Review of Susanne Schroter (ed.) *Gender and Islam in Southeast Asia: Women's Rights Movements, Religious Resurgence and Local Traditions*, Leiden: Brill 2013, x + pp. 335, ISBN 978-90-04-221864

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This book provides a timely and in-depth analysis on the growing debate on Islam, gender, women's rights and the feminist movement through examining country specific case studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand along with transnational piety movements. Different contributors to this edited volume with their diverse disciplinary backgrounds explore the tension between the moderate and liberal activist and the Islamists and neo-orthodox conservatives. After introducing the issue and topic of the book, Susanne Schroter provides an overview on gender and Islam in general and the Islamization of politics and society in Southeast Asian countries in particular.

Nelly van Doorn-Harder, in the section on Indonesia, depicts the tension between the conservative Islamic traditions with the progressive wing of the activists of the Muhammadiyah, in Indonesia, through a particular focus on the 'harmonious family model'. This chapter focuses particularly on the activities of Aisiyah and Nasyiat ul-'Aisiyah about the issues of gender and sexuality such as dating, mixed marriage, polygamy which aimed to 'protect women's positions and rights within marriage...based on reformist ideology' (p. 59). Monika Arnez's chapter focuses on the same sex relationship in the post-Suharto era through a close reading of two texts by Herlinatiens ('A Lesbian on the Margins', 2003) and Putri Kartini ('A Pained Woman's Voice: Being a Lesbian and Marrying a White Man', 2003). The post-Suharto era bears witness to an increased visibility of female writers and taboo topics such as homosexuality in Indonesia. Monika Arnez meticulously articulates how these two authors narrate the inner struggles of homosexuals with heteronormativity and their negotiations with religion and society.

Nurul Ilmi Idrus, through explaining the *Lontara*, the traditional text of the Bugis (native inhabitants of South Sulawesi in Indonesia), narrates the heterosexual male and female relationship in terms of marriage and its significance for everyday life of the Bugis. This text presents women as 'obedient', and virtuous wives (p. 98). Women's subordination to men legitimizes violence against them. The last author in this section, Siti Musdah Mulia explores the possibility of

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Religion and Gender | ISSN: 1878-5417 | www.religionandgender.org | Uopen Journals

emancipation and gender equality in Islam. She opens up her chapter, however, saying that "It is no secret that religion and state 'conspire' against women" (p. 111) and that women are still disadvantaged in Indonesia. She emphasizes the necessity of reforming marital laws in order to facilitate the empowerment of women. She argues that Islamic texts could be interpreted in a progressive way and hence, the reformation of marital laws would promote those Islamic teachings that are pro-women and 'emphasize love and respect for human beings and humanitarian values' (p. 139). Maila Stevens deals with family values, Islamic revival and state-run moral projects in postcolonial Malaysia by exploring the complex intersection between local and global family values discourses. She maintains that the state orchestrated multi-layered family values projects as an exercise in 'governmentality of and through family' (p. 167). Although Malaysia embraces economic globalization, it emphasizes Asian/family values which consider western values as 'westoxification' (p. 148). Malaysia's Islamic modernity poses, as the author argues, considerable problems for women's rights activists and thus complicates the engagement of reformist Muslim women with the government regarding women's rights. Yet, she found a substantial level of support for Islamic revivalism among the new middle class in Malaysia.

Amina Rasul-Bernardo focuses on Muslim women activists in the Philippines and their endeavors to bring about justice, democracy and equal rights for men and women. She argues that Muslim women's organizations could be an effective partner for the government, if they are given access to resources. They could be at the 'forefront' of peace and development, if they can forge an alliance with other civil society organizations such as the church, media and so on (p. 177). She argues that Muslim women should not only get the state elites involved in their endeavors, but should also firmly stand against oppressing patriarchal values. She urged Muslim women to fight with their 'hearts and minds' and that they must not be silenced (p. 179). Vivienne S. M. Angeles focuses on the experiences of Catholic women who converted to Islam ('Balik Islam'). She traces the problems and consequences of the new religious movement at both the personal and family levels. These converted women found a new 'sense of identity and spiritual fulfillment', a new perception about gender roles and changes in the relationships within the family and with society at large (p. 182). Although these women converts have brought economic well-being at the family level (such as wage labor in Saudi Arabia), it has alienated them from their parents and generated negative feedback from society. Birte Brecht-Drouart, focusing on the Maranao ethnic community in the Philippines, discusses the opportunities and challenges for Muslim women in political participation. Clan politics, Muslim feminist NGOs, *adat* (decorum) and dysfunctional political systems have an impact on the political leadership of Muslim women. However, these Maranao women can hold a political or influential position in society 'only if they are supported by dominant clans' (p. 219).

Alexander Horstmann opens the part that focusses on Thailand and deals with one of the largest piety movements in the world, named Tablighi Jama'at, to show how a conservative Islamic movement is opening up space for Muslim women in the public sphere. The author argues that despite its conservatism, participation in this movement enables women to widen their (international) networks as well as to construct and cultivate their religious piety and boundaries. Horstman interestingly shows that these women were not forced by their husbands to join in this piety movement, women's participation rather reflects

their 'keen desire' to be a perfect believer, gain prestige and status (as a member of the movement) and consequently they become able to negotiate gendered spaces in the public sphere (p. 227). Similarly, Farish A. Noor explores the Tablighi Jama'at to examine how it frames women and gender issues within the movement. Although Tablighi Jama'at is considered as an exclusively male domain, Noor argues that women are an 'integral part' of the movement (p. 185), yet the 'figure of the woman' is a 'complex' one (p. 287). While Tablighi women in Thailand, as Horstmann suggests, are vulnerable to critique of the wider community, their source of vulnerability in Indonesia, as Noor maintains, rests on the action and interpretation of the Tablighi fundamental texts. Noor suggests that in order to frame women's issues, Tablighi Jama'at relies on the foundational text of the movement that provides images of 'ideal types of Muslim women' to follow (p. 280), though Tablighis might differ in their manner of thinking and acting based on these texts. Amporn Marddent concludes this section and looks at the female wing of the Nahdatul Muslimat, a Salafi movement in Thailand to see how they developed 'a Muslim model of society' through a contemporary approach to Islam (p. 242).

This book brilliantly unveils the complexities intertwined in the reemergence of Islamic piety and changing gender relations. Due to its lucid style this book is an easy reading. It provides a rich diversity in terms of the countries chosen and it brings the Muslim Missionary movement to the forefront. This movement requires critical scholarship due to its increasing prominence in the Islamization process of the South and South-east Asian countries in particular. The volume succinctly elucidates the contestation between moderate and liberal female activists and neo-orthodox conservatives regarding the everyday practice of Islam, family, marriage, work and political participation of women. It offers interesting insights by making the comparison between how Muslim women as a member of the majority in one society (e.g. in Indonesia, Malaysia) and of the minority in the other (e.g. in Thailand and the Philippines) are taking part in the reconstruction of the self and society. This book will inspire further research on the peripheral Muslim majority states (e.g. Bangladesh) and will encourage the exploration of Muslim women's activism and Muslim missionary movements i.e. Tablighi Jama'at (that holds the world's largest Muslim congregation meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh during the winter each year). Finally, the editor comes to the conclusion that 'even in the regions where Islamic actors exert considerable influence, women will find ways to successfully assert their interests' (p. 52). This optimism would inspire other researchers and activists from Muslim societies to explore gender issues in Islam.