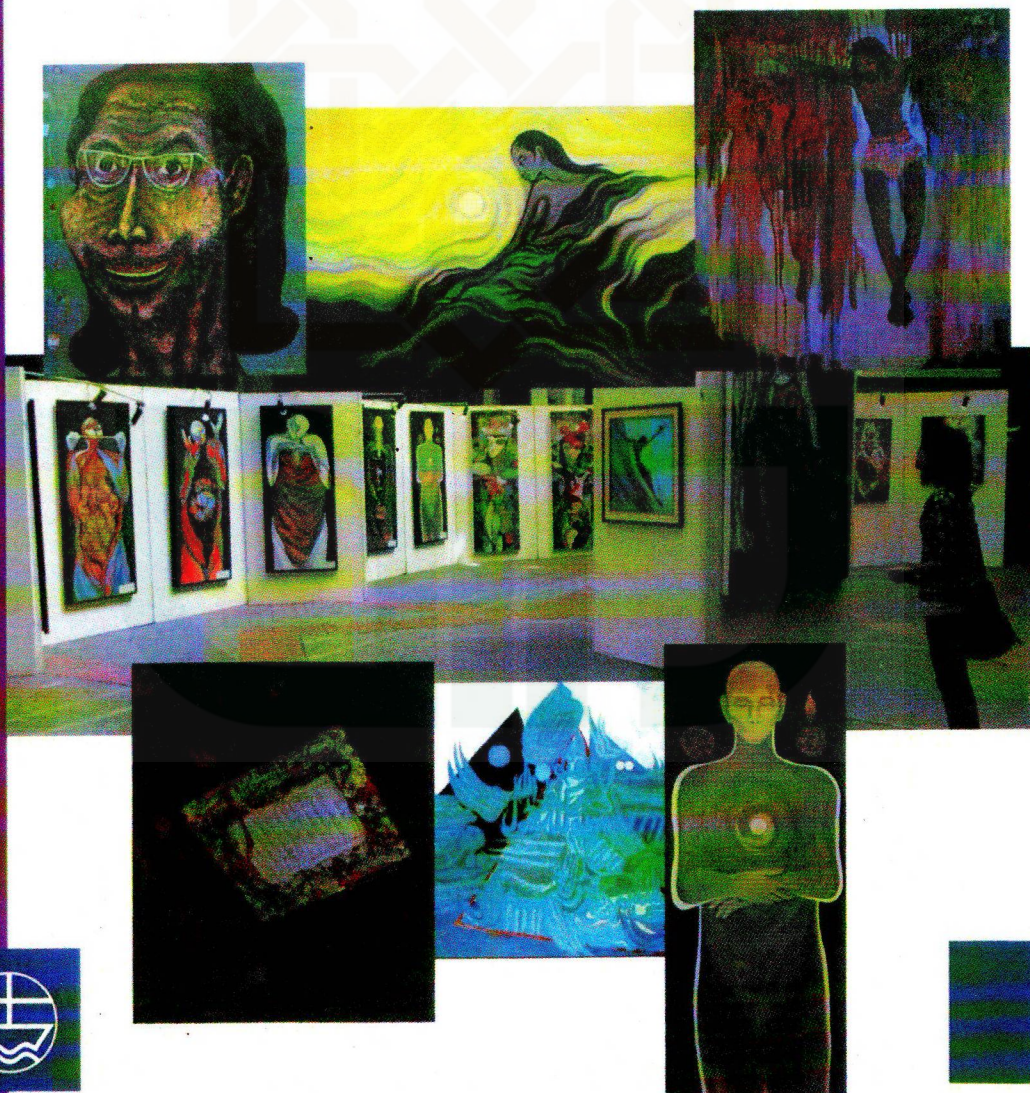


Volker Küster, Robert Setio (Eds.)

Muslim Christian Relations Observed

Comparative Studies from Indonesia and the Netherlands



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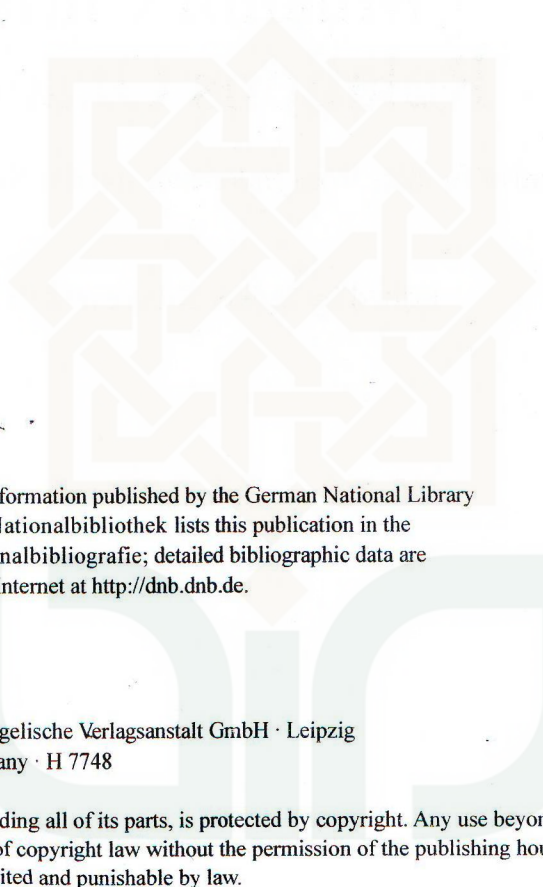
Comparative Studies from Indonesia and the Netherlands

Edited by Volker Küster and Robert Setio



EVANGELISCHE VERLAGSANSTALT
Leipzig

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Introduction

Volker Küster and Robert Setio

The Indonesian Dutch Consortium on Muslim-Christian Relations is in a certain sense a grass root initiative. Its foundations were laid at a meeting between representatives of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) under the leadership of its mission organization *Kerk in Actie* (KIA) and the Indonesian Council of Churches in Kaliurang, the retreat center of Duta Wacana Christian University (UKDW) in the vicinity of Yogyakarta (6-8 October 2010). During the discussions about future cooperation Muslim-Christian relations were identified as one of the target areas if it comes to theological issues. PERSERTIA, the umbrella organization of the theological schools in Indonesia, chaired by Robert Setio, was co-opted on the spot. In the Netherlands the Protestant Theological University (PThU) as the official body of theological training for the pastors of the PKN was invited for cooperation. Finally colleagues from the Free University in Amsterdam (VU) and the Radboud University in Nijmegen (RUN) came aboard.

In some preliminary meetings between the editors in Yogyakarta and later with some of the Dutch participants in Utrecht, five sub-themes were agreed upon: *Identity, Religion and State, Gender, Hermeneutics* and *Theology of Dialogue*. A first consultation was held in Kampen on May 23-24, 2011 bringing together most of the Dutch participants in the research project with an Indonesian delegation. A crucial issue at this meeting was the controversial Islam nota that had recently been discussed at the synod of the PKN and was supposed to be revised in the light of the reactions of international partner churches. The major conference again took place in Kaliurang (March 26-30, 2012). The opening ceremony was celebrated on the UKDW campus

in Yogya. The exhibition "Dialogue through the Arts" that was held in conjunction with the consortium meeting in the university court yard bringing together Christian and Muslim artists also inspired the music and dance performance prepared by lecturers and students of Duta Wacana. A cultural exposure program further introduced the participants to the rich cultural life of Java. The Indonesian hospitality alone made the conference an unforgettable experience.

The genuine feature of the consortium is that it brought together not only Christian academics from the Netherlands and Indonesia, which is already an accomplishment in itself but also Muslim academics from both countries as well as social activists, Christian and Muslim alike. While what is published here is the academic output, the impact of the conference has therefore been much broader. The present publication is organized into five parts following the subthemes identified at the very beginning of the journey. Each section has an individual introduction by its chair person. The book has attracted attention already before its publication. It is hoped that this initiative will be carried on.

While reading the last proofs of the manuscript the editors were reached by the sad news that Prof. Dr. Henk Vroom, one of the founding members of the consortium, passed away. Many of his colleagues in the Netherlands and Indonesia will remember his tireless engagement for interreligious dialogue.

The editors, who have had the pleasure of coordinating the endeavor since its inauguration, wish to sincerely thank Corie van der Ven from KIA for her support not only in financial matters. The PThU has covered logistic costs like airfares and hosted the preparatory consultation. The other participating Dutch Universities have also supported their representatives financially. Locherfonds and Stichting Zonneweelde have made this publication possible. We finally thank Dr. Annette Weidhas from the *Evangelische Verlagsanstalt* in Leipzig for the fast and uncomplicated realization of our first common project.

Parental Role in the Education of Children

This chapter discusses the various roles and instructions that come from parents.

Generations of parents in the so-called Persian school is a school of education, having the role of a wife of a king, the wife of a professor. Her power is really advised to her. The role of the students and the teachers is to observe and in fact reflect an individual more sensitive and in detail to their autonomy they can be in a position to be able to make judgments for appropriate decisions and to be able to set the tone for the relationship between the student and the professor.

Parents and mostly kin are key actors in the education of school leaders and teachers. They also play a role in the basic values and concepts that are transmitted to their students in public and private schools.

Identity



Potential for Women Leaders of Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) in Promoting Gender-Inclusive Education

Emma Marhumah

This chapter discusses the role of women leaders in the *pesantren* and looks at the various forms of hegemonic power exercised within these institutions that obstruct models of gender-inclusive education in *pesantren*.

Generations of Indonesian Muslim leaders have been trained in the so-called *Pesantren*: Islamic boarding schools. The head of such a school is a scholar of Islam called a *kiai* and is fully in charge of the institution, holding the final authority in all matters. Oftentimes the wife of a *kiai*, the *nyai*, is in charge of the women's education of a *pesantren*. Her position, however, is not equal to that of the *kiai* as she equally submits to his final authority. When considering the formation of the students and the distribution of knowledge and power within the *pesantren*, we observe that the high level of authority held by the *kiai* in fact reflects an imbalance in power. Firstly, male students follow more extensive and in-depth curricula, which means that in terms of religious authority they gain higher positions. Secondly, the gender discourse in *pesantren* becomes heavily male-dominated, creating the regular standards for normative conduct and behavior. Furthermore, it sets the tone for the relationships between male and female students in the *pesantren*.

Nyai and mostly *kiai* are key figures in *pesantren*. They not only act as school leaders and teachers, they play important roles in modeling Islamic values and concepts. They serve as role models and guide their students in public and personal matters alike. The relation be-

tween *kiai* and *nyai* with their students (*santri*) is governed by a religious spirit and the students are not only expected to obey and follow the *kiai* or *nyai*'s instructions, but also their advice, such as whom to marry. This type of relationship gives the *kiai* as well as the *nyai* a powerful position from which to convey their norms and values to the students.

Education in the *pesantren* furthermore has a sacred value, transmitting certain models of Islamic authority, and the values, rituals, and symbols that are accepted in its related communities. Their educational materials are laden with references to truth, correct modes of morality, and authority structures.

In their capacity as second most important person in those schools, *nyais* can play foundational roles in introducing models of gender-inclusive education into the curricula of *pesantren*. When given positions equal to those of the *kiai*, they would gain the opportunity and authority to promote gender awareness and create non-discriminatory gender relations within the *pesantren*. Such proactive initiatives would not only change the mindset of scores of future leaders of Islam, but also contribute to vibrant gender discourses in contemporary Islamic thought. Furthermore it would equip the male students in *pesantren* with gender-sensitive knowledge that they can apply to the traditional Islamic disciplines of learning.

Considering the power imbalance between male and female leaders and students in the *pesantren*, we observe that *kiais* as well as *nyais* are in positions to change and support an inclusive gender discourse. Not only can they raise the students' awareness on gender issues and promote gender equality in their religious teachings, they can also model this type of equality within their own relation and in the way they govern the *pesantren*.

1. Obstacles for women leaders in the *pesantren* to achieve inclusive education

Since early 2000, the Indonesian government has introduced the so-called "Gender Mainstreaming" policy aimed at increasing women's participation in all parts of society. It is supported by almost all governmental institutions, and nowadays women's involvement in all aspects of life has become a center-stage issue. Among other goals the government aims at fulfilling a quota to fill 30% of the seats in Parliament with women and encourages public and private institutions to

follow suit. Gender mainstreaming has even influenced the educational systems of the *pesantren*.

Arguably, gender-inclusive education is a new idea for the *pesantren* and some have shown fierce resistance to it. Some even created a controversy, claiming that such forms of education are Western models and not rooted in the Islamic tradition. However, the issue of inclusive education, which has given male and female students equal opportunities to obtain an education and become members of a *pesantren* community, is supported by gender sensitivity awareness, which is critical of the cultural bias that has long existed within the *pesantren*.

Since the early 1970s, historians, sociologists, political scientists, linguists, as well as anthropologists have researched the phenomenon of *pesantren*. However, gender issues as an aspect of social life in the *pesantren* have hardly received any attention until recently. During the 1980s, Zamakhsyari Dhofier conducted the first comprehensive research on *pesantren*. As the title shows, *Study on World View of Kiai*, Dhofier focused on the position and role of *kiais* in developing the social-religious life of the *pesantren*. In *pesantren*, the *kiai* had become the single authoritative person who was supported by a network of kinship and the intellectual and symbolic power across *pesantrens* and across generations. Meanwhile the *nyai* did not have a significant place in the discussion of *pesantren* as a whole.

The limited attention given to women and the focus on the dominant male figures of the *kiai* and the *ustaz* (teacher) in the *pesantren* discourse point to a blind spot concerning gender sensitivity in the early studies on this educational institution. Before 2000, the three main underlying research assumptions seem to have been that a *pesantren* is a social institution created, run, and developed by men with the *kiai* and his multiple *ustaz* as the key figures. Furthermore, the position and role of women in the *pesantren* was regarded as less important, subordinate or at times as irrelevant. Finally, it was assumed that the *pesantren* education did not have any substantial social, cultural, or political impact on the lives of their female students. Even if such an impact was apparent, it was not deemed important in the wider socio-religious context.

This imbalance in available material was corrected when in 2003 a study appeared focusing on the role of the *nyai* in the *pesantren*. The research details the experiences of a *nyai* who supports her husband in

managing a *pesantren* on Java.¹ The author, Faiqah, investigates in particular the *nyai*'s role in the traditionally domestic and public division of labor, emphasizing her economic, social and educational contributions. The research concludes that a *nyai* plays an important role in keeping the *pesantren* sustainable as an educational institution by creating innovations in learning methods (272f., 347). These findings contradict previous assumptions that women lack agency when influencing the dynamic of *pesantren* life.

Currently research on the role of women in the *pesantren* is still too limited to construct a conceptual map of social interactions in the *pesantren* based on gender. In principle, a hierarchical structure rules the *pesantren* with the *kiai* in the top position that defines all relationships between him, the students, and the other teachers.² Being the final authority, the *kiai* is considered to be the main actor who directs the social dynamics within the *pesantren*. Meanwhile, students are placed at the bottom of the hierarchical structure and strive to move up the ladder to become a *kiai* and one day open their own *pesantren*.³ In this process, the student is assumed to be male.

The limited literature that is available about the topic interprets the role and position of the *nyai* in the *pesantren* in relation to this hierarchical model as in general she has a lower position and exercises less power than the *kiai*. The status and position of a *nyai* is determined by her position as the wife of a *kiai*, who in certain cases she was forced to marry. Several studies report cases where the *nyai*'s parents forced her to marry a *kiai* in order to strengthen family relationships.⁴ However, some studies focus on the important role the *nyai* plays in the *pesantren* general and religious education.⁵ In some cases,

¹ Faiqah, *Nyai Agen Perubahan di Pesantren*, Jakarta 2003.

² Chumaidi Syarief Romas, *Kekerasan Kerajaan Surgawi*, Yogyakarta 2003, 27. Romas did not say that all *pesantren* had a rigid hierarchical structure and were patriarchal. He also compared hierarchic structures within various *pesantren* ranging from conservative to more horizontal models that helped monitor and limit the *kiai*'s authority (cf. 39).

³ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Panandang Hidup Kiai*, Jakarta, 1986, 52f. and 82.

⁴ Faiqah, *Nyai Agen Perubahan*, 307 and Martin van Bruinessen and Farid Wajidi, "Syu'un ijtima'iyah and the *kiai* rakyat: Traditionalist Islam, civil society and social concerns", http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/let/2007-0312-083048/bruinessen_06_syuunijtimaiyahandth ekiairakyat.pdf. 2007, accessed 11/04/08, 34f.

⁵ Faiqah, *Op cit.*, 272; Van Bruinessen and Wajidi, *Syu'un*, *Op cit.*, 35; and Masruchah and Briget Keenan, Working from Within: Using the Legitimacy of Religion to Create Change in Indonesia, in: Geentanjali and Chandimarani (eds), *Sexuality, Gender and Rights: Exploring Theory and Practice in South and Southeast Asia*, New Delhi and London 2005, 175.

a *nyai* also leads the *pesantran*⁶ and has gained the authority to interpret religious teaching.⁷ Nevertheless, in general as teacher, interpreter and leader of the *pesantran*, a *nyai* tends to interact with female students only.

2. Hegemony of power obstructing Islamic forms of gender-inclusive education

As I have shown so far, gender-inclusive education in the majority of *pesantran* faces tremendous barriers due to the persistent imbalance in power between the *kiai* and the *nyai*. This imbalance is not only based on gender, but also on knowledge. Following Foucault, there is a connection between power and knowledge perpetuated by the forms of education in this religious institution. Various mechanisms within *pesantran* education create gender-biased power structures: behavioral requirements based on certain values and disciplinary actions applied when these value codes are broken;⁸ a strict adherence to authoritarian values, sets of rituals, symbolic actions and the supremacy of certain forms of truth that are strongly influenced by cultural codes;⁹ adherence to these truths leading to certain degrees of cultural control¹⁰ and resulting in the institutionalization of norms that hold up certain figures and beliefs as ultimate.¹¹ Thus gender-biased education can become one of the strategies and mechanisms that keep certain individuals in power.¹²

These patterns of *pesantran* education lead to what Foucault has called a *discourse* intermingled with power; certain sets of messages, discourses, values, norms, beliefs and moral models underpin the construction of a gender ideology.¹³ Therefore, all ideas, teachings, messages and forms of understanding on women and men in a society are

⁶ Faiqah, *Nyai Agen Perubahan*, 178.

⁷ Masruchah and Keenan, *Working from Within*, 175.

⁸ D.A. Rosenthaland and S.S. Feldman, The acculturation of Chinese immigrants: effects on family functioning of length of residence in two cultural contexts, in: *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 4, 1990, 495-514.

⁹ Aziz Talbani and Parven Hasanali, Adolescent females between tradition and modernity: gender role socialization in South Asian immigrant culture, in: *Journal of Adolescence* 23, 2000, 519-644, 616.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ J.S. Hirstand L. Thomas, Introduction: Playing for Real: Hindu Role Models, Religion and Gender, in: Hirstand Thomas (eds), *Playing for Real: Hindu Role Models, Religion and Gender*, Oxford 2004, 2f.

¹² Aziz Talbani and Parven Hasanali, Adolescent female, 616.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*, 1978, 100.

indirect manifestations of power. Knowledge is constructed by certain regimes of power, and works in tandem with the ruling elite. According to Foucault:

Power operates knowledge continuously and vice versa, knowledge assumes a form of implication and power. ...Knowledge and power are integrated and there is no moment in one period of time where knowledge will lose its dependency to power.¹⁴

Since power enables knowledge to form a social reality, the power relation among social actors always creates an arena of knowledge.¹⁵

Referring to this framework developed by Foucault, education as a socialization process, including inclusive education in *pesantren*, is a process of production and reproduction of gender discourses that reflect certain power relations. The domination of certain gender discourse in the *pesantren* is the manifestation of a power relation where one group of agents dominates the other group of agents. Conversely, the power structure in the *pesantren* serves as the explanation of a certain dominant gender discourse. This discourse in turn regulates and normalizes all actions, behaviors and gender relations among the *pesantren* community members.

3. The role of women leaders in gender-inclusive education in *pesantren*

Kiai and *nyai* have the power to change or support the gender discourses that are currently being created in the *pesantren*. They can raise the students' awareness about gender issues and support gender equality in religious teachings, for example, by monitoring the types of religious textbooks that are being used. *Kiai* and *nyai* can also strengthen their commitment to teaching the values of gender equality by their personal behavior and by the way they carry out their daily duties.

They can influence all decisions that regulate the lives of the students, in the school, as well as in the dorms. They can even intervene in decisions taken by some of the *pesantren*'s governing bodies. Decisions taken by the managing bodies will acquire the status of legal power if the *kiai* and *nyai* have given their approval. In summary: the *kiai* and *nyai*'s role in creating models of gender-inclusive education

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, C. Gordon (ed.), Brighton 1980, 52.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth 1977, 27.

is vital; they can strengthen negative as well as positive gender stereotypes.

Those teaching in the *pesantren* have various degrees of involvement ranging from major, to moderate, to minimalist. The major role is played by the *kiai* who holds the highest authority in the *pesantren*. As the school's owner, he makes the most strategic decisions and teaches the main religious classes to both male and female students. None of the *nyai* holds this high position, not even if they function as associate to the *kiai* (*badal*). The moderate role is held by *kiai* and *nyai* who are in leadership and decision-making positions in the *pesantren*, but are neither involved in the daily learning process, nor do they interact directly with students. Most of them are young, junior *kiai* and *nyai*. Meanwhile, those holding a minimalist role do not take part in any decision-making processes.

As I mentioned earlier the dominant gender discourse in a *pesantren* reflects an ideological truth system that is adopted and applied by the school's community, specifically the students. It is enforced in various ways, often involving a mechanism to discipline students' behaviors and attitudes. According to my observation, methods of regulating the behavior of students include: written sets of rules to maintain order within the school; speeches and sermons that convey certain values, norms and accepted modes of behavior; religious threats and sanctions when students violate the prescribed ethical, cultural and moral codes. Furthermore, there are numerous unwritten rules concerning modes of behavior and habits that are considered acceptable or unacceptable within *pesantren*. The disciplinary process also takes place within the personal relation between *kiai* or teacher and students and by monitoring the students' learning progress. Interfering in the academic achievement and learning progress in a *pesantren* is also a way of disciplining students, because in this process, students are asked to accept, understand and comprehend certain gender models and ideologies. Finally, the schedule of sermons and rituals inside the *pesantren* by itself can serve as a mechanism to discipline students, providing certain routines that lead to specific goals.

At the same time, students have to obey the ever-present demands in respecting authority, values, rituals, symbols and certain truths that are upheld in the *pesantren*.

Conclusion

Gender inclusive education in the *pesantren* should emphasize the position and role of the nyai. If given opportunities and the necessary platforms, *nyais* can play important roles in promoting ideas of gender equality. Especially when her position is equal to that of the *kiai*, non-discriminatory gender relations can emerge in the closed off world of the *pesantren*. This essay attempts to address several issues concerning gender inclusive education in the *pesantren*. It is clear that the mindset in the *pesantren* concerning structures of power and authority that influence the gender discourse needs to change. In order for this effort to succeed, all those present in a *pesantren* should be addressed, including the *kiai*, *nyai* and teachers, as well as the associates or *badal*. When dealing with the problems of women today, we need new understandings about gender relations based on Islamic values. By using historical analysis, as well as by referring to the traditional disciplines, the entire *pesantren* community can become more sensitive towards women's issues and understand contemporary gender issues. In order to create a more dynamic and open-minded atmosphere, all students in the *pesantren* should be involved. Furthermore, alternative studies on gender and Islam need to be added to the curriculum. There is a need for a model of understanding gender in Islam that can accommodate traditional gender concepts that are compatible with and draw from Islamic teaching. Mining the Islamic tradition will help the male leaders, especially the *kiai*, to become familiar with new ideas about gender and prevent them from feeling threatened by the new mindsets. Among others, the Sunnite tradition of the *Ahlu Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* needs to be reinterpreted in order to infuse it with principles of gender. This is an exercise that is already starting at the Islamic universities all over Indonesia. After all, the issue of "gender streamlining" has taken center stage throughout the country and its strategic plans as set forth by the Ministry for Women's Empowerment can encourage traditional institutions such as the *pesantren* to accept learning about contemporary issues that affect and influence the life of women.

When the authoritative bodies and teachers in the *pesantren* have become more sensitive towards gender issues, we need to introduce gender-inclusive teaching models, followed by gender-sensitive management models. Lastly, there is a need to develop learning models that are dialogical and discursive which will create a more open culture of dialogue among students, *kiai*, *nyai* and teachers. These ap-

proaches will help students to learn how to express and articulate their points of view. Needless to say, the government can assist in each of these steps as it concerns the education of an important part of Indonesia's population and the future of Islamic leaders.



The Indonesian Dutch Consortium on Muslim-Christian Relations brought together academics, intellectuals as well as social activists from both countries, Christian and Muslim alike. While what is published here is the academic output, the impact of the consortium has therefore been much broader. The contributions are organized according to five generative themes: Identity, Religion and State, Gender, Hermeneutics and Theology of Dialogue. The book has attracted attention already before its publication. It is hoped that this project will inspire continuous efforts for interreligious dialogue.

»This interdisciplinary and comparative study of Muslim Christian relations in Indonesia and the Netherlands is a truly amazing collaborative effort. It provides rich empirical data, gender analysis, hermeneutical insights, and theological arguments that attend to the complexities on the ground and go far deeper than books I have read on interreligious dialogue. I highly recommend it.«

Kwok Pui-lan, Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at The Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA and author of Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology

»This is a very concrete, spirited and inspiring book! More than 25 mostly young scholars, Muslims and people from various Christian denominations, do not approach the old dichotomy between Pancasila versus the Islamic State, but discuss the micro-level: concrete observations how relations work (or not) outside political and religious authority. With a good deal of female authors and interest for the role of women.«

Karel Steenbrink, Prof. em. of Intercultural Theology, University of Utrecht (IIMO) and editor of A History of Christianity in Indonesia

»The impact of this fascinating book goes far beyond its focus on Muslim-Christian relations in Indonesia and the Netherlands: with strong impulses for both, dialogical practice in other contexts, e.g. Germany, and for research like ours on dialogical theology and interreligious dialogue in modern societies.«

Prof. Dr. Katajun Amirpur & Prof. Dr. Wolfram Weisse, Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg



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