa*, such as in the early 1960s, late 1970s and after the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001. The initial initiatives aimed at a modernization of curriculum by reform of religious teachings through a return to the foundational texts and a reduction of medieval, natural and philosophical sciences. This modernization also opened the way for inclusion of English and ‘general’ sciences, while the Zia regime’s reform efforts further emphasized the integration of a ‘general’ curriculum into the *madrassa* (Zaman, 2007: 77–78). However, Muhammad Qasim Zaman says that:

The recommendation of the 1979 report that the university curriculum in Arabic and Islamic studies be the same as that of the *madrassa* at a comparable level may have affected the *university’s* curriculum more than it has the *madrassas’* — a marked contrast with the evolution of the *pesantren* in relation to the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Indonesia (2007: 80).

Another negative development in this respect is the prolonged radicalization of the religious milieu in Pakistan, including the *madrassas*. The radicalization includes both a level of discontent between the state and *ulama* in general, and between the majority Sunni group and minority Muslim groups. It also includes a level of militancy and terrorism, domestically due to the above discontent and internationally due to the war in Afghanistan and following the rise of the Taliban. However, Pakistani *madrassa* are not homogenous institutions, and the extent to which the radicalization has affected the *madrassas* varies considerably (Zaman, 2007: 70–77). This is also a development that might have changed over time. In a study based on fieldwork around the country, Christine Fair comes to the conclusion that: “While it is likely that Pakistan’s *madaris* do not contribute significantly to the support of terrorist manpower, they may foster conditions that are conducive to public support of terrorism” (2006: 5). She also refers to an attitudinal survey among 10th-grade students in Urdu middle public schools and English middle public schools, and their equivalent in *madrassa* from 2003. Among the issues investigated were religious minority rights and women’s rights. The results showed a huge difference between the kinds of schools, with the students from *madrassa* and English middle schools at each end of the scale. A

great majority of *madrasa* students were negative toward minority and women's rights issues (denying such rights), while a great majority of English medium school students were positive (affirming such rights) (Fair, 2006: 5–6). According to Saleem Ali, there is very limited space for a negotiation of Islamic gender roles in Pakistan. He says: “The dominant narrative in Islamic schools regarding women is that they are ‘separate but equal’ (and)... there are old traditional arguments that women must be ‘protected by men’”.³⁰

One conclusion is that the religious and intellectual milieu in many Pakistani *madrasa* is intolerant and patriarchal, and not open for the inclusion of human rights issues and a gender perspective. Despite this conclusion and despite the aforementioned suspiciousness of *ulama*, some educational reform has, nonetheless, taken place, including at a variety of well-known institutions of Islamic learning affiliated with Deobandi, Bareilwi and Jamaat-i-Islami. Candland, however, does not blame mainly the *ulama* for the relative failure of reforms, but instead argues that there is a certain interest for reform within the ranks of *madrasa ulama*. He puts the blame on poorly designed administrative structures, at least in the later reform policies from 2001 onward (Candland, 2005: 156–157, 161). Candland suggests the inclusion of “qualified *ulema* and university professors in *Islamiyat* to develop an alternative curriculum for Islamic educational institutions”, providing Bangladesh, Indonesia and Turkey as positive examples of such a development (Candland, 2005: 162). He also suggests co-operation among scholars from these countries.

In Pakistan, reforms seem to concentrate on basic religious teachings, but special ambitions aim at radical or militant interpretations of Islam and intolerant interpretations concerning religious minorities, while gender issues and/or women's rights are never mentioned. A recent book *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs* by Saleem Ali (2009) strengthens this impression. Here several issues of current importance in Islamic education are discussed — violence, conflicts, modernity, foreign-power involvement and economical concerns. Human rights and gender issues, however, are not included.³¹ Despite it being very informative and material-rich, the anthology *Gender and Education in Pakistan* further confirms this line of thinking. It elaborates on a variety of examples and topics from schools at all levels, but Islamic

education is not mentioned at all (Qureshi & Rarieya, 2007). In summary, these aspects taken together imply that gender is a non issue in Islamic education in Pakistan.

Women-only *Madrasa*

An interesting recent development is the growing number of *madrasa* for women in Pakistan. The first was established in the late 1970s and a dramatic expansion has taken place since the late 1980s (Bano, 2010: 9). Masooda Bano has carried out a study based on in-depth interviews and group discussions with parents, teachers and students in 24 *madrasa* across the country. She reports that a majority of the girls enroll in *madrasa* education because of their parents' decision. However, 40 per cent assert that it was their own wish to enroll, often because of the social engagement with female *madrasa* graduates in their immediate surroundings and the subsequent admiration for them (Bano, 2010: 7, 16). According to Bano: "Female madrasas emerged from an ideological move to preserve traditional value structures in the light of the threats such values were seen to face, due to growing social liberalization" (Bano, 2010: 8–9). The main components of these 'threats' are economic and cultural modernization, including information technology and, not least, the widespread influence of Indian movies and soap operas (Bano, 2010: 12). Therefore, traditional Islamic values and morals are highlighted in *madrasa* education for girls, and most girls enter *madrasa* studies after having completed secular education by the age of 16 or more. The majority enroll in *fiqh* studies which teach basic principles that shape their everyday behavior, rather than Quran studies which lead to other-worldly rewards and are popular in male *madrasa* (Bano, 2010: 14). In addition, many female students emphasized the virtue of simplicity, with the Prophet Muhammad as a guiding example (Bano, 2010: 20). Indeed, many girls reported that "their religious beliefs help to reduce the importance of many material aspirations, making them more content with their existing circumstances [and making them] ... recognize their own worth, by eulogizing their central roles as mothers, sister, daughters and wives" (Bano, 2010: 19). Consequently these female *madrasa* graduates are regarded as 'pious and family-oriented', which in turn makes them attractive in the 'marriage market' (Bano, 2010: 14). Another outcome of their education is that many girls engage in Islamic teaching and predication, and conduct religious

rituals upon returning to their homes, with some even having plans for opening their own *madrasa*. These activities are much appreciated by most communities and make the girls an asset to both their family and to the larger community (Bano, 2010: 18). Afiya Shehrbano Zia defines them as religious informal education groups, or *dars*, and argues that they are a part of the privatization of religion. According to Shehrbano Zia, these *dars* compensate women for their lack of democratic or domestic importance (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 41, 44). Unfortunately, Bano's impressive study does not provide a discussion of the frequency and role of women as teachers in female *madrasa*. However, we can assume that the number of female teachers, administrators and leaders is rising as a consequence of this expansion and as a consequence of the increasing number of women educated in the Islamic sciences.

This assumption is supported by a report from Jamaat-i-Islami on the number of female students and teachers at their 531 *madrasa* around the country. The average numbers presented show that women constitute 27 per cent of the students and 35 per cent of the teachers, although we have to remember that local variations are considerable. Islamabad is at the top of this scale, while Balochistan and the Federal Administrated Tribal Area are at the bottom (Yamane, 2011: footnotes 14–15, 18). Keiko Sakurai traces a similar development of increasing participation of women as students, teachers and managers in her study of Shia *madrasa* in Pakistan, although she does not provide any numbers (2011: 45). A new development is the involvement of national and international NGOs in building the capacity of teachers and administrators in *madrasa*. A pilot project took place at the University of Peshawar in April 2011, with 35 leaders from women-only *madrasa* participating in the four-day training workshop. The training included a promotion of critical thinking among students and the inclusion of scientific and social disciplines in the curriculums, all with “a special emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights (particularly women's rights)”.³² This is a seminal development that resembles the long-standing involvement of NGOs in Indonesian *pesantren* and might constitute a first step towards the wider inclusion of a gender perspective in Islamic education in Pakistan.

In conclusion, although a *madrasa* education provides female students with a certain amount of religious authority and a personal feeling of empowerment, it consolidates rather than challenges the very

strongly patriarchal Islamic gender order/s. Still, due to the steadily increasing number of female-only *madrasa* and students, teachers and administrators, and an accompanying seminal interest for women's rights, this development might pose a slight challenge to the male-dominated gender regime in Islamic education and a pinprick to its patriarchal content.

Women's Rights, Islam and the State

The Indian sub-continent has had a strong women's movement for a long time. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century struggles were focused on women's rights to education, age of marriage, and widows' rights and polygamy, while often cutting across religious and class borders. Several remarkable individuals, such as Begum Rokeya and Gangabai, managed to establish schools for girls, and Rokeya herself wrote extensively. However, both class and religious borders became increasingly apparent (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2002: 144–147; Fleshenburg, 2010: 170–171). A number of women's groups have been founded since Pakistan's independence, and the years of far-reaching Islamization during Zia ul-Haq's regime (1977–1988) constituted a peak in their activities. These movements included highly educated women as well as women from the ruling class, and were regarded as very effective and even militant (Moghadam, 1992: 45; Fleshenburg, 2010: 171–172). This active period coincided with an intensive debate among women's groups on the issue of religion “both as a contention and as a strategy of empowerment” (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 32). However, the debate is still not settled and it has created tension between secular feminists, Islamic feminists and Islamist women.

Many secular feminists have decided to continue defining themselves as secular, although religion often plays an increased role in their personal lives as well as in their activism (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 32; Fleshenburg, 2010: 169). The term ‘Islamic feminism’ can, according to Shehrbano Zia, be helpful in distinguishing between “feminism and non-feminism within a broader Islamic activism” (2009: 32).³³ Islamic feminists “reinterpret religious texts in a modern, indigenous, culturally relevant context” (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 38). Probably the most senior and distinguished representative of this group is the previously mentioned Riffat Hassan, who is a feminist, modernist theologian and internationally known pioneer in carrying out feminist or gender

sensitive interpretations of Islam in response to gender-biased Islamic legislation and history. Hassan migrated to the US in 1972 and has had a number of academic posts, including her lengthy position as professor in Religious Studies and Humanities at the University of Louisville. However, she has maintained engagement in her home country over the years through activities in NGOs and field studies (Svensson, 2000: 67–70)³⁴ — although Saleem Ali contends that her influence in Pakistan is nominal.³⁵

Finally, we have Islamist women who reject feminism while advocating more rights and increased status for women within the framework of an Islamic state (Fleishenburgh, 2010: 170). However, there are no sharp lines between the respective groups, and Shehrbano Zia talks about the multiple identities of many women activists today in regard to their personal Muslim identity and their membership identity/ies (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 42–43). Durre Ahmed, on the other hand, contends that “different conservative schools in theology” dominate the current gender discourse.³⁶ Although the women’s movement is still strong in Pakistan, this later development implies a continued tension along religious lines among women activists.

In relation to the women’s movement we need to mention the role of Benazir Bhutto who was the first female leader in a Muslim country. She put women’s issues on the agenda during her first tenure as president (1988–1990), although no concrete policies were launched (Moghadam, 1992: 45). During her second tenure (1993–1996), “women’s activists were included for governmental policy planning and policy measures” (Fleishenburgh, 2010: 177). According to Shehrbano Zia, under Bhutto’s leadership “the women’s movement gained maximum influence in policy making in general and women’s issues in particular” (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 36). During the subsequent leadership of Nawas Sharif, on the other hand (1997–1999), the women’s movement lost ground to growing political conservatism and religious revivalism. Later, Perves Musharraf’s rule (1999–2008) set up a permanent National Commission on the Status of Women in 2000. It also worked for women’s political empowerment and increased participation in parliament (Shehrbano Zia, 2009: 36–37). In general, women’s movements have throughout the history of independent Pakistan reached a number of agreements with authorities. However, due to a lack of political will or to changes in the political regime,

many have not been implemented (Fleshenburg, 2010: 171). We can conclude that the national political instability and the frequent changes of regime have hampered the success of women's movements, secular as well as faith-based.

Another example that illuminates the complexity of the relation between women's rights, Islam and the state is provided by the victory and ruling of an Islamist party in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, which has explicitly focused on women's issues. The party aims at banning the practices of honor killing, trading in women and forced marriage — all un-Islamic local traditions, according to the party. At the same time they criticize women-friendly amendments to Muslim Family Law on requirements to register divorces and the necessity to obtain the first wife's permission before a man can take a second wife (Weiss, 2008: 161). Of importance here, therefore, is 'true' Islam and not concern for women's rights as such. The party has also been active in the underdeveloped field of education in the province, where the number of literate women is extremely low. Like many Islamists they claim that "creating an Islamic context itself will solve many prevailing social problems" (Weiss, 2008: 156). The solution has, therefore, been to build more schools for girls only, and on all levels up to university. These gender-segregated and 'safe' environments will accordingly lead to a greater number of girls attending school and will "enable women to lead better lives in accordance with Islam" (Weiss, 2008: 156–7). Again, it is not primarily a matter of women's rights or girls' education, but of Islamic values.

Higher Islamic Education and the Case of Al-Huda

We should not underestimate the potential of gender-segregated educational institutions. The women's campus of International Islamic University in Islamabad is one such institution where women's studies and research thrive. This fully fledged campus was established in 2000, although female and male students have been separated since the university's inception in 1985. The university's webpage presents an increasing number of female students (almost 9000 by 2010), teachers and academic subjects, as well as a variety of practical and technical facilities. The presentation is, indeed, impressive. Female students are provided with accommodation, a cafeteria, a shopping center, a medical center, a bank within the campus area and separate

buses for transportation outside campus.³⁷ All these facilities, however, also preclude any kind of social intercourse between female and male students, even outside campus — something that, of course, is one of the purposes behind the increased facilities. The university's mission statement seems equally impressive when it comes to academic objectives and the intention to harmonize Islam and the modern world. It even advocates a contextual approach in studying and interpreting Islam. However, nowhere can any reference to gender awareness or equality between the sexes be found. The only formulation of interest here says that the university is: "Opening its doors to all without any discrimination of caste, creed, color, race, religion or sex".³⁸ Sex is listed last, and this formulation says nothing about the policies once the students have been accepted to the university. Rather, the mission is written in a gender-neutral manner, something that indicates that gender issues are not explicitly a part of the university's main agenda. Still, this does not prevent women scholars from regarding the university as a vehicle for women's empowerment.

In November 2010 a conference with the title *Women Universities as Agents of Change* was held at the women-only campus. The main objective of the conference was:

..to discuss how women universities can serve as a centre-stage and launching pad for a programme to interrogate and redress gender inequality, to reduce the gender gap, to formulate a pedagogy which instills critical selfhood and consciousness in women and to promote higher education and skill development in women.³⁹

The conference had four themes and the last was 'Islam and women empowerment'. This theme had three subsections but, although they discussed the relation between women's rights and Islamic jurisprudence, as well hinting at the importance of new interpretations of the religious sources in order to empower women, there was no explicit mentioning of a gender perspective in these endeavors. This is not to say that the intention was not there but that it was not so clearly expressed, probably because it was not unproblematic to do so. The other three themes addressed women and education in a more general sense, and here both feminist perspectives and gender roles were explicitly mentioned (*Women Universities as Agents of Change*, 2010). Therefore, women's universities have to be regarded as an important step in a longer process of women's empowerment on the

personal as well as societal levels. What is unfortunate though is that, according to Bano, many of the women educated here will seldom practice their profession. Instead, they will become more attractive as marriage partners (2010: 12–13).

Another example, of a different kind, is Al-Huda Islamic School founded in 1994 by Farhat Hashmi. Hashmi is a highly educated Islamic scholar with an M.A. in Arabic from the University of Punjab 1980 and a Ph.D. in Ḥadīth studies from the University of Glasgow 1989, among other qualifications.⁴⁰ Al-Huda started on a small scale but now has a wide network of schools in urban areas around Pakistan. It also increasingly engages in the publishing of Islamic educational material, radio broadcasting and social welfare, with women running all activities. They offer two-year, one-year and short courses, and it is also possible to attend on an irregular basis as a ‘listener’. Most attending women are veiled and some cover their faces, but it is not a requirement (Mushtaq, 2010: 1–2). Faiza Mushtaq, who carried out a 22-month-long fieldwork with Al-Huda at various locations around the country, reports that Hashmi herself wears casual dress with a loosely draped matching scarf in class, but an ankle-length black robe and scarf in addition to the *niqab* (face veil) outside school and when appearing in the media (Mushtaq, 2010: 3–4).

Hashmi has her main following among highly educated, urban upper-middle class women, although some women from poorer spheres take part as well. The level of Al-Huda’s education is high and focuses on studies of the Quran and Ḥadīth, including Hashmi’s extensive interpretations of these texts. She pays attention to their historical context as well as to their relevance for contemporary Pakistani society, in a similar vein to many modernist Islamic thinkers. Al-Huda schools also put great effort into promoting the personal Islamic morality and piety of their students (Mushtaq, 2010: 2, 5). Al-Huda’s stress on Islamic morality and personal piety is similar to the ambitions in female-only *madrasa*, although their curriculum differs. The *madrasa* prioritize *fiqh* studies, while Al-Huda focuses on Quran and Ḥadīth studies — the most popular subjects of study in men’s *madrasa*. In studying the main Islamic texts, Quran and Ḥadīth, Al-Huda’s students are firmly guided by Hashmi’s commentaries. Meanwhile, female-only *madrasa* students engage in *fiqh* studies that leave little or no space for their own reasoning and understanding of Islam.

Hashmi presents herself as a liberal and feminist scholar and interpreter of Islam. She argues in favor of women's right to pray at a mosque, to offer their ritual prayers in the same style as men and also to lead those prayers. In addition, she supports women's rights to recite the Quran while having their menstrual period. At the same time, however, she accepts and even encourages polygamy. She is also a defender of conservative social conventions and personally follows these in her roles as mother, wife and daughter. Hashmi neither pays much attention to the widespread oppression and domestic violence faced by rural and lower-class Pakistani women (Mushtaq, 2010: 9, 11, 13). Outside its own ranks Al-Huda is often contested, and liberal Pakistani commentators — secular as well as religious — regard it as being very conservative and anti-feministic (Mushtaq, 2010: 10–11). Among those we find Riffat Hassan. Although she applauds Hashmi's effort and aspiration to be a scholar of Islam, she is very critical of her approach to and interpretation of Islam, and she completely rejects Hashmi's description of herself as a feminist, liberal and modernist (Hassan, 2002: 8–13). At the same time, Al-Huda also receives criticism from traditionalist *ulama*. Firstly, these scholars question Hashmi's knowledge of Islam based on her credentials from secular and Western academic exams and on not having a traditionalist *madrasa* education. Secondly, Hashmi's behavior that includes travelling alone, lecturing in the media and her initiative to encourage women to study outside home, is contested (Mushtaq, 2010: 8–10, 13; Toosi, 2010: 3).⁴¹

We can compare Al-Huda and the women's piety movement in Cairo, discussed by Saba Mahmood. The religious message is similar but while Al-Huda is a well-organized network of schools with one founder and leader, the piety movement in Cairo is loosely organized and has several leading figures with different approaches (Mahmood, 2005). The ideas and values conveyed by these movements may not be feminist or even address gender issues, but they do encourage women's public engagement and increase their religious knowledge, leading to an increased ability for them to formulate their own viewpoints. Maybe the contribution of Farhat Hashmi and Al-Huda is best summarized by Faiza Mushtaq, who says: "Whether they end up supporting liberal, feminist visions of women's liberation or undermining them, the changes wrought by this movement are already disrupting existing power relations and institutional arrangements in Pakistan" (2010:

14). Additionally, Mushtaq states that, Al-Huda is no longer the only organization that offers a similar kind of religious education for women (Mushtaq, 2010: 12). This might indicate a further challenge to male-dominated Pakistani power structures, including gender regimes, both within and outside the realm of Islamic education.

Concluding Discussion

This article analyzes the development of gender awareness in Islamic education in Indonesia and Pakistan. The countries provide two very different examples, although we also find some similarities. The current situation in Islamic education is a result of larger national contexts, not least concerning the factors focused upon in this study — educational reform, intellectual milieu, female student enrollment, political developments and the women's rights movement. Indonesia has come a long way in this development, and on the front line we have the institutions for higher Islamic education. They are all gender-mixed and here we find well-founded gender awareness, mainly due to the work of teachers and researchers active at their respective PSW. These scholars — many of them Islamic feminists — engage in research with a gender perspective, and some also carry out gender-sensitive interpretations of Islam. These results are practically applied in curriculums and methodological and pedagogical training for teaching staff, but are also found in education and activism in the wider society.

The most far-reaching results have been made in Jakarta and Yogyakarta where such scholars have produced textbooks covering general gender issues and — the most pioneering of all — books on basic Islamic subjects by pursuit of a consistent gender perspective. This ultimate outcome is, however, a result of a more-than-a-century-long process of educational reform in combination with an open-minded intellectual climate that has developed, especially during the past 50 years. This intellectual climate has featured individuals such as Mukti Ali, Harun Nasution, Nurcholish Madjid, Amin Abdullah, Azymardi Azra, and Musdah Mulia, and has continued until today with scholars in subsequent younger generations. Furthermore, the number of female students has steadily increased, reaching an almost equal gender ratio. An increase in the number of female teachers, researchers and administrators has followed suit.

Pesantren, initially traditionalist and gender-segregated Islamic schools, have been experiencing an equally long but slightly different process of educational reform. The long-standing educational reform process is similar, but the influence of the establishment and continued development of *madrasa*, as well as the involvement of NGOs, has been important. NGOs have, since the late 1970s, co-operated with *pesantren* regarding development issues, including gender issues and women's rights; a co-operation that has generally been supported by the NU leadership and, not least, by Abdurrahman Wahid. The *kyai* have also proven to be relatively willing to achieve educational and intellectual reforms. Although many *pesantren* remain traditionalist and patriarchal, one can still find a variety of ideological orientations and phases of reform among them. Patriarchal textbooks on the role of women and men in Islam have increasingly been questioned, and occasionally they have been if not replaced then at least complemented with material covering gender issues and women's rights in Islam. The enrollment of female students has increased and resulted in an almost equal gender ratio. In addition, the number of female teachers and *nyai* has increased considerably. Although *pesantren* continue to be segregated by gender, women enroll more for the sake of obtaining an education rather than, as was previously common, the regarding of *pesantren* as a safe environment for young women. After graduation women educated at both these institutions increasingly engage in work and other activities outside the home, and are also often encouraged to do so. For example, many of these women engage in preaching and other *da'wah* activities, and some are activists and members of NGOs. Many also nurture an ambition to include a gender perspective in their preaching and/or activism.

The development of gender awareness in Indonesian Islamic education has been facilitated by the growth of a liberal and progressive school of Islamic thought — one that is open to new approaches, including a gender perspective. This was unintentionally stimulated by the larger political climate that for many years depoliticized Islam but supported private religion and Islamic education. The development met opposition from conservative or scripturalist-oriented scholars of Islam and Islam-minded politicians alike, yet it still continued, albeit more or less successfully, in different areas of the country. An additional facilitating factor has been the activists and scholars in

Indonesia's strong women's movement. The movement has become increasingly aware of the impact of religion on women's rights and, as a result, many women have incorporated that aspect into their struggle — for example, in Islamic feminism. However, Indonesia's first female president Megawati Soekarnoputri did not have any impact on development towards increased gender awareness — neither in politics, nor in education.

Pakistan still has a long way to go when it comes to gender awareness in Islamic education. The International Islamic University of Islamabad (IIUI) provides an example of reformed higher Islamic education, but like all Islamic education in Pakistan it is segregated by gender. The women's campus was established in 2000 and is growing rapidly. Practical and technical facilities are impressive and so are the academic objectives. In Islamic studies, IIUI advocates a contextual approach and aims at a harmonic relationship between Islam and the modern world. However, gender issues and women's rights in Islam are not explicitly part of this ambition, although we can at least discern some activities in this field among scholars at the university.

Pakistan had a similar process of educational and intellectual reform at the turn of the twentieth century, and individuals such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Ameer Ali and Muhammad Iqbal established modern educational Islamic institutions. These did not, however, lead to a continued establishment of similar institutions for higher Islamic learning. Also, Islamic intellectual reform slowed and the country was not ready to embrace the ideas of later reformist thinkers like Fazlur Rahman and Riffat Hassan. Rahman was forced into exile in the late 1960s and Hassan left the country in the early 1970s. Interestingly, both have influenced some of their contemporary Indonesian Islamic thinkers. Rahman was Nurcholish Madjid's supervisor during his doctoral studies in Chicago and Hassan was repeatedly invited to Indonesia for workshops with Indonesian Islamic feminists.

Madrasa were initially dominated by the traditionalist Deobandi school, but since the 1950s ones based on a variety of ideologies have been established. Over the years many of these schools have gone through slight reform concerning methodology and curriculum, although most remain traditionalist and patriarchal. *Ulama* have often been suspicious of governmental reform programs and many

madrasas have also become radicalized. Therefore, later ambitions of reform have aimed at curbing this radicalization, while human rights and gender issues, for example, have never been a part of this agenda. Something that has changed, nonetheless, is the ambition to provide Islamic education for girls, and a large number of women-only *madrasa* have been established since the late 1970s. These *madrasas* have an increasing number of students enrolled, as well as growing cadres of female teachers and administrators. However, most female students engage in *fiqh* studies that pursue traditional Islamic values and patriarchal morals, acting to cement rather than challenge existing gender roles. Yet, some NGOs co-operated with *madrasa* in a recent pilot project aimed at a seminal development of gender awareness.

One problem is that most women educated at universities and *madrasas* will never practice their profession. Rather, their education will make them more attractive as marriage partners — a trend that does not seem to change like it did in Indonesia. However, as more women are needed as teachers, researchers and administrators in female Islamic schools, a gradual change is likely to occur. Moreover, female *madrasa* students increasingly engage in informal Islamic teaching and predication after graduation. This raises their status in the family as well as in the larger society. Al-Huda is a new form of Islamic school for women, initiated by a woman and run solely by women. The founder, Farhat Hashmi, has obtained a high secular Islamic education in the West and the education is university-like. The ideology and Islamic values pursued in Hashmi's teaching are similar to those of the *madrasa*, while the curriculum and methodology differ. The main difference though is Hashmi's and Al-Huda's high public profile, which is contested by traditionalist *ulama*.

Pakistan has for a long time had a strong women's movement that has also become increasingly aware of the impact of religion on women's rights, not least due to the increasing Islamization of the Pakistani society, including in the areas of politics and law. However, this has caused harsh internal debates among feminists of different ideological leaning, and has not led to any raised gender awareness in Islamic education. Furthermore, the political situation in Pakistan has often been turbulent, not least in relation to the role of Islam in the country. Still, some political regimes have been more favorable to the demand

for women's rights, not least Benazir Bhutto during her two tenures as president. Due to recurring shifts in government, however, they have only been implemented to a very limited extent.

All in all, the impact of these different factors has led to a situation where the awareness of gender issues is almost nonexistent in Islamic education in Pakistan. The growing presence of women in Islamic education might pose a seminal challenge to the prevailing male-dominated gender regime in these institutions, but there is still almost no impact on the patriarchal curriculum and textbooks. In Indonesia the situation is different, and here we find a number of developments that have challenged both the male-dominated gender regime in Islamic education as well as its patriarchal content. A phenomenon in both countries is the questioning by traditionalist *ulama* and scholars educated in the Middle East of the knowledge about Islam and legitimacy of many reformist scholars — women and men alike — on the basis of their secular and Western academic experience, and/or their lack of traditionalist *madrasa* or *pesantren* education. This is something that nonetheless constitutes a part of a larger dispute on religious authority that is ongoing in many Muslim countries and communities around the world. We can contend that these opponents have been more influential in Pakistan than in Indonesia. This has led to an intellectual climate in Indonesia that has been more open to new methodological approaches and perspectives, including a gender perspective, than probably any other Muslim country or country with a large Muslim minority in Asia, and maybe even in the world.

Finally, we can draw some further conclusions from the Indonesian case. It is evident that increased gender awareness leads to the formulation of less gender-biased, even woman-positive, interpretations of Islam. Therefore, in a longer perspective, gender-aware students and scholars can play an important role not only in a continued reform of Islamic education, but also in the greater reform and development of Indonesian society. Providing a gender perspective based on locally produced gender-sensitive interpretations of Islam may help to facilitate the implementation of already legally established women's human rights in the country. This endeavour to contextualize policies and laws to local circumstances is increasingly emphasized in discussions on democratization processes. The current challenge of the prevailing gender regime in Indonesian Islamic education may lead to

a change of that regime and, in line with the discussion above, to a modification of the greater Islamic gender order/s. This is a development that seems much more distant in the Pakistani case.

Although there is still a lot of work to be done, this article argues that Indonesia, within the field of gender and Islamic education, certainly has something to contribute to Pakistan and the Muslim world at large. Nevertheless, it is obvious that certain factors in a country's broader national context are instrumental for such a reform to take place. Also, once again we need to emphasize the importance of locally produced interpretations and educational materials for more thorough legitimacy.

Endnotes

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- 1. I want to thank Saleem H. Ali, author of the book *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs* (2009) and professor at University of Vermont/ University of Queensland for informative conversations by e-mail. Moreover, I want to thank Iram Asif, Ph.D. student at Copenhagen University, for additional information through e-mail.
- 2. See, van Bruinessen, 2008: p. 220, for a discussion of the *kyai* as a 'caste-like rural elite'.
- 3. For a discussion of the development of *madrasas* see Arief Subhan, 2010. 'The Indonesian Madrasah: Islamic Reform and Modernization of Indonesian Islam in the Twentieth Century', in Azyumardi Azra, Kees van Dijk and Nico Kaptein (eds) *Varieties of Religious Authority: Changes and Challenges in 20th Century Indonesian Islam*, Singapore: ISEAS.
- 4. There is also a third kind of Islamic schools in Indonesia simply called 'Islamic school', which aims at "providing even higher-quality general education than were ordinary madrasas", all infused with a modernist 'religious spirit'. In this last category we find the schools of Muhammadiyah and recently also elite Islamic schools that emphasize the general education topics even more than their predecessors. The latter schools are especially popular among the new Muslim middle class (Azra *et al.*, 2007: p. 177).
- 5. Field notes, discussion with Marzuki Wahid and other staff at Fahmina, Cirebon, January 2011.
- 6. Field notes, interview with Lies Marcoes-Natsir at Asia Foundation, Jakarta, April 2008.
- 7. Field notes, discussion with staff at Rahima, Jakarta, April 2008.
- 8. See, also Eka Srimulyani, 'Muslim Women and Education in Indonesia: The Pondok Pesantren Experience', in *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 27, no.1, 2007, pp. 85-99.
- 9. Field notes, interview with Syafiq Hasyim in Jakarta, April 2008.
- 10. See, van Bruinessen 2008: p. 222, for a discussion of indigenous and Saudi-inspired Salafi movements.
- 11. For a thorough discussion of context-based *ijtihad*, see Rahman (1982) and Saeed (2006).
- 12. According to Azra *et al.*, a similar education program was also included in Muhammadiyah's university system.
- 13. Observations during several periods of fieldwork from 2008–2011.
- 14. Field notes, interview with Lies Marcoes-Natsir, The Asia Foundation, Jakarta, April 2008.
- 15. My chapter 'Women's Agency in Transforming Religious Discourse: Gender Sensitive Interpretations of Islam in Indonesia' constitutes a part of the anthology *Alternative Islamic Discourses and Religious Authority*. This volume is edited by Carool Kersten and Susanne Olsson and will be published by Ashgate in 2012.
- 16. Field notes, interview with Lies Marcoes-Natsir, The Asia Foundation, Jakarta, April 2008.
- 17. Field notes, interview with Musdah Mulia, ICIP, Jakarta, April 2008.
- 18. For further reading on women's increased activity in Indonesian Islamic discourse, see: Susan Blackburn, Bianca Smith & Siti Syamsiyatun (eds.), *Indonesian Islam in a New*

- Era: How Women Negotiate Their Muslim Identities*. Clayton: Monash University Press; 2008; Anne Rasmussen, *Women, the Recited Qur'an, and Islamic Music in Indonesia*, London: The University of California Press, 2010.
19. Most of these books are only published in Indonesian. However, in the running text titles have been translated to English by the author, while the original titles are given in the bibliography.
 20. Field notes, discussion with staff at PSW UIN Yogyakarta, October 2010
 21. Field notes, discussion with staff at UIN Jakarta, October 2010
 22. Seri Buku Ajar Keislaman Berperspektif Gender
 23. Field notes, discussion with staff at PSW UIN Jakarta April 2008, October 2010 and December 2011.
 24. Field notes, discussion with staff at PSW at UINs in Jakarta, Makassar, Bandung and Banjarmasin April 2008.
 25. Field notes, discussion with staff at PSW STAIN Pontianak, October 2010.
 26. Field notes, discussion with staff at PSW UIN Yogyakarta and Jakarta, November 2012.
 27. For a detailed discussion of later educational developments in Deobandi *madrassa* on the Indian Sub-Continent, see: Dietrich Reets, 'Change and Stagnation in Islamic Education: The Dar al-Ulum of Deoband after the Split in 1982', in F. Noor, Y. Sikand & M. van Bruinessen (eds) *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008.
 28. See also S. A. Hannan, *The Religious Education of Muslim Women in Bangladesh*, no year of publication, <http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Articles/education/ReligiousEducationMuslimwomen.htm> (downloaded 2010-09-03).
 29. Most South Asian *madrassa* are residential schools like the Indonesian *pesantren*.
 30. Conversation by e-mail with Saleem Ali on July 21, 2012.
 31. This section is based on Mohammad Talib's comprehensive review of Saleem's book in the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, April 26, 2011 (downloaded July 4, 2012).
 32. See *Pilot Project Number 1*, http://www.globalpartnershipforwomenandgirls.org/wp-content/themes/mwf/pdf/GPWG_Pilot_Project_1_ICRD.pdf (downloaded July 19, 2012).
 33. This understanding of Islamic feminism is based on the Muslim modernist scholar Azza Karam's use of the term. See, Sherbano Zia, 2009: 32.
 34. See, also <http://louisville.edu/artsandsciences/hallofthonor/inductees/riffat-hassan> (downloaded July 4, 2012). She founded 'The International Network for the Rights of Female Victims of Violence in Pakistan' in 1999 see, <http://ecumene.org/INRFVVP/background.htm> (downloaded July 4, 2012).
 35. Conversation by e-mail with Saleem Ali on July 21, 2012.
 36. For an interview with Durre Ahmed see: <http://pakteahouse.net/2010/01/06/interview-pakistan--the-gender-discourse-needs-to-be-linked-to-local-realities> (downloaded July 17, 2012).
 37. International Islamic University Islamabad, *Female Campus*, http://www.iiu.edu.pk/index.php?page_id=28 (downloaded 2010-09-02). International Islamic University Islamabad, *Directors Message*. http://www.iiu.edu.pk/index.php?page_id=3709 (downloaded September 2, 2010).
 38. International Islamic University Islamabad, *Mission*, http://www.iiu.edu.pk/index.php?page_id=34 (downloaded September 2, 2010)
 39. *Women Universities as Agents of Change*, conference held at International Islamic University Islamabad, November 26-27, 2010.
 40. In addition she has carried out extensive studies of *tafsir*, Hadith, *fiqh* and Arabic

grammar books under the supervision of specialized local and foreign scholars (Her official CV at <http://www.alhudapk.com/home/about-us/About%20the%20Founder.pdf>. Downloaded December 9, 2010).

41. Al-Huda International: *About Us*, <http://www.alhudapk.com/home/about-us> (downloaded December 9, 2010).

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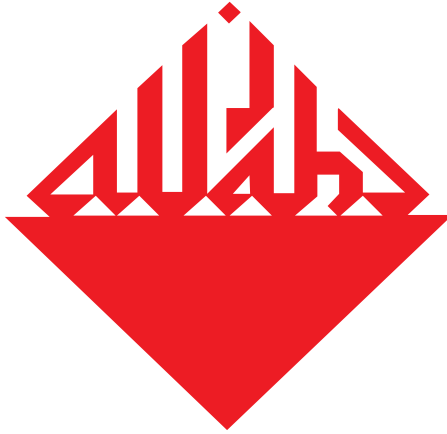
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ءراسة لقضية قانءون إءارة الزكاة
اسماعيل مرزوقي

:*[Kitab Rahasia Hari dan Bintang]*
علم النجوم عند المسلمين من قبيلة الساسك
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