

‘Indigenous Feminisms’ as Locations Of Development? Theorizing *habitus* and Collective Action for Change in Diverse Chinese Muslim Contexts

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I am glad to join my colleagues from the WEMC project in a joint presentation of our work so far. This coming session, following on from an introduction of the central WEMC Research Framework (RF) in the introductory session, will demonstrate our respective engagement with different aspects of the RF, reflecting our different academic and activist backgrounds, our disciplines and methodologies. But it is the inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary work of our Consortium that makes our conversations exciting.

I am commencing the session with reflections on the notion of ‘the indigenous’ which is both a central but also an elusive concept in our thinking about conditions, facilitation and obstructions of empowerment processes in the various Muslim contexts which constitute our ‘sites’ of action/research.

Given the time constraints¹, I shall confine myself to

- (1) presenting the intellectual and scholarly discourses on indigenous feminism against which the RF must be evaluated,
- (2) comparing such conceptualizations with formulations to be found in the WEMC RF (see *Women empowering themselves. A framework that interrogates and transforms*),
- (3) and illustrating through our work on China’s Muslim contexts how the discourses on indigenous feminism are implicated in projects of state and community formation, requiring sensitive and nuanced interpretations of how women’s indigenous strategies might be seen as either complicit in, or subversive of, religious and secular patriarchal strategies of legitimization of the status quo.

SCHOLARLY DISCOURSES

Whilst historically the term ‘indigenous’ in relation to theoretical or activist feminism has been most often used in conjunction with ‘aboriginal’ women, the term has been re-appropriated by all those who seek to challenge oppressive stereotypes. In Katherine Bullock’s words, such feminism seeks ‘to fashion an indigenous model that does not hold the West as its ideal model’ (p. xxii).²

Importantly in feminist anthropology and history, the question had become: ‘How can we liberate ourselves from this dual hegemony [that is, the colonial/neocolonial hegemony of the West and patriarchal hegemony]?’ [Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi (Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East Through Voice and Experience)].

First, in what Katherine Bullock calls the ‘contextual approach, voices and experiences are the critical tools with which to uncover women’s silenced agency. Patriarchal hegemony is dismantled from within, by the women themselves, inspiring feminist scholars to seek to ‘understand the meaning of a social practice from the inside’ (p.xvii). Such indigenous feminism is without any *ism*, with core meanings derived from everyday social practice (the everyday life experience of women).

¹ This presentation is part of a more comprehensive research paper in progress, intended as contributing to WEMC publications.

² Katherine Bullock (2002) *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil. Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes*. London: The International Institute of Islamic Thoughts.

Secondly, indigenous feminism stands for the **reclaiming of tradition** which denies patriarchal monopoly over interpretation of core sources of religious faith and gendered identity. Mai Yamani characterized these ‘new feminist traditionalists’ (Yamani, ‘Introduction’ p.11)³ as capable of flexible thinking and alternative readings of core scriptures. Such feminism brings with it rejection of Western role models, with women assuming ‘a much more prominent role in interpretation of the basic sources of Islam’. In a recent address to a meeting in Malaysia, the very contemporary voice of the Iranian anthropologist Ziba Mir Hosseini formulates this as such: ‘Secular feminism [i.e. Western feminism] has fulfilled its historical role, but it has nothing more to give us. The challenge we face now is theological.’⁴

Thirdly, in the writing of Fatma Müge Göçek, Shiva Balaghi and others, [here moving close to the WEMC RF], indigenous Feminism stands for a **recapturing of the agency of hegemonized women** muted by a dual hegemony [colonial/neocolonial hegemony of West and patriarchal hegemony].⁵ Their theory holds that by bringing together a ‘historicised’ everyday experience (as feminist theory suggests) and a critique of underlying relations of power (Marx and Engels) can the ‘allegedly elusive agency of the oppressed, the hegemonized’ be revealed (F.M. Göçek and S. Balaghi, p.2). Women’s voices and experiences, this approach holds, are deeply embedded in the normative realities and political status quo transmitted and reified in core concepts such as *tradition, identity and power*. Only in the problematization of everyday life can the dismantling of social power be accomplished – experience unfiltered simply reproduces constraints and coercive power which underlie relations of ruling (reference is to Dorothy Smith’s work).

Moving to yet another scholarly discourse. Here ‘Indigenous Feminism’ is conceived as a locus of progress or of alternative modernity. Critical of Western modernization theory and its assumptions that Western modernization created the sole pathway to progress and modernity, the ‘indigenous’ is located in ‘alternative geographies of modernities’ (a term which comes from Rob Shields).⁶ Women’s ‘habitus’⁷ contains the promise of ‘alternative modernity’ and of the transformative potential by which the indigenous becomes the ‘feminist progressive.’ This is the argument of Sarab Abu Rabia-Queder, an Israeli Bedouin anthropologist of development.⁸ Her criticism of Western modernization theory on women is a critique of modern enlightenment models which, she

³ Ed by Mai Yamani (1996) *Feminism and Islam. Legal and Literary Perspectives*. Reading: Ithaca Press.

⁴ *International Herald Tribune*, Sabrina Tavernise, ‘Malaysia – Muslim Women Hold Conference for Equality.’ <http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/16/asia/women.php>.

⁵ Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi eds, (1994) *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East. Tradition, Identity, and Power*. New York: Columbia University Press

⁶ Rob Shields (1999) *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London: Routledge.

⁷ The notion of ‘habitus’ is an important building block of social theory and pertinent to our work in China (and elsewhere). Bordieu’s theory, so Olsen and Neff write, explains how people are complicit in their own intimidation. It allows us to think about ‘indigenous feminism’ not as residing inert, unmovable, parochial and passive but as *dynamic* and defined in relation to patriarchal structures of control. Bordieu’s theory of ‘habitus’ as a set of acquired thought, practices, preferences and beliefs are ‘dispositions’ which grow out of imperceptible complicity of persons with social structures – of family, religious tradition, education – and external conditions. Partly voluntary, partly involuntary, choices, decisions, selections and withdrawals are informed by often most implicit rules and guidelines. Neither social determinism nor individual autonomy, habitus mediates between these at the intersection of objective social structure and its inculcation into the subjective experience.⁷ The inculcated dispositions are observable not so much in practices and the habitus but in the subjective experience. The criticism of Bordieu’s theory has been, so Olsen and Neff contend, that it does not give sufficient explanation of the presence of agency and of the possibility of resistance.

⁸ Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) ‘Between tradition and modernization: understanding the problem of female Bedouin dropouts’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27 (1), 3-17.

says, are posing a false binary of ‘public’ space as modern, communicative, transparent and civic - and ‘private’ as closed, backward and inert in the face of change. Abu-Rabia-Queder argues for a postmodern approach⁹ and ‘the embedding of local traditions in modern societies’ (page 4). Whilst the women’s rights movements have historically targeted access to legal, economic and civil rights, the lack of cultural underpinnings of women’s legitimacy to move within the public sphere would make a full realization of such rights difficult, even counter-productive. ‘Modernization gave them physical access to public space, yet they were still restricted culturally in this space’ (page 6). Quoting E. Munson¹⁰, Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder says that ‘for women whose modernist spaces limit their access to the public, the best solution is not to change the spaces already dominated by men, but to grant women their own separate but equal spaces’ (page 15).

This must beg the question as to whether such a postmodern approach might not make itself complicit in relations of power, whether religious/cultural/political or economic, which disadvantage women. As the work of Joyce Green and, moving closer to home, as the work done by WEMC project researchers indicate, there is need for critical interrogation of the role played by ‘traditions’ and by patriarchal control mechanisms which reject emancipatory initiatives from within ‘indigenous feminisms’ as either ‘endangering’ to familiar norms and practices or as ‘betrayal’ of allegiances to the collective and destabilization of political status quo.¹¹

THE ‘INDIGENOUS’ AS STRATEGIES OF EMPOWERMENT

Women’s indigenous strategies are central to WEMC RF and its mission. Where do we build on the foregoing, where do we go beyond these approaches?

Indigenous strategies for women’s empowerment are understood, to quote from the WEMC RF, as “women’s endeavours to assert their rights in their own socio-cultural context, with no attribution of indigenous identity to the women themselves.” Why are such strategies important, why is their theoretical and empirical examination central to the framework which is evolving as the 5-year project proceeds. The reasons, to summarize are: to highlight (ordinary) women’s agency in the empowering processes, given we are working in Muslim contexts, to challenge the political Islamists’ diktat which denies women entitlements to their own thought and action, and moreover, as this research takes place in with orientation to issues of development, to question certain modes and methodologies of development processes which infantilize and moreover disempower their target populations, making women ‘patients’ rather than agents of development (Amartya Sen, frequently cited in the WEMC paradigm) .¹²

As a way of locating our work within feminist discourse, let me use Sandra Harding’s characterization of feminist methodology. Harding claims it is not the method that makes feminist research different from what she terms ‘malestream’ research, but (a) the alternative origin of the problems, which concern women rather than men; (b) the alternative hypotheses and evidence used; (c) the purpose of the inquiry, which is to understand a woman’s view of the world and assist in the emancipation of women and (d) the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the so-

⁹ Giddins, A. (1994) ‘Living in a post-traditional society’, in: B. Ulrich, A. Giddens & S. Lash (Eds). *Reflexive modernization: politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁰ E. Munson (2002) Walking on the periphery: gender and the discourse of modernization, *Journal of Social Theory*, 36, 63-75.

¹¹ Joyce Green (ed.) (2007) *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. London: Zed Books.

¹² *Women empowering themselves. A framework that interrogates and transforms*. 2008 WEMC RPC. HK.

called 'subjects' of her inquiry (Harding 1987).¹³ And here I would add a point made by Stanley and Wise. They point to the imperative of critical awareness of how to manage the different 'realities' and understandings of researchers and researched because, they say, 'these touch upon and translate for us the complex questions of power in research and writing' (Liz Stanley and Sue Wise 1990: 23).¹⁴

The RF was presented in great detail in the first part of the Symposium. Whilst it shares with other approaches the critical feminist focus on women's voices, experiences and recovery of women's traditions within 'their own socio-cultural environments', all of these contingent on the dismantling of ideological and political hegemonies ----- one of the differences which I want to highlight in my presentation today is the **relational** nature of our project. And this has critical implications for our need for awareness of how to manage the different 'realities' and understandings of researchers and researched, the complex questions of power in research and writing, to which Stanley and Wise refer, as we seek to do what is central to the case to be made for the potentially radical nature of the RF: engagement in research and action *together* with local women's communities (i.e., application of participatory modes of research and of mutual learning).

Moreover, by bringing into the research model premised on women's indigenous strategies, the complex matrix of development **relations**, or what Philip Quarles Van Ufford and others call the 'human aspect of development', (that is, individual trajectories, alliances, networks, trans-local partnerships, that constitutes the partners of the WEMC collective), a participatory spaces for women opens up. It is here that lies the difference with the postmodern approach advocated by some scholars as the narration of women's local knowledge and creativity does not serve the aim to sustain separate spaces, although 'safe space' can afford the first telling and recording of women's stories, but to reveal their connectedness to historical time. We have taken from Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu how power reveals itself as social power – how 'technologies of power' (relations, processes, supports, strategies which obfuscate hegemony) play an intimate part in the maintenance of political hegemony ----- and how beyond social and political the 'symbolic' power infuses and inscribes language, religion, education, art, ideology etc. Importantly, both suggest that rather than accepting the myth of immutable institutions, it is the **relational nature** of all symbolic sites through which women may obtain a voice.¹⁵ Only in the interrogation and dismantling of social power through its contestations can a participatory space for women be created (Introduction, 1-19).

This brings relations within such a research consortium and also relations of its researchers with the researched into sharp relief. Because if we take serious the ambitious goal of sustainable transformations and context-sensitive investigation, then the power-lines of transformation (creation of new epistemology through participatory methodologies and pedagogies, consolidation of local empowerment projects through widening their cross-border impact and alliances, and the more) – then these lines of transformation run also right through the Project. In such a context, critical reflexivity is not only necessary to the WEMC project but its very premise.

¹³ Harding, S. (1987) 'Is there a feminist method?' In S. Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

¹⁴ Stanley, L. and Sue Wise (1990) 'Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes'. In *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Research*, ed. by Liz Stanley. London: Routledge.

¹⁵ M. Foucault (1981) *The History of Sexuality* NY: Pelican; P. Bourdieu 'Social Space and Symbolic Power' *Sociological Theory* 7(1), 17.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF 'INDIGENOUS STRATEGIES', CHINESE MUSLIM CONTEXTS

Moving on to the country contexts in which all our research components are located, more issues arise. In the case of China (where I work together with colleagues in different sites in central and northwest regions of China), the diversity of feminist expression, whether in officially sanctioned spaces of activism 'with Chinese characteristics' or in the 'unruly spaces' (Kay Schaffer and Song Xianlin) that have opened up outside designated women's organizing, deserves more attention than can be given here. To add to this complexity, the 'indigenous' (*bentude*) is highly ambiguous: associated with China's model of multi-culturalism it serves as state category of minority identity. It serves as expression of dissent on the part of Chinese feminist's response to the Western feminist model. And it serves the claim, made perhaps in a weaker voice, by descendants of 'muted' histories for recognition of their worth and place in mainstream history.

Lydia Liu writes of the double patriarchal bind of two discourses of power faced by (mainstream) Chinese feminists, that of Western-derived feminist hegemony and the patriarchal dominance of the Maoist Party/State, between feminism as oppositional to the State and a feminism in which gender equality (*nan-nü pingdeng*) threatened erasure of all difference.¹⁶ Such feminist politics of difference, Kay Schaffer and Song Xianlin write, has come to situate a specifically 'indigenous Chinese feminism' *as both a product of, and a catalyst for, the local re/emergences of women's familiar traditions and women intellectuals' engagement in trans-national discourses.*

'The term they [Chinese feminists] have strategically adopted, *nǚxing zhuyi* [Schaffer and Song say] signals a deference to Taoist principles of harmony between the sexes and also provides a platform for indigenising a Chinese-style feminism.¹⁷ For example, a term which has become popular recently, first used by the editor of a new journal *Feminism in China*, Huang Lin, *weixiao de nǚxing zhuyi*. She offers this definition:

Chinese feminism is sharp but not aggressive. It explores female issues. It is concerned with the harmonious development of both sexes. Its utmost focus is on the eternal subject of humanity. It draws on historical, contemporary, translated and indigenous theoretical and practical sources and combines theoretical concerns with material practices. For us, it displays a smiley Chinese feminism (Schaffer and Song, p.20).¹⁸

Indeed, Chinese feminism has become defensive of its own 'roots' and 'ancestry' – so Kwok-dan Tam, Wimal Dissanayake and Terry Siu-han Yip declare.¹⁹

But, I would argue, in their quest for ancestry, to paraphrase Susan Harding, secular feminists have come to define themselves on the back of narratives of religious faiths (barely ever heard in the context of China). These are the side-lined narratives of women's alternative stories of liberation, not easily fitting into the discursive space of either officially sanctioned or of 'unruly' expressions of Chinese feminists. Whilst much separates official and unsanctioned discourses, they are nevertheless united in their equation of secularism with progress and modernity, compressing

¹⁶ Lydia H. Liu (2002) 'Invention and intervention: the making of a female tradition in modern Chinese literature.' In *Chinese femininities, Chinese masculinities: a reader*. Edited by Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁷ See Schaffer and Song, p. 28, Note 3, in reference to Hou Jizheng (2005) *Harmony between Both Sexes – a Possible Way to Indigenize Western Feminist Theory in China*.

¹⁸ Quoting Huang Lin, 2004, *Feminism in China*. Spring.

¹⁹ Kwok-dan Tam, Wimal Dissanayake and Terry Siu-han Yip, eds (2002) 'Introduction' in *Sights of Contestation – Localism, Globalism and Cultural Production in Asia and the Pacific*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

adherents to religious meaning systems into a homogenous ‘non-secular’ Other, forever mired in inertia of backwardness.

But our research methodology has enabled us to uncover a wide spectrum of meanings by which ‘indigenous feminism’ in Muslim contexts constitutes its local history: in the intermingling with other local strategies, and in the receiving and translating from transnational influences. We conceptualized these diverse contexts as **relational models of change**, embracing ‘women’s indigenous feminist tradition as space of gender continuity and transformation’, ‘women’s tradition from association to organization’ but also ‘tradition as institutionalizing women’s social exclusion.’ In the more than two and a half years of work, the important relationships between women living within these diverse Muslim contexts and the researchers/activists (i.e. WEMC partners) have changed, so have nature of collaboration on research and community projects and scope as well as impact and objectives of our work

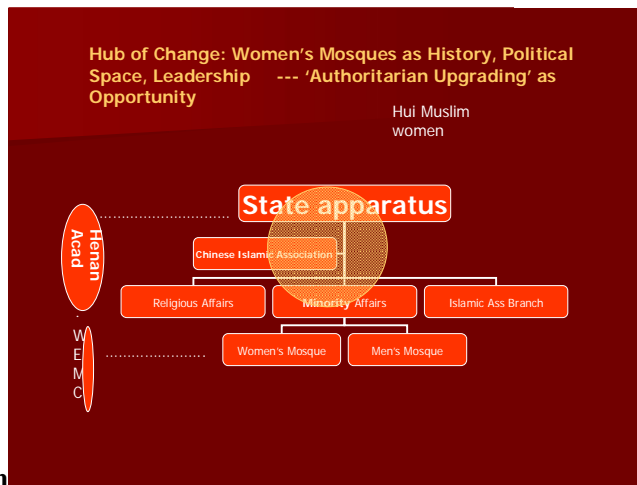
Whilst local ‘unruly spaces’ of Chinese feminist discourse are opening up resisting the global (Western) feminist discourse by re-affirming itself under new forms of multi-culturalism (I am making reference here to Fredric Jameson),²⁰ we are interested in, among other research questions, the capacity of indigenous traditions of women as members of non-mainstream groups, to continue to serve women’s aspirations and needs (‘development’ understood as a holistic concept). As in the institution of women’s mosques, the drive for reform and modernity to stay relevant and in touch with modernizing societies can be said to be in tension with policies of state management of organized religion but also with the Muslim community’s nurturing of cultural and religious identity and continuity with the past. ---- At a time when the reinvigorated contacts with Arab Muslim countries have begun to question the very survival of women’s indigenous expressions of faith and collective self-assertion, at a time when problems over sources of income for women’s mosques limit scope of renewal and expansion, we, that is local and international researchers working in the project, are deeply engaging with women whose commitment is to continuity, renewal and social relevance of their own age-old institutions. We are therefore entering the cultures of women’s traditions at a historical moment when our colleagues at site - as well as the women whose lives we seek to understand - are looking *outwards* just as we, on the outside (the researchers/activists), are formulating and applying approaches to *jointly* create and share knowledge of, and contribute to, women’s participatory and transformative spaces.

Appendix 1

We have in the course of our work identified **three relational models of change**

²⁰ Fredric Jameson (1999). ‘Notes on Globalisation as a Philosophical Issue,’ in *The Cultures Of Globalization*. Edited by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp.54-77.

Older Model:
Women's Mosque
as a hub of social
change



Indigenous Feminism: Historical Tradition

My colleague is herself a Hui and a practising Muslim, in a critique of development discourse on Chinese women, since the 1990s, involving the Chinese Party-State government, the All-China Women's Federation (a mass organization implementing official policies), international and national NGOs, and local philanthropic institutions²¹ says that these all contribute, in the estimation of also her fellow-Muslims, to a hegemonic secularist development discourse on 'raising the calibre of women', which neglects almost entirely alternative sources of ethical conduct. True respect for the history, culture and aspirations of Muslim women, she says, supports women's own notions of betterment and progress.

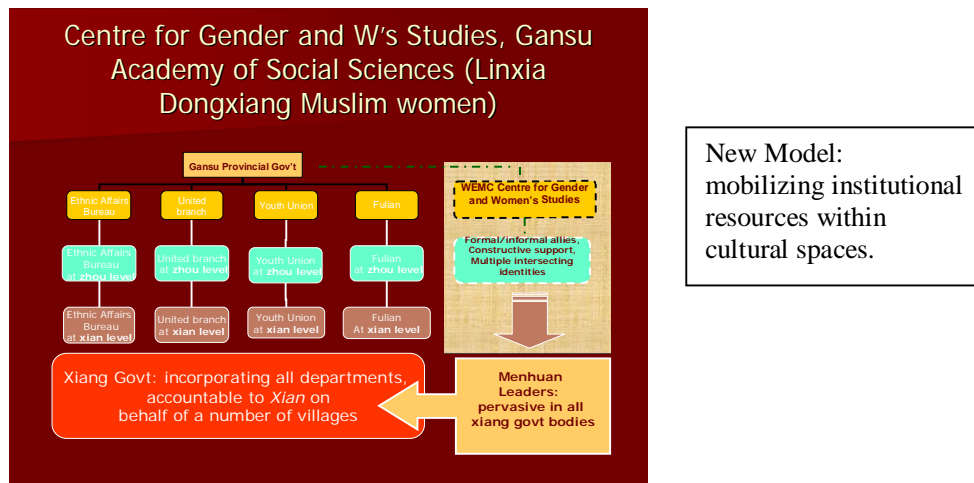
Based on effective strategies of organizing women from within their own *fang*, that is, women from the community worshipping at a given women's mosque, female *ahong* have participated together with our local colleagues in meetings with officials from the local branches of the Chinese Islamic Association to learn from activists from a local secular women's organization. (semi-official). The outcome of these meetings has been collective initiatives for improved vocational school, preparations for funding such a school, the learning of organizing strategies and relations with local government officials which serve women's interests. Women's collective organizing and networking within the community draws from local models of successful experience; the scope and influence these initiatives hope to have and their alliance across ethnicity and religion are contemporary processes in which researchers are partners.

Such close collaborations have allowed for the interrogation of research questions of importance to us, such as the relationship between indigenous feminism and tradition and its interrelationship with other aspects of women's engagement in society, such as the concept of 'indigenous feminism' and its relationship to transformative development, such as what difference the presence or absence of tradition (of public institution) make for facilitation of social change in largely masculine public spheres, such as the emancipatory potential of indigenous knowledge through which strategies engender change.

²¹ The Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) includes gender equality in its overall objectives, making it a basic State policy for the enhancement of national social progress. Six areas are identified for priority development: women and the economy, women's participation in decision-making and management, women and education, women and health, women and law, and women and the environment. (*Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Combined fifth and sixth periodic report of States Parties. China. 2004).

On the other hand, we are aware of the need for critical reflexivity when it comes to evaluating the role of researchers as we wield influence and bring resources, as we document and interpret women's lives and, at times, as we are invited into women's lives to facilitate social change.

Appendix 2



New Model:
mobilizing institutional
resources within
cultural spaces.

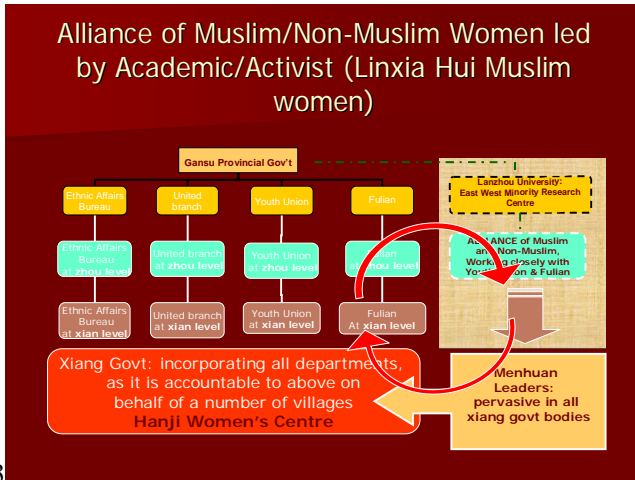
Tradition as 'social exclusion'

My colleague's role is important, both locally, as lead researcher, and within the RPC. Many discussions related to her own role and to the tensions her multiple identities within the WEMC is engendering: whether in relation to the women with whom she is working, or in relation to her own identification with in certain conversations becomes strongly worded Chinese nationalistic sentiment (Interviews, August/Sept. 08).

- (1) Her difficulties, so her words indicate, are with the process of coming to voice in a conservative environment where women live behind closed door
- (2) The process of discovery in which she is interested relates to women's creative knowledge and skills (traditions of women's embroidery), relate to her difficulty of access to women in conservative Muslim communities; she is local and Muslim but she is also 'outside' these communities because of social status, level of education, and an urban life-style only loosely affected by Islamic strictures on dress, interaction with men and with non-Muslim society.
- (3) She is attentive to the complexity of Muslim context even in the apparently most closed communities, affection insider and outsider status and relations
- (4) She uses translocal ties to create safe spaces for the telling of local stories and nurturing of strength.
- (5) WEMC project is opportunity and challenge --- the latter is understood by her as the challenge of our participatory methodology to her understanding of 'scientific' work based on distance and objectivity.

BENTUDE ZHISHI (indigenous knowledge) is both condition and outcome of sensitive research, but its patriarchal threadings makes participatory methodology vital as she does not want to *gai* women in the way that All-China Women's Federation cadres have engaged in 'social engineering' of 'the modern Socialist woman'. Her reference points for not applying a certain 'style of work' is thus *funü gongzuo*, cadre work performance associated with top-to-bottom approach to engaging in 'women's work'.

Appendix 3



New Model:
Alliance-building across religion and class: creating a new space for women at grassroots level.

Setting up a new tradition

This project in particular raised many questions about the difference women’s own history of collective engagement makes to the current potential for social change in a given community.

Here the story of indigenous strategies shifts in emphasis to raise questions **about the facilitators of change at the point of take-off**. What were the issues of power for WEMC partners as agents of change? What methodologies were applied to render their approaches both credible and relevant to the community? The former question involves the identity of local partners within the local governmental, institutional and cultural landscapes of women’s activism.

He xie (harmony) as the Chinese government’s current political rhetoric, *tongyi* as the principle underlying treatment of ethnic minorities, *qianghua nengli* (strengthening of ability/capacity) as a part of WEMC discourse to stress the priority of ‘empowerment’ in the advocacy of social change. Difficulties are enormous, whether in terms of cultural and political resources or women’s own socialised deference to all perceived as superior (such as allies across class boundaries who are defending an understanding of *bentu zhishi*, indig. knowledge which argues both against Maoist-style methodology and also imitation of Western methodology). Left weak are however the voices of ordinary women.

Extract from a discussion with local colleagues in WEMC project, in Gansu:

‘I did not think that women were so capable.’ A local lead researcher discovered that in setting up a ‘safe space’ for local Muslim women, she was giving *resources* and NOT bestowing *agency*. She discovered that by making available these resources (provision of a safe space) she enabled the freeing of capacities native to local women, that she, together with local women, widened their participatory space. .

By way of conclusion, Mai Yamani says, in talking about the difficult emergence of an ‘indigenous women’s movement’ in Muslim countries:

‘It can be seen against the context of the democratic deficit in the political systems of those states, as well as the specific gender-based inequality. Many of the rights that women seek are the rights of citizens that are equally denied to men. Unless there is freedom of expression, less censorship, freedom of association and less intolerance of differences in opinion, there will be no effective women’s movement. The allowing of a religious heterogeneous society to exist is more liberating even if a society is not conventionally democratic. The more the tolerance, the more the liberty (1996, p.24).’