

# Muslim Women Seize a Place of their Own in the World of Religious Knowledge:

## Da'iyat, mujtahidat, and 'alimat<sup>1</sup>

Amel Grami

The attitudes of historians and scholars towards women's contribution to the scholarly field of Islamic knowledge range between recognition and denial. In view of a number of publications on this issue, major attitudes can be classified as follows:

1. An attitude that recognizes the importance of women Islamic scholars (alimat) starting with Aisha, the Prophet's own wife, who was considered a main source of the Prophet's sayings or Hadith (the record of the Prophet's sayings and deeds), and including other women at later stages of Islamic history who stood out and became famous for their religious knowledge. Moreover, there were Sufi women who were knowledgeable about religion and gained a reputation for their ability to explain to people the rules and principles of the faith.<sup>2</sup>
2. Another attitude that considers the number of women scholars throughout Islamic history to be very limited.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, what we have is a mere list of their names without any mention of their work.<sup>4</sup> It is no secret that over centuries after the death of the Prophet Mohammed, men who dominated the sphere of knowledge and education excluded women from the public sphere; women's role in terms of religious knowledge was often limited to private circles. They were also banned from occupying positions of authority such as being a judge, issuing fatwas (legal rulings), and from holding a religious office. The dominant class of male scholars suppressed and marginalized any female scholastic contribution, affirming that women cannot be skilled in anything but linguistic blabber as a way of covering up for their own mental deficiencies. Historians, in turn, did not hesitate to marginalize women's intellectual production, and recorded only a negligible part of their work.

Despite different opinions and arguments, it is evident today that many women have entered the field of religious knowledge and are committed to enjoying their right to speech in public. Female scholars have managed to change some inherited stereotypes and representations of women, and to contribute to *ijtihad* (the endeavor of a Muslim scholar to derive legal rulings from the Qur'an and Hadith without relying on the views of other scholars). They have managed to move from a situation where women were the subject of jurisprudential rulings without any right to speak for themselves,

to a situation where they became researchers of religious texts and examiners of arguments on which male scholars based their discourse.

There has been an increase in recent years in the number of women scholars in the area of fiqh (faqihat, i.e. or jurists enjoying authority in Islamic jurisprudence) and iftaa (muftiyat), and of female scholars ('alimat)<sup>5</sup> who are well-versed in legal fiqh (jurisprudence) and considered arbiters of shari'a law. Furthermore, there has been media emphasis on their attitudes towards various issues while failing to frame their work within the "religious reform" movement.

This paper seeks to assess women's presence in the field of religious scholarship in some Arabo-Islamic societies. We found it convenient to deal with the following issues:

- The role of women in preaching (da'wa) and ijtihad.
- The presence of female scholars in the media.
- The consequences of women's inroad into the sphere of religious scholarship.

#### 1. Women in Preaching and Ijtihad (Da'iyat and Mujtahidat)

The reader of books on tradition can tell how adamant the patriarchal society was, especially in the dark ages, about excluding most women from knowledge. This was so despite women's eagerness to learn the sciences and despite the existence of a Hadith by the Prophet urging Muslims, both men and women, to seek knowledge at all times and in all places, even in China. This marginalization underestimated the value of women and their intellectual abilities, and reflected the fear of seeing them obtain the tools of knowledge, especially after it became culturally engrained that women's role should be restricted to giving men pleasure and keeping them company.<sup>6</sup>

Even though most parents were not keen on educating their daughters, a number of girls managed to obtain an education. This passion for knowledge was not restricted to 'free' women as competition for education and excellence was also fierce among female slaves in the harems of the caliphs and ministers. The more knowledgeable and educated female slaves were sold for higher prices, were favored by their masters, and enjoyed a better status among other women slaves.

In modern times, the education of women has been a major concern for the pioneers of the reform movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mohammed Abdou, Qassim Amin, Talaat Harb, and Taher al-Haddad). They succeeded in shedding light on aspects of oppression against women in the name of norms and traditions. They defended women's right to education, helping them put an end to their isolation. This generation of reformers agreed that the objective behind educating women was mainly providing them with the tools for good housekeeping, better upbringing for their children, and being on the same intellectual level as the husband. Thus, there was a distinction between subject matters in education, on the basis of gender; the girls were supposed to take up sewing, embroidery, and weaving lessons, while the "noble" sciences were the privilege of men. Educating girls was not considered a right but rather a gift from society for a rather instrumental and limited objective (mostly family happiness).

Additionally, the right to education was not enjoyed by all women. Most of them had to fight to change their status. While many well-established families that favored

education encouraged their daughters to acquire knowledge, many other women from less privileged classes struggled to access schools and get an education.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a large number of women's lives in Islamic societies witnessed important changes. These changes differed from one country to another. A number of governments sought reforms and issued laws that would grant women certain rights such as the right to education, to employment, and to participation in public life. Education was no longer meant to prepare girls for motherhood.<sup>7</sup> These changes in various political, social, economic, and intellectual areas enhanced women's self-awareness and renewed their faith in their abilities and talent. However, the area of religious knowledge remained the privilege of men who showed fierce resistance, throughout the ages, to any woman who dared venture into this male-dominated field. In this respect, we mention the case of the severe objection of male scholars to Nazira Zain al-Din (d. 1976), who wrote a book in response to allegations against her defending her right to deal with religious issues.

Gradually, the attitude towards women changed, especially with the fundamentalist movements — most of which started allowing the emergence of female missionary thought.<sup>8</sup> Along came Zaynab al-Ghazali,<sup>9</sup> a pioneer of the first generation of women who defended the political project of the Islamic state. This new generation made use of opportunities provided by Islamic groups to participate in social life. By joining in preaching (da'wa), these women were motivated by the quest for a world of their own. Although this was under the cover of religion, it became a quest for women to impose themselves through participation in the public sphere. Religious education offered a way for women to gain more independence and liberation from the bonds from which they suffered, especially those women who grew up in a conservative or traditional environment.<sup>10</sup> This resulted in a growing number of women joining Islamic movements, studying religion, and practicing preaching, especially that religious education was considered the fulfillment of women's religious obligation and a shield to protect them against calls to unveil.

The last decade of the previous century witnessed an intense preaching activity by women<sup>11</sup> in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Syria — an activity that became a distinct characteristic of social life in these countries. It is obvious that this preaching activity was led by female academics specialized in Islamic studies, Islamic law (shari'a), or Arabic language, and by graduates from the schools of Education, Law, Economics, and Public Administration.<sup>12</sup> Private gatherings, meetings within academic institutions or mosques,<sup>13</sup> occasions of condolences and events by charity organizations are considered suitable for female preachers and advocates to deliver their sermons, lessons, and lectures on Islamic doctrine ('aqida), and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) among other topics.

One cannot disregard initiatives made by a number of other women as well. Syrian Islamic preacher Munira al-Qubaissi was able to establish a renowned women's movement in major cities and villages that focused essentially on Sunni circles. In this movement, she depended on the power of established families with Sufi inclinations.<sup>14</sup> Other women soon followed this "Qubaisyat" model and similar movements appeared in Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Kuwait.

The Islamic preaching discourse, whether direct or on the internet, focuses on making women aware of their main role, namely that of taking care of children and husbands. It also focuses on strengthening the sense of Islamic pride among young women in order to help them rid themselves of psychological defeat and the mentality of subordination. Further, it warns against unveiling, mixing with the opposite sex, and being attracted to feminist calls and what goes on in conferences about women's rights, often in retaliation against advocates of women's liberation who refuse to separate the private and the public.

The preaching discourse is often centered on the West, seeking to compare the nature of Muslim societies with those in the West which, according to fundamentalists, have witnessed moral disintegration, sexual laxity, and an increase in violence as well as other social diseases. The mobilizing preaching discourse is characterized by a spirit of psychological intimidation that provokes feelings of hysterical fear, aversion to earthly life, and concentration on commitment to Islamic rituals.

While some female preachers have focused their discourse on reestablishing moral values in the family and society, armed with a sound knowledge, most female preachers and advocates lack that sound religious knowledge and promote superstitions and falsities and concentrate on suffering in the afterlife and the woes which befall women who focus on their looks and makeup. This reactionary discourse infiltrated all classes and gained power and reputation with the success of women preachers in attracting female audiences. The audience that consumes this proselytizing propaganda includes mostly women who themselves lack religious knowledge and the ability to criticize and investigate religious issues, and who have faith in religious scholars and preachers.

Preaching is not the only area in which women stood out. A group of female scholars also contributed to the areas of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and exegesis (tafsir).<sup>15</sup> Nazira Zain al-Din was the first to advocate giving women the right to interpret the Qur'an (ijtihad). She maintained that "women have the obvious right to contribute to ijtihad through exegesis and interpretation. They are even more entitled than men to interpret Qur'anic verses related to their duties and rights, because those concerned with such rights and duties are in a better position to judge their importance."<sup>16</sup> It is believed that thanks to Nazira Zain al-Din, Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, and Asma Barlas, male-centered exegetical prejudices were exposed, mainly through these women's study of various Qur'anic verses and Hadith related to shari'a provisions specific to women.

Female scholars grasped every opportunity to defend women's right to participate in the formal academic study of religion. Such studies are based on the idea that Muslim men and women are required to use their intellect in order to understand and interpret religion.<sup>17</sup>

This also meant that women are not obliged to follow men's interpretations,<sup>18</sup> but must seek to derive meaning directly from the Qur'an without depending on a mediator. Women must begin to lay the foundation of a religious view that goes beyond subordination and incompetence. Through such views, women scholars would

endeavor to enlighten other women about their identity, rights, and role in society. Female researches thus called for the rejection of the “gender” division that links men to reason, law, and productivity, and confines women to caregiving roles.

Although these female researchers differ in terms of educational background, geographic affiliation, age, ideology, and scale of productivity, they all agree on the need to build independent selves and individual identities, and highlight the importance of linking the knowledge of the religious texts with awareness of women’s rights. Also, they stress the need to expose structures of domination and forms of oppression and tyranny. The exclusion of women from public life after the death of Prophet Mohammed, especially the right to pray in mosques, led to their exclusion from decision-making and prevented them from active reflection on religious issues. Women became dependent on the words of male scholars.

Having acquired new research tools, some women became open to modern sciences while others were influenced by feminist studies of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Christian and Jewish theology. As a result, they were encouraged to reinterpret some Qur’anic verses. Female researchers studied concepts of equality and justice; wife beating; and rules related to marriage, alimony, inheritance, and testimony. They called for the exclusion of ahadith (the Prophet’s sayings) that insult women because they are unreliable and in conflict with the objectives of the Qur’anic verses that place women on a par with men. It is no secret that not all female researchers in the religious field share the same qualifications and courage to break the silence and address issues considered “taboo” in Islamic thought. Amina Wadud, for example, who lives in the United States and enjoyed freedom of expression and thought, raised the issue of a woman’s right to lead prayers (imama) in the family, at home, and even in the mosque. She used the example of Umm Waraqa whom the Prophet allowed to manage her household, including slaves, because she memorized the Qur’an and had acquired considerable knowledge. Amina Wadud explained that nothing prevents women from holding religious office, but scholars have provided misogynistic interpretations that suit their interests and safeguard their scientific and social status.<sup>22</sup>

Similar to Amina Wadud, a group of female Muslim researchers in Europe argued that courage is now a more pressing requirement than educational capacity in order to reinterpret some of the problematic verses, such as the verse calling for the beating of women (Qur’an: al-Nissa’ 34:4), and the verses on slavery that are no longer relevant owing to the change in times and circumstances.<sup>23</sup> This means that rules and regulations should not be constant but are subject to re-consideration in accordance with the changes in time and place.

## 2. Women and Legal Religious Rulings (iita’) in the Media: From a Source of Seduction to a Source of Knowledge

Biographies of the Prophet (al-sira al-nabawiyya) indicate that the Prophet allowed women to issue their own legal rulings (fatwa), especially in matters of concern to them. Books of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) explained that being male is not a prerequisite to issue fatwas. However, reality has proven that women have been banned from doing so, as the legal religious institutions are male-centered and have excluded female scholars.

However, in our modern times women have grown aware of their own competence in religious sciences, an aspect that encouraged them to defend their right to be active in public life and to access the media. The credit goes to modern media services and the revolution in telecommunications which allowed a group of female scholars, namely veiled ones, to take part in religious programs and share their fatwas.<sup>24</sup> Among the stars of Egyptian satellite TV channels are Abla al-Kahlawi, Suad Salih, Amna Nosseir, Malika Zarar, Abla Kamel, and Elham Chaheen, in addition to Rafida al-Habash and others on Syrian TV channels.

After female preachers set out to give religious lectures in educational institutions, charitable organizations, and social centers, the internet websites witnessed an intensive and active presence of a number of female preachers who take part in talk shows and ifta'. These women have shown self-confidence and a desire to challenge the established order, expressing their determination to formulate a new identity by defending the veil and Islamic values. However, according to women scholars, their number is limited, especially if we take into consideration the abundance of religious satellite channels and internet websites on the one hand, and the growing audiences of ifta' programs on the other. According to Suad Salih,<sup>25</sup> the low number of female muftis is due to women's reluctance to specialize in this area in compliance with tradition, their lack of awareness of what is legally permissible, and the absence of ambition. To this is added women's fear of the media and their rejection by society.

We can identify two types of women preachers in religious media: Egyptian, Kuwaiti, and Syrian female preachers who tend to appear in the image of the caring mother who provides guidance to her own children, showering them with affection, and leading them cautiously to safety. Abla Kamel may well be a perfect example of the authoritative figure playing this motherly role. The emotional and educational message conveyed by Abla Kamel is based on spreading love around her and giving advice, instruction, and sympathy.

The second kind is represented by Muslim female preachers, TV preachers, and professors of Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic doctrine who give precedence to their role as scholars over that of mothers, and are eager to discuss issues from the perspective of the knowledgeable female scholar. These female muftis and da'iyat share a common belief that reconsiders women's role in the private and public areas, and rejects the common view that women have a mental and psychological nature that is different from that of men, and therefore lack the ability to analyze and reach conclusions the way men do.

Women's entry into the world of religious media carried with it a number of challenges. They have been facing a variety of reactions ranging from derision to admiration. Some studies considered that programs on 'fatwas for women' reduced the role of female shari'a scholars and other academics specialized in philosophy and law to the role of preachers, restricting their scope of intervention to limited categories of women's issues such as the postponement of menstruation in order to go to pilgrimage, visiting Mecca, or completing the fasting.

Furthermore, the presence of female scholars in the world of media is marred by flaws. These include ignorance of the rules of working in the media and an inability

to engage with the viewers. Sometimes, these women reproduce the same male-centered way of thinking as if the female da'iyah is nothing but the voice of her male counterpart, making her presence unproductive. Another flaw is often their swift responses that lack deep reflection, which makes them commit mistakes and forces them to often retract and change their opinions about the answers given.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike the critics of female Muslim preachers, a number of researchers affirm that the inclusion of women in religious media contributes to curbing religious ignorance. Through the use of simplified classical Arabic, often mixed with the local dialect, these women are able to fill the gap that exists between scholars and the people. Furthermore, the female da'iyah is more informed about the details of family and women's life. She understands women's needs and the conditions of their life more than male scholars do. Moreover, women can speak to other women without embarrassment.<sup>27</sup> Women muftis have actually managed to reflect a positive image of women, as the female scholar is a role model, can express opinions, and discuss openly social issues and problems (including sexual problems). Other problems dealt with include the situation of immigrant women and their suffering in the absence of a care taker, the marriage of minors, and sexual harassment.

Female scholars believe that it is essential to support women and alleviate injustice, but they affirm that they differ from feminist organizations in their defense of human rights for women. For example, they refuse the call for total equality and insist on the difference between the sexes: "God wanted to give all rights to women just like men within the framework of justice ('adala) but not similarity or sameness (mumathala). Similarity is hard to apply even for the same sex, how can it be applied then for two different sexes?"<sup>28</sup>

It is not uncommon for female preachers (da'iyah) to object to family laws or international treaties that oppose discrimination between men and women (CEDAW for instance).<sup>29</sup> Suad Salih refused the call for full equality in inheritance between the two sexes and did not consider such a view fair. Malika Zarar launched a violent attack on laws recently passed in Egypt, considering that, unlike what some believed, such laws bring great injustice upon women. Examples of such laws include the ability of women to file for immediate divorce (khul'), alimony, visitation rights, and custody of children.<sup>30</sup> Malika Zarar wants to revive the application of the shari'a laws which include applying the hiraba (severe physical punishment) rules on those who harass women.

By contrast, Amna Nosseir sees that some laws no longer suit our modern societies. She even rejects polygamy in Muslim societies affirming that it was adopted in the past for a purpose, and demanded that a mother whose child's parentage is denied by the father, may give her name to her offspring out of compassion for the child. She also calls for the prosecution of anyone who practices excision on young girls.<sup>31</sup>

These female scholars are also clear about matters of public interest such as women running for the office of president of the republic. Suad Salih explained that Islam does not forbid women from being a leading Imam (i.e. assuming the imama al-kubra), and gave the example of Balqis, the queen of Sheba, who was described in the Qur'an as a wise woman. Suad Salih, however, argues that women's imama is permissible

“provided the position does not impede a woman’s natural role as wife, mother, and caretaker in her family”.<sup>32</sup>

As for Amna Nosseir, not only does she defend the right of women to run for leadership positions but also that of people from other confessions, arguing, for instance, that there is no harm if a Christian holds high office or if the head of state is of any faith other than Islam if it is the choice of the people. Within the same vein, Amna Nosseir affirms that Islam does not rule by killing apostates, and the Hadith attributed to the Prophet to which scholars refer in support of their view (about killing apostates) is unreliable. Such unreliable ahadith, she maintains, must not be adopted in matters of faith. Another argument offered by Nassir against the death penalty for those accused of apostasy is that Allah Almighty gave people the free will to choose their faith. Islam, therefore, is too clement, tolerant, and great a faith to allow such a punishment of apostates.<sup>33</sup>

It is obvious that modern means of communication have liberated women and encouraged them to make their voices heard, boosting efforts to change the reality of the Islamic nation and to change mentalities. This new female awareness, self-confidence, and ability to confront, has been behind women’s attempts to make sure their demands are heard by the authorities. The Islamist female preacher or da’iya (this is the title that female professors of jurisprudence, Islamic law (shari’a), or philosophy insist on using in religious programs), should not limit herself to explaining the foundations of Islamic doctrines, showing the principles of Islamic laws, and answering questions. She should also work on changing unfair laws and contribute to reforming society. Istanbul female college professor and da’iya Zulaikha Shukr, who launched a campaign to give women more religious roles, asserts that “we [women] have become enlightened, and we would like to enhance the religious role of women.”<sup>34</sup> Such demands for reform include female membership in The Islamic Fiqh Assembly (majma’al-fiqh al-Islami) in order to actively participate in research and issue formal legal judgments or rulings (fatwas) related to women’s issues. In this context, Suhaila Zain al-Abidin called in Saudi Arabia for women’s right to political participation. She reminded politicians of women’s right and called on king Abdallah, on the occasion of his coronation, to include women in public life by including them in municipal councils. Zain al-Abidin also demanded women’s right to enjoy authority over themselves, to issue formal legal rulings (fatwas), as well as to hold high office (i.e as ministers of as members of fiqh assemblies).

A group of female Islamist preachers in Saudi Arabia demanded the formation of a coordination council to support women’s efforts in the area of Islamic preaching (da’wa). Female preacher Roqiyya al-Moharib stressed the need for the harmonization of preaching efforts on satellite TV networks through the establishment of an office to coordinate preaching activities on Saudi and Arab satellite TV networks in order to avoid conflict or difference when presenting issues and offering solutions.

As for Amna Nosseir, she called for the establishment of a scientific jurisprudential council that covers the various sciences of our times: Hadith, exegesis, history, medicine, and others, offered by specialized, experienced professors who can work on a voluntary basis. The Islamic Research Assembly, of which I am member, allows



a limited number of women to become members, through a quota system. As Nosseir laments, this system is applied at a time when the council is in desperate need for more female researchers and scholars who deal with women-related issues, especially that women are more informed in these matters than men."<sup>35</sup>

The technological revolution in the media world did not only benefit female Islamist preachers (da'iyat). New voices have emerged in the religious scene armed with modern methods of understanding religion. They are female writers on websites and authors of books that deal with various religious issues relevant not only to women but also to human beings in general.<sup>36</sup> Writers on these websites are characterized by the boldness of their discussions, deep analyses, strong arguments, and the ability to stand up to "the custodians of the shari'a". They are also keen on uncovering invisible structures, challenging established religious and social configurations, and resisting stereotypes.

As these female writers are fearless and have proclaimed their animosity to those who manipulate the destiny of people for the sake of personal interests, they tend to embarrass the Muslim conscience and annoy religious and political figures who dominate official institutions.<sup>37</sup> As a result of this female intellectual activity, men are no longer the spokespersons for women. Women have now found a voice, a pen, and a presence, and are expressing an independent self that seeks fulfillment through merit and not through a mediator, be it a father, a sheikh or a teacher; or through the guardianship of the husband or the tribe.

### 3. Women in the Religious Knowledge Sphere: Consequences and Impact

The past few years have witnessed a change in the status of women, as some have accessed new positions. In Morocco, Raja' Naji reached the highest academic ranks in 2003 and for the first time in Moroccan history gave a religious lecture before King Mohammed the Sixth and an elite group of renowned ulamas. In the same context, the Turkish government appointed a woman as deputy mufti in 2004, two women as assistant muftis in 2005, and a large number of female da'iyat in mosques, in addition to female teachers of the Qur'an in mosques. The same happened in Morocco where the government appointed a number of female da'iyat in mosques in the past few years. However, the empowerment of women in religion and their presence in media outlets have not met with the approval and consensus of all walks of society. Many conservative religious figures realize that these recent changes in the status of women are a threat to them and challenge their authority over the masses. After centuries of monopoly of religious discourse on "truth" by male scholars who spoke on Allah's behalf, the emergence of women scholars in shaking these structures based on the pattern of sovereignty/subordination, superiority/inferiority. After being the subject of a discourse of instructions wherein women sought the assistance of male scholars or husbands to understand what they find difficult in religion, women are now in the forefront of knowledge circles. They are competing with men, even challenging them with views and arguments of their own.

Female scholars have revived images of women who were reputed during the early period of Islam for their eloquence and ability to argue with the Prophet Mohammed and the caliphs after him. There was a group of women that even stood against the decisions of the third caliph Omar bin al-Khattab,<sup>38</sup> and drew his attention to the

mistakes he was making. There were other women who used to argue with their husbands, rejecting injustice and defending their rights using sound arguments.

Undoubtedly, these images of intellectual resistance shake men's confidence and disturb them, bringing out their deep and buried fears while stirring their Islamic imaginary. These women remind men of Tawadud, Harun al-Rashid's slave girl, who according to *Arabian Nights*, held debates with scholars presided by Ibrahim Ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam, defeating them one by one, stripping them of their social and psychological authority.

Although the objective of modern female scholars is not to compete with men but rather to contribute to reforming religious thinking, they have been met with rejection and a violent backlash. Those who follow religious programs on television, or articles in newspapers or websites, realize that a number of da'iyat have been the subject of violent verbal attacks.<sup>39</sup> According to Asma' Barlas, this is understandable as "those who define religious knowledge in most Muslim societies are first and foremost men, and since many of them are conservative, they are annoyed by the themes [these women] raise."<sup>40</sup>

Although the da'iyat differ from these women who specialize in various areas of knowledge, both bear the consequences of venturing into the world of religious knowledge. The female scholar, whether veiled or not, a graduate of Dar al-Azhar or faculties of arts and literature, with a degree in jurisprudence or political science, will mostly be shamed and obscured, and her efforts to reform society will be marginalized. This collective neglect of women's intellectual work is manifest in the marginalization of female scholars. Many academics and scholars deliberately avoid referring to them or citing them, as if reforming religious thought is the privilege of men and there is no place for women who want to contribute to the criticism of established doctrines and to uncover weaknesses in the structures established by ancient scholars.

Strict conservatives do not hesitate to undermine the qualifications of female scholars by pointing out the weakness of their training and expressing their skepticism about women's ability to write. In fact, this skepticism is one of the means used by men to block the way for women venturing into the field of intellectual production, and this attitude has in fact affected many women.<sup>41</sup> It seems that "the fate" of the female scholar who has reached the highest levels of education is to be branded as being inefficient for no obvious reason other than being a woman.<sup>42</sup>

As for voices opposed to women playing new roles in the media, they are characterized by intensive criticism of women's external appearance such as clothing, conduct, and way of speaking. Malika Zarar, for example, has, according to her critics, "a rude way of speaking, and tends to move her eyebrows and hands and all her body. She has facial expressions, words, and a manner of speaking that do not correspond at all with her title as Islamic da'iya."<sup>43</sup> As for Suad Salih, some think of her as using excessive makeup and looking severe. These criticisms reflect stereotypical images common in many cultures that reduce a woman's existence to her body. Amna Nosseir maintains that: "the sheikhs of al-Azhar do not want women to compete with them, as they consider them simply 'mothers', and do not encourage them at all to appear in public."<sup>44</sup>

The attack seems to be even fiercer on unveiled female intellectuals who are referred to as “female secularists”.<sup>45</sup> Their educational qualification is questioned, and they are accused of being intruders into the field of religious knowledge, of being loyal to the West, and of being in the service of an “American agenda” that aims to eliminate Islam. Accordingly, women reading and interpreting religious texts from a different perspective are often denounced as being transgressors, apostates, secularists, liberals, etc.

It is noteworthy that these smear campaigns and accusations of apostasy<sup>46</sup> became widespread in the past few years and targeted female Islamist preachers such as Suad Salih.<sup>47</sup> A fatwa to execute her was issued because she did not allow students wearing the face veil (niqab) to enter exam halls. Similarly, Amna Nosseir was accused of disrespecting the Qur’an because she considered the face veil a Jewish custom.<sup>48</sup>

The public attitude towards female scholars is clearly negative. No matter how high the level of knowledge a woman reaches, she can never achieve authority in the field of religious knowledge, even in the eyes of members of “her own sex”. They prefer to ask the “sheikh”, for he is the “exceptional scholar” whose presence in assemblies and meetings reflects that authoritative knowledge. The sheikhs are seen to be endowed with a higher degree of knowledge than women, enjoying self-confidence and a better mastery of both linguistic skills and knowledge related to the subject being discussed. For all these reasons, the male scholar has an effect on viewers and listeners, and earns their admiration and appreciation, and sometimes even their fascination.

However, the female Islamist preacher in the eyes of her audience is involved in the discussions mostly through emotion and overreaction. No matter how hard she tries to be poised and to highlight her religious knowledge, she is often viewed as lacking authoritativeness and the ability to dissect and analyze. Thus, the female scholar remains “wanting in reason and religion”. Criticizing Amna Nosseir, someone asked: “Does Mrs. Amna know more than others?”<sup>49</sup>

Redefining women’s role has led to the achievement of many gains, one of them being the emergence of the female professors in Islamic Law (shari’a), women judges (qadiyat), women mufti, preachers (da’iya), and the female marriage official. But the prevalent mentality still finds it hard to accept the emergence of women who are learned in the study of religion for many reasons, and one of them is that religion is a domain related to the “sacred and sanctified”, and that the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim imaginary often linked women to “impurity.” Another reason is that male-centered societies find it difficult to accept any change in gender roles: How can the husband who was commanded to teach his wife her religion and be her guardian become “the husband of her ladyship/the scholar”, support his wife, encourage her, and even listen to her speeches?

Despite all these challenges and the attempts to suppress their voices, female scholars have managed to shake society and impact the course of Islamic thought. The writings of Raja’ Naji, for example, have contributed to the establishment of the family code in Morocco which was issued at the beginning of 2004 and caused controversy since it prohibits polygamy — a decision that seeks to secure justice for women. The same code gives wronged wives the chance to ask for divorce. Raja’ Naji drew the legislators’

attention to the need for married couples to document in writing the joint assets they acquire after marriage in order to secure the women's property rights. Although this is a procedure that used to be applied in the past based on the Islamic shari'a law and was mentioned in the jurisprudence of Omar bin al-Khattab and Imam Malik, it later ceased to be applied, leaving women ignorant of a right that gives them security and consolidates healthy marital relations.

### Conclusion

No one can deny the changes in women's way of thinking. Women have become more aware of their rights and role in society. They have gone from being followers to being individuals with their own opinions, capable of proving themselves and defending their positions. They have transformed from being passive recipients to being participants in the production of knowledge, from being reserved to being outspoken scholars capable of communicating with the public. However, the entry of women into the battlefield of religious knowledge raises a number of problems summarized as follows:

- Women scholars vary according to differences in their education, specialization, and academic degrees obtained. Similarly, the influence of their discourses on their audience varies. This forces the female researcher to be attentive to the differences in these women's experiences and avoid falling into generalizations. While the ambition of some women is limited to exposing injustice against women in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance, the demands of female Muslims in South Africa focus on worship and seeking justice and equality between male and female believers. This means allowing women to pray alongside their husbands and sons, not behind them, especially if the women are more knowledgeable than the men. As a case in point, women in South Africa are demanding the right to lead the Friday sermons. Indeed, Muslim American women have been able to achieve that goal, with Amina Wadud being the first woman to lead men and women in prayer in modern times.<sup>50</sup>

- Despite the increase in the visibility of female contributions in the area of religious knowledge, the number of these contributions remains very low, with no coordination between female scholars. The Muslim women in Turkey, for instance, are basically unaware of women's contributions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Tunisian women have no idea about protest movements led by women activists in Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, or South Africa.

- The decision by a large number of female scholars to focus on women's issues through the interpretation of some Qur'anic verses, examining women's laws, and providing answers to their questions reflects a desire to speak about and on behalf of women.<sup>51</sup> This focus, however, also shows the inability of most women scholars to be at the origin of real epistemological breaks in religious knowledge and to develop new discursive forms capable of exposing reality and improving the individual's status regardless of sex, age, class, religion, and race. There is no doubt that changing this situation requires restructuring our views of education and the world, and a realization that women's knowledge should not be restricted to matters of menstruation, post-partum period, and purity.

- It should be mentioned that the female da'iyah, when presenting her religious knowledge and education, says that she is not the author of her text or the source of the opinions and views, as if she imparts authority over texts is reserved for men, leaving women scholars no possibility other than to retell inherited views and identify with them. It seems that only a few women manage to produce an alternative discourse.
- Female Muslim da'iyahs have not been able to break free from existing social structures. The female Muslim da'iyah, for example, is not asked to give lectures before a male audience or to teach young men. Nor is she able to cross the gender divide or challenge the prevailing view that the work of women preachers addresses only a specific audience, namely women and children. Unlike female preachers, female writers are managing to break free from self-censorship and the coercive social norms, and to face threats and attempts to silence them. The willingness to fight battles against extremist religious thought and the desire to impose oneself authoritatively in the public sphere inevitably involve paying a price.
- The emergence of women scholars in the field of religious knowledge is related to the gendered structures in Islamic societies, which determines the nature of relations between men and women in the institution of knowledge in general. Such relations are subject to the system of binary opposition ("Eros/Logos", "Reason/Emotion", "Poise/Impulse", "External/Internal") and require that those concerned with the sociology of knowledge and masculinity studies dismantle these dominant intellectual structures and analyze the characteristics of the Muslim imaginary in order to find the reasons that make women's entry into the sphere of religious knowledge so undesirable and feared by men.<sup>52</sup>
- Conditions have changed, and the voice of women is no longer low or timid. However, opening the way before women preachers and the unprecedented offers they are receiving from satellite television networks have led to a distinction being made among the women concerned with reforming religious views: covered women preachers are favored over secularist ones on the ground that the latter, who do not wear the veil, do not have the legitimacy or religious knowledge that allow them to talk about the rules of Islamic shari'a. Consequently, it is no surprise that female preachers, who are graduates of religious studies institutions, are in the forefront of the preaching activity, whereas women scholars specialized in studies of religion are subjected to various forms of restriction and control, as if the goal of reform is to Islamize, spread the faith, and confirm what is known instead of challenge concepts and raise questions.
- The return to religion as a way to compensate for many disappointments in the political, economic, and social spheres, in addition to the failure to lay the basis for a civil society, have opened the door before the female Islamist preachers and enabled them to gain position, audiences, and money. The Muslim da'iyah Abla al-Kahlawy, for example, apparently earns 2,500 Egyptian pounds for every episode of her show "My Heart is With You" (qalbi ma'aki) on al-Rissala Channel. The da'iyah Suad Salih earns a steady income from the Egyptian satellite TV for hosting the show "Woman's Jurisprudence" (fiqh al-mar'a)<sup>53</sup>. It seems that encouraging this category

of women scholars is meant to achieve two main objectives: first, to bring women to Islam by “members of their own sex”; second, to transform female Islamist da’iyat into symbols who carry their own cultural distinction. The da’iyat are religiously empowered women. As such, their public presence can counter the Western commodification and “objectification” of women in commercials, video clips, and pornography.

- Attention should be drawn to the fact that certain governments are investing in women preachers’ activity to achieve various objectives such as fighting leftist female lawyers and activists of human rights or women’s rights, or to neutralize a main section of society and exclude it from any oppositional political activity. Totalitarian regimes fear that these latter groups may engage in political action and have a “contagious effect”. Therefore they encourage this formal “Islamization” as long as it is “moderate” and “undermines women in the opposition”.

It is obvious then that religious institutions in Islam are a “masculine product”, and have created, throughout history, mechanisms and strategies to consolidate male-centered domination and safeguard male interests. According to the supervisors of these institutions, female intellectual activity is a nonproductive force, and that is the reason why women have been excluded from the cycle of knowledge production. Today, however, women are leaving their “secluded quarters” (khidr), gaining supporters, and demanding positions within religious institutions and other “sacred” spaces. They are challenging those who occupy positions of authority and play the role of custodians over people under the pretext that they possess authoritative knowledge.

The emergence of women scholars in the religious realm, instead of leading to the emergence of a fruitful intellectual pluralism, is being viewed negatively as a sign of conflict between women who are “acting like men” and are aspiring for the spotlight, fame, and leadership. These women are seen to be in competition with men who have to struggle in order to defend the status “bestowed” upon them by Divine Providence: It is a conflict between a (male) authority that is based on knowledge and whose essence is to represent “the truth” and to speak on God’s behalf, and a new (female) authority that is modernist and based on the premise that all have the right to access knowledge and to think and express themselves freely, since human knowledge is relative and there is a need for a plurality of voices to be heard in religious affairs.

Amel Grami, Professor  
University of Manouba, Tunisia

## ENDNOTES

- \* This article appeared first in Arabic, under the title "Ikhtiraq al-nisa' aswar al-ma'rifa al-diniyya" in Al Mesbar Studies and Research Center, book number 47, November, 2010.
- The qualities used here refer to different areas of activity or knowledge. In this paper they are used in the following sense and according to their common use:
    - Da'iyā, plural in Arabic is da'iyyat, means female preachers who often engage in education, counseling and proselytizing. Preacher is the English translation of the term used in this paper
    - Mujtahida, from the concept Ijtihad, the feminine plural of which is mujtahidat, refers to female scholars who derive rules of divine law from the Qur'an or the Hadith without relying on the views of other scholars.
    - 'Alimat, feminine plural of 'Alima. Throughout history this term has not been used in the feminine as it is widely known in its masculine plural Ulema, plural of 'alim. (Scholar)
  - See Said Ashur, *Mawssu'at al-hadara al-arabiya al-islamiya*, Al-mu'assasa al-arabiya lil-dirasat wa-l-nashr, Beirut 1987, p. 328. Omar Rida Kahaleh, *Al'am al-Nissa' fi 'alamai Al-Arab wal-Islam Mu'assasat al Rissala*, Beirut 1977. In addition to the opinion of Amina Nassir, professor of Doctrine and Philosophy at Al Azhar University, which she expressed on: [http://www.almasryonline.com/portal/page/portal/MasryPortal/ARTICLE\\_AR?itld=UG116250&pId=UG14&pType=](http://www.almasryonline.com/portal/page/portal/MasryPortal/ARTICLE_AR?itld=UG116250&pId=UG14&pType=)
  - Introducing a woman scholar, Ibnou Aljawzi, for instance says that "Satita Bint Al-Qadhi Abi Abdallah Al-Hussain Ben Isamil... nicknamed Oummatu Alwahid... is among the most learned in Fiqh after Imam Chafii... she issues fatwas with Abu Ali Ben Abi Huraira", Ibnou Aljawzi, *Al-Muntadhim*, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiya, Beirut, 1992, Vol.14, p.325.
  - For more details on the attitude of Arab culture towards female education, see: Amel Grami, *Al-Ikhtilaf fi al-thaqafa al-arabiya al-islamiyya [Differences in Arab Islamic Education]*, Gender Studies, Al-Madar al-Islami Publishing, Beirut 2007, pp. 273- 289.
  - The first Egyptian girl's high school to offer courses on topics other than those traditionally considered as specific to women was in 1925.
  - See Turkish sociologist Bokeet Turkman's opinion in his article *The Turkish Woman is a Missionary*, Islam online, April 29, 2005.
  - Among the Saudi women we mention: Fatima Nassif, Sana' Abed, Anahid al-Samiri, Faten Halwani, Khadija Babidan, Souad Obeid, Amal Nassir, Wafa' Hamdan, Latifa al-Qurashi, Fawz Kurdi, Sara al-Harithi, and others. From Egypt: 'Abla Kamil, Souad Saleh, Malika Zazar. From Syria: Samira al-Zayid, Rafida Habash, and others. You can refer to Amal Zahid's *Ta'nith al-Wa'z al-Saudi (Feminizing Saudi Preaching)*, Al Majalla issue 1339, 2005.
  - See Bashir al-Baker, *Souriyya Bayna al-Ikhwana-Muslimin wal-akhawat al-Qubaisiyyat [Syria Between Muslim Brotherhood and Qubaisi Sisterhood]*, retrieved from [http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/basheer\\_albaker/basheer\\_albaker\\_between\\_brotherhood\\_and\\_qubaisiyyat.htm](http://www.metransparent.com/old/texts/basheer_albaker/basheer_albaker_between_brotherhood_and_qubaisiyyat.htm) Mohammed Shama, "Al-tiba'iyyat" fi-l Urdun: Da'wasamita bi aswatna'ima ["Al-tiba'iyyat" in Jordan: a silent call in soft voices], retrieved from [http://www.metransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=9603&var\\_lang=ar&lang=ar](http://www.metransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=9603&var_lang=ar&lang=ar)
  - See Nazik Saba Yared, Nazira Zeineddine (1908 – 1976), *Bayna I-Tahaddi wa-l iltizam [Between Challenge and Commitment]*, Bahithat, al-Nissa' al-arabiyyat fi-l 'ishrinat: Huduran wa-hawwiyya ["Arab Women in the Twenties – Presence and Identity"] Beirut, n.d, pp. 243 – 261. Also see *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*; edited by Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke; Indiana University Press – London 1990, pp. 270 – 278.
  - Such female scholars include Fatima Amine (1983) and Fatima Mernissi, who pioneered in criticizing the chain of men transmitters of Prophet's Hadith (isnad) on the bases on which religious texts were founded. There is also, Aziza al-Habri, Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, Rifa't Hasan from the United States; Amani Saleh, Hiba Ra'ouf Izzat, Hind Mustafa from Egypt; RoqiyyaTaha Jabir Al-Alwani from Syria; and Shahla Sharkat, Ziba Mir Housseini, Afsana Najm Abadi, and NiraTawhidi from Iran. YasimArat, Farida Akar, and Nelifour Ghoul from Turkey. For more information, refer to EvonYazbek Haddad and John Espozitto, *Al Islam wal Jounousa [Islam and Gender]*, translated by Amal al-sharqi, al-ahliyya Publishing, Amman, 2003, pp. 107-147.
  - See Hanan Attiyeh, *Ayna al-Mar'a al-Faqiha? [Where is the Female Master of formal legal judgments?]*, /servlet/satellitewww.islamonline.net
  - See Nimat Hafez, Barazangi articles, (1995). *Educational reform and Religious education*. In *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. (Vol. 1, pp. 407-420). New York: Oxford University Press.
  - See Nahed Saleem, *Inza'ou I-Qur'an min Aydi I-Rijal [Take Away the Qur'an from the Hands of Men]*, and it is the title of a book published by a Dutch press of an Egyptian origin. For more information, visit: [http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-321/\\_nr-24/\\_p-1/i.html](http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-321/_nr-24/_p-1/i.html) - Myriam check new link I found: <https://ar.qantara.de/content/ktb-jryshfy-hwIndy-mn-sl-msry-thryr-lqran-mn-qbd-lrjl>
  - In this context, we mention the large number of religious programs on satellite TV stations such as Al-Mehwar, Iqra', Dream-2, Dubai, and others.
  - See [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net)
  - For example, Souad Saleh, see: <http://www.arabprof.com/vb/showthread.php?t=13446&pagenumber=&13446>
  - See [http://alwaei.com/topics/view/article\\_new.php?sdd=2201&issue=519](http://alwaei.com/topics/view/article_new.php?sdd=2201&issue=519)
  - See <http://arabi.ahram.org.eg/arabi/Ahram/2008/6/7/INV55.HTM>
  - Souad Ibrahim Saleh, *Issues of the Contemporary Woman*, Maktabat Madbouli, Cairo 2008, p. 176. <http://www.islamfeqh.com/News/NewsItem.aspx?NewsItemID=2888>
  - See <http://sahetalhwar.jeeran.com/archive/2008/10/709688.html>
  - See <http://www.aljarida.com/ALJarida/Article.aspx?id=126438>
  - See <http://www.aljarida.com/ALJarida/Article.aspx?id=126438>

23. See <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=124721> & <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID>
24. See <http://www.3rbu.com/vb/t1211.html> <http://www.3rbu.com/vb/t1211.html>
25. See <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=41212>
26. See <http://www.aljarida.com/ALJarida/Article.aspx?id=126438> <http://www.aljarida.com/ALJarida/Article.aspx?id=126438>
27. These female writers include: Wajiha al-Houwaydir, Amal Zahed (Saudi Arabia), Raja' Bin Salama, Amel Grami (Tunisia), Ilham al-Mani, and Arwa Osman (Yemen), Dalal al-Bizri from Lebanon, Venus Fa'iq, Nadia Qathim, and Rou'a al-Bazirkan from Iraq, Razan Zeitoun, Florence Ghazlan, and Mayya al-Rahbi from (Syria), and others.
28. Among the subjects covered by female writers: Circumcision, the veil, and various types of marriages in Islam, as well as disciplining the defiant husband, incest, freedom of expression, the choice not to worship, and politics of religion.
29. The Caliph Omar Ibnu al-Khattab forbade excessive dowry for women and ordered that it would not exceed 400 Dirhams. A woman at the mosque objected to him, saying "have you not heard Allah's words "But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, Take not the least bit of it back: Would ye take it by slander and manifest wrong?". He said, Allah forgive, all the people are more knowing in the fiqh than Omar and according to some other accounts: "A woman was right and Omar was wrong." He then went to the pulpit and refuted his decision.
- Asma Ben Yazid Ben Assakan is considered the most eloquent speaker among women.
- Ibnu Abdulbarra said, "it was reported that Asma Bent Yazid went to the Prophet Peace be upon Him, and said "Messenger of Allah, I and with me a group of Muslim women, all of my opinion, and would say what I say: Allah sent you to both men and women, we believed in you and followed you, and we women are the foundations of homes, and the subject of men's desires, bearers of their offspring, and men have been privileged for Fridays, attending burials and Jihad, and when they go to Jihad we would keep their property, raise their children, do we share with them rewards?"
- The Prophet, Peace be upon Him, said: "Go Asma and tell the women who support you that being a good wife to one's husband and seeking his satisfaction, abiding by his consent is just equal to what you have mentioned for men") Ibnu Abdu-Al birr, *Al-Istiy'ab* Vol.4., p.233.
30. This happened, for example, with Souad Saleh and Amina Nassir. See <http://www.shorouknews.com/ContentData.aspx?id=103780>
31. Jesuit father Lamance did not believe Nazira Zeineddine wrote her book and insisted that it was the work of the father, as it is impossible for a twenty-year-old girl to interpret verses of the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith, See *Al Mashriq*, May, Beirut 1928, p. 366. See also Nazira Zeineddine, *Al-Fatatwa-l shuyukh [The Girl and the Sheikhs]*, Dar al- Mada Publishing, Damascus 1998, pp. 13 – 16.
32. For example, the last book on this subject is by the Saudi writer Ibrahim al-Oussayri, *Saudiyyat fi-l Thamama (Saudi Women in Thamama)*. Retrieved from <http://www.elaph.com/Web/ElaphWriter/2010/2/532878.html>
33. See <http://www.masrawy.com/news/egypt/politics/2008/january/1/zerar.asp>
34. See [http://www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/show\\_news.php?main\\_id=6533](http://www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/show_news.php?main_id=6533) [http://www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/show\\_news.php?main\\_id=6533](http://www.ahl-alquran.com/arabic/show_news.php?main_id=6533)
35. See [www.almasryonline.com/multimedia](http://www.almasryonline.com/multimedia)
36. See <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/6EDF0F36-8112-42D8-9732-57B4A933C5C0.htm>
37. In this respect, refer to: Amel Grami, *al-shath al-lathi qad yuqas 'alayh: Imamat Amina Wadud salat al-jum'a: (The Woman's Imam for Prayer)* retrieved from: [http://www.mettransparent.net/old/texts/amel\\_grami\\_imam\\_amina\\_wadud.htm](http://www.mettransparent.net/old/texts/amel_grami_imam_amina_wadud.htm)
- Amel Grami, *Al-Maskut 'anhu fi qadiyyat imamat al-mar'a al-salat [The Unspoken in the Matter of the Woman as Imam for Prayer]* [http://www.mettransparent.net/old/authors/arabic/amel\\_grami.htm](http://www.mettransparent.net/old/authors/arabic/amel_grami.htm)
- Amina Wadud and the Woman as Imam for Forgiveness and Equality in Practicing Religion [http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-321/\\_nr-19/\\_p-1/i.html](http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-321/_nr-19/_p-1/i.html)
- Halima Korawzin and her attitude towards the question of Amina Wadud: Breaking Away from Blind Obedience and Making Room for Jurisprudence [http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-321/\\_nr-20/\\_p-1/i.html](http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-321/_nr-20/_p-1/i.html)
38. We notice that Souad Saleh has been nicknamed "The Women's 'Mufti'"
39. We notice that the resistance of the male-centered society to women's emergence in the field of knowledge is a phenomenon found in other cultures. See: Linda Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture (1598 – 1715)*, Champion, Paris, 1993.
40. See [http://amndawlaforever.blogspot.com/2007/09/blog-post\\_5220.html](http://amndawlaforever.blogspot.com/2007/09/blog-post_5220.html)



---

 REFERENCES

- Abboud, H. (2007). Al-sijn lil-nisa' aydan: Zaynab al-Ghazali wa ayam min hayati, In N. Hamadeh, N. Bayoumi, R.R. Sidawi, S. Ghandour, & J.S. Makdissi (Eds.), *Hafriyat wa tahariyat: hayat nisa' arabiyat* [Out of the shadows: Investigating the lives of Arab women] (pp. 269 – 289). Lebanon: Bahithat The Lebanese Association of Women Researchers.
- Allés, E. (1999). Des oulémas femmes: le cas des mosquées féminines en Chine. *Revue du monde musulman de la Méditerranée*, 85(1), pp.215-236.
- Al-mar'a al-turkiya da'ya (2005, April 29). Retrieved from <http://almotamarpress.net/news/21173.htm>
- Al-Sarrafi, S. (2001). *Ahkam al-mar'a bayna l-ijtihad wa-l taqlid*. Paris: Al Qalam Publishing.
- Assyaukanie, L. (2005). Amina Wadud wa imamat al mar'a: Attasamuh wal musawat fi mumarast al-din [Amina Wadud and Appointing Woman as "Imam": Tolerance and equality in practicing religion], Retrieved from <https://ar.qantara.de/content/myn-wdwd-wmm-lmr-ltsmh-wlmsw-fy-mMrs-ldyn>
- Cha'ban, B. (1995, Fall). Al-muffassirat al-mukammamat, *Al-Nahj*, (5), 224-234.
- Grami, A. (2006). Témoignage sur le rôle de la femme Tunisienne dans la rénovation de la pensée islamique In *Le donne nelle culture del Mediterraneo* (pp.69-81). Milano: Mimesis; Milano.
- Kamrava M. (Ed.) (2006). *The new voices of Islam*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Khalil, M. & Saleh, S. (2007). *Al-mousawat al-mutlaqa laysat fi Salih al-mar'a...walaha an takhud intikhabat al-ri'asah*, Asharq Al Awsat Press, (10533).
- Mahmoud, S. (2005). *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton University Press.
- Nimat Hafez, B. (2002). Al-hawiya al-thatiya lil mar'a al-muslima. In XXX (Eds.), *Al-mar'a wa tahawulat 'asr jaded: waqai' nadwat dar al-fikr fi 'usbu'ha al-thaqafi al-thalith* [Women and the changes of a new age: Proceedings of dar al-fikr in its 3rd cultural week] (pp. 232-245 242-241). Damascus: Dar al-Fikr.
- Novriantoni, & El-Dardiry, R. (2005). *Jasad al-mar'a masrah Sira'at shatta*. Retrieved from <http://www.yabdo.com/board/showthread.php?t=94243> [http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-321/\\_nr-23/\\_p-1/i.html](http://ar.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-321/_nr-23/_p-1/i.html)
- Wadud, A. (1999). *Qur'an and woman*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weibel B. N. (1996). Islamité; égalité et complémentarité: vers une nouvelle approche de l'identité féminine. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 95(1), 133-141.
- Zeineddine, N. (1998). *Al-Fatat wa-l Shuyukh*. Damascus: Dar Al Mada, Damascus.
- Zawjati sa-tuqadi jaridat al-arabi wa Amina Nassir min 'ajil anniqab (2009, September 5). Retrieved from [http://lokmetaesh.blogspot.com/2009/09/blog-post\\_3012.html](http://lokmetaesh.blogspot.com/2009/09/blog-post_3012.html)