

The Discursive Constitution of Pakistani Women: The Articulation of Gender, Nation, and Islam

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ABSTRACT

I disrupt notions of the passive, unidimensional Islamic "Woman" by outlining the discursive constitution of gendered subjectivities and practices in Pakistan. I trace the shifting intersection of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam, and demonstrate how this intersection both effects an ideological tool - "Pakistani Woman" - and incites women's resistance.

RÉSUMÉ

Je sème la confusion dans les notions de la « Femme islamique », passive, unidimensionnelle, en donnant les grandes lignes de la constitution discursive des subjectivités propre à chaque sexe et les pratiques au Pakistan. Je trace l'intersection divergente des discours sur les hommes et les femmes, sur la nationalité et l'Islam, en démontrant comment ils amènent et un outil idéologique « la Pakistanaise » et incite la résistance des femmes.

INTRODUCTION

Here, the women are always suffering. They give too many children birth. And they let men handle them like weak people. That's their lot. They can't be seen or heard. That's a big problem here for me, the plight of Pakistani women.

(Nilofer Orange, 1999)¹

The discourse of the passive, male-dominated Islamic "Woman" meanders through much of the interview material I gathered for my research on how western women living in Gilgit, Pakistan, negotiate their subjectivities in transcultural and postcolonial space.² Outside the interview transcripts, this discourse constitutes, in part, the practised subjectivities of both western and local women living and interacting in the small mountain town of Gilgit (Foucault 1978; Stoler 1995). My research participants are not alone. Many recent feminist analyses also "diagnose" the status of women in Islamic countries using such ethnocentric, homogenising, and monocausal explanations (Brooks 1995; Ghoussoub 1987; Haddad and Smith 1996; Hassan 1995; Mohammad 1999). This occurs despite a large body of postcolonial and poststructural feminist literature that recommends attempts both to understand how the category "Woman" is discursively constituted in specific and contingent contexts, and to identify how various discourses intersect to constitute

gendered subjectivities and material practices (Frankenberg 1993; Mohanty 1984; Spivak 1985, 1988).

My aim here is to disrupt the givenness of this passive, oppressed, and unidimensional Islamic "Woman" by outlining the discursive constitution of gendered subjectivities and practices in Pakistan from 1947 to the late 1990s. Specifically, I trace the shifting intersection of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam during that time, demonstrating how they constitute, reproduce, and legitimate one another. Although individual Pakistani women practise these discourses in different ways depending on their situatedness within discourses of class, modernisation, ethnicity, and location, one of the irregular regularities (Foucault 1980) of the discursive formation that results is the construction of an idealised "Pakistani Woman," who becomes available to state leaders and Islamic fundamentalists for ideological purposes. For example, when state and religious leaders restrict women to the confines of the private sphere through their politico-religious rhetoric, as well as in law, they fashion a "Pakistani Woman" almost exclusively as wife and mother. That wife and mother becomes useful in projects of nation-building and Muslim group identity construction.

Pakistani women's organised resistance to this disciplinary regime is a theme which runs unevenly throughout the paper. In the tradition of Hammani and Rieker (1988) and Sharoni (1994), I

describe Pakistani women as active social participants engaged in negotiations of power as a way to undermine reified and Orientalist (Butz 1995) conceptions of homogeneous "Islamic" women as passive, helpless victims. Space limitations, however, prevent me from emphasising Pakistani women's everyday resistance, the ways in which individual women disrupt disciplinary discourses and practices in and through their daily activities.

A brief outline of the rise of the Pakistani state will help contextualise my topic. In 1940, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, future founder of the state of Pakistan, presented the Lahore Resolution to the Muslim League, a political party founded in 1905 to advance the agendas of India's Muslim landowning class. This resolution inaugurated the Pakistan Movement, a nationalist crusade for an independent, non-theocratic Muslim state, where Islam could be practised free from the constraints of the British government and the Hindu-oriented Indian National Congress. The agenda of the Muslim League, similar to that of other colonised groups attempting to reassert a Muslim identity through nationhood, was grounded primarily in anti-colonialism (Shaheed 1986). The British Raj imposed on its colonial subjects laws and practices which left little room for Muslim colonial subjects to satisfactorily practise Islam in their daily lives (Hasan 1981). Jinnah incorporated a sense of beleaguered Muslim identity, along with growing dissent against British rule and the West more generally, into his fight for independence and an oppositional national identity. In his efforts to forge a common Muslim front, Jinnah consistently represented Muslim women as a vital nationalist resource.

Jinnah shared this practice of constructing and appropriating women for nation-building purposes with many other nationalist leaders in South Asia and elsewhere. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), in their study of women's relation to national processes and state practices, provide a useful typology for understanding the historically contingent intersection of discourses of gender and nationhood. They identify five ways in which women have been discursively constituted and utilised by nation-state leaders as (a) biological reproducers of state members, (b) propagators and defenders of the frontiers between nations, (c)

transmitters of culture who socialise youth into the ideological framework of the nation, (d) signifiers of national difference, and (e) participants in national liberation struggles. An overview of the historical development of the Pakistani state reveals that various political leaders have drawn unevenly on these discursive complexes to support their nation- and identity-building agendas.

In the body of the paper, I augment this typology by outlining how discourses of Islam, including Islamic fundamentalism, have frequently mediated the coupling of discourses of gender and nationhood in Pakistan. This three-way intersection has strengthened the disciplinary regime and its effects on Pakistani women. However, since discursive formations are contingent and marked by series of ruptures and recuperations, this gender-nation-Islam trilogy has shifted with changing state mandates, with the effect that new discursive spaces, where tangential discourses can influence the discursive formation, are continually emerging and disappearing.

WOMAN-NATION-ISLAM

Women as Biological Reproducers of State Members

Several Pakistani political regimes have constructed Pakistani women as biological reproducers of the national collectivity. In the Pakistan Independence Movement of the 1940s, Jinnah represented Muslim women as "mothers of the nation" who embodied special, although politically limited power. Willmer (1996) argues that this discursive use of women for the Muslim nationalist cause was constructed within a set of existing discourses of gender and modernisation, which used the status of elite women to evaluate the modernising potential of a polity. Thus, discourses of gender, nationhood, Islam, and modernisation intersected in the Muslim League agenda. By incorporating these discourses into their program, the Muslim League's quest for emancipation from the Raj and the Indian National Congress gained ancillary social meaning. This alliance also meant that the concerns of elite Muslim women were coopted into the national checklist, thereby quelling the development of a modernising feminist movement.

Jinnah encouraged all women to renounce

their needs and interests, and those of their children, to support the development of a more glorious Islam. In a speech he gave on Radio Pakistan in 1948, he stressed that privileged women should take the lead, "not only in their homes, but by helping their less fortunate sisters outside in that great task" (as quoted in Hasan 1981, 71). This discourse constructs for women an identity as mothers and wives who nurture, support, socialise, and sacrifice for the good of the nation. Women were persuaded to confine themselves to the parameters of home and family in their support of nationalism, something the overwhelming majority of Muslim women assured Jinnah they were willing to do. As Hatem (1993, 45) notes in another context, "women's incorporation in the body politic as citizens is premised on their acceptance of nationalism as the only acceptable discourse."

Although Pakistani women were constituted as wives and mothers sacrificing for the Muslim nation, elite women within the Muslim League, including Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah (Jinnah's sister), had the discursive and spatial latitude during the parliamentary period of Pakistan's history (1947-57) to promote women's rights and public participation (Haq 1996). This latitude widened during successive governments, as the intersection of discourses of gender, nationhood, and modernisation coalesced more confidently, shifting discourses of Islam to the sidelines. For example, Ayub Khan, who gained power through a military coup in 1958, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1969-77) after him, concentrated on modernising Pakistan, identifying the status of women as an important gauge of their success. They both passed legislation, including the 1973 constitution, that gave women greater rights in marriage, divorce, educational opportunities, family planning, and employment.³ In 1977, with General Zia-ul-Haq's (1977-1988) military coup, the formation of gender-nationhood-modernisation shifted abruptly. Discourses of Islam were recuperated at the expense of modernisation, although their nature altered radically.

In an effort to justify martial law, which lacked a social base of support (Gardezi 1985), Zia initiated a process of Islamisation with the help of right-wing religious fundamentalist parties such as the *Jama'at-I-Islami*. These fundamentalists claimed that anything "modern" was a tool of

Western imperialism. In opposition to the "modern," they argued that the foundation of Islamic society lay in the sexual segregation of women and the reciprocal obligation of the sexes. This alternative socio-moral order could simultaneously combat neo-colonialism and reassert a "true" Muslim identity (Haeri 1995). By promoting notions of a unified religion and national identity, as well as the moral honour of Islam, Islamic fundamentalism became the most influential discursive legitimation of Zia's military rule.

Zia exploited this reactionary form of Islam to justify destroying civil society and implementing oppressive laws. Legislative changes, including family planning restrictions and anti-abortion legislation, renewed and strengthened the discursive constitution of women as biological reproducers of the nation. Islamisation policies reinforced the ideal of women's segregation in the home. For example, working women were constructed as liabilities due to their "lax" morality, which ostensibly disintegrated national, Muslim, and family values.

The *Hudood Ordinance* (1979), which narrowed the criteria for rape and included fornication and adultery in the criminal code, provided the legal context within which women were disciplined - by themselves, their families, and the state - to remain within the confines of their homes where they were less likely to be raped (Mehdi 1990).⁴ The law disciplines women's behaviour and spatial movement by constructing a vulnerable female identity in need of protection from strange men by male family members. Women are encouraged to remain safe at home, raising children in a segregated family setting.⁵

Zia's dictatorship roused Pakistani women to organised resistance. Despite the difficult climate for protest, urban middle-class women began to study the Quran for themselves, determined to reinterpret it as an empowering ideology rather than an oppressive one (Ayubi 1995). They also challenged Zia's junta by inaugurating an official Pakistan women's movement in 1981 with the formation of the Women's Action Forum (WAF). By uniting numerous women's groups under the WAF banner, feminists were able to organise a collective struggle and set the tone for debates over the status of women under martial and Islamic rule (Gardezi 1990). They were, however, ultimately

unsuccessful in halting Zia's Islamisation program. I will discuss his tenacious legacy in the 1990s later in the paper.

Women as Propagators and Defenders of the Frontiers Between Nations

Pakistani women have also been constructed through state legislation as reproducers of national boundaries. The symbolic and material manifestations of nationhood are most strongly expressed through the allocation of citizenship, a process that is gendered throughout much of the world, including Pakistan (Joseph 1996). The state needs to specify who can claim legitimate citizenship, because potential citizens identify with multiple social groupings, many of which may pose a threat to the boundaries and identity of the nation. The state frequently draws on discourses of gender, as well as class, ethnicity, and religion, to differentiate between members of the polity and thus establish national boundaries.

Forging a Muslim, anti-Western national identity remained a state imperative during the first few years of Pakistan's independence. State leaders recognised that establishing strong national boundaries would buttress this objective. The *Pakistan Citizenship Act* was passed in 1951. It was a law that consolidated intersecting discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam to constitute Pakistani women as reproducers of the national frontier. The *Citizenship Act* prohibited Muslim women who married foreign or non-Muslim men from passing their Pakistani citizenship to their children, but it permitted the children of Muslim men married to non-Muslim women to become nationals. The legislation controlled the manner in which Pakistani women had children by stipulating that legitimate Pakistani nationals be born to a father of "authentic" Muslim identity. Since children gained citizenship and its attendant rights through their fathers and not their mothers, an explicit connection was forged between fathers and national citizenship (Joseph 1996). Pakistani women were denied the right to pass citizenship to children of non-Muslim fathers in order to enforce a national Muslim boundary and male citizenry. They became nationals only as appendages of their husbands and fathers. Through the process of conferring citizenship rights, the state constituted

and utilised women as reproducers of the boundaries of the Islamic nation, while denying them citizenship as an autonomous right.

In April, 2000, General Pervez Musharraf's government amended Section 5 of the 1951 *Act* under the Pakistan Citizenship (Amendment) Ordinance 2000. The Ordinance provides that the children of Pakistani women married to non-Muslim men are also entitled to Pakistani citizenship. This amendment releases women from their role as national frontier scouts and loosens slightly the gender-nation-Islam discursive trilogy.

Women as Transmitters of National Culture

By framing Pakistani women as "mothers of the nation," Jinnah implicitly represented them as "cultural transmitters of the nation." He drew on discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam to constitute women as wives and mothers confined to the private sphere. As such, women were constructed as the main socialisers of youth, those people responsible for perpetuating Muslim cultural symbols and ways of life. Discourses of modernisation, which gained political purchase after Jinnah, disrupted the discursive formation of gender-nationhood-Islam and produced discursive space within which some women could practice supplementary identities outside the home, loosening, however slightly, their exclusive tie to children. Zia's Islamisation project, drawing on Islamic fundamentalism, coerced women back home to take up full-time duty as ideological reproducers.

Zia's 1984 *Law of Evidence*, for example, stipulates that the court requires evidence from two men or one man and two women for the conviction of a crime, reifying in legislation the notion that women's minds function at only half the capacity of men's (Doumato 1995). The law works from the premise that women's reproductive and socialising function renders them unsuitable for public responsibilities such as political and labour participation and, consequently, that their main value is as wives and mothers who socialise youth into Islamic culture.

Male household heads frequently utilise and legitimate these circulating discourses of gender and Islam to deny many non-elite women academic opportunities, or at least strongly dissuade them

from pursuing their studies. They argue against women's education according to the logic that academic endeavours interfere with women's primary role as wives and mothers, that women's public and economic participation is culturally inappropriate, and that women ought to be obedient in most circumstances (Moghadam 1993). The discourse of women's obedience is premised on the notion that they surrender their rights to some realms of independent thought, action, and expression, including educational and employment opportunities. The low literacy level among Pakistani women (Malik 1995) - one effect of intersecting discourses of gender and Islam - traps women in the home where they remain economically and psychologically dependent.

Women's coerced entrapment in the home is somewhat paradoxical considering the profile of fundamentalists who exhorted it. Contrary to popular belief, fundamentalists in Pakistan tend not to be theological experts, but young, semi-worldly rural men who have migrated to the city in search of work, but whose lack of education and limited resources leave them disenfranchised in the urban social, economic, and political spheres (Ayubi 1995; Stowasser 1993). They are populist "scriptural activists" whose agenda is to transpose Islamic thought into holy practice with the view of establishing more egalitarian social relations, a fundamentally political, not religious, act (Stowasser, 1993). Fundamentalist notions of egalitarianism, however, do not extend to women, since they are constructed as the inviolate foundation of Islamic society.

The extremely discriminatory Law of Evidence incited Pakistani women to mass protest on a scale previously unprecedented in Pakistan. The WAF demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the draft bill through public lectures, discussion groups, resolutions, and artistic performances. The protest reached its climax in February, 1983, when women's organisations united in a demonstration march down Mall Road in Lahore. They planned to end their walk with a sit-in near the Court House, where the Chief Justice would hear their singing and poetry reading and be compelled to accept a formal memorandum against the draft legislation. Despite the peacefulness of the demonstration, the sheer number of women protesting unnerved the police. They surrounded the protesters, discharged

tear gas, beat them until many were seriously injured, and arrested 50 women. Rather than vanquishing the protesters, this public "attention" impelled them to further action and greater solidarity.⁶ Their continuing resistance to the Law of Evidence forced the government to delay implementing the bill for two years; it was eventually ratified in October, 1984.

Women as signifiers of national difference

Taking the previous intersection of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islamic fundamentalism a step further, Zia cast Pakistani women as actual symbolic markers of the nation. These "women do not only teach and transfer cultural and ideological traditions of [the] national group, they constitute [its] actual symbolic figuration" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, 8). Through their constitution as wives and mothers, Pakistani women become both an alibi for and an emblem of cultural authenticity. By appropriating Islamist anti-imperialist discourses and advocating an "authentic" Muslim identity, Zia drew a cultural distinction on the actual bodies of Pakistani women, through their spatial movements and sexual behaviour. Women's "sexually appropriate" behaviour became legally and morally controlled since women were viewed as the touchstone of what it meant to be Muslim. This preoccupation with women's sexual and moral behaviour stems from the fact that "the woman question" constitutes one of the few Quranic legislative domains, and, moreover, from the fundamentalist conviction that "good" Muslims should be readily identifiable through appropriate clothing styles, polygamy practices, and adultery regulations (Keddie 1990). According to fundamentalists, women who reclaim for themselves the appropriate role of wife and mother re-establish an Islamic socio-moral order. Women's dress, domesticity, and behaviour thus constitute what Keddie calls an Islamic "badge of ideology" (101). In Stowasser's (1993, 22) words, "culture, religion, and morality stand and fall with [Muslim women]."

Purdah is one institutionalised form of restrictive behavioural codes for women. This social and spatial system of sexual segregation, where women are isolated from men who are not family members, was endorsed by Zia to ensure women's

economic dependence on male family members and assure their "function" as wives and mothers. Moreover, *purdah* "protected" women from the dangers of the public sphere, while it safeguarded family honour by maintaining female modesty.

Rauf (1987) identifies four principles upon which *purdah* is founded: (a) women must not mingle with men who are not part of their immediate kinship network; (b) females should be physically sequestered from the time of puberty; (c) men bear the responsibility for being family breadwinners while women reproduce the extended household; and (d) women must dress, move, behave, think, and represent themselves in culturally appropriate ways. Moral responsibility, therefore, rests mainly with women. These principles are instituted through the division of space (between the inside and outside of the home, and the male and female places within it) and the mandated use of a veil.

In Pakistan veiling takes diverse forms, from the scarf-like *dupatta* to the head-to-toe covering *burqa*. And, as a signifier, it has a range of meanings, depending on the social and political context in which it is used. While fundamentalists prefer women to veil completely in public as a sign of their Muslim identity, modesty, and sexual-spatial segregation, Pakistani women, like their Muslim counterparts elsewhere, veil to varying degrees and with varied meaning: to (a) be non-arousing, (b) promote an erotic culture, (c) protect themselves from sexual harassment in public, (d) express urbanism and their escape from the village (where veiling may be less common), (e) disguise their lower class clothing, (f) support fundamentalist movements, reject western values, and assert nationalism, (g) garner sympathetic public reaction and comply with group norms, (h) pursue a career that they might not otherwise be permitted, and (i) signify their class status (Abu-Odeh 1992; Afshar 1994; Bulbeck 1998; Hammami and Rieker 1988; Mohammad 1999). Although many Pakistani women lead quite segregated lives according to the rules of *purdah*, most do not and cannot follow strict clothing and boundary directives due to economic and labour materialities. Consequently, the *dupatta* and the *chaddor* are more common in Pakistan than is the *burqa*.

Despite its flexibility of meaning,

Hammami and Rieker (1988, 93) argue that "the veil continues to signify its most historically constant meaning - class." Privileged women in Pakistan, who have access to often sizeable economic resources, are more rigorously regulated through *purdah* than most working- and middle-class women (Shaheed 1986). *Purdah* restrictions are frequently applied more strictly to women in feudal landowning rural families to deny them access to their resources and the public sphere where they could mobilise them against both the men of their class and the dominant class monopoly of property ownership. However, some lower middle-class urban women also chose to follow stricter *purdah* regulations to distinguish themselves from working-class women (Shaheed 1986).

As part of his Muslim identity- and nation-building strategy, Zia drew a cultural distinction between Pakistan and the West on the actual bodies of Pakistani women. He reinforced and extrapolated the principles of *purdah*, a prevalent social/class system, as part of his agenda to re-establish an Islamic socio-moral order. By controlling women's spatial movements and sexual behaviour, Zia constituted them as the touchstone of what it meant to be a "good" Muslim. Whether most veiled Pakistan women actually constructed themselves as Islamic "badges of ideology", or merely covered themselves as a way to move unimpeded in public, get an education, or cover their shabby clothes, is open to question.

Women as Participants in National Liberation Struggles

During the Pakistan Movement and the early years of the new state, Jinnah consistently drew elite women into the struggle for a non-theocratic Muslim state. In so doing, he strengthened the intersection of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam. As part of his strategy of mobilising Muslim women to the nationalist cause, he toured with his sister Fatima, advocating the organisation of women's branches of the Muslim League in major urban centres, and foregrounding both his support of women's rights and his contempt for their subordinate position in society.

However, Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders deliberately constructed a Pakistan

Movement narrative that mobilised women politically without ever promising them official political positions within the proposed nation (Willmer 1996). Once the state was formed, Pakistani women discovered that the Muslim League never intended to engage discourses of modernisation as seriously as those of nationhood. The Pakistan Movement coopted elite women's concerns without forming any specific agenda for women. This neglect marginalised women's concerns within the framework of the new state, and allowed Jinnah to constitute "modernisation" for women within an Islamic national framework. For example, while he called on women to contribute to the national effort, they were asked to do so only in "appropriate" ways, as nurturers and supporters of the cause and its implicitly male citizenry. Women were posted in the Pakistan Women's National Guard and the Pakistan Women's Naval Reserve, but primarily to support and nurture men, by signalling, typing, and administering first aid (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987). By drawing selectively on discourses of gender, modernisation, nationhood, and Islam, Jinnah constituted Pakistani women as vital participants in the struggle for national liberation and resources for Muslim identity construction, without allowing that to outweigh the needs of nation or Islam.

ZIA'S LEGACY

As discourses of Islam mediate the coupling of discourses of gender and nationhood in Pakistan, disciplinary effects on Pakistani women are strengthened. However, ruptures to this discursive formation, realised through discourses of modernisation during the middle period of Pakistan's history, left some women room to manoeuvre. Zia's program of Islamisation, by rejecting discourses of modernisation as Western imperialism, re-entrenched the gender-nationhood-Islam trilogy. And that discursive formation has been difficult to rupture in the years following Zia's rule.

Martial law was replaced by a pluralistic democracy after Zia's murder in 1988. Citizens angered by Zia's tyranny elected Benazir Bhutto (1988-90), who promised to continue her father's modernising agenda. That a woman was elected prime minister indicated both a widespread

dissatisfaction with Zia's Islamisation program and elite women's discursive latitude within it. Not surprisingly, Bhutto was unable to repeal many of Zia's initiatives, despite her campaign promises to abolish the *Hudood Ordinance*. The fundamentalist *Jama'at-I-Islami* continued to exercise power due to its state ties. Bhutto maintained a defensive position vis-a-vis the fundamentalists who questioned her credibility as a female Muslim leader. The consolidation of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam in law and socio-cultural practice was also difficult to disrupt, as was the power of the military (backed by US military and economic aid) (Gardezi 1985). These factors frustrated Bhutto's efforts to steer a moderate course. She managed, however, to appoint women judges, open banks and police stations for women, restore freedom of the press, and draw women out of the home and back into public and political participation (Haq 1996).

In contrast to Bhutto, Main Nawaz Sharif (1990-93, 1997-99), leader first of the Islamic Democratic Alliance and later the Muslim League, made the *Jama'at-I-Islami* party an integral component of his coalition government to combat political instability and legitimate his rule. He resumed the process of Islamisation begun by Zia and recuperated the trilogy once again. Specifically, he concentrated on making institutions and social arrangements conform to *Shari'a*, the traditional socio-religious law of Islam. Women's sexual and moral behaviour was state-monitored again as Sharif strengthened the Ordinances and censored female cultural representations (Pakistan News Service Nov. 2, 1997). In protest, Pakistani women formed Women Against Rape (1990) and challenged the Shariat Bill and a plan for separate women's universities.

Nawaz Sharif's government was overthrown through a military coup in October, 1999, and Pakistan is presently ruled by Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf. Unlike the military leaders before him, Musharraf is sidelining repressive discourses of Islam in favour of those active during Bhutto's leadership. He has vowed to fight honour killings and violence against women, promote female literacy, encourage women's public participation, and, most importantly, modify the *Hudood Ordinance* (Pakistan News Service, Sept. 6, 2000; Pakistan News Service, Oct. 22, 2000). However, fundamentalists still exercise

considerable power and influence throughout the country, especially through their support of the Taliban in Afghanistan (Pakistan News Service, Nov. 3, 2000). Recently Musharraf inducted two religious scholars (*ulema*) into the National Commission for Women. Leaders of WAF criticise the appointments as a policy to appease "extremist and hardline parties" (Pakistan News Service, Sept. 7, 2000). Although Musharraf's government is not yet democratically run or elected, the discourses of Islam he is circulating may provide Pakistani women with fresh manoeuvring space.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to follow the theoretical guidance of postcolonial and poststructural feminists in demonstrating the contingent and multifaceted discursive constitution of gendered subjectivities and practices in Pakistan through time. To understand more adequately the intersection of discourses of gender and nationhood in the process of subjectivation, I augmented the typology outlined by Yuval-Davis and Anthias to demonstrate how discourses of Islam, appropriated and legitimated by non-theocratic and fundamentalist state leaders, have mediated this coupling. Tracing the shifting intersection of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islam allowed me to avoid monocausal and homogenising explanations of Pakistani women's situation in, constitution by, and resistance to discourses of power. It also demonstrated how the discursive formation of gender-nation-Islam fashions an ideological tool - the ideal Pakistani "Woman" - who is then utilised by state and religious leaders for nation- and Muslim identity-building practices.

This three-way intersection, which is characterised by various ruptures and recuperations over time, has had important but uneven disciplinary effects on Pakistani women. While political leaders like Zia-ul-Haq and Nawaz Sharif tightened the gender-nation-Islam trilogy through their appropriation of Islamic fundamentalism, others, such as Ayub Khan, Benazir Bhutto and her father Zulifkar Ali Bhutto, loosened it through state mandates for modernisation. What is most troubling about the uneven confluence of discourses of gender, nationhood, and Islamic fundamentalism is its tenacity in the context of continuing

neo-colonialism and the persistent oppressive effects it has, with varying degrees, on Pakistani women.

But Pakistani women continue to resist this disciplinary regime. Recent debates in the literature (Gardezi 1990; Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987; Rouse 1988; Shaheed, 1995) illustrate the controversy between two prominent feminist agendas. Leaving explicit questions of nationalism aside, one feminist group argues that the struggle against gender oppression must engage discourses of Islam since they fundamentally constitute Pakistani culture, legitimate Pakistani feminism, and appeal to working- and lower middle-class women who have not participated widely in feminist struggles. Another group asserts that gender oppression is a secular issue of human rights. Shaheed's (1995) research identifies two factors that support a non-Islamic feminist agenda. First, many Pakistani women, despite viewing Islam as a participatory and communal spiritual experience, can be mobilised around a feminist critique of gender oppression independent of Islam. And second, the Islam practised by many Pakistani women does not resemble that preached by fundamentalists. This is well illustrated in fundamentalist parties' poor electoral showings in recent years. By nesting feminist demands in Islamic justifications, feminists risk fundamentalist control of their movement by suggesting implicitly that all debates about women must be conducted in religious terms. This action undermines secular debates, which view women's emancipation as a worthy and valuable cause in itself, and constructs feminist activism as "alien" to Pakistani culture.

Despite these problematic elements of Islamic feminism, some feminist scholars (Kar 1996; Shaheed 1995) have argued recently that secular demands need not, and should not, be placed in a binary opposition to religious discourses. Rather than mobilising one unified women's movement, a multifaceted approach to the struggle, realised through a network of independent groups and individual practice, may generate the momentum and altered subjectivities required to disrupt the gender-nation-Islam trilogy. This strategy, which involves deconstructing women's primary constitution as wives and mothers by state and religious leaders and establishing women as full legal and social beings, may be the most effective

route to feminist advances in Pakistan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank David Butz for his encouragement and advice, as well as his comments on an earlier draft of the paper. Thanks also to Haideh Moghissi, who directed me to pertinent literatures, and SSHRC for funding my doctoral research. I am further indebted to reviewers for their valuable insights.

ENDNOTES

1. My research participant's pseudonym is Nilofer Orange.
2. I conducted eight months of ethnographic fieldwork in Gilgit, northern Pakistan in 1999 and 2000. My research explores how disciplinary complexes that operate cross-culturally constitute the bodies and subjectivities of foreigners and locals in contemporary transcultural space. Specifically, I attempt to decipher how western women reproduce and legitimate imperialism as they negotiate their and "Other's" subjectivities in Gilgit. They do so, in part, by drawing on the Orientalist discourse of the passive, unidimensional Islamic "Woman." I write the paper to disrupt this discourse (in both practised and written form) and thereby undermine its imperialistic effects.
3. Khan eventually lost some of his credibility as the defender of women's rights during the 1965 election when he questioned the suitability of Fatima Jinnah's candidacy as the leader of the Combined Opposition Parties, arguing that a woman-headed Muslim state was un-Islamic.
4. Mehdi argues that most reported cases of rape in Pakistan, unlike those in the West, are perpetrated by men whom the victims do not know.
5. This less conspicuous intent of the Ordinance is echoed in other fundamentalist legislation based on the Shari'a which identifies women's rights under Islam (and consequently their social contribution) as claims to male guardianship, full care in the home, children, house-task education, and the honour of preserving Muslim culture. See Doumato, E. 1995.
6. See Mumtaz, K. and F. Shaheed (1987) for a complete list of the dates and actions taken by women against the Law of Evidence.

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