

Introduction

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Muslim women's lives in Asia traverse a terrain of experiences that defy the homogenization of "the Muslim woman." The articles in this volume reveal the diverse lived experiences of Muslim women in Islamic states as well as in states with substantial Muslim populations in Asia and the North American diaspora.¹ The contributions² reflect upon the plurality of Muslim women's experiences and realities and the complexity of their agency. Muslim women attain selfhood in individual and collective terms, at times through resistance and at other times through conformity. While women are found to resist multilevel patriarchies such as the State, the family, local feudal relations, and global institutions, they also accept some social norms and expectations about their place in society because of their beliefs and faith. Together, this results in women's experience being shaped by particular structural constraints within different societies that frame their often limited options. One also has to be aware of academic rhetoric on "equality" or at least women's rights in Islam and in the Quran and the reality of women's lived experience. In bringing the diverse experiences of Asian women to light, I hope this book will be of social and political value to people who are increasingly curious, particularly post 9/11,³ about Islam and the lives of Muslim women globally.

Authors in this collection locate their analysis in the intersectionality of numerous identities. While the focus in each contribution is on Muslim women, they are Muslim in a way framed by their specific context that includes class and ethnicity, and local positionality that is impacted by international and national interests and by the specificities of their geographic locations. This diversity is reflective of the most pertinent sociopolitical and

religious issues Muslim women face in each context. While some of the issues discussed may seem culture- and region-specific, they offer useful ways to think about Asia more broadly. Thus, the range of topics addressed in this book reveals the layers of complexity of Muslim women's lives. For example, some essays show the contrast in women's demand for educational reform in socialist and Islamic contexts, while others highlight the dilemmas of legal and religious norms that delineate Muslim women's rights. Each essay is reflective of the specific historical, political, and cultural context, and therefore highlights the diversity of Muslim women's lives.

The status of women or the "woman question" has been of much interest, debate, and conjecture over the last century and more. While concern over women's suffering, declining status in society, and second-class citizenship has led to substantial research, policy and constitutional changes, and on-going debates, patriarchy as a deep-rooted institution continues to foster gender hierarchies. This is a consequence of the power of masculinities, and how femininities are defined in opposition and relation to masculinities of not just the populace but also of the nation (Ahmed-Ghosh 2012). Historically, and even more so today, women's bodies and women's lives are seen as national markers to define the purity, status, and legitimacy of the nation. Many feminists (Enloe 1989; Sinha 1995, 2006; Jayawardena 1986) have written extensively about this, particularly through the colonial era of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where colonizers justified their occupation of the colonized country through the rhetoric of "civilizing" the nation, and where the civilizing pursuit became necessary because of the "improper" treatment of local women by local men. In this colonial process, the colonizers emasculated local men to establish their rule in the colonized nation by engaging in practices and rhetoric to justify their dominance not just politically but also, appropriately for themselves, through the empowering of masculinity. This led to a twofold situation where colonial men gained power over the colonized and, in the eyes of local women, degraded local men.

This argument is now visible in the justification of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that has led to hostile relationships between Muslim communities worldwide and the United States as well as other Western countries. Muslim women's lives are once again being constructed in visible and public ways to justify military occupations and war through the discourse of "freedom, democracy and human rights" with the aim of "liberating women."⁴ Once again, Muslim men are being projected as emasculated males because they do not know how to treat their women. To put it in oft-quoted terms, the rhetoric is about "saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988).

Given the range of reasons that have been deployed to justify U.S.-spearheaded global engagement, particularly in military conflict, bringing competing masculinities into the debate about women's rights and lives becomes critical. Women as globalized property (Ahmed-Ghosh 2012) that justifies such ends is not a new strategy, and is revealed by numerous examples of the media's political complicity in defining Muslim women in the West. A few examples repeatedly used in public representations include: Muslim women usually covered with a headscarf or burqa (full body covering) who are presented as poor, unsmiling, and with very sad eyes. These images are in contrast to unveiled women from the same region who wear Western clothes and look very happy, and are usually employed and appear to be "educated."⁵ These binary projections are politically manipulated to contrast the "subservient" Muslim woman as oppressed, and the "modern" one as a rebel or progressive.

Such projections of Muslim women globally can lead to a backlash in Muslim majority countries from their Islamic clerics and politicians who institute increasingly stricter laws that restrict women's public behavior and comportment in ways that create a cultural divide between the West and the Muslim East. This politically created divide then,

Defines and redefines modernization in terms of women's rights in the West and in the Islamic East. Anti-West for these analysts means anti-modern, and anti-modern status is expressed through women's oppression in non-Western states. The myth of modernity as the brainchild of the West, based only on western social and political principles has been further perpetuated by the constant presentation of non-western states as the "other." (Ahmed-Ghosh 2008, p.112)

Thus, for Asian societies and Asian Muslims in the diaspora, contentious definitions of modernization and backwardness that are defined through women's status and the politicization of their bodies seek to deny women their agency, and fail to recognize their rights and struggles to change their societies.

The essays in this book focus on issues of women's agencies and rights by examining how Muslim women resist the political, legal, and economic spheres, as well as issues of sexuality to challenge dominant social norms. Each essay focuses on how globalization, in different ways, rearranges gender hierarchies and relationships with specific consequences on Muslim women's lives in their home countries and in the diaspora. Each essay also

underscores the stereotyped perception of Muslim women as house-bound and veiled to show instead how Muslim women adapt to and contest existing norms in their societies through interrogation of dominant patriarchal discourses.

Why Muslim Women in Asia?⁶

The book has its foundations in the *Journal of International Women's Studies*.⁷ As mentioned in the Introduction of the journal, I saw a noticeable lack of academic resources and materials on Muslim women in Asia when asked to edit an issue on this topic. This observation was reinforced when, a few years ago, I was asked to teach a course on Gender and Islam. Research for my syllabus revealed an abundance of books, articles, and films on women in the Middle East,⁸ but scattered and scarce resources on Muslim women in Asia. It led me to delve into the reasons for why there was such a disparity in publications, especially in the English language, given that a majority of the Muslims live in Asia.⁹ It became apparent that this is greatly due to increased fascination in the West with the lives of “oppressed” Muslim women and a simultaneous denigration of the “Muslim man,” especially post 9/11 vis-à-vis the USA’s relationship to the Muslim world. This also led to writings and publications in English that supported the national rhetoric of the West (Donadey and Ahmed-Ghosh 2008). Not surprisingly, a focus on the Middle East dominates Western discourse on Muslim women where writings are abundant, widely read and prescribed, and used as examples of the status of Muslim women globally. The rhetoric of the “oppressed” Muslim woman is more apparent and easily substantiated through selective projections of women in the Middle East when compared to Asian Muslim women in general.

Culturally and socially, the Middle East also becomes more attractive than Asia because the level of body covering by women in the Middle East fits the stereotype of “the Muslim woman” perpetuated in the West compared to un-scarved or just head-scarved women of Asia. Given the warring and povertied situation in the Middle East, this image is then conflated with domestic violence, regressive social and cultural norms, and ultimately an Islam that is backward and violent. Such imagining of Muslim women or Islam is not necessarily associated with the West’s perception of Asia, and nor will it conform to the stereotype that the West wants to create about women in Asia. In many parts of Asia, Muslim women have historically been engaged in employment outside the home and held high political positions such as Presidents and Prime Ministers¹⁰ of their countries.

Historically, the clash of civilizations (which dates back to the Crusades), and the implacable animosity between politicized Islam and Christianity has also contributed to the USA's focused attention on the Middle East. This has led to an economic dominance of the region through occupations and sanctions to ensure oil supplies, and perpetuation of capitalism through an arms build-up and reconstruction projects in war torn countries. On the political front, despite the censure of Pakistan and Afghanistan by the West as crucible states that harbor terrorists and terrorism, other parts of Asia (especially Southeast and East Asia) are not seen as dangerous. Fundamentalism is on the rise in Asia, but it is not viewed in the same way as it is in parts of the Middle East and North Africa—yet!

Nevertheless, in recent decades, one cannot deny the strong link between the Middle East and Asia that has resulted in the rise of Islam in Asia. Saudi Arabia, through its “generosity” in foreign aid has been able to spread an austere version of Islam to create a pan-Islamism in the Asian region based on Wahhabism and Salafism¹¹ and more rigid forms of Islamic interpretations and practices. The essays in this book focus on the impact on women of traditional and newly adopted forms of emerging Islamisms globally as they impact local Islamic practices through cultural challenges and reclamations. This further reflects the lack of homogeneity in the cultural practices and interpretations of the faith and to the diversity amongst Muslim women based on their class, ethnicity, sexuality, and religious diversity (within Islam).

Brief History of Islam in Asia

Women's status in Asia has been consistently shaped by religion. Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam are the major religions that have well-developed and clear pronouncements on family laws and gender roles. Islam's presence in Asia dates back to the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. when sea routes from Arabia facilitated trade with India (which included present day Pakistan and Bangladesh) and Southeast and East Asia. However, the earliest presence of Arabs in India did not lead to conversions or large Islamic settlement in the region (Federspiel 2007). As trade developed, Muslim populations started to mushroom in Indian towns through a gradual increase in marriages with locals, settlement in particular in port cities, and the building of mosques followed by an increase in conversion. Sufi saints from Persia traveling through India led to the further spread of Sufi Islam in China and the Malay Peninsula. Conversions of local kings and leaders were the main impetus of the growth of Islam in Southeast

Asia. McAmis concludes his book on Malay Muslims (2002, 25) by noting that Islam was “welcomed by the people since it was simple and considered superior to their animistic, Hindu-Buddhist belief. The social aspect of inter-marriage was also a contributing factor. This removed the obstacle of approaching the people from a superior cultural and religious background.”

The Yunan province of China was also one of the regions where Islam first spread in Asia. Through conquests by Mongols and because of its location, this province saw many Muslim traders, rulers, and Sufi saints. In northern China, the silk route from Persia to current day Xi'an brought an influx of traders. According to Armijo (2007), it was during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1274–1368) that mass settlements of Muslims occurred in China. Armijo (2007, 2) states that, “The Mongols recruited and forcibly relocated hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Western and Central Asia to help them administer their rapidly expanding empire.” Chinese Muslim traders then brought Islam to the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia.

In South Asia, Islam became more visible through invasions from the West, Central Asia, Persia, and Afghanistan. Muslim rule started with the Ghaznavid dynasty (998–1040) that held sway in the northwest province of India, and was followed by the Mughals who came to India in 1525 and ultimately ruled all of North India. By mid-1850s, the country had a substantial Muslim population (Dale 2010). This increase in numbers of the Muslim population in India is reflected in their struggle for independence from British rule, and a major segment of which supported the demand for a separate Muslim State. In 1947, independence from Britain witnessed a bloody partition into secular India and Muslim West and East Pakistan. A few decades later, in 1971, another bloody war of independence led to the creation of Bangladesh, formerly known as East Pakistan. Today, both Pakistan and Bangladesh have an overwhelming Muslim majority population and have declared themselves Islamic republics.

The past thirty-five years have seen major political and cultural transitions in other Asian countries with large Muslim majorities that have created poverty, displacement, and ruptured social systems with highly fractured gender hierarchies. The late 1970s witnessed Russian tanks rolling into Afghanistan, giving rise to the Mujahideens (Islamic freedom fighters) and later with U.S. support, to the Taliban. Iran saw Ayatollah Khomeini overthrowing the Shah and declaring Iran an Islamic state, and earlier, General Zia-ul Haq declared Pakistan an Islamic State. In 2002 and with a bigger victory in 2007, the AKP (Justice and Development Party), an Islam-based organization, assumed political power in Turkey. The early 2000s also saw Malaysia's then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad declare Malaysia an Islamic state, even though the Supreme Court maintained that Malaysia is

a secular state. China is also seeing a revival of Islam among its oppressed Muslim population that has recently seen violence perpetuated by the Han majority against ethnic Uighurs. Since 1989 and following Suharto's death, Indonesia has seen a reassertion of Islamic cultural and legal norms. The reemergence of Islam in Asia has led to what Imtiaz Ahmad claims is the spread of pan-Islamism "in a reincarnated version" (2004, xii).

The Book

The essays in this book detail the complicated outcomes of global and state dominance on the lives of Muslim women in Asia and in the Western diaspora. These interdependencies are steeped in political alliances and dominance that empower patriarchal state ideologies by restricting Muslim women's lives. The role of the State and political processes has added complexity to such efforts in their attempts to invent the "proper" Muslim. Women's bodies are once again seen as "globalized bodies" to be manipulated to claim state power. Competing masculinities whether in secular or Islamic state policies, base their sparring over women's bodies; to "cover up" or not! In the discourse on Muslim women's rights, lives, and status, there is a contestation of global masculinities, and power games are played out through control over women's bodies (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2012). Recently, this contestation has become very public, but it is not a new phenomenon. The colonizers' and, in more recent times, Western fascination with segregation of women from the public has been alternatively romanticized, eroticized, demonized, and basically, used to define the region as backward, and (as mentioned earlier) led to wars with the rhetoric of "liberating" women.

Against this backdrop, authors speak not only to the urgent sociopolitical intersections and crisis in Asian countries, but also to women's diverse experiences. The essays in this book challenge global, state and dominant Islamic discourses to claim their stake in their ever-changing social and political realities. The majority of the essays in this book engage with ethnographic research to highlight the lived realities of Muslim women. The interdisciplinary approach employed in their research enriches their methodologies and analysis.

Part I: Globalization and Transnationalism: The Local Muslim Woman and Public Space

This section addresses the complex realities of Muslim women's lives in relation to globalization. The rise in Islamism and consciousness of a Muslim

identity, and its intersection with global politics, conflicts, and markets, has created different dilemmas for Muslim women's social and economic roles. This section explores the impact of globalization through conflict and through global production and markets on the lives of Muslim women. Moghadam (not a contributor in this book) in her extensive work on women in the Middle East and globalization concludes that Islamism flourished with neoliberalism. She lists the characteristics of globalization showing that it can create "new forms of inequality and competition" through "investment, trade and war" that also lead to "inequalities in gender, race and class through processes of accumulation" (2009, 12–13). Moghadam then concludes that the fallout of such globalized state manipulations is the "paradoxical" development of "various forms of identity politics" (27). This is corroborated for Asia too in the following essays. As Shelley Feldman's and Damla Isik's essays describe, globalization creates a complex and nuanced situation in which Muslim women are constantly parlaying the shifting perception of their identities by others in ways that reinvent who they are.

Shelley Feldman, in her exploration of Bangladeshi garment workers, emphasizes the contradictions the demand for women's labor has created for women in both the market and at home. Through her discussion of the New Industrial Policy initiated in the 1980s, Shelley showcases the ways in which neoliberalism brings Muslim women into the public sphere through employment while recasting their value as women whose salary contributes to social sustenance. Yet, this economic contribution notwithstanding, garment manufacturers realize their profits on the backs of Bangladeshi women whose labor is devalued through exploitative wages that define workers as "disposable and redundant."

Damla Isik also supports the above conclusions in her work on women in Turkey. Damla points out that the 1980s economic liberalization in Turkey has led to economic and social upheaval. Through a detailed discussion of both secularist and conservative leaning civil society organizations and the changing trajectory of the State institutions, Damla has shown that all parties since the 1980s have engaged productively with a neoliberal agenda. Both secular and conservative organizations have engaged in "progressive" agendas for women's rights while neither is really engaging in such rhetoric out of concern for women's issues nor the impact such "liberalization" is having on women's employment. Damla concludes that both the secular and the pious women through their support of the market economy end up "hurting poor women the most."

The next two essays by Sandya Hewamanne and Lubna N. Chaudhry expand on the concept of globalization to include wars and post-conflict

impacts on women in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. They discuss the transnational fallout in conflict situations, and the impact of international donor assistance. Peace is not a local initiative to heal and rebuild the lives of people, but rather is better understood as an international business and political process. Both essays focus on Muslim women's resilience in the absence of men because of displacement and conflict through their roles as heads of households. While suffering from poverty and displacement, women in Sri Lanka and Pakistan are able to empower themselves through decision-making and manipulation of the system to provide for their families.

Sandya Hewamanne's essay, based on an ethnographic study of Muslim families displaced during the Sri Lankan civil war (1983–2009), discusses the role of international non-government organizations (NGOs) on internally displaced Muslim women, and the consequences of viewing women as victims not just of conflict but also of Islam. Sandya delineates how Muslim women deliberately “buy into” this rhetoric to empower themselves through public participation in meetings and other community activities. While engaging in these processes of women's empowerment, Sandya draws attention to the class distinctions that shape women's experiences.

Lubna N. Chaudhry too focuses on class differences in Pakistan and, like Sandya, engages ethnographic practices that locate Muslim women in global, national, and local discourses. Through life-stories of Muslim women in Swat, Lubna describes the process of Talibanized Islamization and un-Islamization brought about by the presence of the Taliban in the region. In the post-conflict era in Swat, many men have joined the Taliban or gone to Saudi Arabia, leaving women to take care of themselves and their families. Due to such abandonment women have reclaimed their agencies, and their voices are being heard outside their homes.

What is evident from these contributions is that through globalization, women's lives take twists and turns that are dictated by foreign forces whose vested interests impact women that can be both empowering and disempowering. The next set of essays, reflect Muslim women's appeal to and rejection of State policies and protections that impact their rights.

Part II. Muslim Women: Lived Realities, Resistance, and the State

In this section, the focus shifts to patterns of resistance to state and dominant discourses of Islam that shape the legal system (India and Malaysia) and education system (Indonesia and China). The authors through their detailed research show how Muslim women challenge prevailing dominant state systems to further their demands for women's rights. Education policies

and the legal systems in any society impact women's lives in complex ways. These are the primary institutions in society that entrench patriarchies. In recent years constant shifts in these institutions among Muslim populations have defined and redefined women's status, complicating their lived realities. The first two essays in this section address how complex legal systems impact women in India and Malaysia.

For Muslim majority states (even in some secular countries), the Sharia clearly outlines the jurisprudence that pertains to men and women. Authors in this section suggest that the Sharia has been unfavorable to women. Islamic feminists, including Mir-Hosseini (1996) and Hasan (2004), contest a fundamentalist reading of the Quran to claim rights for women, but the prevalence of Sharia law in secular states challenges the demand for women's rights and complicates legal discourses in these countries. As Raghavan and Levine (2012, xxv) point out, "Women in many Muslim societies, especially in countries with a history of colonial rule, have to grapple with the legal pluralism of customary law, civil and penal codes, and Islamic law." Competing laws, grounded in competing agendas of the State and other vested interest groups, have been most evident in the arena of family laws with negative impacts on women. As Aziza Ahmed (2012, 71) concludes, "Muslim women end up suffering from 'dual subordination': the simultaneous subordination by two legal paradigms—namely one rooted in a more formal secular legal regime, and the second in the religious legal mechanisms enacted at the local level. Often the secular and the religious rely on each other to reinforce gender norms." The contributions in this section highlight the contradictions of legal pluralism by untangling some of the dilemmas and complexities that plural legal systems pose for Muslim women.

Sylvia Vatuk, in her essay, meticulously delineates the discourse around the Protection of Rights on Divorce Act of 1986 in India. This Act was a compromise Act to Criminal Code 125 for Muslim women who sought maintenance following a divorce from their husbands. While many feminists and human rights activists protested the Act because it reverted back to Islamic interpretations of maintenance for wives, Sylvia's detailed analysis of evidential cases helps to explain the pros and cons of the Act. She argues that despite its shortcomings, the Act still provides an important recourse for Muslim women.

Similar to post-colonial legal systems, **Maila Stivens**, in a study of the case of Kartika Dewi Shukarno who was sentenced to caning under the Sharia High Court for drinking alcohol in a nightclub in Malaysia, explores "ongoing larger and interconnected conversations about religion and rights." Maila does not dwell on just the representations of Kartika's body and pun-

ishment but also examines how this case opened up a dialogue in the political struggles of feminists, politicians, Islamic courts, and most importantly, in relation to Muslim women's rights. Maila's analytical exploration was grounded in Kartika's demand to be flogged publicly, which both created a dilemma for both the State and attracted global responses.

The next two articles focus on Muslim women reclaiming education to establish their identities within the Muslim community in Indonesia and China by resisting the State and patriarchal education system. Educational systems, course contents and accessibility to different forms of education have been a prominent and politically dominant institution in every society. In recent decades, Islamic schools are seen as conservative and fundamentalist institutions in their respective countries and as breeding grounds for terrorism in the West, to the extent that the madrasa (Islamic school) has a negative connotation in Western parlance. Similar to madrasas, pasentrens are Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, though some scholars try to differentiate the two on minor issues. Unlike madrasas that mainly cater to lower classes (who basically cannot afford secular education), Indonesian pasentrens cater to all classes of students in the country and in many cases provide education beyond the religious texts. The popularity of such religious schools has increased in the face of a threat of Westernization and globalization that are seen as disrupting cultural norms, family institutions, and most importantly, the religious and traditional moral fiber and value system of the nation and the individual.

Ann Kull's essay focuses on Indonesian pasentrens. Ann examines how female teachers through their curriculum and research are reclaiming Islam by contesting the traditional patriarchal systems. She enumerates the efforts made by successive governments and Islamic boards to reform Islamic education through Centers of Women Studies in these schools. Ann concludes that the process of change is slow, but there are changes in school curriculums calling for gender-neutral education. Ann suggests that by creating less gender-biased interpretations of Islam, hiring more female teachers, and increasing economic investment can set the stage for an enlightened education system in the pasentrens.

Once again as is apparent in Indonesia, more girls and women in China are opting for religious education to reinforce their Muslim identities and to preserve a culture they perceive as being decimated by socialist China. Concluding this section is the contribution of **Maria Jaschok** and **Hsu Ming Vicky Chan** who examine how women's resistance in the political sphere challenges the dominant norms of state and society in China. Their focus of research is religious education for women among different Muslim

communities. Using the analytic of the State's treatment of minorities, they find that there are numerous Muslim groups in China who may be separated by region and culture but who nonetheless are united by Islamic education.

In concluding this section, we see that through the history of the education system, one can trace the politicohistorical journey of any nation. In her writings, Linda Herrera (2004, 318) asserts that for most Muslim countries, secular education was imposed from the outside through colonizers and leaders in their attempts to "modernize" their nations, and stemming from the assumption that Islam is "seen as an essentially regressive social force." Herrera concludes that, "Relationships between education, religion, and change in the Muslim societies remain complex, contentious, and often-times, little understood issues" (2004, 318).

Similar extrapolations can be made for the legal systems for women in Muslim countries that were colonized by the British. In India, the confluence of the British colonialism, post-Independence constitution and later of the Hindu right conspired to keep the Muslim Personal Law in a flux. The Constitution of India, in its attempts to protect minority rights furthered the separation of the Uniform Civil Code Bill and Muslim personal law, especially in the aftermath of partition of India and Pakistan. As was the case in India, in Malaysia too, according to Azza Bassaruddin, "politicization of Islam in the public sphere is in response to the British colonial legacy of 'economic divide, ethnic distrust, and political discontentment.'" She blames "Arabization of Malaysian Islam" for the increased conservative status of women, and through her field research resolves that the rise in Islamization "has increased surveillance of women's movements, dress etc. and an erosion of women's rights" (2010, xxi).

Part III. Women's Voices and Agency: Challenging and Reclaiming Islam

This section is eclectic in its contributions. The essays address how women's status in society is dictated by religion and the State through censures on their bodily representation and control over their sexuality. As is often assumed, it is not only nationalism that is encrypted on women's bodies, but also religious identities and other institutions that exert a hegemonic role over women's sexualities. The essays in this section push the boundaries of these Islamic/Muslim hegemonies and censures that dictate women's bodily and sexual expressions by appropriating the faith in ways where women can rationalize and "own" Islam on their own terms. These contestations are based in the understanding of Islam by the authors in ways that do not reduce the religiosity and respect for Islam of their subjects but simultane-

ously question the prerogatives expressed by Muslim men and the Muslim communities by their appropriation of the religion.

Islamization of Afghanistan began with the invasion by the Russians in 1979. The Mujahideen (freedom fighters) were fighting against the Russian troops not just to liberate their country, but also to protect it against a socialist and secular occupation and to declare it an Islamic nation. Therefore, a visible and contentious aspect of this project (that the Taliban further severely implemented) was the adoption of an Islamic personal law, especially in reference to family laws, and the imposition of Islamic strictures on Afghan women. Similar Islamization in Indonesia, through the call for democratization, has revived the Islamic tradition of polygamy. In Indonesia as well, this Islamization is most apparent in family laws and visible through control over women's sexuality and dress codes. Both Julie Billaud and Sonja van Wichelen in their respective essays deconstruct issues of sexuality as controlled through Islamic codes by focusing on femininities in Afghanistan and masculinities in Indonesia. Marcia Hermansen and Mahruq Khan in their joint essay on young Muslim women in the U.S. diaspora also highlight how these women wrestle with issues of sexuality. For diasporic Muslim women, issues of sexuality become a highly problematic issue. They not only carry the burden of "good Muslim immigrant women" for the individual but also for their family, the community and the region from where their families migrated.

Julie Billaud, in her essay on "the politics and ethics of beauty" among Afghan female students in Kabul adds a new dimension to discussions of women's negotiations with state policies by showing that despite women's dressing in ways that fall within the restrictions of Islam, they still may face criticism. Julie challenges stereotyped Western notions of veiled women being backward and servile, to engage in a discourse that ascribes agency to young women for whom "self-beautification is a daily ritual." In this essay, Julie elaborates the contexts, social and political, that manipulate women's bodies and sexuality to define the nation, Westernization, and a Muslim identity in "post-Taliban" Afghanistan. The fierce social critiques they face reveal the identity anxieties and moral panics that have emerged as a result of the current military occupation.

Similarly, **Sonja van Wichelen** in her work on polygamy in Indonesia elaborates on the emergence of "new discourses" at the intersection of Islamization, modernity, and sexuality. Sonja expounds on the revival of public polygamy among Indonesian Muslims as not entirely a return to Islam, but a revival that is based on a modernist interpretation of reclaiming masculinity in a secular and globalized society. She posits her arguments on the crowded intersection of secular and Islamic feminists, polygamous men, women who

approve and disapprove of it, and Islamic jurists to claim “how Muslims are re-imagining identities” in a secular Indonesia today. Sonja’s focus on men and women’s sexuality also opens up spaces in feminist literature to talk about masculinities. This essay attempts to locate the issue of polygamy not just within a framework of religious revivalism, but also in a framework of post-colonialism, modernity, and nationality. In her essay, she analyzes women’s approved complicity in the institution of polygamy.

Similarly, **Marcia Hermansen** and **Mahruq Khan** in their research on young South Asian Muslim American women (SAMA) in Chicago discuss how SAMA women negotiate their identity as South Asian, Muslim, and American. Through their ethnographic study, the authors reveal that a “nascent girl power” is evident in the lives of these young women. Marcia and Mahruq discuss the ways in which the young women negotiate their multiple identities by being “selective,” that is, by prioritizing one or another identity and negotiating with the norms imposed upon them at home and in their community. They conclude by showing that SAMA women not only claim their agency through their hybridized and calculated identity formations, but also become “culture producers” by creating media products on their Muslim lifestyle with humor and a seriousness that legitimizes their choices.

Nonconformity to sexual expectations of society is seen as going against Islam, thus creating tension and anxiety in a community that is already feeling battered by the majority. Second-generation women are especially conscious of their minority status as immigrants, of being “brown” in a predominantly white context, and, post 9/11, of being Muslim. The essays in this section highlight the issues that Muslim women as individuals or as part of groups see as personal and intimate in their claiming of Islam to assert their rights and autonomy. Cognizant of global- and State-enforced restrictions and aware of limitations their faith imposes on them as individuals, women in all three essays negotiate their position in their cultures by appropriating Islam on their own terms.

Conclusion

Since 9/11, the trend toward Islamization of particular nation-states has limited some women’s rights while also creating a space for women to question, understand, and reclaim Islam. As observed in the above essays, these Muslim women establish their sense of purpose and agency through challenging the State. To be sure, the contemporary politicization of Islam is a response to the ongoing crisis of the modern, so-called “secular” nation state. As Farhat Haq elucidates in her article on women in Pakistan, even the call for

secularism was not necessarily based on the desire for women's liberation but to "push further men's enlightenment and agenda for modernization" (2001, 250). She writes, "Emancipation of women had great instrumental value." But, the call for Islamism as a political alternative for state power seeks to only strengthen its claims by making demands on women to conform to strict Islamic strictures in the name of "protecting" women. As the above essays reflect, secularism has provided the space for contestation of women's rights whether to emphasize Islamism or to contest it—thus confirming secularism as still the desired political institution to aspire to.

The debate about women's rights becomes complex because it is ridden with not just global and local politics and numerous interpretations of Islam, but also by competing feminisms and masculinities, academic power plays, and colonial and post-colonial analysis. The frame of reference therefore has to do with the acceptance of the reality of change. It has to do with the fact that there no longer exists a monolithic Islam, if there ever was one. Ideology has to be grounded in some sort of reality, especially these days when talking about Islam and gender. Also, much of the discussion post-9/11 around women's issues in Islamic and substantial Muslim minority societies is based on the urgency to defend Islam. For Muslim women this becomes problematic: should they defend Islam as a monolithic faith, which provides no space for a critique, or should they craft their lives through their multi-layered identities? These essays raise new questions and new dilemmas. Lives of Muslim women are part of evolving gender hierarchies leading to new familial and personal dynamics. In complicating popular understandings, therefore, these essays bring to light the status of Muslim women as multi-dimensional and historically specific. Their status is complicated by changing economic practices and political wrangling, personal dislocations, options, negotiations, and compromises, and by women's struggles for recognition, power, and contentment on their own terms. Importantly, this collection discredits the illusion of Muslim women as passive bystanders. What is exciting about the current conjuncture is that the lives of Muslim women are part of evolving gender hierarchies that are leading to new social, familial, and personal dynamics that create new challenges.

Notes

1. Here I am referring to countries like India, which has the third largest Muslim population in the world and to other countries in the West where the Muslim population is rapidly increasing.

2. Countries included in this paper are Bangladesh, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Afghanistan, and the USA.

3. 9/11 refers to the date of September 11, 2001 when the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, USA, and part of the Pentagon building in Washington DC were destroyed. Airplanes flown by so-called “terrorists” flew into these buildings. Additionally, a plane was taken over by “terrorists” and crashed in Pennsylvania the same day. Total deaths were recorded at slightly under 3,000 people.

4. George W. Bush’s war in Afghanistan in 2001 was based on the call to liberate Afghan women.

5. Education, especially the lack of it, is a major weapon used by the West to legitimize the claim of oppression of girls and women in Muslim countries.

6. For the purpose of this volume, Asia includes East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia extending to Iran and Turkey.

7. (Vol. 11, #1, 2009) Special Issue on Gender and Islam in Asia.

8. Countries referring to Middle East are tricky. Most U.S. government documents and some documents from the World Bank include Afghanistan and Iran in the Middle East. This book does not. When mentioning resources on Middle East in the West, there has been an abundance of writings on women in Iran and, for a period, on women in Afghanistan, both being viewed as Middle Eastern countries. I would categorize Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan as being part of Asia.

9. According to research conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the population of Muslims in the world in 2010 was 1.6 billion. The report claims that the numbers of Muslims in the world will grow at a faster rate than non-Muslim populations over the next twenty years. According to this report the USA has 2.6 million people, 44.1 million in Europe, over 1 billion in Asia, 322 million in North Africa and the Middle East, and 5.2 million in Central and South America. Asia has over 60 percent of the world Muslims with Indonesia leading in numbers followed by Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Turkey 74,660,000; Afghanistan 29,047,000; Pakistan 178,097,000; India 177,286,000; Bangladesh 148,607,000; Sri Lanka 1,725,000; Malaysia 17,139,000; Indonesia 204,847,000; China 23,308,000; Thailand 3,952,000; Philippines 4,737,000; and Uzbekistan 26,833,000. <http://www.pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>. Accessed Nov. 20, 2012.

10. Benazir Bhutto was President of Pakistan twice: 1988–1990 and 1993–1996. Khaleda Zia led Bangladesh as Prime Minister for three terms: two terms from 1991 to 1996 and third term from 2001 to 2006. Sheikh Hasina Wajed is currently the Prime Minister of Bangladesh since 2008 and has previously served as Prime Minister from 1996 to 2000. Indonesia too saw a woman President from 2001 to 2004.

11. Salafism is sometimes used interchangeably with Wahhabism. Within the Salafi Movement though there are conflicting views on how closely or not they are aligned with Wahhabism. The Salafi Movement is gaining ground in Central Asia and more visible in East Asia specifically China and Indonesia.

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