The Women’s Movement(s)
Pakistan...
Whose culture, whose issues, whose movement?
Which women?

Who defines ‘womanhood’? ‘Culture’? ‘authenticity’?
Which Issues? What strategies?

Education

Women’s Reform Movement – The struggle for ‘modern’ education

1925
Atiya & Nazli
gatecrash &
disrupt MEC
Conference
to ensure
women never
excluded
again

Nazi Fyzee & Atiya Fyzee, 1906

Zohra Fyzee & Atiya Fyzee

Nazi Fyzee, 1906
Economic Rights: 1935, 1951...2008
Inheritance
Property rights

1935 –1937 Muslim Personal (Shariat) Application Act
Gives women right to inherit property, never implemented

1951: economic rights: exclusion from Inheritance & Property rights

Demanding land
Demanding work
Personal status rights?

State culture vs. Sub-state collective identity = family, clan, ethnicity, religion

Collective identity blocks de jure rights as ‘customs’

Voting & running for office
Employment, Education
Whether & who to marry

SG training - Lahore High Court
Women’s Bar Room
Which historical & political environment?

Gain right to vote and stand for elections 17 years before France 1921-1925

Demonstration Women’s Jail, Lahore

Independence movement

Redefining group membership as citizens

Courting arrest

Women members assembly
1977-1988

Martial law justifying itself as “Islamic”

Criminalises consensual sex, Qisas & diyat – introduces barbaric punishments religious apartheid

Questions + rescinds women’s rights
Introduces new dress codes

Burning veils – protesting cultural impositions & Control
Women's Action Forum

Protesting new criminal laws

Religious interpretations
Taking the streets
Jalsas: songs, poetry & laughter
Whose movement?

WAF limited by class & urban location... still

Defied martial law
Rejected “Islamic” laws/policies
Put women permanently on national agenda

Engage with the state or not
State-centred activism vs. ground changes
Political or non-political & links with politicians
Within framework of Islam or not
Feminist vs. women’s rights movement

Vexatious questions
Democratisation meant...

Inserting women into other movements...

Joint Action Committee for People’s Rights
Lobby political parties
Labour groups
Peasant groups

No single voice for women...
Unity in diversity
2000-2003

Women’s Thappa brigade

Peasants confronting the state for land
Thappas = Women’s threshing sticks

Thappas = protection
family & fields
Symbol of resistance
Gaining/using knowledge

Legal awareness

Social & political awareness
Movements are about solidarity

Asian Conference - Lahore 1932

Peasant women - Pakistan 2008

Linking across the divides

WLUM LTraining - 2000
Democratic or authoritarian states shape the context & so women’s movement(s)

How to integrate & sustain movements

Women’s location in social groups shapes their dreams of the possible & strategies for change

Who speaks for the community?
Which oppression is critical & which can be challenged today?
What sources of support?
What obstacles?
Land from government not from brothers

Shirkat Gah planning 2005
Empowerment can be catalysed by any activity... but always entails a cycle of reflection, analysis and decision for action: Paolo Freire

Women are the fulcrum of their own empowerment
United we stand, divided we fall

Our culture must become ours to define…