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The 7th EGEP Open Forum

변화를 만드는 아시아 여성연대

Voices from Asian Feminist Activism



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일시

2015년 1월 9일(금)~1월 10일(토) 09:30~17:10

January 9th (Fri) ~ 10th (Sat), 2015, 09:30~17:10

장소

이화여자대학교 LG 컨벤션홀(국제교육관 지하 1층)

LG Convention Hall, Ewha Womans University, Korea

The interpretation of Islamic teaching and the cycle of violence against women case: Aceh Indonesia

Host



이화여자대학교
EWA WOMANS UNIVERSITY

Organizer



이화여자대학교 아시아여성학센터
Asian Center for Women's Studies

Cooperating Agency





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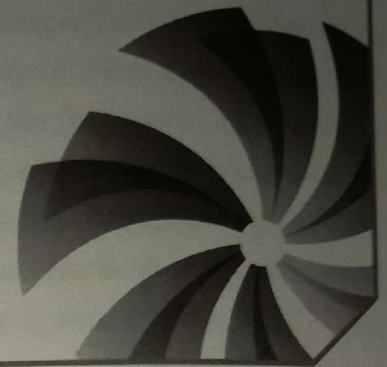
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PROGRAM		10 January 2015 (Saturday); 09:30~17:10
Time	Events	Contents
09:30~10:20	Special Lecture II	Moderator LEE Mi-Kyoung (Ewha Institute for Leadership Development) Transnational Feminisms and Women's Activism: Voices from Asian Feminist Activists Sylvia Estrada-CLAUDIO (University of the Philippines) Q&A
10:20~10:40		Break
10:40~12:00	Session 4: Gender Based Violence 1	Moderator MOON KyungRan (Human Rights Committee of Seoul Metropolitan Government) A Rape Survival: Continuous Victimization in Nepal Ritu THAPA (Nepal) Should the Victims of Sex Crimes Be Blamed for?: Implication of Sex Crimes in Metropolitan Subway Setting Liv Hyunjung SHIM (Korea) Patterns of Help-seeking among Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence in Malaysia Tengku Nur Fadzilah TENGKU HASSAN (Malaysia) Women's Activism in Timor-Leste Isabel M Marcal SEQUEIRA (East Timor) Q&A
12:00~14:00		Publication Party for "Our Voices"
14:00~15:20	Session 5: Gender Based Violence 2	Moderator KANG Minah (Ewha Womans University) Violence against Women in the Veil of Religion Saiqa AKBAR Babar (Pakistan) Domestic Violence against the Women PEMA DEMA (Bhutan) Love Crimes & Violence against Women in Afghanistan Somaya daughter of khoda bakhsh (Afghanistan) The Cause or The Cure: The Confusing Paradox of Sexual Violence against Lesbian, Bisexual (Women), and Female-to-Male Transgender in Indonesia Ayu Regina YOLANDASARI (Indonesia) The Interpretation of Islamic Teachings and the Cycle of Violence against Women in Case of Aceh RASYIDAH (Indonesia) Q&A
15:20~15:40		Coffee Break
15:40~17:10	Session 6: Gender Based Violence 3	Moderator LEE Gunjeong (Ewha Womans University) From Brokenness to Wholeness: A Holistic Care for Rape Survivors Sovannara MOCH (Cambodia) Institutional Arrangements to Address Violence against Women in Bangladesh Sabina SULTANA (Bangladesh) Ending VAW through Adoption of Good Practices/Models Flowra AKTAR (Bangladesh) Psychological Counselling for Garment Factory Workers of Sri Lanka Vidarshani Nadeesha PERERA-DESILVA (Sri Lanka) Unleashing the Taboo: Exploring Women's Experience of Barriers to Equality amongst Patients with Depression Nur Zafifa KAMARUNZAMAN (Malaysia) Q&A

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The Interpretation of Islamic Teachings and the Cycle of Violence against Women in Case of Aceh



RASYIDAH

Women Study Centre (PSW) UIN Ar-Raniry, *Indonesia*

Abstract

In this paper, I tried to explain our efforts to prevent gender based violence (GBV) against women in the local context of Aceh, Islamic context. Several studies have described that GBV against women gets legitimacy from the interpretation of Islamic teaching that developed by some religious leaders in Aceh. This interpretation then makes the cycle of gender based violence (GBV) against women that occurs over and over again, because the existing culture re-produce the perpetrators of GBV. This prevention efforts, have been getting resistance from religious groups and said women activists as a 'destroyer of Islam' and the destroyer of Aceh's local wisdom. For this, it is necessary to build a more strategic strategy to strengthen the perspective of religious leaders and Islamic learning group of women in the grass root with the new interpretations of Islamic teaching. The new interpretation on Islamic teaching which make sure that Islam is a peace religion and never teach on gender based violence.

Introduction

This paper starts with highlighting my anxiety after realizing that the circle that forms the chain of violence against women in Aceh is uninterrupted and there is no earnest effort to work against it. Thus, violence against women continues to occur because Acehnese culture supports it and continues to socialize the perpetrators of violence.

As one activist religion in society. I often meet women who have experienced violence from their husbands. They were physically injured as a result of the anger of the husband who does not like what his wife told him. In other cases, there is a wife who constantly is subjected to psychological violence from her husband because of differences in the way they worship. There is a husband who leaves his wife simply because of the assumption: his wife did not take care of him well because of preparing lunch late. Then there are husbands who forbid their wife to go out of the house even if they only want to interact with their neighbors. There are also some families that abuse wives so she cannot feel any comfort during her marriage, she can only feel fear. Ironically, all of the husband's behavior is justified with reasons related to Islamic law regarding the education of the wife who is under the power of the husband.

As a female activist and a researcher, I also received a variety of information about violence against women in society. There are cases of women where it was decided by consensus by the traditional leaders that she marry a certain man in a certain period of time as one of the conditions so that she could remarry her ex-husband in accordance with Islamic law. In some cases these provisions were undertaken by women due to feeling very tormented because they were powerless. There are also cases of people who outcast women rape victims and their families because they believe that the presence of the victim and her family in their village would bring disaster to all of the surrounding communities. In addition, there are also cases of youth who sexually abuse women because these women were arrested by the people for committing '*khalwat*' (seclusion). They called for sexual abuse as a sanction for women who commit seclusion. This case submitted by the victim's family to me, and it stunned me because of the various forms of violence against women that is prevalent in this society. These various forms of violence are linked to Islamic teaching.

Violence occurring in the family and in society is compounded by the attitude of the state. The West Aceh district has made regulations prohibiting slinky and tight trousers for women. This particular regulation arose numerous negative responses from Islamic groups and even Islamic scholars. These responses are getting stronger because of a variety of sanctions and coercion are being committed. In other districts in the North, the Mayor of Lhokseumawe City also has issued a ban on women sitting astride on a motorcycle. This ban did not last long, however, because of the

criticisms from the public and scholars. In other districts, there were aggressively executed raids related to veils or clothing. Importantly, the targets are usually women. Again, these kinds of things are also linked to Islamic teaching, in order to enforce Islamic Sharia in Aceh.

I love Islam with all of my soul, and I strongly believe that Islam does not allow violence against women to occur. Furthermore, Islam respects men and women based on their good deeds. On the other hand, it is important to ask, why are such acts of violence associated with Islam? This phenomenon makes me think there is a circular and continuous reason behind it and I suspect there is something wrong in our lives. Finally, I realized that: people's lives are continuing on a cycle that produces and legitimizes violence against women. This cycle relies on a biased interpretation of Islamic teachings. Importantly, Islam is an integral part for socio-cultural construction of the Acehnese.

In terms of the socio-cultural sphere, Aceh is a community that has Islamic cultural values. The values that exist in the community are considered relevant to Islamic teaching, the behavior is also measured with Islamic values, and cultural work should also be compatible with Islam. Thus, Islam becomes an important parameter to interpret the reality of people's lives. Religious leaders (*teungku*) become a very important part of people's lives because they provide religious knowledge and make decisions that are needed by society; they even guide the various religious and life rituals of their society. Unfortunately, most *teungku* who have influence in public life are developing a biased interpretation of Islamic teachings. They also contribute to the formation of the cycle of violence against women in Aceh. As a result, I want to focus on learning more about how these biased interpretations of Islamic teachings relate to the cycle of violence against women.

How the Interpretation of Islamic Teachings Can Cause the Cycle of Violence against Women

In this section, I will try to explain some of the biased interpretations of Islamic teachings. In addition, I will explain the social processes that cause these interpretations of Islamic teachings to become the driver for the cycle of violence against women. There are three concepts of Islamic teaching in particular that often get biased interpretations which affect the cycle of violence against women:

Al-Qur'an (An-Nisa' 34): "*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women....*" This verse is then translated by the people that men should be the leader in the household and in society. Therefore, women are not leaders both at home and in the community. This verse is often used to legitimately

reject women's leadership. In the domestic sphere, the meaning of the word 'leader' extends into the ruler who should be respected, listened to, not blamed, and is the main regulator of family decisions. As a result, there are cases of violence that occur because many husbands are angry when they are advised by their wives or the husband was caught doing wrong. Often, the physical violence that occurs is because the husband is an educator who needs to physically punish his wife.

In fact, there is another interpretation of this verse which is to give protection to the wife of the family. The background of this verse is as an answer to the complaint of a few women to the Prophet Muhammad because they experienced spousal violence. Prophet Muhammad, as a model for Muslims, is a figure that is gentle to the family. Thus, the function of a leader is intended by this verse is to provide security and protection, not lead in the context of a ruler.

→ power Relation →

Hadith: "Women are the pillar of the state, if good then let the state and if broken then corrupted the country." This hadith is actually speaking of the glory and the potential of women, but in reality, it is understood as a moral standard. Thus, women are often treated as a goal of moral improvement, assuming that the state would be destroyed if the women's character is damaged. This understanding also influences certain policies, which are related to the application of rules about women's clothes, the tight trousers ban and the prohibition of women sitting astride when on the motorcycle. Related to family relationships, it is implemented in terms of the strict supervision of the way girls dress, their social interaction and attitude. It also appears in the justification expressed by perpetrators of sexual abuse, "that women's sexual harassment as a result of her bad behavior or dress that is not according to the teachings of Islam."

Hadith: "Wife's Heaven is under the feet of the husband." This hadith often spoken by religious leaders in various forums, on the advice of marriage. It is very popular in the community. This hadith is interpreted that the wife should be submissive and obedient to her husband. Whether wives go to heaven or not, will depend on how they please their husband. In fact, if understood directly, the contents of this hadith is contrary to the principle of marriage in the Qur'an which states that the family is a place that gives peace to the husband and wife, is built with good interaction, to make each other happy. In terms of clothing, the wife is to dress for her husband and the husband is to dress for his wife too. With this conflict, the substance of the argument can be understood as it could be that the strength of this hadith is weak in terms of its origin, or the hadith only explains a particular case or it has a connotative meaning, but is not a generalization.

The three concepts above are only a small part of other Islamic teachings that are interpreted in a biased way by religious leaders. Then, it is important to see how Islamic teaching flows into Acehese culture, which can be seen in the following points:

Most of the traditional studies of the sources of Islamic teachings produce the biased interpretations in regards to the relation of women and men.

As a result, the biased interpretations of Islamic teachings are continuously socialized at all levels of different generations through education in schools, Islamic boarding schools (*dayah*), non-formal groups in the community as the place to learn about Islam for children (*tempat beut*), study groups in the community (*majlis taklim*), and traditional arts activities.

Then, these biased interpretations have been socialized to affect the relationships of women and men in society. Women become second-class citizens, their opinions represented by men. In addition, women experience marginalization, and less access to welfare. Women are also not allowed to be community leaders. Furthermore, rape victims are expelled from communities because they are believed to be a bad influence for rural public safety.

The biased interpretations also shape the minds of policy makers who target women for regulation.

Then, the biased interpretations establish the concept of unequal families in which the husband is the leader and ruler and his wife is follower with the connotation that she must serve. So, the ideal wife in this context, is obedient and does not argue, does not fight back and waits even if she is abused. While the husband is expected to be able to enforce the law in the family and should not to succumb to his wife. In some contexts, 'educate' is often interpreted with violence, even hitting and injuring is also interpreted as under the category of 'educate.'

Finally, an unequal relationship in the family, society, policy, the various processes of interaction and education, and the shaping of parents leads to the formation of a dominant hegemonic masculinity. Boys grow up to be adult males who inherit the attitude and behavior that leads to violence against women. Some of them will be religious leaders, educators, policy makers and take part in the community and the family and so on. This cycle continuous to keep spinning and creating the new perpetrators of violence.

Thus, the cycle of violence against women continues to get stronger from the biased interpretations of Islamic teachings. These interpretations are then socialized through various activities that disseminate Islam, forming vulnerable families that become a place of violence, building social behaviors which maintain the violence and influencing policies that put women as targets. All of this being a comprehensive guide to parenting which upholds the construction of the dominant hegemonic masculinity. This means that the community will be a factory that always creates perpetrators of violence against women.

Breaking 'the Cycle' of Violence against Women

The phenomenon of violence against women receives legitimacy from biased interpretations of Islamic teachings which are socialized and internalized through Islamic activities. Some friends and I at PSW are trying to break the cycle of violence against women. Initially, we tried to focus on a three-point approach. First, through changing the perspectives of *tengku* who created the biased interpretations of Islamic teachings. Second, influencing the discourse surrounding equality in the university as this is the institution which produces policy makers. Third, strengthening the *majlis taklim* as a place of learning and support group for mothers in the Aceh Community.

However, this approach is not easy to implement as it means relying on the assumption that the *tengku* who have many followers in the community misinterpret Islamic teaching. In addition, this will not be easy because it would lead to resistance from the *tengku* and their communities. Moreover, women activists who speak out are also considered to have been misguided, secular, and have become Western agents. Nevertheless, there is always a chance. I personally have, several times, expressed my beliefs about gender relations from the Islamic perspective forums attended by *tengku*. Most of them have open minds, and are surprised to find out new understandings and immediately express their regret. Although, there is also resistance in the forums, where the women's movement agenda is refused, of course, by using the biased interpretations of Islamic teachings. We have also held a meeting for the rector-rector in Aceh, to introduce the link between the learning in university and the emergence of violence against women. In our society, we will strengthen *majlis taklim* as a learning forum and group support to prevent violence against women.

Sustainable Prevention: Breaking the Cycle through Dayah, Family and Majlis Taklim

After three years of trying to focus on colleges, *majlis taklim*, and the perspectives of the *teungku*, I think we need an adjustment to our focus which needs to be more interconnected. There are the *dayah* which produce *tengku*, *majlis taklim* for women in society and strengthening the *family institution*. However, it is not easy. For example, the *dayah* are Islamic educational institutions that are attached to people's lives and have its own sanctity. What's more, it is difficult to get support for the prevention of violence against women through enlightenment *dayah*, strengthening *majlis taklim* and family. There is only partial and incremental progress without continuity. Therefore, we need an earnest effort to run it. Some important notes that need to be considered are:

Establish Islamic interpretations that have equal perspectives at educational institutions and the

dayah. Approaching the dayah should be done by the dayah's alumni who have a good perspective of the protection of women. Furthermore, since the hierarchy of policy makers in dayah is predominantly male, it will be more effective if the companion dayah also male. Approaches to the dayah begins with strategic dayah, which is referred to by another dayah as a role model. There is a need to strengthen the writing of Islamic reference to dayah with equal perspectives, which is usually in Arabic and it is known as the 'Yellow Book.' The approaches should never be confrontational, because the dayah have a high resistance to women's issues.

The family is one of the institutions that determine the socialization of perpetrators of violence or peace actors. Then, it is important to reinforce equality in relationships within the household which will create the potential to form peace actors. Further, it is important to start focusing on mentoring men in the family. This is important because various activities are still in the form of women's awareness efforts. Thus, future efforts need to influence changes in the behavior of men. A very important approach is to use an Islamic approach as it is more easily accepted.

Majlis taklim is the only place of learning for women in Aceh society. As a result, what is the syllabus includes will affect their understanding of society and themselves. If these religious studies involved the biased interpretations, then this is precisely what they will learn. During this time, it became a way to disseminate Islamic teachings conveyed by the *tengku*. *Majlis Taklim* also help the *tengku*'s thoughts be closer to the community. No wonder, what is growing in the community is biased understanding.

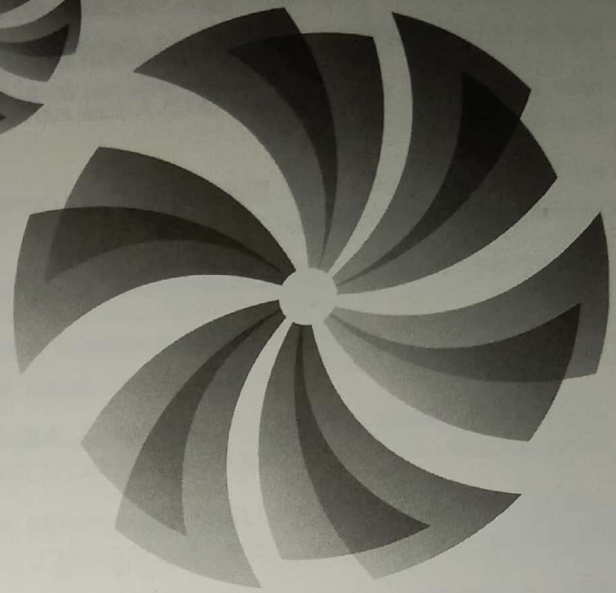
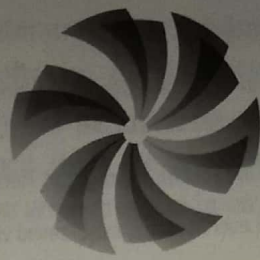
Conclusion

In conclusion: The Dayah produce *tengku* that have equal perspectives, and have developed it through *majlis taklim*. In addition, the *majlis taklim* will educate individuals who intend to build tequal relationships in their family. Moreover, the *Majlis taklim* can also network to support its members. Essentially, these three aspects should be approached simultaneously as they are related and complementary.

- pretty diverse but not to contradict

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Asian Center for Women's Studies
Ewha Womans University

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