Re/placing Islamic Feminism

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"I see Islamic feminism at the center of a Transformation within Islam struggling to make headway. I call this a Transformation rather than a Reformation. The Islamic Transformation is not about the reforming of patriarchal claims and practices that were insinuated into Islam; it is about the transforming of what has passed as 'Islam' through a realignment of Islam with the Qur'anic message of gender equality and social justice… Transformation is about restoring the deep Qur'anic message to the surface of awareness and articulation."[1]

As I consider the trajectory of Islamic feminism and its transformative aim, I begin with these words from 2006. Islamic feminism emerged as a new discourse of women, gender and equality in Islam. It was born of the intimate combination of women's existential knowledge and their re-readings of the Qur'an and other religious texts. In the last years of the 20th century, Islamic feminism burst upon the scene of the global *umma* (Muslim community). Political Islam as a movement (Islamism) was well underway at the time and was bent on re-imposing, in the name of religion, patriarchal thinking and practices. At the same time, many women had been primed by education, training and an intensified gender consciousness to re-read Islamic religious texts for themselves and stand by their positions. Disquieting though it may have been to Islamists, the new Islamic feminist discourse was immediately hailed by Muslim women throughout the world, an unmistakable sign that it was speaking to an urgent need.[2]

Islamic feminism is the first theology-driven feminist discourse to have been broadly received by ordinary and privileged women alike. Christian and Jewish liberation theologies, most prevalent in the United States, were compartmentalized – that is, they were only of concern to a handful of people interested in matters of religious doctrine and ritual practice. The emergent secular feminisms of the Muslim world, by contrast, incorporated Islamic modernist, secular nationalist and humanitarian elements. What's more, Islamic feminism is to be distinguished from its Western counterparts by virtue of the fact that it emerged in an era of globalization and is characterized by a global reach.[3]

The religious principle of the full equality (*al-musawa*) of human beings (*insan*) is at the core of Islamic feminism. The principle of gender equality is Islamic feminism's *sine qua non* and the indispensable foundation of its calls for social justice. Islamic feminism promotes the idea and practice of full human equality in the public and private spheres. In an Islamic framework, the unequivocal assertion of human equality in family and society constitutes an historical breakthrough.[4] Islamic feminism, which brings together interpretation and implementation, is a major force in the drive to move beyond patriarchy in Muslim contexts.[5]

I want to reflect upon Islamic feminism, which has now been with us for twenty years. We are currently witnessing a new stage of Islamic feminism. From my perspective as an historian, I can see that this second stage was beginning to take shape in the middle years of the last decade. This shift was characterized by increasingly sophisticated interpretations of the Qur'an on the part of feminist intellectuals and new approaches to Islamic jurisprudence. Unlike secular feminism, which in the Muslim world primarily surfaced in the context of *social movements*, Islamic feminism first emerged as a *new discourse*. From the start, however, it included an activist element informed by the experience of secular feminists. The second stage of Islamic feminism is characterized by more extensive, robust and collective organization at the national and trans-national levels and has been consolidating as a global social movement. As such, it has now gained considerable momentum. These observations raise the overarching question of the present paper: how do we re/place Islamic feminism?

I begin by recalling Muslims' pioneering feminism, known as secular feminism, and examine the transition to Islamic feminism. I then look at the first and second

stages of Islamic feminism. Finally, I explore the activist dimension of Islamic feminism and its development as a global social movement.

Muslims' Emergent Feminism

To more fully appreciate the ground-breaking work of Islamic feminism, it is useful to briefly consider the version of feminism that preceded it in the Muslim world. First appearing in various Muslim countries in Africa and Asia in the early 20th century, this was known as secular feminism. Pioneering Muslim gender activists drew upon and expanded the Islamic modernist, secular, nationalist and general humanitarian ideas of the day to elaborate a homegrown feminist discourse.[6] This emergent, nation-based feminism (in contrast to the global and transnational Islamic feminism of today) aimed to open the way for women's entry into the public sphere – that is, into the life of the nation and society in the colonial and early postcolonial years. As nationalist feminists, these Muslims joined with compatriots of other religious backgrounds to ensure that the new institutions of emergent sovereign states would be responsive to the needs of *all* citizens and that those citizens, male and female alike, would be able to freely participate in the organization and management of the modern state and society. It is important to stress that these pioneering secular feminism/s were indigenous. That is, they had emerged *within* particular national, cultural and religious contexts and were elaborated in the terms of local realities, thinking and demands. Ever since it first appeared, critics of this (secular) Muslim feminism have insisted that it was a foreign and, more particularly, Western phenomenon Recent claims to the effect that Islamic feminism represents the first *indigenous* feminism to be produced by Muslims indicates that belief in the "inauthenticity" and "foreignness" of secular feminism is still widespread in these societies.[7]

In the Muslim world, secular feminism was articulated around the concept of *equal citizenship*. Yet even this was partial, with secular feminists confining their demands for equal citizenship to the public sphere of national/secular society. Emergent secular feminists did not conceptualize gender equality within the context of the family (virtually a worldwide phenomenon well into the 20th century). The two arenas in which Muslim secular feminists did not conceive of equality (what Arkoun has termed the "unthinkable")[8] were: 1) the *religious* segment of the public sphere, specifically, the religious professions and leadership roles, and 2) the private sphere of

the family, which was legally regulated by *religion* (with the exception of Turkey). Women's limited formal education and general lack of access to public space, including places of worship, rendered premature any attempt to secure equality of access to religious offices and leadership roles.[9]

Of far greater immediate relevance for women were matters relating to the family. During secularization processes in Muslim majority states, the family was typically the sole domain that continued to be regulated by the religious authorities. Meanwhile, the family remained under the sway of a set of supposedly Islamic cultural notions and practices. These could vary – at times, dramatically – from one social, geographical and national context to the next. While secular feminists were aware of these variations, they had, like society in general, internalized the patriarchal family as 'natural' and religiously ordained. This entailed an acceptance of asymmetrical gender roles reflecting an idealized system of gender complementarity under male leadership. In short, gender equality within the family was not on the secular feminists' agenda. [10] Influenced by late 19th and early 20th century Islamic modernist thinking, they instead limited themselves to calling for legal reform of the patriarchal family and an amelioration of behavior, urging men to fulfill their obligations and refrain from abusing their access to unilateral divorce and polygamy.[11] To conceptualize gender equality in the family, feminists had to move beyond the limits of early Islamic modernist thinking.

The task of elaborating a rigorous discourse of gender equality in Islam that included equality in the family and disentangled patriarchy from Islam would fall to the Islamic feminists of the late 20th century. They opted for the wholesale eradication of patriarchy rather than tolerating its continued existence in state regulated, compartmentalized form within the public religious domain and the 'private' sphere of the family. By this time, as we have seen, gender awareness had significantly increased among Muslim women, who possessed the training and tools (thanks to the expanded educational opportunities won by earlier generations of feminists) necessary to criticize patriarchy in the family and society as un-Islamic. Prior to this, only a handful of women received instruction in the religious sciences. Nazira Zain al-Din, an early 20th century Lebanese woman who studied at home under the guidance of her father, an Islamic scholar, was one such. Though still a young woman, in 1928 she published *al-Sufur wa al-Hijab* (Unveiling and Veiling) in Beirut. This led to heavy persecution at the hands of the religious establishment and, after responding to her critics in a second book, she withdrew from public intellectual debate.[12] By the late 20th

century, in contrast, a significant number of Muslim women were well-equipped to engage in religious interpretation. Freeing themselves from the discursive monopoly of the patriarchal male religious establishment, they refuted their opponents' arguments, dismissed the claims of Islamist ideologues and energetically countered the deeply held beliefs of a broader, conservative society.

Transition to a New Feminist Paradigm

With growing numbers of middle class women beginning to work outside of the home and contributing to household incomes in the last two decades of the 20th century, husbands and wives increasingly shared family decision-making and domestic responsibilities. Alongside this growing *de facto* equality within the family, gender equality – and, in particular, the equality of men and women as heads of household – received religious expression.

When Western women who had converted to Islam (a significant and ever-expanding group) witnessed how their perceptions of Islam as a religion of equality and justice were subverted by the patriarchal practices of an allegedly Islamic Muslim community, they turned to the Qur'an for answers.[13] As this happened, female Muslim immigrants to the West from African and Asian Muslim societies, together with the new Muslim citizens of Western countries, experienced a painful tug-of war between the patriarchal ideas of Islam inherited from their countries of origin and the legally enforced ideas of equality of their new countries. They also witnessed and often experienced firsthand what subversion of equality meant in multicultural countries in which equality was enshrined as a principle and expressed in law. This made these women intolerant of all inequality, including gender disparities.

Meanwhile, use of the term 'gender' as an analytical category – the intellectual spearhead of second-wave feminism in women's studies departments throughout the American academy – rapidly spread. Gender became a key tool for the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious scholars and theologians who sought to challenge patriarchal readings of scripture and related practices within their respective communities. The term 'gender' was soon taken up by public sector professionals, especially in the development community, and before long passed into broad global circulation.[14]

In the 1980s and early 90s, a major paradigm shift in Muslim gender thinking — what would eventually become known as 'Islamic feminism' – was underway. This

was the creation of a group of female "scholar-activists" who explicitly stated their religious commitment, often describing themselves as "believing women" in a conscious reference to the Qur'anic term '*mu'minat'*.[15] A notable exception proving the rule was Moroccan secular feminist Fatima Mernissi, a sociologist and professor at Muhammad V University in Rabat, who produced a ground-breaking text on Islamic feminism entitled *Le harem politique* (an English language translation was published in the UK as *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry* and, in the US, as *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*.) [16] Raja Rhouni, a young Moroccan scholar, examines the trajectory of Mernissi as a producer of "secular" and "religious" feminist texts and analyzes the complexities and complications of her highly influential work.[17] By 'scholar-activists', I am referring to women who have defined themselves in overtly religious terms and are producers of Islamic feminist discourse. While I also use the term 'Islamic feminists' in speaking of these women, it is as an analytical category, fully aware that most of the women in question have shunned this term as an identifying label. However, with the advent of the second stage of Islamic feminism, some began to accept an explicitly feminist identity. While the women who produce Islamic feminist texts may publically self-identify as "believing women" (*mu'mina*), their display of religious conviction does not in itself confer authority upon them or necessarily indicate rigorous *ijtihad* or critical intellectual engagement with religious sources. It does signal, however, that the personal stakes involved in engaging in such work are high.[18]

Gender-sensitive women scholars began to reread the Qur'an, revisit the *ahadith* (sing. *hadith*, sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) and reconsider *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). The creators of the major new works on women and gender in Islam typically hold doctoral degrees with specializations in a variety of academic disciplines, including the Islamic religious sciences. These scholar-activists see themselves as engaging in revisionist work within the world of Islamic thought and scholarship.[19] Establishment (male) religious scholars (*ulemah*), however, have not infrequently responded with attacks rather than constructive engagement. Most mainstream reformist intellectuals, for their part, have ignored their work.[20] Yet, it is important to acknowledge that some leading progressive male scholars of Islam have taken the work of scholar-activist women seriously.[21]

Within the Muslim intellectual and activist community, secular feminists were quick to appreciate the scholar-activists' innovative work on Islam and gender. [22] They

recognized it as a paradigm shift in feminism and, indeed, coined the term 'Islamic feminism'. The term struck a chord and provided a highly resonant framing device and way of locating and understanding new, gendered works of exegesis. With the assistance of these secular feminist 'women of the pen' and their extensive network of contacts, word of the new Islamic feminism quickly spread. The simultaneous expansion of the Internet instantaneously brought the new Islamic gender thinking to far-flung global audiences.

By the end of the 1990s, and with growing frequency after the turn of the 21st century, international conferences and workshops on Islamic feminism were organized by academics, NGOs and think tanks. At these events, scholar-activists and secular feminists presented their work and engaged in strategy sessions with Muslims from the broader activist community. These events, which were explicitly held under the aegis of the Islamic feminist movement, were organized by Muslims and non-Muslims in Western countries.   In Muslim-majority countries, conferences were convened to address issues of Islamic feminism without directly employing the term.

In 2005, Spanish Muslims – mainly converts and members of the Junta Islamica, an organization headed by the Barcelona writer and poet Abdennur Prado – held the first large, general access International Conference on Islamic Feminism in Barcelona. The aim of the conference was to encourage global connectivity and strengthen mutual support among advocates for an egalitarian Islam.[23] The Junta Islamica convened two more conferences in Barcelona (2007 and 2008) as well as one in Madrid (2010). The sponsors of international conferences in the West invited speakers from around the world – mainly Muslim women, though men and non-Muslims also spoke – to address a Western and non-Western audience. The great publicity attendant upon such conferences brought Islamic feminism to the attention of a large global audience that had up till that point been largely unaware of feminism in an Islamic context.

Ironically, the Muslim secular feminists who, in contrast to the Muslim religious establishment and mainstream, were so quick to promote the work of the new scholar-activists were looked upon askance by the scholar-activists themselves (though this attitude has recently been changing). In explicitly announcing their religious identity and making public displays of piety, the scholar-activists implied and sometimes openly declared that "secular" Muslims had distanced themselves from religion. The scholar-activists reacted to the label 'Islamic feminism' with a mixture of unease and

hostility. They bristle when the term is applied to them but are at times less dismissive if it is made clear that the term only serves conceptual purposes and that they themselves reject it. Some scholar-activists allege that feminism is a fundamentally Western phenomenon or distance themselves from feminism simply because Muslims in general widely associate it with the West. Those who claim that feminism is Western not only display their ignorance of the long history of feminism amongst Muslim women in Africa and Asia but also reinforce negative stereotypes about Muslims and feminism, colluding with those Westerners who in their arrogance and ignorance assert that Muslims are incapable of producing feminism and that Islam is intrinsically patriarchal.[24] Though the discourse of Islamic feminism breaks down dichotomies – secular and religious, East and West, Muslim and non–Muslim – such binary pairs are ironically re-enforced by the social attitudes and practices of some of the creators of Islamic feminist texts.

Islamic Feminism: Stage One

As an analytical category, gender was first introduced in the mid-1980s, at a time when the second-wave feminist/womanist movement was still in full swing. It was in this context that the African-American scholar Amina Wadud began the research that would result in *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1991).[25] This book was immediately hailed throughout the world as a path-breaking treatise on gender-egalitarian Islam. It would soon be recognized as a cornerstone of Islamic feminism. Wadud, who went on to become a well-known theologian and professor of Islamic studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, was innovative in her use of gender as a tool of analysis for systematically investigating the issue of gender equality in the Qur'an.[26] It is interesting to note in passing that, in the early 20th century, Muslim women in parts of Africa and Asia were similarly quick to appropriate the new construct "feminism" and develop movements for women's liberation concurrently with women in western countries. Yet despite the fact that Muslims contributed via debate and practice to shaping the concepts of 'feminism' and 'gender', they have been perennially dismissed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike as mere imitators of the West.

Through her hermeneutic work, Wadud advanced a Qur'anic theory of gender equality across the public/private spectrum – that is, in both family and society as well as within the holistic *umma* – and in so doing exposed patriarchy as un-Islamic. As we

have seen, secular feminists sought to reform the patriarchal family in both legal and behavioral terms but men were loath to have limits placed upon their prerogatives. For them, unilateral divorce and polygamy were religiously sanctioned rights and fundamental entitlements, as indeed was the very notion of man's authority over woman. It should be noted in this connection that nowhere did 20th century secular feminists fail more completely than in their efforts to reform family law in the Muslim world.[27]

When Wadud "transitioned" into Islam (her phrase) in the late 1970s, she was passionately committed to exploring the religion.[28] Aware that women were not treated equally in Muslim societies, as was the case elsewhere, she wished to determine whether Islam was responsible and, more particularly, whether the Qur'an itself endorsed gender inequality. Starting with this question and employing a hermeneutics of *tawhid* (the unity of God), she found that it did not. God is one and above humans, who are at once paired and equal. For a human being to consider his or herself above other human beings – as is the case, for example, in patriarchy, in which men consider themselves superior to women – is to compare oneself with God in violation of the principle of *tawhid* (in religious terminology: *shirk*).[29] Wadud points out that the Qur'anic notion of *khilafa* (trusteeship or agency), whereby God created *insan,* establishing mankind without distinction of sex as trustee or agent (*khalif*) on Earth, suggests that all human beings are equal. *Every* human being is a trustee or agent, one just as much as the other.[30]

While developing a systematic analysis, she pointed to the numerous *aya*s in the Qur'an that explicitly enunciated the idea of gender equality. There were also verses that require interpretation. Wadud used the Qur'an's own exhortation to read it for its best meanings and argued that the text's higher ideals trumped literal readings that might negate them. An example is the verse (4:3) that allows a man to marry up to four wives. However, this verse refers to a particular context and is conditional upon equal and just treatment of the wives; the ideal is monogamy and thus spousal gender equality. She nevertheless found herself obliged to maneuver around or sidestep certain obstacles. One such was the famous *daraba* verse that appears to sanction wife-beating. Wadud and others have tried to explain this away by means of linguistic analysis, demonstrating that *"daraba"* has multiple meanings, including "to leave" in the

sense of "to strike out (on a journey, etc.)".[31] By use of this method, Wadud offered a compelling argument for a Qur'anic theory of gender equality.

To counter the patriarchal current, most women needed a new way of thinking about gender – an Islamic template of gender equality – before they could effectively campaign for legal change or for that matter change their lives. This was particularly the case in the context of the family, where the most glaring inequalities remain. Wadud's work provided this missing perspective, attracting an enthusiastic following among Muslim women in diverse parts of the globe. These women were elated to discover and quick to embrace an egalitarian version of Islam to replace the patriarchal one they had inherited.

Word of Wadud's new gender egalitarian hermeneutics quickly spread through the Internet and her work was cited on the websites of the Muslim women's organizations that were proliferating in the 1990s. Her book was translated into many languages commonly spoken in Muslim majority countries as well as major Western languages. When *Qur'an and Woman* was republished by Oxford University Press in 1999, it reached still larger audiences and for some time was also available on the Internet. Wadud's book has been taught in American universities in courses attended by Muslims from various parts of the world as well as by non-Muslims from the United States and elsewhere.

A decade after Wadud made the case for Qur'an-endorsed gender equality, Asma Barlas, a Pakistani-American who had served in Pakistan's diplomatic corps before emigrating to the United States in the 1980s and is currently Professor of Politics and Director of the Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity at Ithaca College in New York state, published *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (2002).[32] Circulating in much the same way as Wadud's book and eventually translated into many languages in its turn, Barlas's book became widely regarded as another seminal Islamic feminist text.   Barlas explains that her book is in dialogue with Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman.*[33] She asks the question: is the Qur'an a patriarchal text? Building upon Wadud's work through careful textual exegesis, deconstructive interludes and close attention to the concepts of *tawhid* and *khilafa*, Barlas makes a cogent case that the Qur'an should not be read as a patriarchal text.[34]

Both scholars were careful to historicize, demonstrating that the patriarchal norms and practices prevailing at the time and place of the Qur'anic revelation (which

they argue the scripture addressed in order to redress) persisted as Islam spread and were ultimately reflected in Qur'anic interpretation. This later influenced the consolidation of Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, by the major schools of jurisprudence in the 9th and 10th centuries (CE), as the founders of these schools were also under the influence of the patriarchal structures and practices of their day.[35]

In offering persuasive Islamic arguments for a theory of gender equality, the two scholars make a compelling case that the patriarchal family is un-Islamic. This resonates among Muslim women, at once legitimizing their own individual efforts to wrest themselves free of the patriarchal constraints imposed upon women and providing them with tools for collective action. The limitations of these initial interpretive efforts, however, have also become apparent. Innovative interpretations elicit new critiques, including self-critiques, and catapult theoreticians and activists into new spaces. The first theorists of Islamic feminism have been criticized for their apologetic tendencies as well as for what Abu Zayd, Arkoun and Rhouni refer to as 'foundationalism', that is, a tendency to remain captive to the very (patriarchal) scholarly tradition they wish to disrupt.[36] While some producers of Islamic feminist discourse remain anchored in the first stage, which persists alongside more recent tendencies, others, freeing themselves from the constraints of apologetics, have moved away from foundationalism and into a space Rhouni calls "post-foundationalist islamic gender critique [lower case intended]".[37]

Islamic Feminism: Stage Two

This shift to "thinking outside of the box" heralded a bolder, second stage of Islamic feminism. This development became apparent around the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. For some scholar-activists, the move away from apologetics has been accompanied by lessened antagonism towards the term 'Islamic feminism' and feminism per se.

Wadud exemplifies the move to a new stage of Islamic feminism. In her second book, *Inside the Gender Jihad*, published in 2005, she explicitly announces that she is moving beyond her earlier apologetics.[38] She stresses the importance of seeing the Qur'an, not simply as a fixed text, but "as an utterance or text *in process*" [her emphasis]. She goes on to say: "One important aspect of this challenge confronts the possibility of refuting the text, to talk back, to even say 'no'."[39] She candidly remarks that, "Personally, I have come to places where how the text says what it says is just

plain inadequate, or unacceptable, however much interpretation is enacted upon it."[40] She asserts that the Qur'an tolerated and controlled certain practices that were prevalent at the time and place of revelation, though these later became unacceptable. Slavery is the prime example of a practice that was condoned and regulated but became unacceptable in modern times, was declared as such and has since been eliminated. Wife beating and polygamy are other cases in which rejection is in keeping with the spirit or higher principles of the Qur'an as well as with current understandings of justice and equality. By now, it seems more appropriate to simply say 'no' to the text in certain instances than engage in complicated hermeneutics from within the box of patriarchal scholasticism. Saying 'no' to what is no longer acceptable does not amount to rejecting the Qur'an but can rather be seen as celebrating it by enacting the scripture's higher principles. "With our human development of postmodernist and deconstructionist disciplines of meaning," Wadud writes, "we accept the fact that we are potentially guided by the text, even if not limited to its particular utterances."[41]

While some scholar-activists have been primarily engaged in new hermeneutic work, others have focused their attention on Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, in their efforts to promote egalitarian Islam. How jurisprudence is used to legitimize state-enacted Muslim laws, especially Muslim family laws (also called Muslim personal status laws), has been of intense concern to Islamic feminists. As already mentioned, the reform of Muslim family law was a perennial concern of Muslim secular feminists. As we have seen, secular feminists have since the early 20th century tried to reform Muslim family law by drawing upon modernist Islamic discourse. Even though they remained within the framework of the patriarchal family model, their efforts met with little success. Their goal was to achieve functional gender complementarity via the promotion of legal and behavioral changes that would lead men to live up to the duties they had been assigned.

Islamic feminists seeking to bring about legal change in support of a gender-egalitarian model of the family have found it necessary to move beyond classical *fiqh*. Inherited jurisprudence erected Islamic scaffolding around the patriarchal family; constructing an egalitarian model of the family on that basis is an impossible task. The Iranian-born legal anthropologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini, who is based in London and serves as an international consultant and frequent Visiting Professor at New York University, has been in the forefront of efforts to achieve gender egalitarian Muslim family law. While firmly committed to staying within the framework of Islam, she argues

for a new jurisprudence. Mir-Hosseini makes an unequivocal historicist argument to the effect that classical *fiqh* was constructed in a patriarchal moment when egalitarian practices were not the norm. While such *fiqh* might have been an adequate juristic expression in its day, the spread of ideas and practices of gender equality, including within the family, has made it necessary to create a new jurisprudence that is more responsive to existing social realities, or *ma'amalat*. Mir-Hosseini insists it is necessary to escape from the box of patriarchy as it has been reflected in *fiqh* in order to achieve the justice and equality that are its true goal.[42]

Islamic feminist discourse has confronted the confusion between *shar'iah* (the divinely-guided path inspired by the Qur'an) and *fiqh,* or Islamic jurisprudence (man-made and profane and thus subject to change). Muslim family laws, which are enacted by the state on the basis of readings of *fiqh*, have been commonly referred to as *shar'iah* law. This confusion, which often seems to be intentional, frustrates efforts to modify family law for fear of tampering with the divine.[43] In addition to shedding light on the confusion between divine *shar'iah* and man-made *fiqh*, Mir Hosseini has also addressed another instance of conflation. Islamic jurisprudence, as is widely known, makes a distinction between *ibadat* – that is, unchanging, prescribed ritual or religious duties such as prayer, fasting, and so on – and *mu'amalat*, or social practices subject to change. She draws attention to the widespread notion that marriage – considered a contract in jurisprudence – is a religious duty. By sacralizing marriage in this way, attempts to change *fiqh*-based family law can be made to appear impious.

The transnational network, Women Living under Muslim Laws, published a compendium of Muslim family laws (which I discuss further below) that demonstrates the considerable variation in these *fiqh*-based laws from one country to the next. The majority of Muslim family law codes are found in secular states. While it may appear that the Islamic establishment is free to legally regulate the family, in reality, the state typically has the upper hand when it comes to enacting and modifying Muslim family law. In this area, the instrumental and political needs of the state take precedence over those of the religious establishment. As a result, family law can be changed in major and minor ways when doing so suits the interests of the state. Both the religious establishment and the state have upheld a patriarchal version of the family. In Muslim majority countries, the Muslim family as legally constituted by the state and religious establishment has remained the lynchpin of patriarchy. This remains the case despite

the significant erosion of patriarchal practices – many of them instigated and protected by the state itself – in the secular segment of the public sphere.[44]

Legal reform of the Moroccan *Mudawwana* type will only be possible elsewhere once states decide to endorse an egalitarian model of family life. Among the factors that resulted in reform in Morocco are secular feminists' relentless campaign, beginning in the 1980s, for a new family law and their propitious access to the Islamic feminist discourse that has more recently begun to circulate.[45] The transformation of Moroccan family law stands as *the* exemplar for other countries with Muslim family laws.

Soon after Islamic feminism appeared on the scene, global and local, theory and activism joined hands in a stunning new articulation of gender equality that disrupted the patriarchal way (or patriarchal ways) of perceiving Islam.[46] I will now turn to consider the transnational feminist networks (or TFNs, as Moghadam calls them) that emerged in the mid-1980s and have since played a crucial role in moving from discourse to activism.[47]

Islamic Feminism as a Global Social Movement: Two Stages

When the scholar-activists articulated the principle of human equality they found in the Qur'an, they insisted that considerations of ethics and justice required equality to be put into practice. In order to shut down discussion and pre-empt action, Muslim conservatives perennially intone that Islam has already given women their rights. The challenge is thus to find a way to implement the egalitarian vision of Islam.

Activists seeking to realize the ideals of gender equality and gender justice elucidated by this new generation of Muslim scholars have opened up to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Their shared, trans-communal activism reflects modern social realities, that is, the co-mingling of Muslims and those of other religious backgrounds in national and transnational spaces, and indeed within family space (marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims are continually increasing). Since the rise of Islamic feminism, a central focus of transnational collaboration has been to change Muslim family law by bringing it into conformity with an egalitarian model of the family and contemporary social conditions.

Two large transnational feminist networks that originated in the mid-1980s played a seminal role in drawing upon the emergent Islamic feminist discourse to build a global social movement. As Islamic feminism transitioned into its second stage, two

other key networks were formed. The articulation and organization of Islamic feminism at the global level was mirrored at the local level by intensified collective activism. In this respect, the path followed by Islamic feminism has been the converse of the secular feminist experience, where local social movements in particular national spaces preceded outreach and internationalization.[48] Many of the women who are at the center of efforts to erect global Islamic feminist networks are also intensely active in local organizations, moving back and forth between global space and national space, real space and cyberspace.

In what follows, I will examine four transnational feminist networks that have been central to the process of building a global Islamic feminist social movement, focusing on the transnational level. Close examination of the intersections between transnational and national activism will be the subject of another paper.

The first two transnational feminist networks, Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI), were started by secular feminists in 1984 during the heyday of second-wave feminism in different parts of the world.

Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) was spearheaded by the Algerian-born, French-based feminist Marieme Hélie-Lucas in response to requests from Algerian women to help combat draft legislation for an atavistic new Family Law. This effort to galvanize women living abroad in support of local efforts to reject the draft legislation constituted the beginning of what would become the vast WLUML network. From the very start, members of the network included Muslims and non-Muslims from the various countries of Africa and Asia that have Muslim laws. Over three decades of existence, WLUML has remained focused on legal matters in Muslim societies and also disseminates information, issues alerts and engages in advocacy.[49]

In order to promote change in Muslim family laws based on interpretations of *fiqh* – which, as we saw above, are often (mis)characterized as "*shar'iah* law" – WLUML has sought to de-mystify the notion that Muslim family laws are sacred and therefore cannot be altered. In pursuit of this objective, WLUML embarked upon a massive project to collate family laws. In 2003, after ten years of on the ground research (1991 to 2001), WLUML published a compendium of family laws (including Muslim, secular and customary laws) in Muslim majority countries. Entitled *Knowing Our Rights: Women. Family, Laws and Customs in the Muslim World*,[50] this comprehensive work demonstrated the diversity of Muslim family laws that have over

time been enacted in some twenty countries and the manner in which these ostensibly Islamic laws have been based on disparate interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence and/or resulted from external influences. The clear implication and the message of WLUML's effort is that there is no consensus with regards to the particular form these laws should take, that they are man-made, not divine, and are therefore subject to change. As we have seen, this is the point repeatedly made by Mir-Hosseini and other Islamic feminists. In 2009, WLUML made the 2006 edition of *Knowing Our Rights* available online.

Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI) is the second network that existed when Islamic feminism first appeared on the scene. Iranian-born American Mahnaz Afkhami and other prominent secular feminist activists have been at the forefront of this transnational network, created by prominent American feminist Robin Morgan in 1984.[51] Under the direction of Haleh Vaziri and Mahnaz Afkhami, who assumed leadership of SIGI in the early 1990s, the organization launched a pioneering program to produce a human rights manual containing Qur'anic verses and *hadith* supporting the idea of women's rights. By couching their manual in a religious idiom, they aimed to make it more appealing and comprehensible to ordinary Muslims. First introduced in English in 1996 and subsequently appearing in numerous languages spoken in Muslim societies around the globe, *Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights and Education in Muslim Societies* has had a significant impact on the ground, enabling women to see themselves as human beings with equal rights in the context of Islam. Legal scholar Madhavi Sunder argues that "studying the normative theories and strategies underlying such manuals [as *Claiming Our Rights*] offers another view of how rights on the ground are evolving differently from law in theory."[52] While pursuing the longer-term task of campaigning for legal reform of Muslim family laws, Muslim activists are able to use such manuals to more immediately promote attitudinal and behavioral change among ordinary women in the framework of egalitarian Islam. These activists, who include both secular and Islamic feminists, are well aware that the force of religious reasoning will not in itself result in legal change and that political struggle and state support are also necessary.

Coinciding with the shift to a new stage of Islamic feminism marked by the adoption of Morocco's path-breaking egalitarian family law, two recent global activist initiatives have emerged that at once reflect and actively promote this development.

Musawah ('equality' in Arabic), which identifies itself as the Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family, has been spearheaded by Sisters in Islam in Malaysia, a pioneering group created in the mid-1980s of activists and theorists of Islamic feminism. For many years, it has been led by veteran activist Zainah Anwar. The members of Musawah include academics and activists who play prominent roles in organizations in their various countries. Musawah unequivocally asserts that much in current Muslim family law is "neither tenable in contemporary circumstances nor defensible on Islamic grounds". Musawah demands that laws and policies be enacted to support equal gender rights, including equal inheritance rights, which are often absent from the feminist agenda.[53] The organization held a Global Meeting for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family in Kuala Lumpur in February 2009, bringing together an impressive array of prominent academic and activist women. Musawah is an exclusively Muslim organization of Islamic and secular feminists but some non-Muslims with ties to the Islamic feminist project were invited to the 2009 Global Meeting.

The other major network created during the second stage of Islamic feminism is WISE (Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality), known for its "big tent" approach. Created on the initiative of ASMA (the American Society for Muslim Advancement), WISE was launched at a massive 2006 international conference held in New York that hosted Muslims as well as non-Muslims, "religious" as well as "secular" women and feminists as well as Muslims' wary of feminism. Initially, WISE was ambivalent towards the idea of equality, vacillating between equality and equity. Questions thus arose as to the meaning of the letter 'E' in the organization's acronym: did 'E' stand for equality or rather for equity? In 2008, WISE came out unequivocally for equality. The majority of the "WISE women" are Muslims but the group actively welcomes non-Muslims as well. Like ASMA, WISE understands the importance of trans-communal activism, as Muslims and members of other religions live in close proximity in Africa, Asia and the West. This is reflected in rates of inter-marriage, a common and growing phenomenon among the younger generation.

One of WISE's more distinctive efforts is the Shura Council, a transnational advisory group composed of women scholars and activists spanning two generations. By drawing upon women's scholarship and bringing it to wider attention, the Shura Council aims to enhance women's authority while spreading the egalitarian message. *Shura* is a venerable Islamic term that implies authority, specifically the authority

attendant upon collective consultation. The Shura Council affirms that it operates with new concepts unknown in the world of classical *fiqh*, most notably gender equality. The Shura Council is aware of the challenges it will face in taking this bold approach while simultaneously trying to achieve broad outreach. By means of information and interaction, the Shura Council seeks to contribute to the movement away from the patriarchal inequities with which Islam has become entangled in favor of a more egalitarian religion.

All four networks discussed above remain active. Many of their members belong to one or more network, a fact that promotes a high degree of interaction among them. The transnational Muslim and non-Muslim networked culture is continuing to grow, ensuring that Islamic feminism is ready for the future.

In the Muslim world, secular feminism and Islamic feminism appear to be increasingly blending. This is due to the fact that their proponents are working together in the context of conferences and workshops and have adopted multiple talking points. Some simultaneously claim to be both secular and Islamic feminists while others, without explicitly stating an identity, operate across a secular/religious continuum. These phenomena are the reflection of a common goal binding together all Muslim feminist actors: the desire to rid their religious community of patriarchy and realize an egalitarian Islam, especially in the context of the family, the last bastion of patriarchy.

I will conclude this discussion as I began it, by noting the salient place of Islamic feminism in the Islamic Transformation. As Amina Wadud remarked: "Discussions of Muslim women's full human equality seem impossible without a comprehensive intra-Islamic Transformation."[54] Part of this "intra-Islamic Transformation" entails finding a genuine place for diversity in a world in which Muslims and others live in close contact and contests between patriarchal and egalitarian visions of religion and culture still rage.

Postscript: Islamic Feminism in the Age of Revolution

Much has happened since this paper was originally written in 2008, most notably the recent revolutions in a number of Muslim-majority Arab countries. How are Islamic feminisms to be located in this revolutionary context? What is its relevance?

The Arab revolutions that began in December 2010 remain works in progress. They have sought to topple oppressive and corrupt political regimes and install a new

democratic order in which equality and justice will prevail. While young people have played a crucial role, these revolutions have been the work of a cross-section of male and female citizens drawn from all social classes and age groups. In Tunisia and Egypt, parliamentary elections resulted in Islamist majorities that have pledged to uphold the secular state. But what are the implications of Islamist political ascendancy for gender equality and gender justice? Some worry that, with their newfound political power, the Islamists will roll back gains for women, especially in the sphere of Muslim personal status law. Such concerns are particularly pronounced in the case of Egypt, where some fear that various social restrictions might be placed on women in the name of Islam.

In Egypt, I have observed a surge of interest in Islamic feminism among educated, middle class young people who support the revolution. For many young activists, Islamic feminism is an important way to communicate principles of gender equality and social justice within the framework of Islam to a broader, religiously conservative population. Other activists, mainly drawn from the older generation and formed by different experiences, favor using secular rather than religious language in support of the same ideals. They prefer to focus on projects for economic and social progress and thereby win support for secular democracy. In short, they believe that concrete gains, delivered within the framework of a development model, will win people over and reduce political support for religious conservatives.

It remains to be seen how revolutionaries in the various Arab countries will draw upon and develop Islamic feminism. It is quite clear, however, that Islamic and secular feminism will be used in tandem. There is reason to believe that the term 'Islamic feminism', like the generic term 'feminism', will be used discretely, as emphasis is placed on results rather than labels. When Islamic feminism first appeared on the horizon in the early 1990s, it was hoped that one day Islamic and secular feminisms would blend into a new secular national feminism. I see the revolutions that are presently underway as taking feminism into this new space. In its various forms, feminism is making a vital contribution to transforming the old social, economic and political order, a necessary step towards building a new democracy.

[1] Badran, "Islamic Feminism on the Move," in Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), pp. 323-38. This originated as a paper for the Conference on Islamic Feminism organized by Islam & Laicité and UNESCO in 2006 and was subsequently published as "Le féminisme islamique en mouvement," in *Existe-t-il un féminism musulman?*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2007; and in abbreviated form in Arabic as "Itlaq al-haraka al-niswiyya al-islamiyya" in *Le Monde diplomatique, édition arabe,* Nov. 2006.

[2] I noted the emergent quest among some women in Egypt to develop a discourse of women's liberation within an Islamic framework in "Gender Activism: Feminists and Islamists in Egypt," in Valentine Moghadam, ed., *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993) and discussed the early rise of Islamic feminism in "Towards Islamic Feminisms: A Look at the Middle East," in Asma Afsarrudin, ed., *Hermeneutics and Honor in Islamic/ate Societies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). These two articles appear in my book, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), as chapters 6 and 9, respectively.

[3] The liberation theologies that Christian and Jewish women in the United States began to develop in the 1960s and 70s, for example, constituted compartmentalized movements of religious reform. I examine the difference between this phenomenon and the rise of the new gender-sensitive Islamic theology in "Toward Islamic Feminisms."

[4] In a public lecture in Cairo at the American Research Center in Egypt (2 January 2002), I offered a definition and contextualized description of Islamic feminism. Entitled "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?", this lecture was published in *Al Ahram Weekly,* Jan. 17-23, 2002, and appears in a slightly revised form in Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, pp. 242-252, and in "Islamic Feminism Revisited," *Al Ahram Weekly*, February, 9-15, 2006. It has been republished in the following places: Women Living under Muslim Laws Website, Feb. 10, 2006; *Counter-Currents,* Feb. 10, 2006; *American Muslim*, Feb., 2006; SALDWR Feb 9, 2006; Shams al-Nisa, 10 Feb. 20006; ifeminists.com Feb. 2006; Tawhid Mosque.com 2006; Siyanda: Mainstreaming Gender Equality; The Women's UN Report Program & Network (WUNRN). It has been translated into Dutch by Hendrik Jan Bakker as 'Islamitisch feminisme, een stand van zaken', in: *Tijdschrift voor Humanistiek / Journal for Humanistics*, published by "SWP", Amsterdam, vol. 7, no. 27, October 2006, pp. 47 – 55.

[5] Wadud writes: "My preoccupation with the development of the theoretical considerations and analysis of inter-Islamic ideas is that a theory is only as good as its practical implementation." See Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006) p. 16.

[6] For examples of indigenous feminism among Muslim women, see Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed, 1986); Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009); Parvin Paidar, *Women in the Political Process in 20th Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[7] As Ziba Mir-Hosseini, for example, writes in "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism", *Critical Inquiry* 32, summer 2006, pp. 629-45, "Muslim women, like other women in the

world, have always been aware of—and resisted – gender inequality; yet the emergence of a sustained, indigenous feminism was delayed until recently." (p. 638)

[8] Arkoun, Mohammed, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Saqi, 2002).

[9] Among the first public demands of secular feminists in Egypt (made in 1911) was for women's access to mosques for congregational worship. See Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 69.

[10] See Wadud, *Gender Jihad*, p. 27-28; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Toward Gender Equality: Muslim Family Laws and the Shari'ah", Concept Paper for the Musawah Project, p. 14, and Mir-Hosseini. "Islam and Gender Justice", Vincent J. Cornell and Omid Safi, eds. *Voices of Islam*, vol. 5 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), pp. 629-45.

[11] On the Islamic modernist thinking of Egyptian Shaikh Muhammad 'Abduh, a widely influential figure among Muslims at home and abroad, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 [originally published by Oxford University Press, 1962]) Chapter 5, "Muhammad 'Abduh", pp. 130-160. On Egyptian feminists' approach to family reform, see Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation,* Chapter 7, "Recasting the Family," pp. 124-141, and on feminists' pan-Arab demands for reform of personal status (family) laws, see chapter 12, "Arab feminism", pp. 221-50, and esp. pp. 242-42.

[12] Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke provide an introduction to Zain al-Din, including extracts from her books, *Al-Sufurwa al-Hijab* (Beirut: 1927) and *Al-Fatah wa al-Shuyukh* (Beirut: 1928), in *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Women's Writing*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2004; first edition under the title *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Women's Feminist Writing*, 1990). See Miriam Cooke, *Nazira Zeineddine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2011). See Bouthaina Shaaban, "The Muted Voices of Women Interpreters," Mahnaz Afkhami, ed., *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), pp. 61-77.

[13] See "Conversion and Feminism: Comparing British, Dutch and South African Life Stories", in *Women Embracing Islam in the West*, ed. Karin Nieuwkerk, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006)

[14] See Margot Badran, "Gender Journeys into Arabic," Chapter 8 in *Feminism in Islam*, pp. 192-211.

[15] See Gisela Webb, ed., *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. xi. On activism driven by the combination of scholarship and circumstances, see Katherine Bullock, ed., *Muslim Women Activists in North America: Speaking for Ourselves* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005).

[16] Fatima Mernissi, *Le harem politique* (Paris: Michel Albin, 1987), trans. by Mary Jo Lakeland as *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), also appearing under the title, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Cambridge: Perseus, 1991).

[17] Raja Rhouni, *Secular and "Islamic Feminist" Critiques in the Work of Fatima Mernissi* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2009) and Rhouni, "Deconstructing Islamic Feminism: A Look at Fatima Mernissi", in Margot Badran, ed., *Gender and Islam in Africa*, forthcoming. See also Badran, "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?" in *Feminism in Islam*, Chap. 10, pp. 243-45; Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 70-74.

[18] For some, the public assertion of religious identity that is involved in describing oneself as a "believing woman" as well as public displays of piety are seen as implying that the failure of some individuals to engage in such behavior makes them somehow "less" Muslim. The assertion of religiosity can also be seen as echoing Islamist demands for public displays of piety.

[19] For example: Kecia Ali, Asma Barlas, Fatima Mernissi, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Sa'idiyya Shaikh, Hidayet Tuksal and Amina Wadud.

[20] Wadud does not mince words when she says: "[…] gender is a category of thought ill-respected in even the works of many male intellectuals of Islamic reform." See *Gender Jihad*, p. 189. Nodding to the issue of women's rights in Islam is not the same as seriously considering the new Islamic feminist

discourse. On this point, see, for example, Shireen T. Hunter, ed., *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity (*Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2009).

[21] Mernissi acknowledges the help and support of her colleague Ahmad al-Khamlichi, Professor of Muslim law at Muhammad V University, in preparing her book, *Le harem politique*. Leading male Iranian religious scholars were responsive to Iranian legal anthropologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini's interest in discussing issues of gender equality and gender justice in Islam. The Egyptian Islamic scholar, Nasr Abu-Zayd, has given serious attention to Islamic feminist scholarship and has himself pushed the parameters of examinations of gender and equality in Islam.

[22] See for example, Feride Acar, "Women in the Ideology of Islamic Revivalism in Turkey: Three Islamic Women's Journals", *Islamic Literature in Contemporary Turkey (*1991); Mai Yamani, "Some Observations on Women in Saudi Arabia", in Yamani, ed., *Feminism and Islam,* pp. 262-82; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Stretching the Limits: A Feminist Reading of the Shari'a in Post-Khomeini Iran", in Mai Yamani, ed., *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 286-320; Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Feminism in an Islamic Republic: Years of Hardship, Years of Growth", in Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito, eds., *Islam, Gender, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 59-84; and Margot Badran, "Towards Islamic Feminisms: A Look at the Middle East", in Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Press, 2009), pp. 215-41 (originally published in Asma Afsarrudin, ed., *Hermeneutics and Honor in Islamic/ate Societies* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) pp.)

[23] Abdennur Prado explains that "the conferences were the result of the work of the Islamic Board (Junta Islamica) in Spain…Through numerous activities—conferences, publications, and advancing positions through the platforms of digital communication (Webislam) and print media (*Verde Islam* and books) we have tried to take the lead in sending messages to society demonstrating that Islam is not only fully compatible with the basic values of democratic societies, including gender equality, but that Islam can contribute to the improvement of our society." Email communicationwith the author, 19 December2008. Prado has edited a selection of conference papers from the first two Barcelona conferences (2005 and 2007) entitled *le emergencia del feminismo islámico: Seleccion de ponencias del Primer y Secondo Congreso Internacional de Feminism Islámico* (Barcelona: Oozebap, 2008). Prado is also the author of *El islam anterior al Islam* (Barcelona: Oozebap, 2008).

[24] See Margot Badran, "Who's Afraid of Islamic Feminism?", *Al Ahram Weekly*, issue 609, Oct. 24-30, 2002.

[25] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakati, 1992; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[26] Wadud writes in *Qur'an and Woman*: "Gender as a category of thought is one of the most significant aspects of this development [toward fuller articulation of Islamic ethics] of human understanding and is essential to raising the level of an Islamic ethos to more closely resemble the universal intent of the divine message as contextually disclosed in the Qur'an." (pp. 205-6)

[27] Even while retaining the model of the patriarchal family and simply attempting to reform men's use of unilateral divorce and the practice of polygamy, feminists made little headway. The most notable successes in the attempt to reform family law were secular models imposed by the state.

[28] She took the *shahada* in 1972.

[29] On *tawhid*, see *Woman and Qur'an*, pp 25-26 and *Gender Jihad*, pp. 24-38.

[30] On *khalifa*, see *Woman and Qur'an*, pp. 23, 102 and *Gender Jihad*, pp. 14-15, 32-37, 42 and 47. On *khilafa* see *Woman and Qur'an*, pp. 74, 85 and 91, and *Gender Jihad,* pp. 33, 35-37, 48, 80 and 261.

[31] See Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, p. 76. See also Laleh Bakhtiar's explication of *daraba* in the introduction preceding her translation of the Qur'an, published as *The Sublime Qur'an* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2007).

[32] Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002) (p. 212, note 17).

[33]   Barlas, *"Believing Women",* p. xi.

[34]   On *tawhid*, see pp. 12-13, 79, 94-95, 101-103, 106, 108-109, 141-42, 177 and 210; on *khilafa*, see pp. 106-07 in *Believing Women.*

[35]   See Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[36]   Abu-Zayd, Nasr Hamid, "Qadiyyat al-mar'a bayna sindani al-hadighta wa mitrakati al-taqalid", *Alif* (Cairo) 1999; Arkoun, Mohammed, *al-Fikr al-usuli wa istihalat al –ta'sil: nahwa tarikh akhar lil-fikr al-islami* . Rhouni, *Secular and "Islamic Feminist" Critiques*,

[37]   See Rhouni, *Secular and "Islamic Feminist" Critiques*, Conclusion: "Beyond 'Islamic Feminism': Towards a Post-Foundationalist Islamic Gender Critique", and "Deconstructing Islamic Feminism: A Look at Fatima Mernissi".

[38]   Wadud, *Gender Jihad,* pp. 187-88.

[39]   Wadud, *Gender Jihad*, p.190.

[40]   Wadud, *Gender Jihad*, p.190.

[41]   Wadud., *Gender Jihad*, p. 197.

[42]   See "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism", *Critical Inquiry*, 32 (summer 2006), pp. 629-45; "Islam and Gender Justice", to appear in Vincent Cornell & Omid Safi (eds), *Voices of Islam*, Vol. 5, *Voices of Diversity and Change* (Westport: Greenwood, 2007); and "Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism".

[43]   For a recent and very clear statement of this distinction, see Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Towards Gender Equality: Muslim Family Laws and the *Shar'iah*", Concept Paper for Musawah: A Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family", pp. 2-3.

[44]   For the example of Egypt, see Margot Badran "Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam, and the State in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Egypt," chapter one in *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), pp. 17-55.

[45]   Souad Eddouda, "Women, Gender, and the State in Morocco: Contradictions, Constraints, and Prospects", PhD. Dissertation, Faculty of Letters, Muhammad V University (Nov, 2003). Eddouda examines the secular feminist movement's efforts to reform the *Mudawwana* up till the eve of the 2004 revision. Zakia Salima's, "Between Islam and Feminism: New Political Transformations and Movements in Morocco", PhD. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2005), examines feminist activism, drawing upon Islamic feminist arguments relating to the *Mudawwana* and the attitude of Islamist women, demonstrating the ways in which they were mutually constitutive. Her work has recently been published as *Between Feminism and Islam: Human rights and Sharia Law in Morocco*, in Social Movements, Protest, and Contention, vol 36, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[46]   This broad observation is not intended to indicate a particular form or practice of patriarchy nor to downplay the manner in which it has changed from one context to the next. Rather, the intention here is to indicate a model.

[47]   Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

[48]   Although the pioneering Egyptian feminist movement emerged in a publicly transparent and independently organized form under the leadership of the Egyptian Feminist Union, which immediately joined the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, earlier forms of feminist expression had also found outlets. A decade would pass before Muslims and Arabs began to organize themselves at the regional level, with movements continuing to be anchored in national contexts.

[49]   On WLUML, see "Networking for Change: The Role of Women's Groups in Initiating Dialogue on Women's Issues", Mahnaz Afkhami, ed., *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), pp.51-60; and Moghadam, *Globalizing Women*, passim.

[50]   First published in paperback in 2003 by WLUML and updated and republished in 2006 with additional material concerning developments in migrant locations such as Canada, where Muslim activists successfully defeated an attempt to institute Muslim family arbitration boards. In 2006, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) published *Muslims and Canadian Family Laws: A Comparative Primer* under the direction of L. Clarke and P. Cross (Toronto).

[51]   See Moghadam, *Globalizing Women,* passim.

[52]   Madhavi Sunder, "Piercing the Veil", *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 112, no. 1399, 2003, pp. 1399-1472, see p. 1443.

[53]   See the flyer for Musawah: A Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family. In 1931 public speech in Cairo, Egyptian feminist Saiza Nabarawi said that unequal inheritance was an anachronism now that women were earning incomes and contributing to the material needs of the family. She nevertheless stopped short of demanding this reform. One year earlier, a young female law school student had demanded equal inheritance and was told that this would subject her to the accusation of apostasy. See Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 134.

[54]   Wadud, *Gender Jihad*, p, 188.