

FAIZA MUHAMMAD DIN, *Female Madrasas in Pakistan: Religious, Cultural and Pedagogical Dimensions*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023. 256 pages, £50.00. ISBN 978-1-7897-6200-6

In Pakistan, several modes of education exist, among which madrasa education is one of the most salient for the lower middle class. Madrasa education gained momentum, especially after 9/11, attracting many male and female students nationwide. The book *Female Madrasas in Pakistan: Religious, Cultural and Pedagogical Dimensions* covers a critical aspect of madrasa education by analysing how and why female students are educated and socialised in these madrasas, shedding light on their function, modalities and pedagogies. The author, Faiza Muhammad Din, with the advantage of having been an insider of the female madrasa system herself at one point in her life, examines the criticality of its teaching and training models, the curriculum and materials taught, and the ideals perpetuated at female madrasas (FeMs) in Pakistan.

The data were collected from diverse sources to build a representative case, including five Madaris boards and at least ten female madrasas following various schools of thought in different cities across all four provinces. The rich data and broad sample distinguish this study from others in the field. There is hardly any other study that covers such a wide range of madrasas from all schools of thought prevailing in Pakistan. In addition to interviews and observations, the author also examines and discusses the curriculum taught at these madrasas, books authored by *Aalimas* (graduates of FeMs) and books written by female students of madrasas. The range of data sources enables Din to address all aspects of education, socialisation and character-building of students in female madrasas in Pakistan.

The book is divided into four chapters, with a separate introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, situating herself in the middle of her subject of study, the author narrates her motivation for attending a madrasa: to become an ideal pious Muslim woman through studying the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. This motivation resonated with most of the study respondents. Din introduces the madrasa as a place to teach and learn Islamic theology and law. It existed in the Mughal era in the Subcontinent but was later replaced by the English education system under the British Empire. Furthermore, she discusses the evolution of the female madrasa from being a critical space for Islamic ways of sociability to a renowned degree-awarding institution in Pakistan.

Chapter 1 discusses the historical context of madrasas in Pakistan and the author's fieldwork at FeMs. The author has collected data from at least one madrasa from all five major schools of thought in Pakistan, including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. The purpose of this extensive fieldwork is to understand the routines and patterns of life for a student at a FeM. The overarching objective of FeMs is to emulate the life of Prophet Muhammad and

follow his teachings, both in letter and spirit, to achieve purity. Historically, the madrasa remained an essential site for formal religious education in the early twentieth century on the Indian subcontinent. After the fall of Muslim rule in India, Muslim elite women could not afford home tuition in religious education as a means of self-improvement anymore, giving rise to producing self-study literature that would help women improve themselves. Later, women's involvement in preaching activities highlighted the need for the religious education of women – a starting point for FeMs. The establishment of FeMs gradually took place to fulfil the need for formal education for Muslim women, helping them become “ideal pious women” (p. 10). Pakistan inherited the madrasa system after its independence.

Chapter 2 presents some examples of the writing of madrasa students and highlights the self-transformation of students through fiction after joining FeMs. These stories depict students' journeys, showing how they internalise the knowledge imparted to them. Their writings provide a glimpse into the students' worlds at FeMs and help make sense of how they are trained and disciplined through moral instruction on gender roles, with no mention of politics and economics (traditionally considered male domains). Furthermore, though there is not much difference between male graduates (*Aalim/Mawlana*) and female graduates (*Aalima/Fazila*) from madrasas when it comes to the expectations of society regarding piety, *pardah* (veiling) is the hallmark of FeM teachings that stands out for female students alone.

In Chapter 3, the author discusses the research method applied – discourse analysis – to understand the students' perceptions of the madrasa as an institution and social structure through language formation and linguistic expressions. The curriculum of FeMs includes rhetoric, hermeneutics and literature as subjects to train students in their way of speaking – a primary mode of creating and communicating religious realities and experiences. These routines and techniques rapidly alter the speech styles of students at FeMs. Chapter 4 analyses the literature produced by female *Fazila*. Once a student graduates, she must maintain that identity by practicing the values and norms taught at the madrasa. This identity sometimes becomes a burden, rendering the maintenance of the religious outlook cumbersome. The expectations for a *Fazila* are so high that she cannot be a regular, fallible woman. Instead, she must sustain the high status of an “ideal pious woman” or risk being shunned by her family and cut off from social relations. Religious education elevates a woman's status as a *Fazila* and grants her greater autonomy, but she still cannot match the position of a male madrasa graduate. The teaching and training at FeMs reproduce patriarchy by perpetuating gender roles and the separation of female and male domains (the home for women and the public sphere for men). Despite the large number of female graduates from FeMs, few hold ecclesiastical positions in Pakistan.

In the conclusion, the author sums up the core concern of the book: female agency and FeMs. The relationship between women's empowerment and FeM education is paradoxical. The teachings and training at FeMs aim to replace the desire for empowerment with the image of the ideal Muslim woman who submits in her relationships and prioritises her family role over socio-political or economic activities. Self-assertiveness and rebelliousness are seen as antithetical to humility, obedience and submission and are thus abhorrent for a graduate of a FeM. The liberal connotation of empowerment is the apparent opposite of what FeMs intend for the women in their spaces.

Overall, the book is timely and relevant on multiple counts. For example, in the wake of the rise in radicalisation in Pakistan, it is a helpful resource for understanding the curriculum, routines and pedagogies used at FeMs since many studies correlate madrasa education and radicalisation. However, there are almost no studies available on FeMs or that presumed relationship. Additionally, due to strict purdah and retreat from the public eye, FeMs are no-go areas for many, creating a wedge in understanding the process of self-formation and transformation of female students and the objectives and modalities of madrasa education for women. Faiza Muhammad Din speaks volumes on those topics through her observation, experience and extensive fieldwork. While the book does not address madrasa education, its pervasiveness and its modalities in Balochistan, a southwestern province, the inclusion of madrasas from significant schools of thought in major cities across Pakistan makes the study stand out in the scholarship, providing credible evidence on the subject.

*Abida Bano*

SYLVIA MAYASARI-HOFFERT, *The Cold War and its Legacy in Indonesia: Literary Representation of the Red Scare*. New York: Routledge, 2024. 122 pages, £135.00. ISBN 978-1-0322-8523-8

Studying the anti-communist violence of 1965–66 in Indonesia has always been challenging. One of the reasons for this is the political tension surrounding the issue, given the dominant anti-communist stance in the country. Efforts to seek justice for the approximately five hundred thousand victims are considered as a threat to national unity or an attempt to revive communism. Publications that contest the state's anti-communist narratives risk being banned or destroyed, even in democratic times.

Another reason for the difficulty of studying 1965 is the lack of historical sources. To date, the sources produced by the Indonesian government remain