How Reformist Islamic Theology Influences Muslim Women's Movement: The Case of Liberal-Progressive Muslims in Indonesia

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Abstract

Reformist Muslim ideology has been perceived to liberate Muslim women from the shackles of patriarchal religious and cultural norms. This article analyzes the extent to which contemporary reformist Islamic theology influences Muslim women's movement in the light of Muslim debates on women and gender issues. In doing so, it focuses on the case of Islamic reform by Indonesian liberal-progressive Muslims since the late New Order and its influence on the Muslim women's movement in the country. This article argues that Islamic reform promoted by contemporary liberal-progressive Muslims has given a significant contribution to the development of Muslim women's movement. It has laid the ground for an Islamic paradigm shift on the discourse on Islam and gender. The opening of the gate of *ijtihad* and respect for modernity espoused by reformist Muslims have provided tools for radical change in Islamic discourse on gender while still ground such change on an Islamic basis. It has empowered Muslim women to claim for the rights in religious knowledge production and build a critical mass of Muslim women who take an active part in the struggle for gender and social justice. However, the development of Muslim women's movement has been far more vibrant through its engagement with the dynamic of its surrounding socio-political circumstances and though critical dialogue with broader currents of feminist thoughts. Such complex genealogies have enabled Muslim women's movement to claim its own identity as indigenous Islamic feminism that poses multiple critiques to any unjust systems that deprive Muslim women of their rights.

Key Words

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Introduction

The relationship between Islam and the notion of gender equality has become a recurrent theme of debate throughout history in Muslim societies. From the beginning of this debate, the sources of Islam—the *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence)—have been utilized by many competing forces to justify their positions, ranging from reformist Islamic theology promoted by liberal-progressive Muslims arguing for Islamic ideals of justice, equality, and human dignity to revivalist Islamist theology contending that Islam has its own distinctive notions of women's rights and gender relations (Mojab 2001:127). While reformist Muslim ideology has been perceived to liberate Muslim women from the shackles of patriarchal religious and cultural norms, revivalist Islamist ideology has been perceived to emphasize on the particular Islamic notion of gender issues and traditional women's roles.

This article analyzes the extent of influence of contemporary reformist Islamic theology on Muslim women's movement in the light of Muslim debates over women and gender issues. To do so, it uses the case study of Islamic reform by Indonesian liberal-progressive Muslims since the late New Order and its influence on the Muslim women's movement in the country.

I argue that Islamic reform promoted by contemporary liberal-progressive Muslims has given a significant contribution to the development of Muslim women's movement. It has laid the ground for an Islamic paradigm shift on the discourse on Islam and gender. The opening of the gate of *ijtihad* and respect for modernity espoused by reformist Muslims have provided tools for radical change in Islamic discourse on gender while still ground such change on an Islamic basis. It has empowered Muslim women to claim for the rights in religious knowledge production and build a critical mass of Muslim women who take an active part in the struggle for gender and social justice. However, the development of Muslim women's movement has been far more vibrant through its engagement with the dynamic of its surrounding socio-political circumstances and though critical dialogue with broader currents of feminist thoughts. Such complex genealogies have enabled Muslim women's movement to claim its own identity as indigenous Islamic feminism that poses multiple critiques to any unjust systems that deprive Muslim women of their rights.

In what follows, I analyze reformist Muslim gender ideology and its influence on contemporary Muslim women's movement. Then, I use a case study of Muslims in Indonesia to look at the dynamic interplay between reformist Islamic theology on Muslim women's movement in the largest

Muslim country in the world. Lastly, I provide some reflections on the case study followed by some concluding remarks.

Islamic Reform and Its Influence on Muslim Women's Movement

Historical Overview of Early Islamic Reform and Its Influence on Muslim Women's Movement

The modernization programs embarked by many Muslim countries following their encounter with the West since the colonial and post-colonial era have resulted in a significant transformation of many Muslim societies. This transformation has not only resulted in the fragmentation of religious authorities but also the emergence of Muslim intellectuals who eager to reform their societies and communities in the light of modern ideas while still trace the genealogies of their reformist ideas in Islamic tradition and authoritative corpus. The synthesis between tradition and modernity as the hallmark of Islamic reform since the late nineteenth century could serve as the balancing mechanism between two extremes of religious fundamentalism on the one hand and westernization on the other hand (Haj 2009).

One salient issue that concerns reformist Muslims is the relationship between Islam and gender equality and women's rights. Women who make up half of the population have potential human resources for the nation-state building. Therefore, for reformist Muslims, women's liberation from the shackles of religious and cultural norms could contribute to not only women's self-development but also the advancement of their societies.

As early as Islamic reform, the issues about women and gender equality in the Muslim world have been one of the central issues for reformist Muslims. Rifa`ah Tahtawi's work in 1872 argued that the reform on women's social status, roles, and rights in society has been a fundamental need for the betterment of society (Tahtawi 1972). Another influential reformist Muslim is Qasim Amin with his works on women issues including *Hālat al-Mar`ah fi al-Hai`ati al-Ijtimā'iyaah Taabiah li Hālat al-Adab, Tahrirul Mar`ah,* and *Mar`ah Jadidah.* Three central ideas in his thought are his critique upon *jilbab* (veiling), the need to limit husbands' rights to arbitrarily divorce their wives and his critique upon polygamy marriages (Ja`far n.d). Since then, there emerged reformist Muslim women who also struggled for women's rights and gender equality such as Malik Hifni Nasif, Huda Sha`rawi, and Munniroh Tasabit Musa (Ahmed 1992). These scholars-activists have a significant influence on the rise of indigenous Muslim women's movement in Egypt and inspired similar movements in other Muslim countries.

In such early development, reformist Islamic theology has been focused on the national struggle for independence from colonialism plagued the Muslim world. This has also influenced the orientation of Muslim women's movements in these countries. Muslim women's movements have been mobilized to support the countries' national independence.

Following the independence, Islamic reform has been, to some extent, oriented, if not to say co-opted by the incumbent regimes, to support the modernization project embarked by these newly independent states. At this stage, Muslim women's movement also had more orientation for social reform and modernization. Deniz Kandiyoti argues that during this period, there have been persistent tensions between the modernist trends in nationalism, which favoured an expansion of women's citizenship rights and social equality, and the anti-modernist strands which were concerned about the dilution and contamination of cultural values and identity in a post-colonial context (Kandiyoti 1996).

The Rise of Islamic Revivalism and Muslim Women's Responses

However, the emergence of post-modernist criticism of modernization theory in the 1950s and 1960s had given birth to Islamist groups calling for returning to the "pristine Islam" as a critique of the failure of essentialist Western development theory transplanted to Muslim countries. As Kandiyoti (1995) argues, "[t]he failed promise of post-independence developmentalism could be interpreted not as mere technical failures but as moral failures requiring a complete overhaul of the world views underpinning them." The ascendancy of political Islam as exemplified by movements as varied as Jama`at-i Islami in Pakistan, Ikhwan al-Muslimin in Egypt, the Islamic Republic in Iran, and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, poses a significant challenge for Muslim women's movement as the former insists on singling out women's status and roles in the society as the supreme test of the authenticity of the Islamic order (Afkhami 1995:1). The case of Iranian women after the Islamic revolution in 1969 indicates a clear case where women have been forced to return to their traditional roles under the name of Sharia by the Islamic state (Mayer 1991).

Such a challenge has forced Muslim women's movement to critically engage with the reinterpretation of their religious texts to pose a counter-discourse. In Iran, for example, there have been women writing in the Teheran women's journal Zanan to challenge the traditionalist discourse on women promoted by the Islamic regime (Mir-Hosseini 1996). As Ziba Mir-Hosseini (1996:6) notes, "one neglected and paradoxical outcome of the rise of political Islam in the 1970s was that it helped to create an arena

within which Muslim women could reconcile their faith with their new gender awareness".

However, Muslim women's critical engagement with their religious texts is not solely attributed to the internal dynamic of Muslim societies. As Kandiyoti (1995:24) argues, "since the 1970s, the framework for policy interventions affecting women and local women's movements has been shaped not only by domestic considerations but by an increasingly complex set of international influences". The UN International Women's Year in 1975 and the subsequent United Nations Decade for Women have played significant roles in the promotion of women's rights. Women Conferences in Nairobi in 1985, in Beijing in 1995, and International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1996 have been stepping stones for the urgency to formulate indigenous women's movements in non-western Muslim countries. ICPD has particularly evoked the urgent need to have critical engagement between the notion of universal women's rights with religious and cultural norms. This dynamic has been in parallel with the development in international women's movements that commenced to acknowledge diversity in women's movements by paying attention to women's differences in terms of race, class, ethnicity, and religion.

The Emergence of Islamic Feminism
All these influences have enabled Muslim women's scholars-activists to raise their multiple consciousnesses and pose multiple critiques to individuals, institutions, and systems that limit and oppress them (Cooke 2001:109). This has marked the emergence of a new trend of Islamic feminism. Using their knowledge and authority in Islamic knowledge, there have been growing Islamic feminists who challenge the male-construction of Islamic traditional scholarships by offering female inclusive Islamic text reinterpretations. They reclaim their rights to participate in religious knowledge production such as Riffat Hasan, Amina Wadud, and Asma Barlas on Qur'anic interpretation; Fatima Mernissi on Hadith; and Ziba Mir-Hosseini on fiqh.

Compared to the previous period, the rise of these Islamic feminists has offered a shift of paradigm in Islamic discourse arguing for gender equality. This new discourse argues that women's sexuality is not constructed by nature nor the divine will, but rather by familial and social circumstances. The discourse challenges the notion that gender inequality or gender complimentary is a manifestation of divine justice, but rather a construction of classical male *ulama* (scholars) that reflect their surrounding contexts and time as well as the prevailing gender ideologies when such

traditional Islamic scholarships were formulated and developing in the medieval Islam. Therefore, it poses a challenge to a long-held assumption that some rules concerning gender claimed to be Islamic and part of the divine order. Instead, they are, in fact, the views and perceptions of some Muslims, and social practices and norms that are neither sacred nor immutable but human and changing (Mir-Hosseini 2003:20).

In contrast to the earlier women's rights movements that focused on rights, Margot Badran argues that Islamic feminism builds a wider vision by focusing on the struggle for gender equality and social justice as basic principles enshrined in the Qur'an and challenging men's exclusive authority to define Islam (Badran 2002: 199-203;288-292). Furthermore, Islamic feminism has significantly contributed to transcend and destroy the constructions of old binaries such as polarities between religious and secular and between East and West. By doing this, Badran (2002) further argues that Islamic feminism closes gaps and demonstrates common concerns and goals as well as builds broader solidarities among women.

Islamic Reform's Influence on Muslim Women's Mode of Discourse
Giving the radical nature of the discourse that Islamic feminists formulate, do they offer a new alternative? Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (2006) argues that the great contribution of Islamic feminists by offering a female inclusive reading of Islamic texts has much indebted to reformist Islamic thoughts. He points out that "As for verses that clearly enunciate equality, feminist hermeneutics cites all of the verses also cited by the reformists since the early 20th century, without providing any additional insight" (Zayd 2006:91). It seems that Abu Zayd has emphasized the methodological drawing from Islamic reformists by Islamic feminists. Indeed, Islamic feminism has been part of a wider project of Islamic reform in the Muslim world. Therefore, the methodological drawing would be inevitable, otherwise Islamic feminists will be resisted as alien and transgressing the orthodoxy and boundaries of Islam. This has been reflected in some cases of Islamic feminists. Amina Wadud draws her ideas from the double movement theory of Fazlur Rahman, Fatima Mernissi takes hers from methodologies of *hadith* critique, and Ziba Mir-Hosseini was inspired by Abdul Karim Soroush's reform ideas on the differences between religion and religious knowledge. However, they only draw in terms of methodology. In terms of substance, they offer new insights for Islamic text reinterpretations that subvert male-exclusive perspectives.

Islamic Reform's Influence on Muslim Women's Mode of Activism
The close link between intellectual discourse and social activism in Islamic feminism has also been partly influenced by reformist Islamic theology that emphasizes the urgency of socio-cultural transformation to build a more humane and just society. From reformist Islamic theology's point of view, the vision of human beings as a creation on the Earth is philosophically based on human's mission not only as God's servant but also as God's vicegerent to bring justice and prosperity for all creatures on the Earth. However, the praxis dimension of Islamic feminism is also influenced by feminist thoughts. In nature, the feminist theoretical formulation is mostly derived from women's lived experiences. Although some scholars like Haedah Moghissi argue that 'the marriage' between Islam and feminism is perceived to be "an oxymoron",[28] both have some convergent issues with the concern of women's rights and the praxis dimension.

Therefore, besides Muslim female scholars, there have also emerged Muslim women's movements in Muslim countries and diasporas arguing for more strategic gender interests using the Islamic framework. Although Islamic feminism has not constituted a big social movement, they have offered alternative modes for religious-based women's collective actions in global, national, and local movement. At the international level, there have been organizational networks such as WLUM and Musawah that play a significant role in the process of cross-fertilization of Muslim women's movements across different countries. At the national level, Muslim women's movements participate actively at legal, structural, and cultural advocacies of women's rights. At the local level, they empower their surrounding communities through gender consciousness and women empowerment programs using several strategies that have been also used by reformist Muslims in launching their Islamic reform projects such as public education, media, and NGOs. These aim to build a constituency for strong civil society force that can bring about revolutionary and longer-term, bottom-up changes.

To assess the influence of Islamic reformist theology on Muslim women's movement in a specific context, the next section will discuss the case of Indonesia as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

Islamic Reform and Its Influence on Muslim Women's Movement in Indonesia

Islamic Reform in the Late New Order Indonesia and Its Influence on Muslim Women's Movement

The 32-year regime of the New Order Indonesia (1965-1998) witnessed a dynamic relationship between Islam and the state in this largest Muslim country in the world. In the first part of its period, the secular military-back up regime with economic development orientation embarked on repressive policies toward any formal expressions of political Islam. Islamist activists were the main target for government repression. As late as 1989, almost a hundred Muslims in South Sumatra were killed by army troops (Mujani and Liddle 2009:585). Islamic political parties were merged into a single state-patronaged political party and all social-religious organizations had to pledge allegiance to the state doctrine, Pancasila, limiting the freedom of Muslims to use Islam as a basis for their organizational ideology. However, along with declining military support, in the last decade of the regime, Suharto shifted his previous repressive policies towards Islam and Muslims in Indonesia into more accommodative ones. The modernization of Islamic educational systems, the promulgation of Islamic Courts, the establishment of ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*), the founding of Islamic financial institutions, and state-support of Islamic media partly reflected such shift of policy orientation.

The shift was primarily attributed to creative Muslim responses to the secular regime's policies. Orthodox Muslim intellectuals and activists played the creative role to respond to the context resulted from Suharto's actions in the first decades of the regime. The most celebrated actors were the modernist Nurcholish Madjid, making a conceptual or ideological contribution, and the traditionalist Abdurrahman Wahid, making an organizational and political contribution (Mujani and Liddle 2009:585). Nurcholish offered a break-thought alternative to the deadlocked debate between the incumbent government's secularism and Islamist activists' insistence for Islam as the platform for the Indonesian state where the majority is Muslims. He creatively redefined Islam-state relations in a way that met both the religious and secular needs of a potentially huge constituency by distinguishing between secularism and secularization (Mujani and Liddle 2009:585). His well-known slogan of "Islam: Yes, Islamic Party: No" has made a profound influence on the internal secularization of Indonesian Muslims. Meanwhile, Abdurahman Wahid, a grandson of the founder of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), the country's largest mass-Muslim organization, introduced two sensibilities to Indonesian

political life: the traditional tolerance, pragmatism, even opportunism and a distinctly modern commitment to social democracy and secular nationalism. Joining these two sensibilities both inside NU and in the larger Indonesia society has made his contribution unique (Mujani and Liddle 2009:587). His famous jingle of "pribumisasi Islam" ("domestication of Islam") transformed into a strategic tool to challenge local Islamists' aspirations for an Indonesian Islamic state and trans-national Islamists' agenda for *Khilafah Islamiyah* (Pan-Islamism), which has also increasingly been growing since the late 1970s.

Since then, Muslims have shifted their orientation from formal political struggle into socio-cultural development. Such a strategy has given birth to the so-called rising "civil Muslims". These civil Muslims have been important actors that played a significant contribution to Indonesia's transition of the authoritarian regime into the current democratic one (Hefner 2000). This internal dynamic has been also strengthened by Western's global campaign for democracy and human rights. Western-funded programs for Islam and civil society programs have been proliferated since the 1980s. There have been burgeoning NGOs that oriented for grass-root empowerment and building constituencies for social movements. There have been growing numbers of Islamic-based NGOs campaigning for democracy, human rights, social justice, and pluralism.

Although the above two leading thinkers did not focus their reform on women and gender issues, their Islamic reformist ideas have laid a profound ground for the radical change in Islamic discourse, including the one on women and gender issues. Through their reformist methodology of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning in Islam) and contextualization of Islam, they justified the orthodoxy of their reform and revitalized the Islamic substantive ideas of equality, freedom, human dignity, social and gender justice. The notion of "secularization of Islam" introduced by Nurcholish Madjdid has enabled Muslim women's activists to argue against patriarchal bias in traditional gender discourse promoted by Islamist groups growing during the late New Order period. In a similar vein, the notion of "domestication of Islam" in Indonesia launched by Abdurrahman Wahid has enabled Muslim women to reveal patriarchal bias reflected in the classical Islamic text interpretations. Such reform ideas have also empowered Muslim women to formulate counter-discourses.

Similar other thinkers also developed their reform ideas during the late New Order. Munawir Sjadzali, the former Minister of Religious Affairs, launched his reformist ideas on the so-called "re-actualization of Islamic law" by some measures of the Islamization of state laws

with a more progressive approach. Under his leadership, the Ministry successfully proposed the enactment of Religious/Islamic Courts Law and the Compilation of Islamic Law on Marriage, Inheritance, and Islamic Endowment. These regulations are deemed to be necessary steps to protect women's rights by the state against the arbitrary classical fiqh rules. His project of modernization of Islamic higher educational institutions including sending some outstanding students to pursue their master and doctoral degrees to well-known Western universities resulted in positive results. Then, these returning students modernized the curriculum of their Islamic universities. Some of them founded Women Studies Centers that also become focal points for women's empowerment programs including the reinterpretation of Islamic texts using a female inclusive perspective.

At the society level, there emerges a new trend among the traditionalist Muslims of NU who launched reform while still maintaining their identity of traditionalist Muslims. They introduced a novel approach of Islamic reform through the revitalization of *fiqh* that has been surpassed by previous modernist Muslims in their reform project. They strive to transform the rich legacy of Islamic jurisprudence from previously alleged to be accountable for the traditionalist Muslims' marginalization into the one that can serve as tools for societal change and social ethics. Such transformation has been attributed to the decision of NU in its National Congress in 1986 in Lirboyo, Kediri, East Java, to return to its original platform as a social-cultural organization, to avoid NU to be trapped into pragmatic politics and be further politicized. In terms of methodology, NU has also shifted its orientation from following *fiqh* schools (*madhhab*) literally into applying these schools' methodologies to solve contemporary human issues. One of these reformers, Sahal Mahfud, agues for the renewal of *fiqh* by developing the social *fiqh* paradigm. This paradigm attempt to re-orient *fiqh* as a tool to solve complex social problems through the formulation of Islamic discourse that can empower Muslim society to be agents for social change.

Such transformation at the state and society level has also provided an impetus for the emergence of Muslim scholar-activists who are concerned with humanitarian issues, particularly on social and gender justice. Since the late New Order, there have been emerging independent Muslim (women's) organizations to provide advocacy for the rights of the marginalized groups of the society such as Muslim women in *pesantren* (Islamic traditional religious institutions), women factory workers, slum dwellers, and children. At this stage, the discourse on human rights in the Western contexts and feminist ideas were reconciled with Islamic substantive ideas of justice and equality to serve as methodology and tool

to reflect on Indonesian women's realities of multi-layered oppression from the state, cultural, and religious norms. The emerging organizations during this period included Yasanti, Fiqh Nisa Program of P3M, YKF NU, LSPPA, KKPI, and Women's Studies Centres at state-funded Islamic universities such as Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN).

These organizations have also played a significant role in introducing both Islamic and Western feminist ideas to the Indonesian Muslim audience without generating many controversies and resistance. They translated the works of Muslim scholars-activists such as Riffat Hassan, Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud-Muhsin, Ali Ashgar Engineer, and Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na`im. Furthermore, Indonesia women's activists also started to translate into Islamic-based projects the recommendations from international meetings such as the ones from ICPD (International Conference on Populations and Development) in Cairo in 1996, the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Vienna Platform for Action on Human Rights (1993) and other international conventions on women such as CEDAW and ILO Conventions. The salient issues raised by these organizations focused mainly on women's suppression under the New Order's gender ideology of "State Ibuism" and the way to subvert such ideology, a critique of patriarchal religious discourse on women, women's reproductive rights, and women factory workers. They formulated counter-discourse to challenge the unjust systems responsible for women's oppression and further formulate women's empowerment programs. Using such strategies, Indonesian Muslim women's movement has successfully incorporated Western-inspired, secular ideas into the discourses and structures of the Indonesian contexts of Islam, culture, locality, and history (van Doorn-Harder 2008:1027).

Indonesian Muslim Women's Movement in Democratization Era
Such a dynamic development of Indonesian Muslim women's movement has been further progressed in the current democratization era of Indonesia. Van-Doorn Harder (2008:1028) argues that the period after the New Order signifies the emergence of a new phase of Muslim women activism marked by conflicting developments and incidents: freedom of expression, democratic experiments, economic hardship, and communal violence. This has been further complicated by burgeoning identity politics during the democratization era that gave rise to religious and extreme right-wing fanaticism that bring its own patriarchal gender discourses (Budianta 2002:35-50). This can be reflected in various emerging social-

political forces with Islamist platforms ranging from radical groups such as FPI (Islamic Defence Front) and MMI (Indonesian Mujahidin Council) to conservative ones such as DDII (the Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication), HTI (Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir) and political parties such as PKS (Justice Welfare Party) and PBB (Star-Crescent Party).

To respond to such challenges, Muslim women scholars-activists turned to be more assertive in articulating their voices and agencies to formulate counter-discourses by reclaiming their rights in religious knowledge production and building a more humane and just society in Indonesia. This can be reflected in emerging indigenous Indonesian Islamic feminism. These women scholars-activists continually make critical engagement with both texts and realities. Having authority in Islamic knowledge, the reclaim their right to exercise *ijtihad* where the access to such *ijtihad* had been denied for women for a long time along the course of Islamic history. They draw from a Western feminist strategy for the right to participate in the religious knowledge production and the reformulation of Islamic law: "All who subject to a law have the right to adjudicate it" (Wadud 2009). As Islamic feminists in other counties, they are engaging with several paradigms at the same time: progressive *fiqh*, progressive *tafsir* (Quranic interpretation), human rights arguments, international instruments, laws and treaties, and the lived realities of Muslim women (Sikand 2010). Some Muslim women scholars-activists formulated Islamic feminist discourses to address gender issues in Indonesian Muslim society. They have been ranged from those who focus on *tafsir* such as Zaitunah Subhan (1999), Nurjannah Ismail (2003), Lily Zakiyah Munir (2005), those who work on *hadith* such as Sintha Nuriyah *et al* (2001; 2005), and those who work on *fiqh* discourse such as Siti Mudah Mulia (2004; 2004) and Maria Ulfah Anshor (2006). They often gain support from male *ulama* who are also concerned with women and gender issues such as Nasarudin Umar (2001; 2002), Husein Muhammad (2001), Syafiq Hasyim (2006), and Faqihudin Abdulkodir (2007). They then further disseminate their Islamic feminist ideas by engaging themselves in both legal and cultural reforms.

At the level of legal reform, they build a network for public advocacy against discriminatory state policies and propose legal drafts using female inclusive perspectives. This has been partly attributed to more democratic channels of expression provided in this period as well as the proliferated global media facilitating more exchange ideas transcending local boundaries. Their struggle can be reflected in their advocacy for women under the *sharia* regional legislation, their success to promulgate the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence and the Revised Law

on Health that legalizes abortion under specific circumstances as well as the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking, the attempted counter legal draft that promotes progressive Muslim family law as well as their debates and arguments against the promulgation of Pornography Bills that tend to victimize women. One salient strategy in this legal reform is the utilization of facts and evidence of women's marginalization and oppression to effect policy reforms like the case of Muslim women's intensive lobbying for the promulgation of Laws on the Elimination of Domestic Violence and Revision of Law on Health. This has reflected what Khalid Masud has argued that it is important for women's groups in advocating reform to support their demands for change with data and statistics of the nature and extent of the problems. With such data, he contends that even the most patriarchal and fundamentalist people would have to agree with the analysis of the situation, and justice could then be used as a principle and guide to formulating the appropriate solution (Masud 2009).

At the level of cultural changes, there have been several Muslim women's organizations that promote women's rights and gender equality using the Islamic framework. It ranges from Muslim women's mass organizations like women's wing organizations of Muslim mass organizations (Fatayat and Muslimat of NU, and Aisyiah and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah of Muhammadiyah) to some Muslim women's NGOs that focus on one selected particular issue such as Rahima that promotes progressive Muslim women's discourse, Puan Amal Hayati that provides women's shelter for the victims of (domestic) violence. The activists of these organizations emphasize the praxis dimension of Islam in which Islamic feminist discourse is translated into liberation and empowerment tools for women. They have used several means of public education such as media, publications, seminars, workshops, and training to raise gender consciousness and effect long-term socio-cultural transformation toward social and gender justice. Their efforts have built a critical mass of Muslim women who take an active part in the struggle to build social and gender justice as well as critically engage in the Indonesian public sphere.

Contribution of Islamic Reformist Theology to Islamic Feminism in Indonesia
The reform launched by Indonesian Muslim women's movement has demonstrated a radical shift of paradigm on gender issues in Indonesian Muslim society. It has introduced a thought-breaking middle path to the unresolved debate between Islamist and conservative Muslims who insist on the distinctive gender roles and rights in Islam on the one hand and

secular feminists who perceive religion, particularly Islam, as inherently patriarchal on the other hand. Such a shift of paradigm paves the way for gender activists to challenge the asymmetric gender structures in Indonesian Muslim society without being fear to be condemned as un-Islamic. Issues that had for long perceived as taboo have been currently open for discussion and debates. They currently question gender construction of traditional religious authorities, discussing issues on women's leadership in politics and worship, sexuality and women's reproductive rights, marital rape, and domestic violence. Since they always attempt to find ideological and theological roots for the arguments, this has opened the exploration of a rich legacy of Islamic traditional scholarship, particularly *fiqh*.

Madhavi Sunder (2007), a professor of law at the University of California, in her article entitled "Piercing the Veil", argues that the beginning of the twentieth century has witnessed the emergence of what she calls "the New Sovereignty" marked by the rise of religious and cultural movements. She points out that such movements are the result of binary dichotomy between the public and the private spheres made by the Old Enlightenment. It has assigned science, politics, and law the roles in the public sphere, thus subject to reason, while relegated culture and religion to the private sphere by giving them the jurisdiction to regulate family and morality. As culture and religion are not subject to reason, there have been clashes between them and those aspects in the public sphere, namely science, politics, and law. This has explained some cases of human rights violations including women's rights abuses, which are tolerated under the guise of religious distinctiveness and cultural relativity.

However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Sunder (2007) further argues, there has been a challenge to such dichotomy between public and private spheres as the legacy of the Old Enlightenment. Using the case of Muslim women activism, she argues that Muslim women's activists have introduced radical reform by giving birth to the New Enlightenment where they demand religion and culture to be subjected to reason. The previous exclusivist jurisdiction of religion and culture as the domain of male traditionalist religious scholars and cultural authorities has been challenged by Muslim women's activists through their demand for the democratization of the production of religious and cultural meanings.

The demand by Muslim women's activists for religion and culture to be subjected to reason will contribute significantly to the acceleration of the democratization of Muslim society. M. Steven Fish (2002), in his article "Islam and authoritarianism", argues that one salient factor explaining the democratic deficit among Muslim societies is the subordination of women.

He believes that such subordination and oppression of women may affect life not only in the family and immediate community but also at higher levels as well. He attributes such relation to the fact that individuals who are more accustomed to rigidly hierarchical relations in their personal lives may be less prone to resist such a pattern of authority in politics.

The above Sunder's theory is useful here to explain the reform contributed by Islamic reformist theology and Islamic feminists in Indonesia. They argue that as long as religion and culture are not subjected to reason and become the exclusive domains of male patriarchal religious and cultural authorities, there will always be the politicization of religion. Thus, in contrast to previous Indonesian Islamic reform that demanded the relegation of religion to the private sphere to avoid the politicization of religion, the current Islamic feminists go beyond this demand. They argue that the emergence of religious and cultural movements in the public sphere or the so-called "New Sovereignty" requires the necessity of religion and culture to subject to reason. Furthermore, they claim their rights for the production and reproduction of religious and cultural meanings. They argue for the right of each member of religious or cultural communities to participate in the formulation of rulings that will affect the life of the whole community. With such pluralization of religious and cultural meanings, the human rights abuses, particularly women's rights violations, under the name of religious and cultural particularities can be refuted and eliminated.

In offering the alternative religious meanings, as seen in the case of Rahima with its Islamic texts reinterpretations, they frame such reinterpretation within the boundaries of Islamic traditional religious scholarship in the light of contemporary humanities and social sciences. They use the data of women's lived experiences to argue for the reinterpretation of Islamic texts that will resonate with the Islamic universal principles of justice, equality, and human dignity. The mechanism of *ijtihad* in Islamic intellectual tradition has served as a powerful tool for Islamic feminists for the reinterpretation of the texts in light of the current realities.

In Islamic legal theories, they demand Islamic feminist jurisprudence, an Islamic law that includes women's perspectives. They dig from the field current realities and issues facing women from women's lived experiences and traced the roots from multi-dimensional aspects, including cultural-religious norms. In dealing with religious norms, they attempt to deconstruct the patriarchal world-view underlying such norms. Several tools formulated by reformist Muslim theology for Islamic reform have been deployed for such deconstruction including critical and discourse theories as well as historical analysis to find the gap between Islamic injunctions

for equality and justice and Islamic patriarchal interpretations. Following such deconstruction, they offer alternative interpretation guided by the principles of justice and equality. To gain the legitimacy, they also employ several tools of Islamic traditional scholarships such as the contextual interpretation of Islamic texts, the theory of *maqāsid sharia* (the main purposes of sharia) and the theories of *ikhtilaf* (interpretive disagreements among *ulama* including theories of abrogation, theories of sources, theories of *taqlid* and *madhhab*, and theory of *mura`at al-khilaf*) (Masud 2009) as the basis of their reinterpretation of the texts. All in all, Islamic feminists have significantly indebted to the methodologies of Islamic reformist theology in constructing their female inclusive discourses.

Conclusion

This article has shown that Islamic reformist theology has played a significant influence on Muslim women's movement in Indonesia. The former has affected the latter's mode of discourse as well as the mode of activism. Such influence has empowered Muslim women to claim for their rights in religious knowledge production and build a critical mass of Muslim women who actively participate in the struggle for gender and social justice.

Islamic reform promoted by contemporary liberal-progressive Muslims in Indonesia has given a significant contribution to the development of Muslim women's movement in the country. It has laid the ground for an Islamic paradigm shift on the discourse on Islam and gender. The opening gate of *ijtihad* and respect for modernity espoused by reformist Muslims have provided tools for radical change in Islamic discourse on gender while still ground such change on an Islamic basis.

Nevertheless, the development of Muslim women's movement in Indonesia has been far more vibrant through its engagement with the dynamic of its surrounding socio-political circumstances and critical dialogue with broader currents of feminist thoughts. Such complex genealogies have enabled Muslim women's movement to claim its own identity as indigenous Islamic feminism that poses multiple critiques to any unjust systems that deprive Muslim women of their rights.

Notes

[1] Such transformation has been mainly attributed to three salient factors: the modernization of educational systems, the emergence of print culture, and the proliferation of socio-political organizations.

² See, for example, Haedah Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London dan New York: Zed Books, 1999). However, this argument has been refuted as it tends to essentialize Islam into one single homogenous/ monolithic category as Islamic fundamentalism. See Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

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