



Aspects of Violence Against Women in North Africa

Between Progress and Backlash

Sous la Direction de
Moha ENNAJI et Fatima SADIQI

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Introduction

Moha Ennaji and Fatima Sadiqi

ISIS Center for Women and Development at Fès, Morocco organized on 29 December a National Workshop on Strategies to Combat Violence against Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Several academics and civil society activists from several Moroccan cities participated in this important event. This book encompasses the proceedings of this workshop.

The workshop addressed the issue of gender and violence with the aim of unpacking its overarching historical, cultural, religious, social, and political underpinnings. Whilst gender-based violence is a universal phenomenon, it takes interesting nuances and wears multiple faces in the MENA region where tradition, social norm, religion, war, and politics intermingle in a powerful and tantalizing space-based patriarchy. The theme of “gender and violence” is relatively new in the field of research; hence, scholarly debate on gender and violence in the MENA is badly needed.

The contributors to this book have revealed that gender-based violence is one of the most widespread violations of Human Rights. It may include verbal threats, coercion, economic abuse, or arbitrary deprivation of freedom in both the private and public spheres. Thus, violence against women has many forms; it can be physical, sexual, or emotional, and may be caused by a husband, a partner, a family member, or another person. Violence against women also includes sexual harassment and abuse by authority persons such as employers, the police, teachers, etc. Forced labor and trafficking are also forms of violence against women, and so are traditional practices like child marriages and honor killings.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which constitutes an international bill of rights for women, was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. This Convention defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda to prevent, eradicate and punish violence against women and girls. Countries, like Morocco, that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. Most MENA countries ratified CEDAW with reservations on articles that are said to contradict Shari’a law.

Moha Ennaji and Fatima Sadiqi

Violence against women and girls in the MENA region, as in the rest of the world, has dramatic consequences for families and communities, as it not only causes harm to women, but also blocks productivity, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth.

The MENA area has recently become a hotbed for violence against women, especially after the so-called “Arab Spring”. The Yemen Post released a study that found 2,694 incidents of physical and sexual abuse against women in 2007. Sudan Daily reports that 278 incidents of violence against female citizens occurred in just three months. Likewise, in Egypt and Algeria, women are victimized. In Morocco, 1/3 of all women suffer from domestic abuse.

The victims of today’s wars are 70-80 % civilians, most of them women. They are tortured and humiliated in prisons and refugee camps. There is a link between violence against women and patriarchal oppression. This violence should be fought by building a feminist platform based on solidarity and abolishing all forms of oppression and discrimination.

Whilst violence against women has become a central issue in women’s movements across the MENA region in the last decade, with an emphasis on domestic violence, ‘honor killings’, early marriages, and prostitution-related cases, the dominant research paradigm on gender-based violence in the MENA region is that of the victimized Muslim women and their male oppressors on the basis of culture and religion. The impact of gendered political, social, and economic power on gender-based violence is seldom addressed, and so is the role of the State in banning or punishing violence against women.

The authors of this book recommend that girl’s education, economic independence, and emancipation combined with activism and media can be used as tools to fight violence against women, and to address systematically family, community and state’s involvement in the right policies to fight violence against women. They also recommend the reform of education, critical thinking, and reduction of the parity index through more schooling for girls, addressing gender equality in family, school, civil society, and use of social media to combat violence against women.

Domestic Violence in the African North

Fatima Sadiqi

Introduction

Theories, debates and activism on sexual health and rights have travelled with reasonable speed in North Africa in the past three decades or so and considerable headway has been achieved on this front (see Chaouachi 1997, Charrad 2001, Sadiqi 2008, Ennaji and Sadiqi forthcoming). However, although related, questions of domestic violence, which may also include sexual assault and rape, have been rather side-lined theoretically, in spite of the fact that activism and legal reform work remain strong in the region, and in spite of the fact that gender-based violence is considered essential to the most fundamental provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).¹ This regression in theoretical work on domestic violence in the region resulted in lack of action on the part of policy-makers.

One can understand that domestic violence is generally eschewed by the policies promoting gender equality in the region as such policies are blind to what is undertaken in the private sphere, generally considered not political because not economically productive. But academic theory on the topic cannot make any headway without focusing on the private with the aim of rendering it public. Indeed, although it is true that law and family constitute only one element of the broader constellation of gender relations and institutions, it is a crucial and understudied one. In other words, North Africa has witnessed deep social, economic and political transformations in the last three decades, and there is need to reopen the old debates on domestic violence in new ways that address these new transformations. It should be noted at this juncture that the overall status of women in this part of the world is rather privileged in comparison to those of many Arab and Muslim countries. A number of questions may be raised in this respect: Are the theoretical debates on domestic violence in the 70s and 80s still valid for the present times? What impact do the significant advances on the

¹ In 1992, the Committee on CEDAW formally affirmed that violence against women constitutes a violation of internationally recognised human rights, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a public official or a private person. CEDAW was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. The countries of North Africa signed CEDAW, two of them without reservations.

legal, economic and political fronts have on these debates? What role could the changing notion of the family, perceived as a central safe haven in North African societies, have on these debates?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this paper is organized as follows: Section 1 provides an analytical overview of the major theories of domestic violence. Section 2 presents the state of affairs with regard to domestic violence in the African North. Section 3 deals with the changing nature of the family in the region, and the last section presents new ways of dealing with domestic violence in the light of what the previous sections came up with.

Theories of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the use of abusive and threatening behaviours (usually of men) to exert and maintain control and power over victims (usually women). Domestic violence may be physical, verbal or moral. The most well-documented is the physical type. Theories of domestic violence allow an understanding of why women are battered. Such theories are based on numerous interviews of women victims of domestic violence over long periods of time. The aim of these theories is to devise effective intervention strategies and response to the problem of domestic violence. There are four major theories of domestic violence.

The first theory assumes that violence in general is caused by psychopathological factors and mental illness. This theory was probed by battered women's movement which started in the United States in the early 1970s. Hence, men who abused their wives were mentally ill and women who remained in violent relationships were also considered mentally deficient. Medication or psychiatric treatment was considered the cure. This theory was discredited on the grounds that the behaviour of batterers did not correspond to profiles of individuals who suffered mental illnesses. Whereas people who suffer from mental illness, such as schizophrenics, do not choose their victims, domestic abusers attack only their intimate partners. Further, battered women were not systematically mentally ill and their hysterical behaviour (which contrasts with the batterer's calmer behaviour) is often misinterpreted.

The second theory, the learned behaviour theory, considered domestic violence to be a learned behaviour. According to this theory, the batterers learned violence in their families as children and victims sought out abusive husbands because they witnessed their mothers being abused. This theory was proved wrong as many men who witnessed violence as children do not abuse their partners as adults and women who witness violence in their childhood are not likely to be battered as adults. Further, although boys who witness their

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fathers battering their mothers end up battering their wives, girls who witness battering are not any more likely to be abused as adults. However, a recent research by the Family Violence Prevention Fund concludes that women who were physically or sexually abused as children may be more likely to be abused as adults. Many studies have however established a relationship between witnessing (as a powerful source of information) and battering and further relate this to the fact that such information may also be obtained from the larger society where the control of wives, and women in general, is often enforced through violence. The “batterers’ intervention programs further show that when boys witness domestic violence, they not only learn violence per se but also learn gender roles lessons about the respective roles of men and women that contribute to their abusive behavior as adults.

The third theory, the Loss of Control Theory, is closely related to the previous one as both take violence to be the result of a loss of control. Men are abusive because they cannot control their anger or frustration or because alcohol makes them to lose control. According to this theory societal expectations are gendered and men as men are prevented from expressing anger and frustration, and hence release their accumulated feelings through the use of violence. However, abusers show control in their violence tactics; they carefully target certain people at certain times and places. For example, they choose to attack their partners in private or make sure they do not leave visible evidence. They may also choose to verbal abuse, property destruction, or children threatening (Anne L. Ganley & Susan Schechter, 1995).

The fourth theory, the Learned Helplessness Theory, stipulates that women who are repeatedly battered internalize a “learned helplessness” which prevents them from resisting violence or leaving their husbands/partners. However, research showed that women in general have very rational reasons for staying: fear of their husbands’ revenge on children, lack of financial means to support their families, or fear of family and community rejection. Also, women do resist violence and endeavour to secure their safety in active ways, such as developing survival or coping strategies. Moreover, this theory overlooks important factors such as the economic, social, and familial reasons which oblige a woman to either adopt an attitude of “staying, leaving and returning” according to circumstances or remain in the relationship (Emerson et al, 1992). Women often negotiate with their partners during this period and may use their family to mediate. Further, the learned helplessness theory assumes that all battered women have low self esteem, overlooking the fact such characteristics may be, in fact, the physical and psychological effects of the abuse. All in all, the “learned helplessness” hypothesis is static and overlooks the fact that abused women do not constitute a homogeneous group with similar experiences which makes their response to violence change according to circumstances. Women

are generally responsible for the stability of their couple and hence their husband's violence.

The fifth theory, the Cycle of Violence Theory, considers violence to be "cyclic", namely that batterers experience intermittent violent and repentant periods in their lives. This theory argues that men are not taught to show their feelings and express their anger and frustration. However, a number of case studies have shown that batterers never repented and that the "cycle of violence" is in fact "constant" (Dobash & Russel P. Dobash, 1992). Like the previous theory, this theory is static and does not deal with intentionality. It is often paired with the "family/relationship conflict" model, which stipulates that in intimate relationships, both men and women mutually contribute to violence. The main drawback of this theory is that it reduces violence to some kind of "provocation" and, hence, is but another form of victim blaming. This theory does not, further, explain instances where husbands or partners use trivial issues to start violence or beat their spouse/partner when the latter is asleep (see Paymar for more details on this point).

In spite of their drawbacks, these theories imply that domestic violence is rooted in the subordinate role women have traditionally held in private and public life in many societies. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women describes violence against women as "a manifestation of historically unequal power relationships between men and women." At the same time, violence is used to perpetuate and enforce women's subordinate role. In the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the United Nations and its member countries denounce domestic violence as one of the "crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate [positions] compared with men." These theories share, however, a serious drawback: they fail to recognize the abuser's conscious intent to control their victim's actions, thoughts and feelings.

To fill this gap, the "Power and Control Wheel" theory (Schechter & Ganley, 1995) was devised. While building on previous theories in recognizing the socialization factor, this theory focuses on the fact that physical violence is the result of tactics and calculation geared towards exerting and maintaining power over the victim. The use of violent physical violence is not the result of repetitive expressions of anger or loss of control, but part and parcel of a larger pattern of behavior aiming at holding the victim under power. This theory catches best the existing unequal power relation within the couple; it also explains the fact that violent behaviour is generally tolerated within cultures and reinforced by political institutions and economic managements. This theory provides, thus, a new understanding of abuse.

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However, by restricting violence to domestic spheres, this theory does quite totally capture the phenomenon of violence. Violence needs to be conceptualized in the larger social context. The unequal relationships of inequality and dominance are not only shaped by personal choices and desires by dominant men; society constructs social and economic relationships between men and women, as well as within marriage and families. The crucial thing is to understand how the way we respond to violence engenders an atmosphere of intolerance or acceptance to the violence perpetrated in intimate relationships. According to UNICEF's Digest 1, 7 (2000), various cultural, legal, economic and political factors help perpetuate domestic violence against women. This view establishes a link between the macro-economic dislocation, women's increasing economic activity, and family violence. It ranges from the macro level (wars, government, repression, etc) to acts between the couple and the individual.

A common understanding of the causes of domestic violence can help communities develop more effective responses to the violence; such an understanding helps avoid conflicting responses that could undermine efforts to protect victims and hold batterers accountable. This is particularly important in developing nations like the ones in the African north where women's issues are entangled with human rights and official politics, creating genuine dynamics of change. Dealing with domestic violence is a new topic that did not come about with women's rights only, but also with the changing nature of the family in the region.

The Changing Nature of the Family in North Africa

Domestic violence is closely related to the nature and structure of the family. North African societies are deeply patriarchal and the family space has always functioned as the realm of male dominance over women and children. Such family spaces were often households sheltering members of the extended family with the father or grandfather as the head figure. In these societies, men decide to marry, not women; women are "given" in marriage. Further, within the North African family structure, the rule is to "correct" children with the aim of "upbringing and educating" them (there is only one term for both in Arabic: *rbbi*). Consequently, it is natural to hit children and women with the aim of "correcting" them.

This cultural given started to change with women's education and salaried job-taking. The independence of the Maghrebian countries was accompanied with massive schooling of girls in urban areas. Women's education, women's work have been accompanied by a gradual transformation of households into nuclear families sheltering parents and children. The

transition from bigger to smaller families has had its challenges: various types of violence accompanied the new gender negotiations within the family. In 2003, Fouzia Ghissassi and Moulay R'Chid edited a book where a number of Moroccan university teachers and professors gave testimonies of domestic abuse. Granting that domestic violence is a universal phenomenon that has been attested in the cultural histories of all nations, talking about it, especially in educated circles, is still taboo.

In the last decade or so, the result of a combination of economic crises, unemployment, and a superficial form of religiosity led to a crisis of masculinity in the Maghreb, a fact which resulted in more domestic violence. The North African family has long been described as a patriarchal unit, and it has been noted that Muslim family laws have served to reinforce patriarchal gender relations and women's subordinate position within the family. Again, granting that patriarchy is universal and multi-faceted, Arab-Muslim patriarchy is space-based and takes the family as its abode. Whereas mainstream Western patriarchies are more public and based on the "ideal image of a woman" that multi-nationals "dictate" on societies, Arab-Muslim patriarchy is more "private". As such, it considers the family, kin ties and women's reproductive capacities as "essential" and "natural". It should be noted, however, that the emphasis on biology has led to reductionist and functionalist accounts of the family that we find in both Arab-Muslim and mainstream Western societies. In both societies, the family serves to socialize children into society's normative system of values and provide an emotional environment that will ensure a psychologically protective environment for the (male) worker/breadwinner. In both types of society, these functions are carried out by the wife and mother.

It is for these reasons that in modern North African societies, the role of women and the family are striking. Marriage and family are central to social reproduction. It is also at this juncture that religion and culture intermingle to the extent that the two melt into one. For example, the Egyptian Islamist Seyid Qutb described the family as "the nursery of the future which breeds precious human products under the guardianship of women". In this context, a woman's primary functions are those of a wife and mother and that of a man as that of breadwinner and authority in the private and public spaces (Choueiri, 1990: 127-8). It is this authority that sanctions domestic violence on the cultural level.

On the other hand, domestic violence may have roots that transcend the boundaries of the family. The state, for example, may directly or indirectly monitor domestic violence through its own mechanisms. Studies have shown that state-building in the Maghreb has been based on family regulation (Charrad 2010). The state's grip on the family is channelled through the regulation of marriage registration and the laws which differ according to societies (Sadiqi, 2008). In addition, states devise laws regulating women's reproductive rights,

contraception, etc., as well as family disintegration (divorce, death, etc.). In brief, the family is not an enclave in its relationship with the state and it is in the fine line between the private space and the public space that the relationship between the two resides.

Domestic Violence in North Africa: The State of Affairs

Morocco

Of the three countries of the Maghreb, Morocco fares best in its dealings with domestic violence. However, the road is still long as the following facts show.² Article 490 of the penal code criminalizes extramarital sex for women, calling for punishments ranging from one month to one year in jail. These cases are rarely taken to court, since a conviction depends on either eyewitness testimony or a confession by one of the perpetrators. An unmarried woman's pregnancy is proof of sexual relations and may lead to criminal prosecution, while the fault of her male partner is not established by law. Further, no laws specifically prohibit domestic violence, though general prohibitions against assault found within the penal code are theoretically applicable to such situations. Physical abuse is grounds for divorce, but the wife must be able to call on witnesses to support her claims (See Article 100 of the Moudawana). If she is unable to prove her case, the authorities will return a woman to her abuser's home, leaving her in a worse situation than before she filed the complaint. Consequently, few women report domestic abuse. Sexual assault and rape are both criminalized under the penal code, although spousal rape is not. The maximum sentence for each crime is five years in prison. Given prevailing societal concepts of personal and family honor, victims of sexual violence rarely come forward for fear of shaming their families.

As for "honor killings," in which women are murdered by family members for perceived sexual or moral transgressions, they do occur in Morocco but are rather rare compared with some other countries in the region. As with other forms of gender-based violence, honor killing is traditionally seen as a private issue, meaning police are rarely summoned and are hesitant to intervene. Article 475 of the penal code stipulates that a kidnapper or seducer of a minor girl can be acquitted if he marries her.

² The information about Morocco in this section is taken from - "Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, Morocco (2010). An Analytical Assessment of the 2004-2009 Period". New York: The Freedom House. New York: Spring 2010.

Although prohibited under Article 184a and Article 184b of the penal code, prostitution is common, especially in urban centers. However, the government neither prosecutes nor protects women who have been coerced into providing sexual services. Trafficking in persons, particularly in child maids, is a problem.

In principle, women are protected from gender-based and discriminatory arrest, detention, and exile. Article 10 of the constitution formally protects all people from arbitrary arrest and detention (Article 10 states: “(1) No one can be arrested, detained, or punished except in the cases and forms provided by law. (2) The home is inviolable. There can be no searches or inspection except under the conditions and the forms provided by the law.”) In practice, however, women may be singled out for arrest when they are deemed to behave immodestly, particularly in rural communities.

In a move that bore both symbolic and substantive meaning for women in Morocco, the government announced on December 10, 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that it would lift all reservations to CEDAW (Democratic Association of Moroccan Women, “The Withdrawal of the Reservations to CEDAW by Morocco,” news release, December 17, 2008,³

When it ratified the convention in 1993, Morocco, like many other Arab and Muslim countries, made multiple reservations and declarations covering portions that were thought to conflict with Islamic or national law. The reservations include provisions such as Article 9, which relates to the transmission of nationality to children, and Article 16, regarding the equality of men and women’s marital rights. The king declared that the reservations were “obsolete” in light of the progressive legislation adopted in recent years. The public proclamations regarding their removal created a stronger legal basis for additional progress on women’s rights issues, and carried a political and universal message that was widely applauded by civil society (Sarah Touahri, “Morocco Retracts CEDAW Reservations,” *Magharebia*, December 17, 2008.⁴

³ <http://www.euromedrights.net/pages/556/news/focus/68402> (accessed on Feb. 2, 2015)

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http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/12/17/feature-02.

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The government and the media did not adequately explain the content of the convention or the implications of the decision to withdraw the reservations. However, the Moroccan Association of Human Rights and similar organizations are determined to ensure that CEDAW is fully implemented and that all discrimination against women is eradicated.

Female victims of spousal violence are not well protected by the law or the society. Women often have difficulty providing evidence of domestic violence, as they usually lack witnesses and their word is not given much weight by the authorities. The Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity began publishing official data on violence against women in late 2007. In March 2008, the ministry responded to an upsurge in reported incidents by announcing an action plan to increase the number of support centers for victims and to prepare a draft bill that would specifically outlaw violence against women. According to the ministry, some 17,000 incidents of gender-based violence were reported in the first three months of 2008 alone, 78.8 percent of which were committed by the victims' husbands (Sarah Touahri, "Morocco Seeks to Criminalize Violence Against Women," *Magharebia*, April 1, 2008.⁵ Violence against women instigated by men under the stain of financial difficulties is also on the rise (Amina Barakat, "Renewed Efforts to End Violence Against Women," *Inter Press Service*, March 17, 2009.⁶

In February 2007, the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity presented a draft bill offering a legal framework for protecting women's rights by providing safe spaces for female victims of violence. If a woman is a victim of violence perpetrated by her employer, she will be provided with a safe harbor in her workplace and, depending on her condition, reduced work hours or temporary cessation of work. Support networks and shelters for abused women started to appear in big cities like Casablanca, Rabat, and Fes in 2002.

On February 2, 2009, the Union for Women's Action and the Anaruz network launched an initiative to organize public forums aimed at sensitizing local communities to the plight of female victims of violence, set up "listening centers" where abused women are encouraged to speak about their traumatic experiences, and create a free telephone hotline to give legal help and

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http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/04/01/feature-01 (accessed on Feb. 2, 2015)

⁶ <http://ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=46150> (accessed on Feb. 4, 2015)

counseling to women. A victim can either file a complaint with the court or, if she can afford it, hire a lawyer to handle the case.

The media play a role in raising awareness of violence toward women and showcasing the activities of civil society groups on the issue. There is debate in the media and within society about the creation of rehabilitation centers where violent men would be helped to control their behavior and psychological problems. Investigative reports and advertisements regarding violence against women are aired on television, and guests on talk shows are invited to discuss the topic.

Gender-based violence outside the home is still a reality. However, societal taboos prevent women from coming forward to report sexual violence, and the police and medical personnel are not trained to deal with such issues. Sexual harassment on the streets has decreased but is still a problem.

Women's rights groups and other civil society actors work freely and effectively to improve the status of women's personal autonomy and security. Their activities include national and international networking, tending directly to the victims of violence, and campaigns aimed at sensitizing the general public to the issues surrounding gender-based violence and implementation of the family law. The impact of these efforts has been tremendous, but they must be increased in rural and semi-urban areas.

The mainstream media do not reflect the real progress made by women, and rarely use gender-sensitive language. Although they have attempted to tackle issues such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, and gender roles, these efforts have been insufficient. There is a proliferation of magazines in Arabic and French that focus on women's interests, but they tend to be geared toward elite and educated women. Rural and semi-urban women are marginalized in the media generally due to poverty and illiteracy.

Poverty has a disproportionate effect on women. Although welfare is available to divorcees and widows, it is not offered to single mothers as such. Even in instances where they are entitled to welfare, poor or illiterate women often have difficulty maintaining the necessary paperwork and making frequent visits to the relevant offices.

Although women have the right to housing and the same legal opportunity to obtain housing as men, very few own their own residence in practice. The 2004 family law obliges a husband to house his wife during marriage and during the waiting period before a final divorce, either in the marital home or a suitable substitute. Article 53 of the family law states that if

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either spouse unjustifiably evicts the other spouse from the marital home, the public prosecutor will intervene on behalf of the evicted to spouse and “shall take all necessary measures for his or her safety and protection.” However, reports indicate that authorities are slow to implement this measure and that women are having difficulty proving that they were expelled from the house. Additionally, a father must provide financial maintenance, including housing, to his minor children, even if they are in the divorced mother’s custody. However, there is no guarantee that the wife will retain the marital home after a divorce is finalized, and husbands often use personal connections and bribery to avoid a court ruling to that effect

Women’s rights NGOs have been very active in alleviating the plight of poor and illiterate women. Their work is encouraged by the government, and the positive effects are apparent. For example, groups like Feminine Solidarity and Bayti (My House) have been catering to women in financial distress and single mothers. Meanwhile, through investments in rural roads, other infrastructure, and social programs, the government is attempting to improve the life of the rural population as a whole, although these efforts are still very insufficient: paved roads, running water, and schools are still luxuries for most of the countryside Morocco. The poverty rate in rural areas dropped from 36 percent in 2004 to 21 percent in 2007, according to the findings of a survey by the High Commissioner for Planning, but work to alleviate poverty is still sorely needed.

There exist around 100 counselling and listening centres in Morocco. These centres help women victims of domestic violence cope with their tragedies by providing legal, psychological and social support. The role of these centres is also to organize sensitizing campaigns against domestic violence, formation seminars and follow-ups of women victims of domestic violence. These centres were initiated by the Anaruz network. Established in April 2004 following a consensus workshop that brought together several organizations and counselling centres in Morocco, the Anaruz network counts now 39 centres located throughout the country.

The various bulletins of Anaruz and counselling centres show that domestic violence has the lion’s share of the violence impacted on women in Morocco, an average of 74%, says an Anaruz report on violence based on gender, which covered the period September 2005/octobre 2006. In this report, other forms of violence cover institutional violence (8.8%), violence outside marriage (6.8%), societal violence (4.4%) and domestic violence (4.2%). Regarding domestic violence itself, the report notes that violence against the rights of women represents the largest percentage, 43, 6%, including the deprivation of family expenditure represents a large percentage (58.4%) followed by physical abuse (30.4%). Concerning violence against women’s

rights outside of marriage, the report states that societal violence is one of the most important forms of physical violence directed against women (33, 9%), followed by rape and sexual harassment, which occupy the top spots in this percentage, respectively 57.7% and 42.3%.

To remedy this situation, the report underlines the need to criminalize violence against women generally and domestic violence in a particular. It, thus, activates the role of prosecutor to ensure the protection of a divorced woman's right when she returns to the matrimonial home. The report also calls for the establishment of shelters and the spread of listening centres nationwide, in addition to coordination between the government and women's groups, as well as the human rights groups with the aim of producing a comprehensive national report on violence against women that binds all the parties involved.

In parallel, the Global Rights in Morocco, in collaboration with partner NGOs from various regions across the country, launched a campaign of legislative advocacy through two new tools: a poster called "Penalties, Privacy, No Tolerance: Claims of women for a law against violence", and a discussion booklet that accompanies it. These tools are intended for local NGOs in their advocacy for women's rights in Morocco. The poster illustrates twelve reasons for a comprehensive law on violence against women, with texts simplified in French, Arabic and Tifinagh. The discussion booklet explains the rationale for these proposals, provides statistics and testimonies of women, and provides concrete examples of legislation that are contained in the framework for model legislation on violence in the family and interpersonal relations, based on the UN stance on the issue of violence against women. The result is 161 consultation sessions in 35 towns and villages with 1836 women in their communities to solicit their suggestions and priorities for national legislation on violence against women. Local artists have worked with women to create drawings illustrating their claims, including the poster and this discussion paper are the result. The twelve themes identified by women in legislative reforms on the civil and the criminal law are: Expel the perpetrator's home; No mediation in domestic violence cases; Provide support during conflict relating to domestic violence; Issue protective orders against perpetrators; Develop a writing document of any scene of domestic violence suspect; increase penalties for domestic violence; Criminalizing marital rape, Criminalize all forms of harassment sexual, Prosecution of domestic violence without resorting to witness empower the police to intervene immediately in case of domestic violence; penalize even minor offenses in cases of domestic violence, increase penalties for repeated acts of domestic violence. Pursuant to that, Global Rights and its partners distributed 2,000 copies of the poster and booklet for discussion across the country. During this campaign, the 10 partner NGOs organized public meetings in their communities with local decision

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makers, parliamentary representatives, authorities, hospital staff and staff of the justice system to present the poster and the discussion paper.

On the ground, the most important and operative centre that treats domestic violence against women is Nejma. During the months of January and February 2010, around 270 domestic violence cases were tackled by Nejma. In addition to 274 cases ranging over phone calls, emails or fax messages, most of which suffering from psychological violence⁷. Five types of domestic violence are reported: psychological violence (58%), economic and social violence (17%), corporal violence (15%), legal violence (6%) and sexual violence (5%).

According to women's stories, the most important motive for going to the Centre is a desire to release their feelings towards violence that they have been holding for years. The major reasons which keeps them from going to the centre is their inability to confront society especially in cases of rape or sexual harassment, fear of homelessness and destitutions in cases of poor and jobless women with children. This category of women has recourse to the logics of "patience" and "taboo" (so valued in Moroccan culture⁸), a fact which deepens the problem. Another reason is women's conviction that their private life should remain their own whatever the impact of violence on their lives is. Another reason is women's reluctance to ask legal advice because of lack of trust in the law and the institutions related to it.

The main problems that these centres face is securing proof that rape took place and hence protecting the victim. Another reason the impossibility of finding witnesses given the nature of the circumstances in which rape takes place. This lets many rapers escape punishment. Here is a case reported by Nejma: a 22 years old woman was stopped by a man with a butcher's knife and was led to a secluded place. She was raped and taken to the raper's home where she was kept for 3 days. During this time, the young woman was repeatedly beaten and raped. Upon her release, she presented a complaint to the court. However, in spite of her physical state and the doctor's certificate, she was not given justice because of lack of witnesses. The raper was sentenced to three months without prison.

In other cases, the victims of rape are often seen as the criminals, or at least the ones who provoked violence by the way they dress, talk, look, etc. In these cases the abuser is seen as a victim who committed his crime without

⁷ The information and statistics in this section are taken from the Nejmanews bulletin, published by the ADFM (Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc), No 1, April 2010.

⁸ See Sadiqi (2003)

“meaning to” do it. This is what a victim said to Nejma Centre when she presented her complaint against her divorcer and his friend who came to her house and raped her.

On May 15, 2010, a draft was presented to the government and the official criminalisation of domestic violence is imminent. This opens a window of hope although it will probably take some time to be implemented on the ground.

Algeria

Violence overshadowed Algeria for nearly a half-century. A million lives were lost in the battle for independence from France in 1962, and another 150,000 to 200,000 people were slaughtered in a brutal civil war that followed the annulment of 1992 elections, though trouble has subsided since 2003. In Algeria, domestic violence is still a legal, let alone a social, problem. Facts show that some 7,400 women filed domestic violence complaints in Algeria in 2009, 1,555 more than in 2004, according to the law enforcement agency that handles such cases. According to Belala, referring to the Berber-speaking nomads who live in the Sahara region:

“Violence against women is a pervasive problem in Algeria. It touches all social classes and all regions, except in the extreme south where the Tuaregs banish men who rape women,”

SOS Woman, an Algerian NGO set up some 15 years ago, was the first group to publicly denounce domestic violence against women. This was a pioneer act in Algeria’s modern history. According to this group, although domestic violence is increasing in Algeria, victims still fear scandal and, thus, avoid taking cases to the police or the court. The spokesperson of this group said:

“Victims talk to us anonymously on the phone. We get hundreds of calls from women who complain of being sodomized or forced to do things they are not morally comfortable with,” she said.

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Tunisia

Gender equality is inscribed in the Tunisian government policies since 1956⁹, making the status and position of women in this country a privileged one. However, the implementation of this gender equality is still a challenge in this country. So far as domestic violence is concerned, the Tunisian official discourse does not consider it a social phenomenon, but a rare occurrence. However, according to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999), domestic violence, including sexual violence, battering and other physical and psychological violence, is widespread in Tunisia; what is rare is official data on this phenomenon. On the other hand, the 1999 edition of *Collectif Maghreb Egalité* revealed many cases of threats and intimidation within the confines of marriage. For example, it has reported the case of a 49 year old mother of 6 children who had been married for 30 years and who was subjected physical, psychological and sexual violence throughout the 30 years of marriage. This woman filed a case against her husband in 1979 but had to withdraw her case when her husband was arrested and held in custody for a week. This woman was beaten by her husband in 1998 demanding that she leave her job. The woman left her home and presented a medical certificate showing her injuries, but her husband asked for divorce on the ground that his wife deserted the family home.”

The only Tunisian association which runs a shelter for abused women is the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD). In 2001, this association issued a report on women victims of domestic violence. According to this report, most women who seek shelter in AFTD are beaten either by their husbands/partners or by a male member of their extended family. As in the Moroccan case, the main reasons that push women not to report violence is economic dependence and lack of self esteem. As for the official stance of domestic violence, the Tunisian state prefers to leave it to the extended family.

On the legal front, domestic violence is dealt with in Article 218 of the Tunisian Penal Code. An amendment was introduced on this article in 1993, according to which penalties when an assault is committed by one spouse against another or in cases where the assault is committed by a parent on a child than are heavier. According to the Tunisian Penalty Code, the penalty for domestic violence under article 218 is imprisonment for two years and a fine of 2,000 dinars with the sanctions being increased to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 3,000 dinars if it was carried out with premeditation. In situations where the spouse or child victim decides to withdraw the case, the article

⁹ Habib Bourguiba, the first Tunisian president after independence in 1956 is credited with the inscription of women's rights in Tunisia.

stipulates that the proceedings, trial or enforcement of the penalty shall be discontinued.

Thus, overall, while rape or sexual violence within marriage is in the course of being criminalized in the Moroccan law system, the Tunisian law (couched in Article 218 of Tunisian Penal Code) does not explicitly prohibit it.³ Domestic violence is prohibited in Morocco in accordance with the guidelines submitted by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women to the fifty-second session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (U.N. doc. E/CN/4/1996/53, Add.2). It must be noted, however, that in the three North African countries, women's non-governmental NGOs endeavour to raise people's awareness to the issue of domestic violence through campaigns and assistance. Institutionalized will, proper training, law enforcement and the punishment of domestic violence are still much needed in the region.

New Ways of Dealing with Domestic Violence

The nature of domestic violence, as well as its causes, have changed in the last few decades. Today, in the era of Islamophobia, domestic violence is considered by many to be a problem in Muslim-majority cultures. Ways of dealing with violence have also change in accordance with the overall historical and socio-economic context, as well as with the advent of the internet and cyber media.

There is no consensus among scholars as to the relationship between Islam and domestic violence. The debate among religious leaders and Islamic scholars in this domain focuses on whether there is religious evidence that a man may beat his wife. Forms of beating wives under specific circumstances are explicit in the Qur'an, especially An-Nisa, 34. Some scholars think that beating is the last resort and should not result in physical injury.

Verse 34 of an-Nisa is one of the most important verses for husband and wife relationship in Islam. In most translations, it gives permission to men to beat/hit (they both have the same word in Arabic) their wives if they fear "rebellion," or "*nushûz*". Many interpretive problems have arisen regarding the occasions (if any) on which beating is appropriate, the type of beating prescribed, and whether beating remains discountenanced even if acceptable.

However, in North African societies, very little is reported on domestic violence. Women are ashamed of showing their bruises or complaining to authorities about their husbands. Such complaints are culturally considered as

breaches of the Code of Honor and may harm their own families. Studies on this specific aspect are badly needed, and statistics of beaten women are very difficult to find.

Conclusion

Theorizing domestic violence in North Africa is becoming a necessity. At a time when technology is pulling down the good old space frontiers between the private and the public spaces, violence has not decreased; on the contrary it is finding new reasons: the shrinking of family size, less interference from the extended family, stress, etc. The new interest in Islam is adding a new dimension to this theorization.

Some headway has been achieved at the level of policy-making in Morocco but the road is still long before the taboo surrounding domestic violence is infiltrated.

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Hard-won Progress and a Long Road Ahead: Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa¹

Sanja Kelly

Preliminaries

As the governments of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) undertake the difficult process of enacting social and political change, the unequal status of women presents a particularly formidable challenge. In Iraq, deliberations over women's legal status have been as contentious as negotiations over how to structure the government. In Jordan, measures to increase penalties for so-called honor crimes faced strong resistance by ultraconservative parliamentarians and ordinary citizens who believe that tradition and religion afford them the right to severely punish and even murder female relatives for behavior they deem immoral. These debates are not just legal and philosophical struggles among elites. They are emotionally charged political battles that touch upon fundamental notions of morality and social order.

In order to provide a detailed look at the conditions faced by women in the Middle East and understand the complex environment surrounding efforts to improve their status, Freedom House conducted a comprehensive study of women's rights in the region. The first edition of this project was published in 2005. The present edition offers an updated examination of the issue, with a special focus on changes that have occurred over the last five years. Although the study indicates that a substantial deficit in women's rights persists in every country in the MENA region, the findings also include notable progress, particularly in terms of economic opportunities, educational attainment, and political participation.

The Middle East is not the only region of the world where women experience inequality. In Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and North America, women continue to face gender-based obstacles to the full realization

¹ This essay originally appeared in *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance*, ed. Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin (New York, NY: Freedom House; Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010).

of their rights. In the United States, women have come a long way since the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but even today they earn roughly 23 percent less than men and make up only 3 percent of the Fortune 500 chief executives. It is, however, in the MENA region that the gap between the rights of men and those of women has been the most visible and severe.

The country reports presented in this edition detail how women throughout the Middle East continue to face systematic discrimination in both laws and social customs. Deeply entrenched societal norms, combined with conservative interpretations of Shari'a (Islamic law), continue to relegate women to a subordinate status. Women in the region are significantly underrepresented in senior positions in politics and the private sector, and in some countries they are completely absent from the judiciary. Perhaps most visibly, women face gender-based discrimination in personal-status laws, which regulate marriage, divorce, child guardianship, inheritance, and other aspects of family life. Laws in most of the region declare that the husband is the head of the family, give the husband power over his wife's right to work, and in some instances specifically require the wife to obey her husband. Gender-based violence also remains a significant problem.

Nevertheless, important steps have been made to improve the status of women over the last five years, and 14 out of 17 countries have recorded some gains.² The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC or Gulf)—which scored the worst among 17 countries in the 2005 edition—have demonstrated the greatest degree of improvement, shrinking the gap between them and the rest of the region on some issues. The most significant achievement occurred in Kuwait, where women received the same political rights as men in 2005, enabling them to vote and run for office, and paving the way for the election of the country's first female members of parliament in 2009. In Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the first women judges were appointed in 2006 and 2008, respectively. Women have also become more visible participants in public life, education, and business throughout the region, including Saudi Arabia. They have gained more freedom to travel independently, as laws requiring a guardian's permission for a woman to obtain a passport have been rescinded in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar during this report's coverage period.

Outside the Gulf, the most notable reforms occurred in Algeria and Jordan. Following the Moroccan example from the year before, Algeria made

² The 2010 edition covers 18 countries. Iran was not evaluated in 2005.

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sweeping amendments to its personal status code in 2005, vastly improving women's power and autonomy within the family. The new law prohibits proxy marriages, limits the role of a woman's guardian during marriage proceedings, recognizes the parental authority of custodial mothers, and removes the requirement that a wife obey her husband. In Jordan, after years of lobbying by women's organizations for protections against gender-based violence, the government enacted the Family Protection Law (FPL) in 2008 and established a specialized court in 2009 that handles cases involving honor crimes. The FPL specifies the procedures that police, the courts, and medical authorities must follow when dealing with victims of domestic abuse, and prescribes penalties for the perpetrators. Jordan is only the second country in the region—after Tunisia—to pass such legislation, although parts of the law are not yet enforced.

In nearly all of the countries examined, however, progress is stymied by the lack of democratic institutions, an independent judiciary, and freedoms of association and assembly. Excessively restrictive rules on the formation of civil society organizations make it more difficult for women's advocates to effectively organize and lobby the government for expanded rights. The scarcity of research and data on women's status further impedes the advocacy efforts of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and activists. And ultimately, the passage of new laws that guarantee equal rights for women means little if those guarantees are not fully enforced by state authorities. Throughout the region, persistent patriarchal attitudes, prejudices, and the traditionalist inclinations of male judges threaten to undermine new legal protections.

Overall conditions for women have worsened in only three places: Iraq, Yemen, and Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip). In all of these cases the negative trend is partly related to an uncertain security situation. For example, while the lives of citizens of both genders are affected by the war in Iraq, the conflict's effect on women has been particularly severe. The instances of gender-based violence in Iraq—including honor killings, rapes, and kidnappings—increased significantly during the last five years. This forced women to stay home, thereby hindering most aspects of their lives, including employment and education. Despite these conditions, progress has been achieved on some issues. Women currently hold 25 percent of the seats in the parliament thanks to a new quota system, a new nationality law allows women to transfer citizenship to their children and foreign-born husbands, and women's rights NGOs have grown stronger and more effective.

Similarly, in Palestine (West Bank and the Israeli Occupied Territories), internal political tensions between Fatah and Hamas— coupled with Israeli restrictions on the movement of civilians and military incursions— have seriously affected the health, employment opportunities, access to education, and political and civil liberties of Palestinian women. In particular, due to the increased number of checkpoints and the construction of the West Bank separation wall, women now experience further separation from their families, farmlands, water resources, schools, and hospitals. Moreover, the new, more conservative social order imposed by Hamas has led to greater restrictions on women's rights in Gaza, and women's labor force participation remains the lowest in the region as the local economy has all but collapsed.

While it is possible to identify net gains or losses for women's rights in a given country, the situation is rarely as simple as that, and the course of events often reflects a great deal of contestation. In many states where significant progress has been achieved, elements of the society have tried, sometimes successfully, to introduce measures that are detrimental to women's rights. For example, in Syria, where women have made notable improvements in terms of educational and employment opportunities, the government considered amendments to the family law that would have increased the discretionary power of religious judges in family matters, until the public outcry and activism of women's rights organizations prompted lawmakers to cancel the proposed legislation. In Libya, after it was leaked that the government had imposed a regulation prohibiting women under the age of 40 from leaving the country without a male relative, even the state-owned newspaper was critical, leading the authorities to deny that such a rule had been instituted. In Kuwait, just three years after women got the right to vote and a year before the election of first female lawmakers, the parliamentary committee on education issued a directive instructing the government to start enforcing a law on gender segregation at private universities by 2013.

Among other important findings and developments are the following:

- As measured by this study, Tunisian women enjoy the greatest degree of freedom in the MENA region, followed by women in Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Bahrain, Syria, Libya, the UAE, Iraq, Qatar, Oman, and Iran. Yemen and Saudi Arabia lag significantly behind.
- The greatest gains were achieved in the areas of employment, education, and political representation. More women today hold jobs,

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are literate, and enroll in areas of study previously deemed inappropriate for them than five years ago. Women's rights organizations are becoming more vocal and better organized, and women are increasing their representation in elected government bodies, albeit with the help of quota systems.

- Gender-based violence remains one of the most serious obstacles in women's lives. Laws that would protect women from spousal abuse are absent in most countries, spousal rape is not criminalized, and honor killings still occur and are on the rise in Iraq and Palestine.
- Women's access to justice remains poor due to their low degree of legal literacy, cultural requirements that women first seek mediation through the family before turning to courts, the patriarchal leanings of many male judges, and the fact that in most countries a woman's testimony is worth only half that of a man in certain areas of the law.

Main findings

The 2010 edition of *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa* identifies a complex set of obstacles that prevent women from enjoying the full range of political, civil, economic, and legal rights. However, the study and the accompanying data also indicate that certain gains have been made in recent years, providing grounds for cautious optimism.

Economic Opportunities Grow Despite Persistent Challenges

On average, only 28 percent of the adult female population in the Middle East is economically active, the lowest rate in the world. In nearly all MENA countries, however, women today are better represented in the labor force and play a more prominent role in the workplace than was the case earlier this decade. In Qatar, for example, the proportion of adult women with jobs has increased from roughly 36 percent in 2000 to 42 percent in 2007. Similarly, the proportion of working women has grown by 6 percent in Algeria (to 38 percent) and nearly 4 percent in Libya (to 27 percent). Compared with male employment, these figures remain glaringly low; depending on the country, the share of adult men with jobs ranges from 60 to 90 percent. But male employment has remained static and in some instances decreased since 2000.

The growing number of working women appears to be the result of increased literacy and educational opportunities, slowly changing cultural attitudes, and in some countries, government policies aimed at reducing dependence on foreign labor. Although society as a whole tends to view formal employment and business as male activities, parents and husbands alike are starting to rely more on the financial support provided by their daughters and wives. In Egypt and Bahrain, several women interviewed for this study said that their marriage prospects improve if they hold a solid job, as "young men nowadays look for a wife that can help with family expenses."

Employment also gives women a degree of financial independence from families and husbands, something they lacked in the past. Divorced or widowed women increasingly seek employment to support themselves, instead of relying on their extended families. And with divorce rates on the rise—approximately 46 percent in the UAE, 40 percent in Egypt, 38 percent in Qatar, and 30 percent in Tunisia—married women increasingly see a separate income as vital insurance against future trouble in their relationships. Whether married or not, working women say that they have started to earn greater respect and have a greater voice within their families.

Women in the Gulf generally have higher labor-force participation rates than their counterparts elsewhere in the MENA region. This can be explained by lower unemployment rates overall, meaning women do not have to compete with men for jobs, and by comparatively higher levels of literacy and education. In addition, Gulf women have benefited from government policies designed to reduce dependence on foreign labor, as companies have aggressively recruited female workers to fill newly established quotas for citizen employees. In the UAE, for example, the Ministry of Labor no longer allows foreigners to work as secretaries, public-relations officers, or human-resources personnel; consequently, most of the new hires for those positions are Emirati women. In Oman, a policy of "Omanization" has had a particularly positive effect on poor, less-educated women, allowing them to obtain jobs as cleaners, hospital orderlies, and kitchen help, and thus to support themselves in the face of economic hardship and secure a new role in the community.

Although such policies have increased the overall number of working women, they have also highlighted the cultural limits placed on female professionals. Many women complain of difficulty in advancing beyond entry-level positions despite their qualifications and job performance, leading to a popular perception that they were hired only to satisfy the government quotas.

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In other words, as noted in the UAE report, these policies have resulted in a "sticky floor" for young and ambitious women. Indeed, across the Middle East, very few women are found in upper management and executive positions, arguably due to cultural perceptions that women are less capable, more irrational, and better suited for domestic responsibilities than men.

Women throughout the region earn less than men despite labor laws that mandate equal pay for the same type of work and equal opportunities for training and promotion. While such laws are essential, they are frequently violated in terms of salary and employment perks like housing allowances or loans for senior officials. Women in most countries can file discrimination complaints with government agencies, but these bodies often lack the capacity to investigate discrimination cases or impose penalties for violations by employers, rendering their work largely ineffective. Sexual harassment is also a problem due to the lack of laws that clearly prohibit the practice and punish the perpetrators. Jordan's new 2008 labor law prohibits "sexual assault," but its protections for victims are extremely weak, and it lacks clear definitions and strong punishments for offenders.

In addition, women face significant discrimination in laws regulating pension and similar benefits. In many countries, gender plays an important role in determining the length of employment necessary to qualify, the eligible beneficiaries, and the conditions under which benefits are provided. Upon death, a female employee generally cannot pass her pension to her surviving spouse or children, whereas a male employee can, although female workers give up the same share of their salaries for such benefits as men. Moreover, men employed in the public sector are often eligible for special family and cost-of-living allowances, which are only available to a woman if her husband is dead or disabled.

Several long-standing cultural mores regarding proper professions for women remain cemented into the law. In virtually every country in the region, labor laws prohibit women from undertaking dangerous or arduous work, or work that could be deemed detrimental to their health or morals. In 12 of the 18 countries, women are prohibited from working late at night, with the exception of those employed in medicine and certain other fields. While these provisions are seen locally as a means of protecting women, in effect they treat women as minors who are unable to make decisions regarding their own safety, and they hold women's guardians responsible if the rules are violated. Since most women

opt to work in the public sector due to its shorter workdays and better pay, these restrictions generally affect only a limited number of female employees.

Academic Achievement Expands Women's Prospects as New Threats Emerge

Education has been a prime area of progress for women in the region, and it is an important avenue for their advancement toward broader equality. Since the 1990s, women in all 18 MENA countries have made gains in access to education, literacy, university enrollment, and the variety of academic fields available to them. That trend has continued, for the most part, over the past five years. The female literacy rate has grown by 5.3 percent in Algeria, 6.8 percent in Iran, 3.6 percent in Morocco, and 5.8 percent in Yemen. In most countries, women outnumber men at the tertiary education level, and Qatar and the UAE have the highest female-to-male university enrollment ratio worldwide.

Although women are generally encouraged to study in traditionally female disciplines such as teaching and health care, they have started entering new fields, including engineering and science. For example, in Qatar, women were accepted for the first time in 2008 in the fields of architecture and electrical and chemical engineering. In Saudi Arabia, three educational institutions began to permit women to study law in 2007, although the graduates are only allowed to act as legal consultants to other women and remain prohibited from serving as judges and advocates in court. In countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt, where women have long been able to enroll in any course of study, educators report increasing numbers of female students in their traditionally male classes, such as math and science.

Despite these improvements, many barriers to true gender equality in education persist, while new measures intended to cap surging female enrollment threaten to undermine the progress to date. In Kuwait and Oman, women are required to achieve higher grade-point averages (GPAs) than men to enroll in certain disciplines at the university level. For example, female students in Kuwait must obtain a 3.3 GPA to be admitted to the engineering department, while male students need a GPA of just 2.8. As women make up almost two-thirds of the student body at Kuwait University, the disparity in admission requirements is explained by university officials as "reverse discrimination," intended to increase the percentage of male students in certain fields. Similarly, Iran has recently implemented a rule requiring an equal number of male and female students in select fields like medicine.

In a handful of countries, universities largely remain segregated by gender. It is unclear to what extent the segregation affects the quality of education, but in at least some countries, including Saudi Arabia, the number and diversity of classes offered to men are much greater than those available to women. As noted above, Kuwaiti legislators in 2008 called for an existing law mandating segregation at private universities to be implemented within five years, despite concerns at the Ministry of Education that it would be extremely difficult to create adequate facilities before that deadline.

Protection from Domestic Abuse Remains Minimal

While no part of the world is free from the stain of domestic abuse, the countries of the Middle East are exceptional in their array of laws, practices, and customs that pose major obstacles to the protection of women and the punishment of abusers. Physical abuse is generally prohibited, but among the 18 countries examined, only Tunisia and Jordan offer specific protections against domestic violence, and none prohibit spousal rape. Other contributing factors include a lack of government accountability, a lack of official protection of individual rights inside the home, and social stigmas that pertain to female victims rather than the perpetrators.

Very few comprehensive studies on the nature and extent of domestic violence have been conducted in the Middle East. Nonetheless, domestic abuse is thought to be widespread in every country in the region, with its existence typically covered up by and kept within the family. Many women feel that they cannot discuss their personal situation without damaging their family honor and their own reputation. Consequently, abused women rarely attempt to file complaints with the police. When they do choose to seek police protection, they frequently encounter officers who are reluctant to get involved in what is perceived as a family matter, and who encourage reconciliation rather than legal action. In Saudi Arabia in particular, guardianship laws make it very difficult for battered women to find a safe haven. For example, this study cites the case of a girl who sought police protection after being sexually molested by her father, only to be turned away and told to bring her father in to file the complaint.

Honor killing, in which a woman is murdered by a relative for suspected extramarital sex or some other behavior that is considered a slight to the family's honor, represents the most extreme form of domestic violence. Such

murders have been reported in Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and Yemen, but are not exclusive to the Middle East; they also occur in South and Central Asia, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. Generally, the perpetrators of honor killings serve minimal time in prison due to judicial discretion and laws that prescribe leniency for murders committed in the heat of passion. While Jordan and Syria have recently instituted stiffer penalties to deal with these crimes, honor killings are reportedly on the rise in other countries, such as Palestine and Iraq.

Over the last five years, nearly all countries in the region have taken some steps to combat spousal abuse. In Jordan, the parliament enacted the Family Protection Law in January 2008 after years of lobbying by governmental and civil society actors. As noted above, the law prescribes prison time and financial penalties for abusers, and specifies procedures that the police, the courts, and medical authorities must follow when handling cases of domestic violence, although several important provisions of the law have not yet been implemented. In Tunisia and Algeria, the authorities have joined women's groups in campaigns against domestic violence, holding workshops and engaging police, judges, and social workers. Draft legislation that would prohibit domestic violence was considered by the Lebanese government in June 2009, but it was referred to a ministerial committee for further review.

In Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan, the network of NGOs that support victims of domestic violence is steadily growing, and an increasing number of women seem to be aware of such organizations and the services they provide. Several new shelters have opened over the last five years, and civil society has become more active in its advocacy efforts. The issue of domestic violence has also garnered more attention in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, although it is unclear what practical steps those governments intend to take to combat the problem. In Iran, Kuwait, and Yemen, there is not one shelter or support center for victims of domestic abuse.

Political Rights Improve Amid Low Regional Standards

Throughout the MENA region, both male and female citizens lack the power to change their governments democratically and have only limited rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of speech. According to *Freedom in the World*, the global assessment of political rights and civil liberties issued annually by Freedom House, none of the countries examined here earn the rating of Free, and none qualify as electoral democracies.

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In all 18 countries, gender-based obstacles to women's participation in public life remain deeply rooted. Politics is viewed as the domain of men, and female leaders must contend with cultural attitudes that resist the idea of being politically represented by a woman. In Yemen, for example, a group of Salafist clerics recently issued a handbook that argues against gender-based quotas in political life, claiming that "opening the door for women to leave their houses and mix with men will lead to sexual chaos." Even in Egypt, one of the more liberal countries in terms of women's rights, a former grand mufti issued a fatwa (religious opinion) in 2005 that prohibited women from assuming the position of president. Although the sitting grand mufti later clarified that a woman could lead a modern Muslim state, the disagreement among religious scholars, and their influence on such an overtly political and constitutional issue, are indicative of the challenges faced by women in their struggle to assume leadership positions.

Despite these obstacles, women in 11 of the 18 countries have made gains over the last five years in their ability to vote and run for elected office, hold high-level government positions, and lobby the government for expanded rights. Reforms have been particularly visible in the GCC countries, where women's participation in politics has traditionally lagged behind the rest of the region. In Kuwait, women received the same political rights as men in 2005 and four women were elected to the parliament in May 2009, for the first time in the country's history. In the UAE, eight women were appointed and one secured election to the 40-member Federal National Council (FNC), an advisory body to the hereditary rulers of the seven emirates. Previously, no women had served on the FNC, which until 2006 was fully appointed by the seven rulers. In other countries, such as Oman and Bahrain, the government has appointed an increasing number of women to unelected positions, including cabinet and diplomatic posts. Saudi Arabia remains the only country in which women are not permitted to vote or run for elected office.

Outside of the Gulf, the positive change has been more subtle. In Iraq, women's rights activists mounted a successful campaign of rallies and lobbying to secure a 25 percent quota in the parliament and incorporate that rule into the constitution. Still, electoral laws have been formulated in a way that allows female representation to fall below 25 percent in provincial councils. The implementation of quota systems, either on state or local levels, has increased women's participation in electoral politics in other countries as well. Jordan's government, responding to an initiative by women's organizations, introduced a 20 percent quota for the July 2007 municipal elections, leading to significantly

more women on local councils. Nonetheless, very few women are able to achieve electoral success in their own right. The typical female lawmaker is a close relative of a prominent male leader or a member of a traditional political family.

Working from outside the government, women's advocates in several countries have been able to lobby more effectively for expanded rights in recent years, despite persistent restrictions on freedom of association. In Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt, women's rights activists have been particularly successful in lobbying their governments to reform family laws and implement new protections for women. However, throughout the region, restrictions on civic organizations and human rights advocacy represent one of the main impediments to the expansion of women's rights, since activists are unable to organize and voice their demands without fear of persecution.

Women Are Still Denied Equality Before the Law

Apart from Saudi Arabia, all countries in the MENA region have clauses in their constitutions that guarantee the equality of all citizens. Specific provisions calling for equality between the sexes have been adopted in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, and Tunisia. While the constitutions of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco, the UAE, and Yemen do not include gender-based nondiscrimination clauses, they do declare that "all citizens are equal under the law."

Regardless of constitutional guarantees, women throughout the region face legal forms of discrimination that are systematic and pervade every aspect of life. For example, in most of the 18 countries, women do not enjoy the same citizenship and nationality rights as men, which can carry serious repercussions for the choice of a marriage partner. Under these laws, a man is able to marry a foreign woman with the understanding that his spouse can become a citizen and receive the associated benefits. By contrast, a woman who marries a foreigner cannot pass her citizenship to her spouse or their children. Children from such marriages must acquire special residency permits, renewed annually, to attend public school, qualify for university scholarships, or find employment.

Over the last five years, several countries have made it possible for foreign husbands or children of female citizens to obtain citizenship. In Algeria, Iraq, and Tunisia, a woman can now pass her citizenship to her husband and children, pending approval from the relevant ministries (male citizens need no

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such approval). In Egypt, the parliament amended the nationality law in 2004, allowing the children of Egyptian mothers and foreign fathers to obtain Egyptian citizenship, but the law still prohibits such children from joining the army, the police, and some government posts. Similarly, the new Moroccan nationality law, which came into force in April 2008, enables women married to noncitizen men to pass their nationality to their children, provided that the marriage took place in accordance with Moroccan personal status law. These reforms, although incomplete, are seen as significant steps forward.

As described above, women also face gender-based restrictions in labor laws, can legally be denied employment in certain occupations, and are discriminated against in labor benefits and pension laws. However, gender inequality is most evident in personal status codes, which relegate women to an inferior position within marriage and the family, designate the husband as the head of household, and in many cases explicitly require the wife to obey her husband. Under the family codes of most Middle Eastern countries, a husband is allowed to divorce his wife at any time without a stated reason, but a wife seeking divorce must either meet very specific and onerous conditions or return her dowry through a practice known as *khula*. Furthermore, with the exceptions of Tunisia and Morocco, women need a guardian's signature or at least his presence to complete marriage proceedings, limiting their free choice of a marriage partner. In Saudi Arabia, there is no codified personal status law, allowing judges to make decisions regarding family matters based on their own interpretations of Shari'a. In Bahrain, the 2009 personal status code is applicable only to Sunni Muslims.

Following years of lobbying by women's rights organizations, Algeria's personal status code was amended in 2005 to prohibit proxy marriages, set the minimum legal age for marriage at 19 for both sexes, impose several conditions on the practice of polygamy, and remove the provision that required a wife's obedience to her husband. Several other countries, including Tunisia and Bahrain, made lesser amendments, mainly to prevent the marriage of underage girls. In the UAE and Qatar, personal status laws were codified for the first time in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Although the new laws contain provisions granting women additional rights and are viewed as a positive development, many clauses simply codify preexisting inequalities.

A number of other legal changes over the last five years, if properly implemented, have the potential to improve women's rights. For example, laws requiring women to obtain permission from their guardians in order to travel

were rescinded in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar. In Oman, the government introduced a law in 2008 to stipulate that men's and women's court testimony would be considered equal, although it is unclear to what extent this will apply to personal status cases.

Throughout the region, however, the prevailing patriarchal attitudes, prejudices, and traditionalism of male judges, lawyers, and court officials—as well as the lack of an independent judiciary that is capable of upholding basic legal rights despite political or societal pressure—threaten to undermine these new legal protections. Unless effective complaint mechanisms are in place and the appropriate court personnel are trained to apply justice in an impartial manner, the new laws will not achieve the desired effect. Moreover, unless the judicial system of each country becomes more independent, rigorous, and professional, women of high social standing will continue to have better access to justice than poor women and domestic workers.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY COUNTRY

Algeria: Legislative changes adopted in recent years have the potential to improve women's rights considerably. The 2005 nationality law allows women to transfer their citizenship to their children and foreign husbands, subject to certain conditions. Sweeping amendments to the personal status code, also enacted in 2005, improve women's autonomy within the family. Most recently, a new law against trafficking in persons was approved in January 2009. However, women generally lack an understanding of their legal rights, which threatens to negate the positive impact of these reforms. The political environment remains restrictive, and freedom of expression is curtailed for all.

Bahrain: The autonomy and personal security of Bahraini women improved over the past decade with the adoption of the National Action Charter, the ratification of the new constitution, and, in May 2009, the adoption of a personal status code for Sunnis. Bahrain appointed its first female judge in 2006 and rescinded a law requiring women to gain a male guardian's approval to obtain a passport. In 2007, the minimum age for marriage—previously unspecified—was set at 15 for girls and 18 for boys. However, women's access to justice remains poor. There is no personal status law for Shiite Muslims, so

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related judgments are handled by religious courts and based on individual judges' interpretations of Shari'a. Over the last five years, Bahraini women's rights NGOs have become more active, and both they and the government are increasingly taking steps to address domestic violence.

Egypt: Women in Egypt have made small gains in all categories under study, with the exception of political rights. The nationality law was amended in 2004 to permit the children of Egyptian mothers and foreign fathers (except Palestinians) to obtain Egyptian citizenship. Steps have been taken to combat gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and a law banning female genital mutilation was adopted in 2008, although it is unclear how effective it will be against what is a widespread and socially accepted tradition. In addition, women are taking on a larger role in society; the first female marriage registrar and the first female mayor were appointed in 2008, and in 2009 the first female university president took office. However, the emergency law remains in effect, curtailing a range of civil liberties, and women's political participation has been on the decline. To increase women's representation in the legislature, a gender-based quota system for the lower house of parliament was passed in 2009 and is scheduled to be implemented in 2010.

Iran: Iran has undergone political and social upheaval in recent years, most recently following the disputed 2009 presidential election. Women were visible participants in the postelection demonstrations, marching alongside men to protest voting irregularities and human rights violations. However, Iranian women are unable to pass their nationality to their children or foreign husbands, must secure their guardians' permission before undergoing serious surgical procedures, and are subject to a discriminatory penal code. For instance, to avoid being punished for adultery, a rape victim must prove that she was under duress and did not do anything to invite an attack. Since the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, restrictions regarding modest attire and gender segregation in public places have been more strictly enforced. Restrictions on free speech have led to the closure of prominent women's rights publications, and participants in peaceful women's rights demonstrations have been routinely jailed. Indeed, while resourceful women's rights defenders have launched significant campaigns, such as those that aim to eliminate discriminatory legal provisions and ban executions by stoning, they also face severe persecution and are regularly threatened with heavy fines and long jail sentences.

Iraq: The status of women in Iraq has fluctuated over the past five years, in large part due to changing security conditions. Violence against women—particularly honor killings, rapes, and abductions—significantly escalated during the coverage period. This forced women to stay at home, and has negatively affected their opportunities for employment and education. Nevertheless, some progress toward gender equity has been achieved. For instance, women currently hold 25.5 percent of the seats in the parliament, and a new nationality law allows women to transfer citizenship to their children and foreign-born husbands. It remains unclear whether women will be adequately protected by laws that are currently under consideration. It is also uncertain whether existing discriminatory provisions, such as a rule that permits lenient sentences for perpetrators of honor crimes, will be amended. Consistent vigilance by state and nongovernmental actors both within Iraq and abroad will help to ensure that the rights women have gained to date survive on paper as well as in practice.

Jordan: Jordanian civil society actors remain outspoken proponents of women's rights, even as the government has enacted a restrictive law that limits the freedom of NGOs. Lobbying efforts by women's rights activists helped to secure the Family Protection Law in 2008, providing key safeguards against domestic abuse, although some of the law's most important provisions remain unenforced. The government also established a specialized court in July 2009 to hear cases involving honor crimes, and the court issued several convictions by year's end. There are only seven female members of parliament out of 110, and men continue to dominate the national political scene. But at the subnational level, women have made political headway: the first female governor was appointed in January 2007, and a 20 percent quota was introduced for the municipal elections the same year.

Kuwait: Women voted and ran for office for the first time in municipal and national elections in 2006. In 2009, they reached another milestone when four women were elected to the parliament. Women in Kuwait enjoy higher levels of economic participation than most of their counterparts in the region, but they remain barred from serving as judges or in the military. And as is the case elsewhere in the Gulf, they face unequal rights within the family and cannot transfer their nationality to children or foreign-born husbands. Domestic violence, although a problem, remains largely unaddressed by the government and women's rights organizations.

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Lebanon: Women continue to face gender-based injustices, such as the inability to pass citizenship to their children and a penal code provision that offers reduced sentences for perpetrators of honor crimes. However, women's rights organizations have been increasing their efforts to combat these inequities. The issue of violence against women has gained prominence in recent years. A well-known religious cleric issued a fatwa against honor killings in 2008, the government is reviewing legislation that would ban domestic violence, and the number of hotlines available to victims of abuse has increased. Although more women now head economic enterprises than before, few are participating in national or local politics.

Libya: Some positive changes for women's rights have occurred in the last five years, including a growing female role in the labor force and the state's attempts to promote a greater awareness of domestic violence. However, women's rights have also been threatened, as when the government briefly barred women from leaving the country without a male guardian, a decision that was withdrawn only a week later after a public outcry. Restrictions placed on civil society organizations are extreme, meaning there are few entities that can help bridge the gap between the regime's favorable rhetoric on women's rights and the reality on the ground, and there has been no fundamental shift in societal attitudes or behavior toward women.

Morocco: The sweeping changes engrained in the 2004 family law have been unevenly enforced, and many women—particularly those who live in rural areas or are uneducated—continue to face discrimination in practice. However, access to justice has improved in recent years. Women may now travel without a guardian's approval, are leading business ventures and advancing to higher levels of education in greater numbers, and are better able to negotiate their marriage rights. In addition, the new nationality law enables Moroccan women married to noncitizen men to pass their nationality to their children if certain conditions are met. Some progress has also been made in protecting women from domestic violence, and support networks for victims are getting stronger. Women continue to make gains politically, and a 12 percent quota was implemented for the June 2009 local elections, substantially increasing female political representation on this level. While women's rights groups and individual activists have collaborated with the government to improve the rights of all women, true equality remains a distant goal.

Oman: Women in Oman are being appointed to more senior government positions, registering to vote in larger numbers, and increasingly running as parliamentary candidates. However, no women were elected in 2007, and in any

case the parliament serves only in an advisory capacity. The overall level of political and civic participation remains patently low. The testimony of men and women in Omani courts is now equal in most situations under a new law on evidence. If properly implemented, this law would set an important precedent in the Gulf region. In 2008, the country's first major law against human trafficking was enacted, and the land entitlement system was amended to ensure equality between male and female applicants. Despite these advances, women continue to face significant legal and social obstacles, and are required to obtain the written consent of a male relative before undergoing any kind of surgery.

Palestine: Internal political tensions between Fatah and Hamas—coupled with Israeli military incursions and restrictions on the movement of civilians—have seriously affected the health, employment opportunities, access to education, and political and civil liberties of Palestinian women. The conservative social order imposed by Hamas in Gaza has led to greater restrictions on women's rights there, and women's labor force participation rate remains one of the lowest in the region, as the local economy has all but collapsed. Electoral laws were amended in 2005 to ensure greater political participation for women, and women are extremely active in their communities and in civil society. But while they continue to push for gender equality, political and economic issues, as well as the Israeli occupation, consistently draw attention away from such campaigns.

Qatar: In recent years, the government has taken several steps to promote equality and address discrimination, including adopting the country's first codified family law and enacting a new constitution in 2004 that specifically prohibits gender-based discrimination. Despite constitutional provisions, women continue to be treated unequally in most aspect of life. Since 2007, women have been allowed to apply for their own passports, and in late 2008 they were accepted into the electrical and chemical engineering program at Qatar University for the first time. Nevertheless, women continue to be treated unequally in most aspects of life, and face cultural and social norms that prevent them from making a full contribution to society.

Saudi Arabia: The country performs well below its neighbors in all categories, and Saudi women are segregated, disenfranchised, and unable to travel or obtain certain types of medical care without male approval. Gender inequality is built into Saudi Arabia's governmental and social structures, and it is integral to the state-supported interpretation of Islam. Still, women's status improved slightly over the last five years, as they are now allowed to study law, obtain

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their own identification cards, check into hotels alone, and register businesses without first proving that they have hired a male manager. In addition, two new universities provide a limited form of coeducational experience.

Syria: The Syrian government strictly limits civil society activity, meaning much-needed legal reforms to ensure gender equality must generally originate in and be supported by the regime. Activists are not free to lobby the government or generate grassroots support, without which long-term change is difficult, and existing legal protections are weakened by the lack of mechanisms for women to challenge enforcement and implementation. Women enjoy reasonably high levels of literacy and labor-force participation, and their presence in the parliament is larger than in most neighboring countries. However, the parliament has little power in practice, and women's lack of representation in the executive and judiciary prevents them from developing, implementing, and enforcing policy decisions. Honor killings remain a problem in Syria, with an estimated 200 women murdered each year, although the government instituted stiffer penalties in 2009.

Tunisia: Tunisian women have long enjoyed rights for which other women in the region continue to struggle. The practices of polygamy and divorce by repudiation were banned years ago, girls have had access to free education on par with boys since 1958, and women earned the right to vote in 1957. After the most recent parliamentary elections, women made up 15.2 percent of the upper house and 27.6 percent of the lower house, and both houses have a female vice president, although the country's president holds nearly all political power in practice. Yet even as women continue to pursue a positive trajectory, particularly in terms of academic and economic achievement, inequity persists. Women in rural areas are often unaware of their rights, and women remain underrepresented in community and political life. Restrictions on free speech affect both men and women, although the authorities do not consider the issue of women's rights to be a particularly sensitive subject.

United Arab Emirates: The status of women is improving as the UAE seeks to transform itself into a modern state. Emirati women are entering new professional fields, serving as judges and prosecutors, and being appointed to high-profile positions within the government and private sector. More women are joining the workforce, and the UAE's female labor-force participation and female literacy rates are among the highest in the MENA region. The codification of the family law in 2005 is also seen as a step forward, although the law contains many discriminatory provisions based on conservative interpretations of Shari'a. Women's limited ability to access justice through the courts and combat discrimination remains a significant concern.

Yemen: In Yemen, where the tribal structure plays an influential role and the government is increasingly controlled by a single leader and political party, women are subjected to various forms of violence and discrimination. These include domestic abuse, deprivation of education, early or forced marriage, restrictions on freedom of movement, exclusion from decision-making roles and processes, denial of inheritance, deprivation of health services, and female genital mutilation. In recent years, security forces have implemented heavy-handed policies toward opposition groups and critical journalists, hampering the ability of women's rights activists to advocate for greater equality. In a positive development, some educational and executive institutions have allowed women to join their ranks for the first time, and the Islamist opposition party Islah undertook internal changes that led to the election of the first women to its higher decision-making bodies. However, Yemeni laws still discriminate against women, treating them as inferiors or minors who need perpetual guardianship, and women's representation in the executive and legislative bodies remains very poor.

Fighting Violence Against Women in Morocco: Theory and Practice

Moha Ennaji

Introduction

Violence against women is carried out in most cases by persons associated with the family, and it is present in all social groups. Violence is a weapon used by men for subordinating women. As long as the present system of domination remains, and legal and social inequality continues, both men and the State will feel legitimated to pursue violence against women.

In this chapter, I highlight gender-based violence in Morocco and the legal provisions, both penal and civil, of the Moroccan State, which discriminate against women or which, without being discriminatory as such, become so through their application. Unequal power relations between men and women have led to the domination of and discrimination against women, which in turn leads to violence against women.

In 2008, Morocco withdrew all its reservations about CEDAW, in a speech made by King Mohammed VI, with the aim to enhance the legal position of women on the basis of the principle of equality opportunity and the application of international instruments and declarations ratified by Morocco. This decision may be regarded as an important indication that Morocco is committed to gender equality and to combating violence against women.

Morocco has also ratified other international accords relating to human rights which protect women from violence, *inter alia*: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

The Constitution of Morocco, which was amended in 2011, recognizes the primacy of international law to which Morocco adheres over domestic legislation.

Considerable endeavours have been made by the State to improve the situation of women in Morocco in recent years. Significant measures to reduce gender inequity within the legal system produced reforms in the country's criminal code, labour code, and family law in 2004. The latter, also known as the *Mudawana*, is based on the Malikite school of Islamic law and on internationally recognised human rights; it governs the status of women under civil law. The new family law now fosters the principle of gender equality and substantiates joint responsibility of both spouses for the family. Women's political representation has also improved. The government includes 6 women Ministers. The adoption of a gender approach in all ministries is a testimony to the commitment of the government to combat discrimination against women, and to improve their representation in politics. As a result of the quota system, Morocco has 60 women members of parliament and 3428 women elected in the municipalities.

Under the new labor code, women can start their own business and sign trade agreements without the consent of their husbands. The code stipulates that there shall be no discrimination against women in employment and wages, and considers sexual harassment a serious crime for the first time.

Significant demographic changes have also led to the improvement of women's health, such as a decrease in fertility rates and a rise in the age of women contracting their first marriage (average 26 years).

The *Dahir* (royal decree) of 1958 concerning nationality and the Penal Code of Morocco have been recently revised. The new penal code allows a wife to directly sue her husband without the authorization of the court, unlike in the previous provisions. According to the new Nationality Code passed in 2007, a Moroccan mother can pass on Moroccan nationality to her children with a non-Moroccan father automatically, unlike in the 1958 law which required residence in Morocco and a formal application for granting Moroccan nationality to the child. This new code puts an end to the suffering of thousands of Moroccan women married to non-Moroccans.

The recent legislative reforms will, in the long run, have a very positive effect on gender relations. Nevertheless, these changes will only become truly significant if they lead to a change in the mentalities of all Moroccans, and if they benefit the daily lives of Moroccan women of all ages. This remains a major challenge, for Morocco is a Muslim society where modernity and

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tradition compete – not to mention a country in transition toward democratization, integration into the global economy, and urbanization.¹

Despite these positive changes, women still face violence in private and public spheres alike, as well as societal discrimination in many walks of life. Gender discrimination persists, and inequalities between Morocco's urban and rural populations in terms of access to education, employment, and health care are flagrant.

Additionally, the national legislation of Morocco continues to contain numerous provisions concerning equality between men and women, which are contradictory to CEDAW, as well as other sources of international law to which Morocco has obligations.

The preamble to the Constitution of Morocco makes a reference to human rights as universally recognized, yet the Constitution does not explicitly mention equality between women and men. Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees that women and men enjoy equal political rights. A woman can vote and be elected. In all other areas, equality between men and women can be deduced by reading the laws in conjunction with Article 6 of the Constitution which provides that all Moroccans are equal before the law. Thus, legal discrimination against women continues to persist in many provisions of the new Family Code, which deals with topics generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere such as marriage, divorce, alimony, child custody and inheritance; this legal discrimination acts as a powerful mechanism of control over women's political, social, civic, and cultural activities (see Sadiqi 2009).

Despite some important reforms, several laws still discriminate against women, especially regarding polygamy, which has been heavily restricted, but not banned. To be polygamous, the husband must get the approval of the judge, as well as that of his first and future wives. The first wife can go to the judge to ask for a divorce if she feels wronged by her husband's remarriage. Although the practice of polygamy is declining – there were 700 polygamous families in 2008 in the whole country (Ennaji 2010) – polygamy continues to be a threat to women, as it undermines a woman's dignity, perpetuates notions of male dominance, and above all, creates domestic environments where women become vulnerable to abuse because they are in the difficult position of agreeing to their husbands' marriage or asking for divorce. Likewise, inheritance still obeys shari'a law, which means that women inherit only half of what men can inherit (see Ennaji 2010).

¹ UNICEF statistics, consulted 21 May 2008.

Violence against Women

The new Penal Code has responded to most of the demands of the Moroccan women's NGOs. Article 418 stipulates that murder, injury, and beating are no longer excusable even in cases of adultery. Rape and sexual harassment are also considered serious offences. Article 475 of the Criminal Code states that "... When a nubile minor is kidnapped or seduced and marries her kidnapper, he can only be sued by persons qualified to demand that the marriage be annulled, and can only be condemned after the marriage has been annulled. If the marriage is not annulled, the kidnapper cannot be sued for kidnapping". It has also been reported that a rapist who marries his victim will not be prosecuted for the crime. Following the suicide of Amina al-Filali, 16, who was forced to marry a man who had raped her, this article was abrogated in 2014 and a rapist is now simply sent to jail.

Since the promulgation of the new family law, violence against women has been largely in the news and on top of the Moroccan social and political agendas, mainly due to the work of women's NGOs (Sadiqi 2009). Headed by a woman, the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity, has adopted a new strategy to combat violence against women, guaranteeing gender equality.² In 2007, a unit for women victims of violence was created in a few hospitals and police stations across the country.³

Nevertheless, domestic and sexual violence continue to be considered a private matter. It thereby does not represent a human rights violation or a crime that needs serious investigation and analysis. Violence against women continues to be surrounded by silence. As a consequence, violence against women is underestimated.

Domestic violence constitutes historical behaviour in accord with patriarchal systems. Family and domestic violence includes higher female mortality, wife battering, rape, and early marriage. These practices are commonly integrated into values and beliefs. Women accept domestic violence

² The Minister, Nouzha Skalli, who was speaking at a G8 conference on violence against women on 10 Sept 2009, stressed "the empowerment and emancipation of women" as a way of combating gender-based discrimination and all forms of violence against women (Maghreb Arab Press).

³ Rabéa Naciri, *La Violence basée sur le genre au Maroc*, Atelier "Femmes et hommes au Maroc: Analyse de la situation et de l'évolution des écarts dans une perspective genre", Royaume du Maroc, Premier Ministre, Département de la Prévision Economique et du Plan, Direction de la Statistique, UNDP, UNIFEM, ESCWA, 18-19 Mars 2003.

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in violation of their basic human rights due to ignorance, social prejudices, incorrect interpretations of religious texts, and low self esteem.

According to a survey carried out in 2000 by the “Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc”, (ADFM), domestic violence against women is still considered a private social phenomenon. Many respondents (45.3%) believe that it is justifiable for a husband to beat up his wife in case she commits adultery or disobeys her husband. The lack of cooperation of law enforcement officials, poverty, illiteracy, and the absence of facilities to protect and shelter these women lead the latter to avoid reporting violence. All these factors foster domestic violence which seldom gets reported due to fear or shame.⁴ According to the Ministry of Social Development, Family and Solidarity, there were as many as 28 000 cases of violence against women between 2006 and 2008. One main problem with the prosecution of domestic violence under the general assault provisions of the Penal Code is the issue of proving evidence. Besides a medical certificate, the testimony of a witness to the assault is required to prove and punish physical assault. This condition also prevents women from reporting cases of domestic violence, as domestic violence often does not involve the presence of eyewitnesses.

Law enforcement officials continue to have the old mindset that regards domestic violence against women as a private issue. In most cases, women are blamed for these violations. Under these circumstances, most women report domestic violence to NGOs while most of the physical violence committed by strangers is reported to the police and hospitals.⁵

On the other hand, according to article 496 of the Penal Code, anyone who hides a married woman from her husband is subject to imprisonment from 2 to 5 years. In this context, whoever assists a woman who has suffered domestic violence and left her home without her husband’s permission may fall under this law. This law obviously prevents NGOs from opening shelters for battered women who have fled their conjugal domiciles without the consent of their spouses.

In conformity with the new legal reforms, the police force is pressured to fulfil its duty in an adequate way, and other government units have been trained to curb violence. Even the courts have begun to take the problem more

⁴ Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc, Etudes auprès du grand public sur le renforcement juridique de la femme, March 2000, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵ Survey by ADMF/UNIFEM, Potentiel de changement de la position des femmes dans le cadre des relations familiales, 1999.

seriously. The State has taken on the responsibility of public prosecutor and will register complaints against the perpetrator in cases of violence.

Section 4 of the 2003 labour law specifies the recruitment and employment conditions regarding domestic workers. Despite these changes, the status of domestics is still not well defined, because the labour code applies only to salaried men and women.

According to ADFM, one of four wage earning women in urban areas are employed as maids who often are under the age of twelve. These young girls work under appalling conditions, are deprived of their basic rights and are over-exploited, as they work between 10 and 14 hours a day (cf. Schneider 1999). The government has recently taken measures to reduce the exploitation of maids; but the new law has not been enacted yet.

According to the 2001 survey conducted by the Moroccan League for the Protection of Children and UNICEF, 45 % of domestic workers under the age of 18 were between the ages of 10 and 12, and 26 percent were under the age of 10. In 2002, the legal age for work was raised from 12 to 15. Underprivileged parents oblige their daughters to work as maids so that they can benefit from their earned wages. These young girls are sent by their families from rural areas to work as maids in urban homes.⁶ Over 80% of the child maids are illiterate and over 75% are from rural areas.⁷

These domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. They are usually lonely, with hardly any opportunity to see their relatives or meet new people and consequently no one to turn to for assistance. These young girls are often beaten up by their employers. Many cases reached courts and media. In 2009, a judge and his wife battered their maid, Zineb, aged 12. The wife was sentenced to three years in jail, and her husband suspended from his job (see the Moroccan Arabic daily *AlMassae* of 30 Oct. 2009).

A recent government survey carried within the city of Casablanca has showcased that eight out of ten cases of violence against maids who come to the centres are perpetrated by their employers.⁸ Although there are no estimates as

⁶ US Dept of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2002.

⁷ Report on the mission of the Special Rapporteur on Children (28 February-3 March 2000), U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/2001/78/Add.1.

⁸ "Statistical survey of girl domestics under 18 years of age in the administrative district of Casablanca" (Ministry of Economic Forecasting and the Plan, Regional Delegation of

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to how many children are employed in domestic service due to the hidden nature of the work, United Nations agencies and most NGOs underline the prevalent abuse of young girls working as household maids, which is one of the major issues confronting Moroccan children. Since 2002, the Ministry of Women's Affairs worked with government departments and Moroccan women's NGOs to fight against violence in general, and violence against domestic workers in particular. While reforms to criminal legislation have allowed some protections for women against violence, violent practices against women in the public and private spheres continue to occur, including sexual harassment, and violence against domestic workers.

Moroccan women's NGOs have endeavoured to break the silence surrounding violence and other mistreatments undergone by women using radio and television campaigns on violence against women. Several Moroccan and international NGOs advocate for the prevention of violence against women and for the protection of women victims. Centres like *Solidarité Féminine, Initiatives, Bayti, Annajda, Chourouk, Annakhil*, and many others provide support services, shelter, legal aid, and information.

Conclusion

In light of the new reforms enacted since the implementation of the new family code, the Moroccan authorities are engaged in activities to try and encourage women to report more to police, but such measures may involve significant time to permeate to local levels. Whilst Moroccan Ministry of Interior has shown a reforming zeal in announcing its intention to appoint thousands of new female officers, it will take time to train them and integrate them.

Today, preventing violence against women and increasing women's access to justice is a primary concern of the Moroccan Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity. The Ministry supports gender responsive measures to prevent violence against women. Other ministries are introducing gender mainstreaming and gender-oriented budgets, whereby the gender approach is to be applied to any project or sector including financial matters. Thus, Morocco has made great efforts to advance the human rights of women: the new reforms of the personal status law, the penal, the labour, and the nationality codes have contributed to the promotion of women's rights and to their protection from discrimination and violence.

Greater Casablanca, with the support of UNICEF and UNFPA).

However, women are still far from fully enjoying human rights on an equal footing with men, as they continue to suffer from discriminatory laws and practices, due to many factors, including the predominance of patriarchy and the persistence of a conservative mindset.

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The Intervention of Civil Society in the Elimination of Mass Illiteracy

Souad Belhorma

Introduction

All over the world, education is conceived as the cornerstone of sustainable development, particularly for those who have been excluded from the formal system of education by whatever reason. The present chapter examines the gap in education in Morocco and highlights the role of civil society in promoting literacy of the mass population. Morocco's illiteracy represents a serious drawback to the social and economic development of individuals in the society. For instance, various national initiatives and literacy programs have been implemented. These strategies focus on the adult literacy as a vector of change, which provided an opportunity for the civil society organizations to cooperate with other bodies to strengthen the cooperation process. Drawing on the experience of a human rights association in the city of Fez, the elimination of mass illiteracy is shown to need more efforts in Morocco. More effective civil society work in this context necessitates efficient collaboration between the associations and NGOs, and more attention to research on the needs of beneficiaries as well as societal expectations.

Literacy is a concept usually associated with the positive aspects of human civilization as well as social and economic development. According to the national statistics, the overall literacy rate is 51.7% - with males registering 64.1% and females 39.4%.¹ On the contrary, illiteracy has always been related to precariousness. For many years, illiteracy referred to a situation where a person had no command of basic reading and writing skills in one language (the ability to write their names and/or to read and write a sentence). Nowadays, illiteracy is defined in opposition to the concept of functional literacy. Functional literacy refers to the possession of a set of core skills deemed necessary for an individual to operate in society. These skills include: oral expressions, writing, reading, numeracy and civic as well as religious education. Anyone who does not master all these functional skills is considered to be illiterate. Based on the definition of the Directorate to fight against illiteracy, to literate someone means *“to make them able to understand and use written information to function in everyday life, at home, at work and in the community in order to achieve their*

¹Denise, Youngblood Coleman. *Morocco: 2015 Country Review*. Houston : Country Watch, 2015, p : 133.

goals, knowledge and increase their potentials.”² The failure to achieve these goals explains why Morocco occupies the 126th position in the Human Development Index. In the same regard, the UNESCO ranks Morocco among the 10 countries in the world where illiteracy is a huge economic and social challenge that constitutes a serious obstacle to economic development and a major threat to social cohesion within society.

An illiterate person experiences a handicap because s/he is unable to contribute and/or engage in the development and evolution of society. This makes the fight against illiteracy a priority issue in Morocco. For instance, different national and international initiatives are implemented in order to improve the literacy level of the population. For example, the program of *Education for All* has as an objective to improve the level of literacy by 50% in 2015. In this regard, the organization of the United Nations devoted a decade for literacy in the period between 2003 and 2012. Another strategy is crowned by the launch of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) by the UNESCO in order to accompany 35 countries, among which is Morocco, for the sake of accelerating the pace of achievement in this field.³

The present paper examines the potential contribution of the civil society organizations to ensure the central role assigned to it in the illiteracy elimination. It seeks to find answers to the following questions: what role do civil society organizations take in fulfilling this objective? What are their terms of legitimacy and supervision? How do they interact with other public and private actors in addressing the issue? The first section addresses the historical challenge of illiteracy in the Moroccan society, the second section investigates the role of association in addressing their impact on the issue, and the third section examines the experience of the Center for People’s Rights (located in the city of Fez) as to its illiteracy trainings and their outcomes.

Historical challenges of Illiteracy in Morocco

The first national campaign of mass literacy was launched in 1956 under the leadership of King Mohammed V with the contribution of the Moroccan League for Basic Education and Illiteracy. This campaign reached 1 million citizens. This initiative was followed by a second national one in 1957 and reached 2

²Département de l’Alphabétisation et de l’éducation Non Formelle. «Le Référentiel de compétences en Alphabétisation.» Direction de lutte contre l’Analphabétisme. 2009, p: 10.

³ Mohammed, Abdellatif Kissami. Alphabétisation à travers LIFE et le suivi de CONFINTEA VI au Maghreb. *International Review of Education*, Vol. 57, Issue 1, 2011, p: 163.

million people.⁴The Pioneering initiatives covered the entire territory and created competition between the regions. In the aftermath of independence, Morocco adopted a policy of education as a right to be generalized to all portions of society in order to improve adult literacy. However, Morocco became aware of the negative impact of illiteracy only from 1960 to 1980. Despite this awareness, it was not till the late 1990s that the policy to address this issue was translated into concrete actions. As a result, various national and local committees were established in order to coordinate and implement actions of literacy. Since this period, a national campaign of literacy has been organized each year and targeted all the proportions of society.

In the aftermath of these actions, especially in 1997, a Directorate to Fight against Illiteracy was created within the Ministry of Employment and social Affairs. Four years later, in 2002, a state Secretariat in the Ministry of National Education and Youth in charge of literacy and non-formal education was created within the government. These initiatives reflect a political will to eradicate this social phenomenon through the intervention of the governmental sectors and the civil society. This strategy was adopted in 2004 in order to reiterate the objectives of the national charter of education and training adopted in 2000, which has as targets the following: (1) to reduce the illiteracy rate of 51.7% of the total population from 1998 to 1999 and to less than 20% by 2010, with a prospect of eradicating it in the horizon of 2015. (2) To decrease the rate of illiteracy of the active population to less than 10% in 2010.

Mapping the historical challenges related to the illiteracy rate in the Moroccan society pushed the government to make the fight against this problem one of its primordial priorities. Statistics provided by the UNESCO demonstrate that since 2002, the number of beneficiaries of literacy programs has risen every year. It increased from 286,000 in 2002/03 to 656,000 in 2008/09. The total number of beneficiaries over the last six years (2003 to 2009) was almost 4 million. This is double the number of beneficiaries over the previous 20 years (from 1982 to 2002).⁵

Pursuant to the evaluation of the past experiences, the state shifted the attention to focus on the rural areas, women, target people between the age of 10 and 45, expand literacy and functional illiteracy as well as promote the phase of a cultural follow up. These objectives were doubled by the contribution of

⁴Direction de la Lutte contre L'Analphabétisme. Alphabétisation des adultes au Maroc : bilan de la période 1997-2003- Rapport National. Secrétariat d'Etat du Ministre de l'éducation National et de la jeunesse chargé de l'alphabétisation et de l'éducation formelle. Rapport à présenter à la conférence internationale sur l'éducation des adultes, Bangkok- Taillande, septembre 2003, p : 2.

⁵<http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/?menu=12&programme=68>

associations and cooperatives, which seems essential and indispensable. At this level, one may argue that this sector is in fact the cornerstone of the public policy on literacy.

Civil society and illiteracy eradication: what roles for what ends?

The involvement of civil society in meeting the objectives of public policies on social issues is outstanding. In addressing the status of the civil society in Morocco, the OECD confirmed that: “*Morocco benefits from a vibrant civil society with approximately 90000 associations. Following the global pattern for civil society, most of these organizations work on local social issues such as education, health, sports and local economic development*”⁶ This sector usually includes organizations outside the public sector. The operating logic of these institutions differs from both market logic that characterizes the private enterprises and the administrative logic specific to the public sector.

On the occasion of the celebration of the International First Year of the fight against Illiteracy (8 September 1997), the late King Hassan II addressed the nation in his royal speech urging all the components of the society to participate in the fight against the phenomenon. This would be achieved by educating 200 000 citizens every year in order to reduce the illiteracy rate in the Moroccan society by the end of the century. For this reason, various objectives were addressed, among which are the following:

- To increase illiteracy campaigns in both the urban and rural spheres.
- To create a National Committee for Illiteracy encompassing different actors.
- To create a section of Illiteracy and Non- formal education within the department of Social Affairs. Its main mission is to plan, execute and follow up programs of illiteracy.
- To implement a system of surveillance and evaluation.
- To use ICT to deal with the statistics of the campaigns.

There is the necessity to develop the Moroccan human resources to face the development challenges, which required the promotion of adult literacy as it is mainly high within the female proportion.⁷ In this respect, various public actors coordinated to set programs to achieve clear objectives to reduce mass illiteracy. These include the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Youth and

⁶OECD. Open Government in Morocco, OECD Public Government Reviews, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2015, p: 115.

⁷ According to the 2015 country review, the female adult literacy rate in Morocco is 63%.

Sports, National Promotion, etc. Their cooperation is achieved through the following strategies:

- 1- The general campaign: it is an annual program conducted by the Ministry of Education to mobilize, on a voluntary basis, teachers for pedagogic and/or educational support. This means that there is an exploitation of the reception structures (schools) and the educational supervision (teachers, inspectors as well as directors) to be implemented under the supervision of the regional academy, the regional prosecutors affiliated to the academies. Every social strata benefit from this program in both urban and rural spheres with focus on the age category that ranges between 15 and 45 years. The program is funded from the state budget.
- 2- The other public operators: it deals with the actions carried out by other ministries' departments and public agencies operating in the social domain: (e.g. Handicraft, Agriculture, Fisheries, Habus and Islamic Affairs, Youth and Sports, among others). It has three main objectives. Firstly, it aims at strengthening the role of the public sector in the field of literacy and the introduction of policy objectives and evaluation. Secondly, it targets the packaging of certain services provided by some Ministries and public institutions in literacy domain. Thirdly, it seeks the mobilization of the reception institutions and human resources of all public stakeholders.

The new strategy to fight against illiteracy is conducted through contracting with civil society organizations and enterprises. On the one hand, the civil society program provides financial, educational and technical support for non-governmental organizations working in the field of literacy. It is part of the contractual partnership between the regional prosecutors of academies and associations. The government's purpose is to mobilize civil society organizations to create local, regional and national dynamics in the fight against mass illiteracy, to contribute to the professionalism of associations in terms of illiteracy monitoring, and help them to be organized in a network in order to engage in literacy activities and programs for social and economic development.

Associations operating in the field of literacy achievement are a heterogeneous statistical category. They differ according to the geographical extent of their intervention whether on the local, regional or national level. They are distinguished according to their degree of specialization. Each association that signs the partnership with the public authority receives financial and logistic support from the government to initiate their activities. The program targets adults whose age is more than 15 years and who were not able to register in other programs, especially rural women. This program aims to strengthen the efforts of civil society organizations to eradicate illiteracy and engage them to

achieve the voluntary goals within the framework of a proximity approach. This program is funded from the state budget and the contribution of associations.

As key players in the literacy achievement, civil society organizations also play a major role in contacting beneficiaries. Concentrating on the needs of the illiterate has been the major focus in order to maximize literacy. For instance, consultation, which must be ensured at the local level by the regional academies of education and training is still severely limited, particularly because of inadequate budgetary resources. On the ground, these NGOs provide the link between the local and the central. Their proximity with the beneficiaries allows them to highlight their expectations and constraints. The consultation with the beneficiaries depends largely- if not only- on the involvement of the associative network. This means that the absence of NGOs in some regions, or lack of resources jeopardizes national actions to fight against illiteracy.

On the other hand, faced with the alarming situation of the spread of illiteracy among workers, which mostly affects all categories of the population, especially in some productive sectors such as agriculture, textiles, construction, craft, industry... where illiteracy rates vary between 20% and 60%⁸ many companies have launched projects of literacy for their employees. It is motivated by the belief that the upgrading of human resources would result in different impacts on both the company and the staff. The next point examines the experience of the Centre for the rights of people in the city of Fez and its implementation of legal illiteracy programs in various cities in Morocco.

Legal Literacy Programs

The high illiteracy rate in Morocco, especially among the female population is considered a major predicament in the process of development in the country. One aspect of the willingness of Morocco to change this situation is through changing its tactics. For instance, the traditional literacy practices are being changed to make them more adaptable to the labor market and more congruent with human rights. In the last decade, the department for the Prevention of Illiteracy launched an initiative to implement literacy activities in partnership with civil society organizations. The main target of this kind of initiatives is to create a diversity of programs aiming at the implementation of the intervention approach, the educational aids, the achievement of sustainable learning outcomes and the incorporation of literacy into the development process as well as the integration of beneficiaries into the socio-economic tissue. To reach these

⁸Direction de la Lutte contre l'analphabétisme. *Alphabétisation en milieu de travail, un enjeu pour le développement de l'entreprise et de ses salariés. Synthèse des actes de séminaire du 2 Mars 2012, p : 3.*

objectives, different partnerships with local actors, especially associations and NGOs are signed in order to meet the needs expressed by the target group.

As part of the National literacy program, the Centre for the Rights of People, which is an association promoting human rights, implemented various programs in the field of adult illiteracy. The projects deal particularly with the legal illiteracy to create a model that would make it possible to forge a bridge between literacy and the legal awareness of individuals, especially women to consolidate the literacy skills acquired and make them aware about their rights in the various national laws and international conventions. Legal literacy is an educational activity designed to enable adult beneficiaries to gain the necessary skills to strengthen the values and principles of human rights. This definition in general corresponds to the broad approach of the adult education as it is provided to those who have completed the first phase of schooling, which they began in their childhood, or those who have never had the opportunity to go through this first phase. In this regard, adult literacy is a means to make changes in the behaviors of adults, whether on the professional, social or personal levels. Among the principles underlying the adult literacy are the followings: (1) comprehensiveness of the process of adult education, (2) achievement of responsible participation in society, (3) the conduct of the activity outside the formal framework of education, (4) an activity with beneficial outcomes. One may deduce from the above mentioned ideas that the adult literacy is outstanding for all individuals. It is a continuing activity, which is not limited by a certain level or a particular area and that the implementation of its joint programs is the responsibility of all components of society.

Training

The preparation and running of the training sessions for the beneficiaries are a key stage of the project. Legal literacy reinforcement sessions are held four times a week, with each session lasting two hours. This comprised a total of 8 hours per week over a period of 9 months in one year. The average learner group size is 25 participants. The association tried to implement the objectives of the literacy programs in the following frameworks: (1) as part of the ALIF project in Casablanca and Sidi Sliman in 2006-2007, (2) completion of programs for literacy and non-formal education in partnership with the Ministry of National Education in Settat, Kelaat Segharna, Haouz, Sid iKacem and Fez. The projects in the city of Fez were completed in the academic years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 in various schools, where the success rate of the programs reached 90% as reported by the president of the association.

The initial sessions focused on exercises intended to refresh and strengthen the reading, writing and speaking skills as they represent the initial literacy training. The aim was to maintain the women's status, and these

sessions will serve as a transitional phase leading to the post-literacy training sessions.

The adult literacy performed in the framework of the partnership with associations uses the skills of tutors. Many of them are volunteers or are taken on as hourly paid part time facilitators. When the projects were accepted to be funded, many individuals were called to take part in the teaching process. They were not experienced in teaching adults, but eager to help the marginalized proportions of society. Many were women and young men looking for part time job opportunities to carry out either as extra job or as an assisting source of income. Contrasting with other areas of teaching in the public sector, the tutors did not benefit from trainings. This means that their lack of professionalism has always been problematic for the process of the literacy sessions and the sustainability of the process.

A mechanism for evaluation of the training sessions was put in place. Initially, evaluation activities took place at the end of the sessions to gauge how well the skills had been acquired and to facilitate the interventions necessary to rectify the failings. This task was performed by the facilitators as part of their training duties. The other practical stage of the monitoring and evaluation process involved field visits to the areas of intervention of the program. These field visits enabled the various actors to assess the level of development of the activities, identify weaknesses and discuss ways of remedying them. With a view to documenting the activities, periodic reports were drawn up by the association for the other actors.

Outcomes

Between 2010 and 2014 the project made it possible to reinforce the legal literacy of more than 480 beneficiaries among whom 449 are women in the city of Fez. Another initiative is the completion of a program of the functional literacy for the benefit of 1480 artisans in 2010-2011 in different cities. The program made it possible for 500 individuals in the city of Fez and 400 were women, in Tangier 300 beneficiaries and half of the number is for women, in Tetouan 100 individuals benefited from the project and 80 others benefited in the city of Sefrou and in Casablanca 500 beneficiaries among whom are 250 women. Moreover, the program targeted 1100 beneficiaries in the traditional industry and agriculture sectors in the academic year 2012-2013.

The training for facilitators and beneficiaries covered themes that linked learner needs with the opportunities available in the catchment areas. Association staff was involved in the whole consultation process relating to the program which included the selection of female beneficiaries, the identification and recruitment of facilitators, the development of training modules. The main

findings arising from the implementation of the program for literacy over the status of individuals, especially women are as follows:

Strengths

- Beneficiaries become able to choose the topic, talk about their concerns and thus become liberated and express themselves;
- Empowerment of communication mechanisms and dismantling of isolation and marginalization;
- Changing attitudes and behaviors and representations of educated beneficiaries concerning multiple issues;
- Independence and openness to learning and its sustainability;
- Promotion of values and respect for difference and cultural diversity;
- A change in the behavior of some women, who started to understand the important role of education in the development of their daughters' lives. They become able to send their out-of-school daughters back to school; others provided their children with educational support;
- Beneficiaries were able to gain self-confidence, self-esteem and emancipation as a form to control their lives and challenge the social and cultural injustices within society.

Weaknesses

- Traditional stereotypes regarding women's and girls' education.
- Patriarchal society impeding women's and girls' mobility and access to public resources.
- Low level of male involvement in the program.
- The non-professionalism of the trainers, the deficiency in their specialist qualifications, and the lack of understanding the teaching methods, training and managing for adult learning.
- Trainers' lack of knowledge about the way skills are shaped by the social and cultural contexts and objectives within which reading, writing, speaking are used.
- The availability of gender based stereotypical messages and images in the textbooks emphasizing the gender inequality in society.
- The literacy practices still lack some change as far as the use of modern tools and technologies. This means that the traditional literacy course should shift from the print towards doing reading and writing in digital form.
- The lack of evaluation and follow-up of the level of the beneficiaries, especially those who do not want to continue the post-literacy programs.

Conclusion

One may conclude that mass illiteracy is and will continue to be a structural problem that constitutes a heavy factor that could jeopardize the success of any strategy or structural policy for economic and social development. Moreover, illiteracy in Morocco is far from being a marginal phenomenon and literacy policy and programs should be conducted with the resources to match the challenge. For this reason, the participation of the civil society organizations is part of the mobilization of resources. However, this mobilization should not be an end in itself. Ensuring that the associative tissue is well qualified is an outstanding factor in the success of mass illiteracy eradication. For the efficiency of this objective, the mobilization of NGOs should be done gradually by establishing qualification and certification of associations involved.

As an observer about the literacy program and their implementation by associations, I would recommend that the learning strategy for adult literacy would take into consideration the socio-cultural relationships which frame the illiteracies' programs. The programs for literacy are generally determined by the government and other public actors. Their strategies may not be sufficient to develop and sustain the literacy practice. This means that there is an urgent need for supporting a lifelong learning system which is driven by people's needs and which is open to criticism. Similarly important, associations have to consider their funds in order to support this system in different ways. First, they may increase the learning structures by enlarging the spaces available for beneficiaries in order to secure a suitable environment to exchange ideas and experiences. Second, they may create access points for literacy such as libraries and advice centers where individuals can have the possibility to access information outside the training sessions. Third, support local media in order to spread the word, circulate news and debate issues relative to the phenomenon. Fourth, enlarge opportunities to learn both content and practical skills. Finally, more effective civil society work in this context necessitates efficient collaboration between the associations and NGOs, target research and attention to the needs of beneficiaries as well as societal expectations.

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Innovations in Education, Training, and Communication: A Few Suggestions

Colette Apelian

Introduction

Before I begin, I would like to thank Fatima Sadiqi for her invitation to present. I would also like to thank the Centre ISIS pour Femmes et Development, the Institute für Auslandsbeziehungen, and The International Institute for Languages and Cultures (INLAC) for hosting and supporting the event. I thank the persons in the audience in advance for their comments.

My presentation is based upon my education and background in visual cultures, art and architectural history, and distance education. It is also based upon my first-hand observations of Moroccan society and sources in the bibliography. My intent is to encourage the development of distance education in Morocco. I believe the time is ripe to expand distance training programs as Morocco increases national access to electricity, including from solar sources; and Internet, thanks to Meditel, INWI, Maroc Telecom, and Internet cafés. I believe the time is opportune due to the accelerated consumption of laptops, smart phones, tablets, and applications in at least the urban areas (2013 Oxford Business Group Report, Guessous 2013, McKanders 2014, and personal observation).

The challenges facing Morocco to democratize access to the Internet, telephone services, electricity, digital knowledge, and development opportunities, especially in rural and popular areas and quarters, might be addressed in conjunction with future educational programs. One might even encourage the growth of the other, especially with appropriately applied grants and microloans.

Suggestions in this presentation are made against the backdrop of several intertwined circumstances in contemporary Morocco besides projected advances in electronic and Internet use. They include (1) reforms in the Moroccan educational system; (2) the centralization and privatization of the

Moroccan arts and museum worlds; (3) plans to improve the literacy rates, status quo, and rights of females, among other marginalized groups; (4) programs to develop the tourist and agricultural sectors of the Moroccan economy; (5) relatively high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth; and (6) grants in aid and assistance organized and administered by the Moroccan government, the United Nations, European Union, foreign governments, and nongovernmental organizations, among others. The main focus of my presentation is to outline modes and topics of education in fine and graphic arts, including photography; art and architectural history; arts administration; and art and architectural preservation.

However, suggestions might be applied to situations created by the above circumstances and, thus, be useful in a wide variety of educational and training contexts created now or in the future. I envision the growth of courses in the humanities, technology, media and communications, entrepreneurship, languages, effective use of microloans, tourism, hospitality, agricultural studies, and teacher training, for example, offered by accredited Moroccan institutions of higher education alone or in partnership with foreign.

My presentation stems from a few beliefs. They include the value of a humanities, social science, and liberal arts education no matter one's field of study and occupation, though especially for marketing and economics majors. They include the belief that by educating women and youth, a nation can improve its economy, security, and stability even if it is not post-conflict described in Benard 2008.

I am additionally convinced that distance education and digital communication in their many forms can bring into the Moroccan economy at-risk groups identified in a recent United Nations report, including the urban unemployed and the seeing, hearing, and mobility challenged. Distance education can be used to improve the financial independence of women in particular and, ideally, their contribution to municipal and national coffers. Distance education might be employed to train persons to educate and work with rural women and youth to create sustainable development programs. To conclude, eLearning might be useful in a wide range of educational, civic, and business contexts facing Morocco today.

What is Distance Education? What can be Distance Education? A Few Ideas

It is commonly believed that distance education began during the nineteenth century when correspondence courses became popular in the United States. Classes were offered by postal mail, radio, and television.

Each type of delivery remains relevant today, especially in the countryside and poorer neighborhoods in which there may not be Internet. A dedicated radio or television program can be an effective mode of distance education in outlying or marginalized communities, particularly for ladies with few or unsafe transportation options and caregiving responsibilities.

Today, distance education is usually eLearning and eTraining facilitated by the Internet, data plans, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Classes are offered through learning management platforms (LMS). They might also take advantage of free or low cost cell phone and tablet applications. Most institutions employ a technology team. In Morocco, experts might be hired through one of its communication and call centers. I recommend that choices of how to design an online program be made according to budget and the comfort level of students and faculty. I also recommend technologically easy and standardized methods of information delivery and assessments, for how complicated a program is and how difficult it is to update can often equate to time consuming distractions for professors and students.

One might tailor courses to suit other circumstances. For example, I recommend classes be designed around climate issues that cause power or Internet outages. Finals could be given through oral examinations by cell phone or landline. Locations for eLearning can be individual homes or communal centers, like cafés, cultural centers, museums, and mosques. Transmission of knowledge about museum administration, preservation, and curatorial practices are best done on site, in my opinion. One could arrange courses from an expert at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles or the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, for example, for students meeting at the Mohammed VI Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art in Rabat, the MMVI. Distance education and/or eLearning might be arranged as a communication system through which information flows from teacher to student and visa versa to facilitate adjustments of course content and delivery. Periodic anonymous evaluation is necessary to ensure that the courses benefits students, professors, and institutions.

In sum, once one knows the context of a given community of students and goals of an institution, one can then begin problem solving to meet needs and concerns in a scholarly rigorous manner determined by an accrediting body, the Moroccan government, sponsors, and donors.

Contemporary Reforms and Challenges in the Moroccan Educational System

Morocco has recently reinvigorated plans to reform and standardize education. Goals include improving literacy, decreasing dropout rates, and preparing students for the national and global job markets. Improving each may ultimately discourage immigration, unemployment, and other destabilizing forces mentioned in Shaheed 2012. It may also satisfy donor demands. The reforms and standardizations, some of which are more controversial than others (Llorent-Bedmar 2015), open spaces in which distance education might be implemented, especially in the arts and humanities and especially in situations in which students are offered less funding. Distance education could be offered directly to students or it could be a means to train on site instructors.

Contemporary reforms of the educational system and society emanate from the Moroccan government. They are supported in part by foreign donors, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Reforms target both countryside and urban students of primary to higher education status. The history is chronicled in part in the July 2014 *Education for All 2015 National Review* and a June 2012 *Challenge* series of articles, among other sources in the bibliography. Each provides food for thought.

Reforms of primary and higher education relevant today were passed in 2000. They include a mid- 2000 law reorganizing instruction, Law 01-00, which centralized universities. Subsequent legislation accelerated the creation of vocational or professional schools (LOI N° 13-00 *Portant Statut de la Formation Professionnelle privée*) and made primary education compulsory, particularly for countryside youth (Law 04-00 *relatif à l'obligation de l'enseignement fondamental*).

Despite generations of funding to eradicate illiteracy, it remains a problem in the countryside and among rural immigrants to the cities, particularly women and youth (Ajbilou & Boudarbat 2007 cited in McKanders 2014 and Shaheed 2012:14-5, among other sources). Recently, the Moroccan government has proposed students' attending school as part of the Rural Health Plan (RHP). Recently, the Ministry of Education has announced plans to implement national pedagogical standards and systems of evaluation and accreditation to prepare higher education students for the job market. Especially targeted are future engineers, doctors, and professionals in the energy, tourism, transportation, logistics, environmental, communications, and linguistics industries and occupations. In fall 2015, Omar Azziman, President of the Moroccan Higher Council of Education, Training, and Scientific Research

announced 2015-30 would be a period of reforms and renewal of the Moroccan school system, affirming the Moroccan government's interest in substantial changes that might bring it and its citizens more fully into the global economy.

Reforms extend to vocational training. In 2009, the Moroccan government created the National Pact for Industrial Emergence in which students were to be trained for jobs deemed significant to the future economy of Morocco. They include occupations envisioned to be created in the automobile, aeronautic, electronic, offshore, textile/leather and food sectors. The Moroccan government plans to open at least two hundred and twenty thousand global jobs before 2015 and to restructure the existing training systems for each sector. Institutes were established in Casablanca, Tangier, and Kenitra. Since 2000, similar plans were put into place to train for the hospitality industry (Azur Plan), to instruct farmers' children (Green Morocco), new artisans (Vision for Handicraft), and audio-vision and film (Higher Institute for Audio-Visual Training and Film). Centers in Oujda, Ouarzazate, and Tangier were created to support training in logistics, the Rawaj plan, digital Morocco, the Halieutis Plan, and Solar Energy. Since 2012, the Moroccan government has discussed vocational training for the visually impaired, mentally handicapped, and former prisoners.



Colette Apelian

Image of protesting teacher trainees and medical profession students. Students protested the decrease in aid funding, among other changes instituted by decrees 2-15-588 and 2-15-599 (Rabat, December 17, 2015) (photographer C. Apelian)

Arts and humanities areas of study have yet to be fully addressed in the reforms since 01-00. The Ministry of Culture has taken charge of augmenting and supporting professionals in the theater, musical, and visual arts by continuing a residency programs in Paris, France and creating a process through which artists receive official identification cards. The Ministry of Culture has also instituted a grant program *L'Appel à projets culturels, Arts Plastiques*. However, there is little official mention of preparing youth for museum administration, preservation, and arts administration occupations, despite the creation of the National Foundation of Museums (Fondation Nationale des Musées) (FNM) for the purposes of improving arts management and safekeeping and the opening of new institutions and museums, such as the King Mohammed VI Museum for Modern and Contemporary Arts in Rabat. FNM director Mehdi Qotbi addressed the lacunae in a 2015 statement broadcast on Hit Radio. Qotbi called for the creation of arts administration educational programs at the Rabat University of Mohammed V. To my knowledge, there are few if any Moroccan institutions of higher education that teach visual cultures, art and architectural histories, and theories and methodologies, despite their relevance to tourism, business, and marketing, among other professions.

Concurrent with the reforms in education is a jump in demand. There has been a nearly double jump in numbers of enrolled students, according to data from the Moroccan Ministry of Education cited in the *Review*. The jump in numbers in a short amount of time stresses the educational infrastructure. It increases the demand for professors' time. It creates a need for new buildings, roads, electricity, administrators, and custodians. New buildings include community-based educational centers with satellite schools in rural areas to be organized by the World Bank financed National Initiative for Human Development (l'Initiative Nationale du Développement Humain) (INDH). There is a need for new regional teacher training centers. Funding has also been decreased, resulting in future medical professionals and teacher trainees demonstrating against Measures 2-15-588 and 2-15-589.

Distance education might offer solutions. Especially at institutions with libraries and computers, it might be a means through which students take certificate courses in arts administration, museum studies, and art and architectural history in programs organized between Moroccan and non Moroccan institutions of higher education, for example. Other courses in entrepreneurship or business, tourism, and hospitality could help jumpstart careers. Working from home using a smartphone or a computer at a local Internet café might be a means through which urban based students, at least, could complete their degrees with less funding and without the hardship of moving to a comparatively more expensive city with a university, such as Rabat or Marrakesh. Online, television, or radio based courses might also be offered to retrain and teach language, job hunting, and business organization skills

throughout Morocco during the last year of instruction or after graduation. In its various formats, distance education might be organized for vocational training, especially for the unemployed, including some Unemployed Graduates (*Diplômés chômeurs*), who may wish to move into the global jobs.

The Unemployed Graduates protest for civil service jobs in Rabat, a subject I have documented in photographs, reports, and a conference paper since 2012. They are joined by graduates with physical challenges, such as seeing impairment. These graduates usually want private sector positions, which require sensitivity training for prospective employers.

The training could be offered online and for tax incentives. As a radio or recorded video instruction, distance education might offer a solution in the countryside as a step towards improving literacy, for example. Assessments could be organized through local community centers where local teachers could administer tests to enrolled students seeking certificates or diplomas.

Centralization and Privatization in the Moroccan Arts and Museum Worlds

At the end of 2011, the Ministry of Culture ceded control of many national museums to the FNM based in Rabat. The FNM is directed by the Moroccan born and French educated artist Qotbi. It is in charge of the administration of the museums, their inventories, and the safeguarding of historic sites and objects throughout Morocco. In the press documentation for the inaugural MMVI exposition at the end of 2014, *1914-2014, One Hundred Years of Creation (1914-2014 Cent ans de création)*, the FNM states its mission is to democratize culture and to preserve and value it by, in part, revolutionizing arts management in Morocco and encouraging Moroccans to visit and value museums.

Another goal is to create traveling expositions outside Morocco. The FNM played a key role in organizing the MMVI and its collections, in addition to the *Contemporary Morocco (Maroc Contemporain)* exposition and cultural program at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, France during 2014-15.

The MMVI is at least the second major modern and contemporary museum opening over the past few years in Morocco. Another is the Centre d'Art Moderne in Tétouan in a repurposed and revitalized colonial era train station celebrated for its Saint Pancras-like decorative cladding in Spanish colonial style.

Marrakesh is another active center for modern and contemporary art, architecture, and design. Besides hosting cinema festivals and the biennale, Marrakesh will soon have another institution; in 2014, `Alami Lazraq of Fondation Alliances announced the Al Maaden Museum of Contemporary African Art (MACAAL) will open in 2017. It joins the Palmerie Museum and Gardens (Musée de la Palmeraie de l'art contemporain et nature), the Tiskiwin (Maison Tiskiwin) of Moroccan and Sub-Saharan African artwork, in addition to the École supérieure des arts visuels (ÉSAV), a school for cinema and graphic design. Marrakesh also has the Museum of Photography and Maison de la Photographie (1870-1950).

There is a global upsurge of interest in Moroccan modern and contemporary art. The interest is testified to by the record prices at auctions, such as the 2014 Artcurial event in which artwork by A. Louardiri sold for 73,700 Euros, J. Gharbaoui for 41,500, and H. El Glaoui for 52,600.

Despite the new art spaces, shows, and sales, there are few if any higher education programs in Morocco that teach art and architectural history, museums studies, museum and gallery administration, museum studies, and art preservation. There are also few university or vocational school programs that teach the relationship between graphic art and business, such as marketing and advertising. Design and music professions also lack persons who could help fill the administrative infrastructure Morocco needs.

Many of the currently unemployed can fill job openings in these areas with minimal retraining. Retraining could be offered more cost effectively for institutions and students if it is created online and for certificates or diplomas.

Courses could be contracted from institutions and schools based abroad that already have existing programs or through universities like the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Visuels (ESAV) in Marrakesh, the University of Mohammed V in Rabat, the Ecoles des Beaux-Arts in Casablanca and Tétouan, and Al-Akhawayn in Ifrane. Ideally, Moroccan universities could offer master's degrees in the above areas.

The Rights of Females and Other Marginalized Groups

The Moroccan government seeks to project the image that it takes a progressive stance for women's rights. According to Shaheed 2012, Morocco has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Moroccan government supports the formation and social roles of female spiritual leaders, the *mourchidate*, and the visibility of women in the media. Also more visible are women in the security forces, particularly in

Rabat, and on a television program about border crossing in Tangier. A 2015 movie *Khnifist R'Mad* by Anaa Akroud shown at the downtown Rabat cinema Seventh Art also aimed to do what Shaheed recommended and in *darija*, the Moroccan Arabic dialect: depict strong Moroccan women albeit in an imagined seventeenth century fantasy. When I attended the show one Sunday evening, the theater was packed with families.



Protestors during the March 8, 2015 Women's Day March in downtown Rabat, Morocco (photographer C. Apelian)

There are still some hurdles to overcome. Women's rights in Morocco received fresh attention after the passing of the 2004 Family Law (*Moudawwana*) and after the 2014 suicide of a young lady forced to marry her aggressor under the so-called Rapist law, Article 475. Since then, the law has been changed. There is renewed media attention, particularly on 2M and, with the assistance of the Superior Council on Audiovisual Communication, interest in enforcing Article 19 in the 2011 Constitution and preventing street and workplace harassment and molestation.

On March 8, 2014, Women's Day, a large street protest in downtown Rabat accentuated the demands of women and their dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane's statements against women and equality (Allilou 2014). At least one lady with whom I spoke at the event said she was there to

“teach” Benkirane that he was incorrect about women’s roles in society. Ladies and men of all ages carried placards decrying the mistreatment of domestic workers, violence against and harassment of women, lack of enforcing Article 19 of the 2011 Constitution, child brides, and for abortion rights, among other topics. Artists such as Nadia Bensallam and Randa Maroufi created artwork that brought attention to harassment of women for the *Contemporary Morocco* exposition and the 2014 Marrakesh Biennale.

The 26 July to 1 August, 2015 edition of *Jeune Afrique* was dedicated to what it called the two faces of the Kingdom, and, thus the culture war or conflict between individual liberty, symbolized by an unveiled lady with long flowing hair, and conservative sentiments, depicted as a fully veiled lady. The cover image suggests a battle between moderate and conservative Muslims is played out on the female women. An article inside depicted women carrying a miniskirt as they protested against the restriction of women’s freedom in late June 2015 Casablanca, an event that called to mind the 2012 attack in Rabat of a lady wearing a short skirt. Her attackers were supposedly religiously conservative men. There was also a news report of women in Agadir arrested for wearing inappropriate clothing, though, as one of their defenders pointed out, Morocco has no dress code, according to a 2015 *Morocco World News* article. In short, while the laws are improving to protect women and media attention of female mistreatment has increased, at least in urban settings, spreading word about women’s legal and human rights remains an unfinished project.

Perhaps the most challenging task for the Moroccan government is expressing the new laws to women in or from the countryside, especially if they do not read Arabic and French. Shaheed 2012 remarks that Amazigh ladies prefer to listen to the radio and, therefore, one could offer courses for them or information bulletins in this way. She also notes that the *mourchidate* are well poised and in trusted positions to convey information and/or act as informal or formal instructors. They might also be trained digitally through the use of smartphones. They could receive instruction in distance education formats that allow them to remain in their community while updating their skills and information. Men might also be sensitized in this way. The arts can also play a role, as Shaheed notes in her report, in not just conveying information but also dispelling cultural stereotypes. The arts might be part of the distance education curricula.

Finally, while the conference theme concerns females in Morocco, one might also mention other minority groups in Shaheed’s report and the 2011 Constitution that might benefit from distance education directly or the sensitizing programs it could offer in its various formats. Visual cultures and

cultural studies courses, among others in humanities and liberal arts curricula, teach against pejorative stereotypes of minorities by teaching tolerance.

Why the Humanities and Liberal Arts Matter

Laws like 01-00 that reformed the Moroccan education system tend to focus upon the sciences, mathematics, and medicine (Arne Hoel 2012). The comparative lack of focus on the humanities and liberal arts suggests they are less valued.

Liberal arts and humanities courses, including visual and cultural studies, hone students' abilities in critical and independent reasoning and problem solving. They help students improve their abilities to create and articulate arguments in text and verbally. Each is a necessary life skill. Each offers the tools science and technology professionals need to communicate research and apply for grants. The ability to think creatively and the necessity of contextual research are essential for innovators in science, medicine, and law. The liberal arts teach one that context(s) matter and that analysis of context is a tool one can use for independent reasoning and thinking. The liberal arts also teach tolerance of others and, as the name suggests, our humanity, or rather, how we are all fundamentally the same. They assist students to learn about and make sense of our contemporary lives and conditions, including the relationships between images, objects, belief systems, and economic globalization.

Being able to visually analyze how images and representations convey meaning is an essential life tool, especially in a world cluttered with advertising. Understanding the mechanics of advertising means one can reproduce it as necessary for one's own projects. Computer applications and programs also make use of images as icons and symbols. Visual and cultural studies like art and architectural history teach visual literacy.

Visual Literacy, Oral Cultures, and Notions of Illiteracy

Communication in some corners of Morocco can build upon existing visual and oral cultures. Visual culture can loosely be defined as images that are visible in a given society, from magazine covers and billboards one might encounter on the street to television shows one might watch at night. Visual cultures can have as their origin fine arts, advertising, or even product packaging. They also include what can be described as popular arts in Morocco, from carpets and textiles and the motifs within them, to woodwork and architectural decoration and the distinctive facial tattoos. Each has a select set of

symbols that convey meaning (Barbatti 2008 and Jereb 1995, among others). Some motifs are even repeated in truck decoration.

How one reads an image depends on the individual viewer or social group or community and his, her, or their socialization, by which one could mean one's education and life experiences. A study of how one reads the world around us is a study of visual literacy, or, in other words, how images signify and to whom. It can also be a study of shared cultural meanings or understandings (Barthes 1978 and Seppänen 2006).



Image above is of a cushion purchased in the old city (madina) of Fez (photographer C. Apelian)

The observations above suggest fresh ways of thinking about illiteracy and its stigma. They also suggest reasons why studying visual and oral cultures are especially important in Morocco. Persons who cannot read a book in French, Arabic, and Amazigh can still read images. This belief has been explored in the modern Moroccan artwork of Jilali Gharbaoui, Farid Belkahia, Malika Agueznay, and M. Zouzaf, among others. Also, in order to make a carpet or textile with designs, one must be able to count and divide threads, thus have math skills. Recognizing the language and math of the arts suggest ways in which one can innovatively bridge gaps between persons who have

conventional education and those who do not in addition to means through which information and education can be communicated.

Visual Culture Curricula

The list below includes subjects that a visual arts curricula might have to best address the Vision 2020 cultural tourism goals, the marketability of Moroccan modern and contemporary art, and Morocco's sales of its agricultural products discussed in the Maroc Vert plan, among other development programs requiring packaging and marketing currently envisioned by l'Agence pour la promotion et le Développement du Nord, l'Agence du Sud, and l'Agence de l'Oriental. The course subjects below could also assist architecture and design students in designing and presenting their material in the global marketplace and cultivate a class of future gallery and cultural institute owners and administrators. Some classes might be offered in higher education or vocational school settings.

- The history of modern and contemporary Moroccan art within a global context of art history
- The history of modern and contemporary Moroccan architecture within a global context of architectural history
- The so-called Western and nonWestern canons of art and architectural histories
- The business of being a fine and graphic artist and fashion designer, from how to market oneself to grant writing
- Museum and gallery studies courses, such as the theory behind organizing expositions and in the fundamentals of arts administration, preservation, installation, and handling necessary to organize a museum, gallery, or nonprofit arts space within insurance and donor constraints
- The significance of art history and visual cultures to designing profitable packaging for products
- Architectural preservation
- Art, architectural, visual cultural studies theories, such as those addressing the difference between history and representations of history in text and image and the cultural weight of photographs, especially images of violent or unexpected subjects

- Graphic arts, packaging, and marketing
- Area studies and cultural studies
- Creative ways of envisioning cross-cultural heritage, from the built environment, intangible heritage, medical and beauty materials, and the electrical infrastructure, all of which might appeal to a broad audience
- The importance of contextual analysis and how Moroccan modern and contemporary art can be interpreted differently if one places it within the political and social events of its day in Morocco and globally
- Definitions of popular culture, vernacular architecture, and the histories of music, fashion, and design

These are but a few suggestions. Many of the above can be offered through distance education formats within Morocco and outside its borders. Offering accredited courses on modern and contemporary Moroccan art and architecture to nonMoroccan students could have the added benefit of increasing the market value of the artwork and creating publicity for Moroccan exports, in general, not to mention increasing the funding for distance education programs.

The Benefits of Distance Education as eLearning

Besides being cost efficient and helping students hone their technological proficiency at a time when increasingly more jobs require the skill, online classes can benefit students, professors, and institutions.

- They help students who may not normally obtain a degree or remain in school complete schooling. Students can also travel virtually around visa, cost, and other difficulties to obtain their education. Like their counterparts who travel for their translational education (TNE) experience, students who take online classes can gain transferable credits and practice language skills without the disruption and expense of dislocation. Distance education allows students who may not normally have the opportunity to obtain education to do so and to remain in school.

- Online courses allow persons with mobility, hearing, sight in some cases, and other physical challenges to continue their education from comfortable locales and using the Internet at their own pace and in ways that address their needs. Written lectures are the most desirable mode of delivery; students, especially those with hearing and comprehension difficulties, do not have to worry about taking written notes from oral presentations. Also, written lectures are easier to update with new information including in my case, information from conferences, primary research, archives, and museum and gallery exhibitions.
- Online classes help students obtain an education even if they are not comfortable leaving a home or neighborhood for whatever personal reason or circumstance.
- eLearning can assist students with families by allowing them to continue their education around busy schedules, and, additionally demonstrate to their children the value of education and obtaining a degree.
- Distance Education benefits students who work full time or more than forty hours a week, especially those who must travel for a living and/or are serving in the security forces.
- If the Internet is accessible, then online courses allow students living in remote areas to continue their education. Students can also continue coursework when campus must close due to inclement weather or for other reasons that make it difficult to physically go to a place for instruction.
- Online education benefits students who are in job transition and require another degree or certificate to improve job prospects or job training as they continue to focus upon finding work or working full time in another position.
- Online education creates bridges between communities and cultures. Persons of several generations, ethnicities, linguistic abilities, and educational to occupational backgrounds can be in a class discussion together and share a discussion around a study question. Online education, particularly discussion modules that occur in asynchronous time, can, therefore, promote sensitivity and tolerance,

especially if students are learning about difficult cultures with persons of various opinions, races, religions, and linguistic capabilities.

- Online education democratizes education. Though it remains limited to persons who can afford the Internet and computers, the costs and accessibility can be improved with grants or microloans applied in appropriate directions.

- eLearning can help students who do not typically benefit from large survey courses and little interaction with professors to connect directly with them via email, texting, or other types of applications. I maintain a dedicated email address for students who can typically receive a response within less than twenty four hours, if not sooner.

- As solar power and the Internet become more widespread globally, online education may help students in remote areas of the country remain where they are located. There is little need to establish a household in an expensive city like Rabat and Casablanca.

- Religiously conservative men and ladies do not need to be part of a mixed classroom.

- Unemployed persons might be quickly certified to start a new career as necessary for Morocco's new economic directions and funding opportunities.

How might distance education classes benefit institutions of higher education and instructors?

- Online courses can be relatively cost efficient and environmentally friendly, especially if they are designed around the existing technology of many Moroccans: cell phones, such as Samsung and Nokia. Funding typically spent on building and maintenance can be dedicated to technological support. There is little need for photocopying exams and information sheets.

- Online courses allow instructors the ability to improve their knowledge base they bring to the classroom. Instructors can spend more time in the field researching, presenting at conferences, and publishing. The information and photographs I acquire in the cities in

which I present my research typically end up in lectures I edit for students before each term. I spend more time in the field and making valuable contacts that can benefit my students who want to travel abroad. By allowing instructors to do this, an institution also favorably raises its profile by demonstrating it is actively working with professors towards their professional development and recognizing that development improves the content and courses that school offers.

- An online curriculum makes a university appear forward-thinking, willing to democratize education, and able to serve a wide and diverse population

- An online curriculum can increase funding into an institution by increasing enrollment.

- Might reduce the time necessary to create teacher training centers if they are virtual rather than dependent on the creation of roads and other types of infrastructure. Money spent towards creating buildings can be placed into technology, both hardware and software, and technological help teams, instead.

Impediments to a Successful eLearning and Distance Education Program

There are a few obstacles in to the successful implementation of an online program. Besides the current lack of electricity and Internet in some rural areas, they might include faculty resistance often due to misunderstandings about what online education is and its relationship with on campus instruction and/or stereotypes about the impersonality of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). A short list is below

- Time to enact programs and obtain funding (grants and loans)

- Lack of diversity and tolerance for diversity

- Not having a team environment and/or working with persons who have alternative motivations

- Lack of transparency and competence (Zougari 2014 and Crosswell 1999)
- Lack of independent and disinterested oversight, including of course content and how funding is allocated and spent within cooperatives, communes, and nongovernmental organizations, among other interested institutions.
- Not standardizing course content to accreditation requirements and across institutions
- Discouragement for taking effective action because it may end the reason for grants and loans to continue
- Onerous donor demands or demands that cannot be satisfied with consensus
- Lack of adequate hardware and software, lack of transparency regarding import and customs tariffs, and inability to create budgets
- Lack of adequate technological support
- Privacy issues, especially if using open and insecure Internet
- Cost of schooling, from tuition to equipment to time and difficulties in applying for aid, from language issues to inexperience
- A school system that pushes students in directions that may not benefit them in the end and does not adequately communicate opportunities and solutions to students and parents
- Independent and disinterested accreditation
- unclear rules regarding plagiarism and cheating on assessments and/or lack of enforcement of the rules
- Not paying faculty a living wage, thereby increasing a lack of cohesive sentiments

- Assessments that do not test critical thinking over rote memorization, a type of assessment that makes it easier to cheat

While not all the above impediments can be solved, especially overnight, there are a few solutions that might be implemented to remedy the larger problems besides the lack of adequate electricity by solar, wind, generator, or another means and the lack of Internet coverage. Suggestions to solving many of the above issues can be found in my previous publications. A few are mentioned below.

Solutions: Some Thoughts about Cost

One of the largest impediments to creating an online program is cost. However, funding and support is possible, though neither should be implemented without detailed and disinterested oversight. The following are a few solutions to cost issues.

- Use free or nearly free LMS, applications, and social media tools
- Put popular and core courses online. Courses that appeal to and are necessary for several majors may be an option in some contexts.
- Create strategic partnerships with other accredited online campuses, including those outside Morocco's borders, and pool grants, fellowships, and tuition moneys to create distance education curricula hubs for several institutions of higher education in Morocco.
- Search for cost efficient, previously used, and free hardware and software.
- Keep textbook costs down by using open source or older versions
- Grant write, especially the institutions giving loans and grants to Morocco. At the time of writing this presentation, Morocco has received multiple grants and loans from foreign governments and agencies. Most are for development and/or to expand global influence and sometimes with the larger goals of encouraging democracy and improving human rights and education.

- Search for alternative grant and donation sources. Solicit for publicity purposes large Moroccan and non Moroccan companies to give technological support and hardware.
- Ask for assistance from volunteer groups who may have persons with technological know-how and outside funding.

Getting Creative: Using Distance Education Outside of Academia

Distance education can be used for training purposes for new staff at an international company creating a headquarters in Morocco or certifying construction workers and project managers in building codes. It can be used to impart public service messages including the dangers of smoking and legal rights and obligations. It can also be used for retraining for certificates in the tourism and technology industries, among others, including women and young adults in the countryside.

To sustain the industries and for the success of Vision 2020 and Maroc Vert, auditory (radio, telephone), televised, and Internet based courses might be given regarding the prudent use of pesticides and organic farming methods. Training could be offered regarding nature and rural attraction tours to be given in person or online.

Distance education in its many formats could additionally be used to prepare and teach

- *Lycée* students for higher education.
- New immigrants in Moroccan law, civics, and history in community locales, like churches.
- Online entrepreneurship and other industries for which INDH gives microloans.
- Building and labor codes, property and rental law
- Health practices and highway safety.

Conclusion

Distance education can be used to alleviate Morocco's unemployment quandaries. It can be a new and profitable frontier helping to ensure best

practices and tell employers that the prospective employ has some experiences and references, while also encouraging entrepreneurship that would additionally create jobs. Distance education in its many formats can be used to introduce programs in art and architectural history and visual cultural studies, among others necessary for Morocco's growing art scene. If the challenges of creating and implementing educational programs can be overcome, and many can, I would argue the benefits will outweigh the costs. The benefits include new businesses and jobs.

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Aspects of the Representations of Moroccan Women

Oifae Tribak

Moroccan women have boosted a long path marking their situation and social status with a remarkable change from being conservative women belonging to an Islamic background, and living in the confined circle of deeply-rooted traditions and customs to modernized women who are to some extent liberated and free to perform their cognitive abilities and powers in the Moroccan society. This change has obviously been attested in the various social and political aspects in Morocco.

There are in fact various turning points through which Moroccan women have gone through in order to convert the way there were looked at to new strengths. The shift or we can say the gradual changes can be observed while studying many facets that about their transformation both in appearance and personality. In this respect, I can compare women at the present time in Moroccan to the mother-land itself. There are new images about the country that have never been seen before; the new policies of tourism and privatization that have improved that picture about Morocco from an African primitive country to a modernizing one. In parallel, women are fighting to combat exclusion, oppression and gender- discrimination.

However, while the country is still so traditional and outdated precisely in some rural areas that have no interaction with the modern cities, women in those regions are almost sharing the same characteristics as traditional Morocco as they are utterly marginalized and have no right to know about their rights. They are out of sight and forgotten since they are considered as machines that will never get connected with the outside to speak of change, technology, and progress. The women in rural areas find it hard to shift from the interpretations of the Moroccan society and the rural regions because of the deeply-rooted thoughts of oppression in all forms of life which are mostly centered in lack of child guardianship and custody and, inheritance, marital property, marriage, and divorce.

In general, women in Morocco, both in rural areas and urban ones, have been and for ages stereotypically awaited to behave as home-maids or housewives and to comply with the daily domestic duties and tasks that could sometimes be tough and hard. They are expected to look after the family and house at the same time with no time for rest; they are culturally obliged to take care of the offspring and the elderly especially the parents-in-law who in the

Moroccan culture are considered the backbone of the family controlling and guiding the wife's behavior and movement at home. Also, the woman at home has to split her daily time among weaving, cooking, shopping, and cleaning.

Back to the past, and precisely right before and during the colonial period in Morocco, women were still male dominated starting from childhood to adulthood. Religion was manipulated as it was there for man to be reformed and shaped in addition to the ancestors' customs and archaic thoughts in a very special way that made of women obedient, narrow-minded, and good for nothing creatures. The parents and husbands were both imprisoning their wives and daughters among darkened four-walls of illiteracy and right under the ceiling of authority and domination.

Some of the fields I deal with in this paper are related to cultural studies and cultural clusters that represent two contradictory images of women in Morocco: the cluster of images about clothing, and the cluster of images areas such as education and family, work, and language.

Clothing and Culture

The garments women used to wear in Morocco has been considered by many activists, authors, and writers as a sort of a fence that crippled their freedom and confined their basic rights instead of allowing them to enjoy life just as men did. Fatima Mernissi as a leading example among other figures of feminism that have dealt with this matter from a religious angle. She refers to the veil 'hijab' as a symbol of backwardness. However, I strongly view the veil as a representational cultural process of respect and virtuousness among all the Moroccan women in general before and during the French colonial rule and for the elderly women after that era.

Of course, the young women in the post-colonial period were attracted by the Western dressing style. Thus, a majority of women changed the long outer robes, the long sleeves, and the 'hayek' with jeans, t-shirts, and headscarves. As Moroccan women felt the oppression upon them; they made up their minds to revolt and rebel against the social, cultural, and common norms. The 1940's and 1950's¹, right before and just after independence, was the start of Moroccan woman's gradual change in appearance and look.

The European and other Western tokens in Morocco exerted great impacts on women and played a role in unchaining the woman's individualism.

¹ www.almassae.press.ma

To support my view, I deem it important to mention the Moroccan singer Hussein Slaoui who glorified and at the same time mocked the Moroccan woman via many of his songs that I listened frequently for the purpose of analysis. Accordingly, the song 'LaMarikan' which recounts the landing of US troops in Morocco in 1942, tells as well about the occasion Moroccan women seized to change some of their social and personal behaviour². In the first verse, Slaoui describes women as having become unjust and unfair towards their husbands and Moroccan men in general, and those married women found a reason to go away far from their husbands at least for a period of time. Slaoui then mentioned that the Americans started distributing sweets and gums; and ended the lyric of his song referring to old women who started drinking alcohol. Worse than that occurred at the end of Slaoui's lyric of this song when women are described as cheap goods running behind the American soldiers for the some dollars³. The whole Moroccan culture was melting in some of the European culture, and that is simply because of the years of oppression, confinement, and exclusion of men to women. However, the way women are represented in that genre of media is that much exaggerated as it generalizes their image negatively.

All in all, the garments and the cultural as well as social character of Moroccan women have changed since the French colonial period; nevertheless, as we are going to see below, the way media has been representing women is still static and passive. Despite the many opportunities opened for women, the numbers are low and embarrassing; that's why I can say that women in Morocco are still suffering from gender-discrimination and lack of equal rights same as men.

Education and Family

I initially felt happy to ask my grandmother next to me so that she can tell me about her experience at school. I was disappointed when she mentioned that since her childhood to the age of 14, she was never allowed to go out for schooling. 'It was a shame for a girl to go out alone,' she told me. She added that she used to envy her brother who was very much enjoying that right. She went out shopping with her parents twice or three times as she could remember, and that was to prepare for her wedding. Families at that time were very conservative in matter related to social behavior dress and how to practice religion. Families in the past consecrated their cultural heritage as a responsibility of women. Even today illiteracy is still an alarming issue among Moroccan people, especially women. In rural areas, women are still considered devices to manage houses and do agricultural tasks. Up to the year 2010, fewer

² <http://www.panorapost.com/lmarikane-de-houcine-slaoui/>

³ I bid

than two out of three adults were literate in Morocco according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics⁴. The same statistics showed that the adult literacy rate of boys over 15 years old in 1990 was 55.2 %; whereas girls of the same age rated only 28.7%. In fact, there is no way to compare the two rates. So it is crystal clear that women to the 1990's were still pushed aside and deemed fit just for marriage and housework. However, since 2000, when Morocco launched the National Charter for Education and Training, the rate of schooling among males and females has been increasingly ameliorated as the female enrollment reached 84 percent in the year 2004; whereas the rate reached 89.8 percent among the Moroccan girls at the primary level⁵.

The whole society, both during the pre-colonial period and immediately after, was influenced by a patriarchal norm. In some rural areas, families were and still are considering their daughters ready for marriage at an early age, so there was no chance for education except for some girls of urban areas that were belonging to the privileged society. Another measure of depriving girls of education was that many of the schools allowed more exposure to the European culture, and the school system that was in some areas based on co-education and extra-curricular activities a framework in which boys and girls could spend time together⁶. Accordingly, that to some extent was against the Moroccan family's culture and opposed to traditions and customs especially among the middle class and rural families. Besides, a lot of parents in the past were too much interested in their families' prosperity and dignity. The first concern behind not sending daughters to the available schools was virginity, linked to the pride and honor of the whole family, also a promise for a dowry that could lift them out of poverty or a certain social condition.

Work and Language

Moroccan women have been for years the core subject of different social and cultural issues because they have always been denied practical or active interest. There is in fact a very big number of national and international reports that describe the status of women in Morocco as far from the expectations to be fulfilled after the French colonial rule especially if we bear in mind the socialist reform and social transformations that were adapted as a new beginning for a newly independent country. Indeed, there have been so many efforts to shift the

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2009. ADULT AND YOUTH LITERACY, 1990-2015: Analysis of data for 41 selected countries. Montreal: UIS., P. 5

⁵ USAID/Morocco Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2013 - 2017

⁶ Mizrahi, Beverly. "Morocco: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 20 March 2009. Jewish Women's Archive.

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cultural and social position of women positively in the Moroccan society. In this respect, Princess Lalla Aisha, the aunt of the present king of Morocco, Mohamed VI, was the best example to follow in the process of the Moroccan women liberalization. She was the first Moroccan woman to strip off the veil and show up with an uncovered face to give a speech in public in 1947, addressing the whole Moroccan public that women could be part of the Moroccan politics.⁷

That act was symbolic as well as significant. It was an open invitation to all the Moroccan women to take part and react freely and independently in all the sphere of society. However, as my grandmother still recalls, it was hard for all husbands to change their views and attitudes towards their wives and daughters. In spite of this, many women could not let the opportunity slip through their fingers; they believed in the Princess Lalla Aisha as their leader towards emancipation.

The motive to get enrolled in jobs was for sure an encouraging impetus for many women. The year 1969 was a motivating beginning as 300 well-known, capable and hard-working women were selected for the constitutive conference of *Union Nationale des Femmes Marocaines* (UNFM)⁸. In fact, despite the big number of associations and organizations that took care of women and defended their rights, the numbers and statistics are still hazardous especially when it comes to job opportunities of women in comparison to men. So according to Willy Jansen, the Moroccan women who are employed constitute only 35% of labor force; whereas 27.6% of female labor force is unemployed.⁹

A current survey that was carried out in 2008 reveals that the unemployment rate among young men is 17.4% and among young women 15.9%.¹⁰ The statistics here are totally different. The last decade has been the result of fruitful efforts by women throughout many decades to gain a place in the domains of education and work. However, as it was announced in the daily Moroccan newspaper 'Alssabah,' the rate of women's employment in the year

⁷ Ministry of Moroccan Foreign Affairs and Cooperation 2012, Speaking of *Mrs. Zohour Alaoui, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of Morocco to UNESCO*, p: 2

⁸ http://www.aui.ma/personal/~991BE736604/women_movements_in_morocco22.htm

⁹ Willy Jansen, THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION, GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT, "*Morocco: National Context*". Torino, P. 64

¹⁰ ILO (2008). "Economic Growth, Employment and Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa", Messkoub M., *Employment Working Paper No. 19*

2012 is 24.7% in comparison to 73.6% for men. The fifth edition of the report conducted by The High Commission for Planning shows that the participation of women in the workforce in urban areas has continued to decrease between the years 2000 and 2012, and slowly increased in rural areas because of the growing number of women working in agriculture and farming. The report also mentions the social discrimination between the Moroccan men and women. In this respect, the rate of unemployment is 8.7% for men and 9.9% for women in spite of the high rate of women obtaining higher certificates and diplomas which is about 27.4%, a rate that is far from the rate of men obtaining higher diplomas, and these well-educated men do not exceed the rate of 14%¹¹

Accordingly, we observe the considerable discrimination between men and women, which is due to a variety of reasons that have cultural and social backgrounds and that remain consistently dated back to the pre-colonial Morocco. In this respect, surely the *Mudawwana* or the Family Code came with a sort of freedom and justice to women; however, the mental image portrayed about women has been hardly reformed. The *Mudawwana* can be compared to a constitution whose objectives are to break or shorten the gap between men and women, and to change the way women are represented within the different facets of the Moroccan society, but still there are some stumbling-blocks that cripple that reform. In this context, I quote the Late Hassan II who said:

There are, of course, some gaps and an inadequate application of the *Mudawwana*, there is discrimination and there is justice. But let's repair all this outside the political arena so that we do not fall into some trends that have never existed and will never be allowed in this country. Let's take care of all this as soon as possible.

Excerpts from the speech delivered by Late Hassan II on the occasion of the 39th anniversary of the revolution of the king and the people (August 20, 1992)¹²

The aim of the family code was to back up the role of the Moroccan woman in society and engage her in public life. The Late Hassan II was very careful about that; that's why he mentioned the fact that the *Mudawwana* was still lacking some basics and could never reach perfection, but at least there should be some kind of cooperation and understanding from the part of the civil

¹¹ -"Alssabah newspaper", Wednesday 4th February 2002, N: 4604. Morocco 2015.

¹² | bid

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society so that the new reform would not be manipulated or interpreted in a wrong way. Certainly Rome was not built in one day, likewise the Moroccan mentality that finds it difficult to keep up with and accept the change of the Moroccan woman because that needs a radical reform throughout all the patterns of society as education, work, and politics. All these elements if reformed to fill in the gaps between women and social justice, then women would never be looked down on or regarded as weak and incapable of reacting in a similar way to men.

In rural areas, women are still regarded as home gadgets whose role is to act according to men's orders and instructions. In this respect, I quote an example of a number of interviews conducted by Brian Katulis in her survey about women's freedom. She interviewed some women who answered:

“Women have no rights—they have no rights. For example, if a woman is working as a maid, what rights does she have? Is she going to take the guy she is working for to court? Women have no rights, we can't do anything.” [Newly urban women, ages 45-65, Fez]

“A woman shouldn't go to the market; only children can go to the market. But when you send your child to the market, he doesn't know how to choose the vegetables. We wish we could go to the market.” [Rural Berber women, ages 30-44, towns of Abadou]

“Men and women are different in many ways. If you want to go out, the man would not let you go out. You always need to get his approval.” [Married rural Berber women, ages 18-29, towns of Ait Ourir]

“We always have to wait for the husband. If anything is lacking at home, we have to wait for the husband. Men always have more authority than women. If her husband is bad and beats her, she can't even leave the house. If she goes outside of the house, [can you imagine] what is going to happen to

her?" [Married rural Berber women, ages 18-29, towns of Ait Ourir]¹³

The interviews above were conducted in 2004, and we clearly deduce the image of women in small towns and even in big cities. That fact changes from a woman to another which means that they are still living dichotomies in their own society. It depends after all on how they are represented by their men, and how these men are talking about them. Nonetheless, the unchangeable portrayal of women in society and the language targeted to and about them has roots in the Moroccan media which has a heavy impact over the brains.

Women's Representation in the Moroccan Media

The Moroccan media is distinguished by a bunch of varieties that can be classified into audio, visual, written, and electronic press. In fact, there is a rarity in finding information about the journalism background and infrastructure in Morocco. However, it is mentioned by Hamza Tayebi, a Master Student in Cultural Studies that the first printing press was by Abrines Gregory in the 1880's and exactly in Tangier; whereas *El Eco de Tétuàn*, a Spanish newspaper, whose first publication was in May 1st, 1860, is said to be the first published newspaper in Morocco. Moreover, there are other different newspapers that are claimed to be first published in Morocco.¹⁴ However, we can say the press perspective or the press journalism in Morocco has a very long story and very old history.

Nowadays, media in Morocco has become more professional and varied. In this respect, it was mentioned in a report conducted by the 'Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity,' that there are 618 newspapers among which 13% of these newspapers are not published regularly according to the Ministry of Communications' annual report of 2004 concerning the press¹⁵. In the same report, there is a reference to the nine public TV channels run by the State which are: Channel 1, Channel 2, Channel 4 (educational), Channel 6 (Holy Quran), Moroccan Satellite, Channel 1 Satellite,

¹³ Brian Katulis 2004, "WOMEN'S FREEDOM IN FOCUS: Morocco Findings from January 2004 Focus Groups with Moroccan Citizens on Women's Rights", Freedom House's Survey of Women's Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa. P: 9

¹⁴ Tayebi, H. 2013, *Print Journalism in Morocco: From the Pre-colonial Period to the Present Day*, MCSER-CEMAS-Sapienza University of Rome p.497-498

¹⁵ Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity, "Project Title: Promoting the Rule of Law and Integrity in the Arab World" Second draft

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Channel 2 Satellite, al-Oyoun Regional Channel, and Sports Channel¹⁶. In addition to that, there is a very big number of radio stations; and of course there is an electronic press that contains dozens of newspapers, five of them are published in French, two in English and one in Arabic, according to the Ministry of Communications' report on press.¹⁷

Moroccan women have been a very rich subject to tackle in the Moroccan media. The focus has frequently been on the reforms, uprisings, and transitional status of women in society. However, women, and as every single Moroccan citizen can scan and scheme the content of the different angles of media, are mostly regarded as objects and treated accordingly throughout different sexist advertising. On the other hand, their portrayal is stereotypically promoted instead of empowering their fulfillment and current valuable contribution to development. Now women are taking part in and able to react in every single scientific, political, social, religious, and critical work. However, it does not serve the welfare or the financial benefit of media when admitting the fact of women are effective members of society instead of just mere objects to be manipulated, minimized, and dominated.

Accordingly, what most people grasp from the media such as the TV channels, is that the Moroccan women who are portrayed in Moroccan films are either uneducated, idiot and homebound, or kind of a dancer, singer or server whose primary task is to entertain men in front of the screen. These misconceptions about women have badly influenced the role of women and manipulated their image as active and creative participants in society. That is to say, the discourse used to deal with women in different subjects and represent them in certain shapes and forms is intended in a way women are identified as a human whose basic characteristic is to satisfy men's desires as a biological reality. In certain daily Moroccan newspapers, there is always a photo of a singer, actor, or fashion model right at the end or the back of the newspapers, it is like saying: here is the salad of a long and tiring reading. Accordingly, such images are so offensive and unfair; and raise the rate of harassment that the women are the only ones to be blamed for by media when there are complaints, or any crime they face in their society.

Social questions that are frequently asked to the public as a whole also differ according to gender. Men are mostly asked about their jobs and responsibilities at work; whereas women are asked about how they could manage to combine their job with their family responsibilities. In such a context they are often represented as weak and disabled.

¹⁶ I bid

¹⁷ I bid

Oifae Tribak

The reasons for these representations are once again varied and different. It could sometimes be just because of an editor who is bias about women or because of misogyny, but unfortunately the outcomes are both psychological and physical for women. The current decade as we can notice is more dramatic as the representation of women in Morocco has reached the level of the real image.

Islamist Leadership and its Impact on Mass Mobilization Against Gender Issues: The Case of the Movement of Unification and Reform

Driss Rhomari

It is widely accepted among social movement theorists that the availability of political opportunity structure alone, though central to public activism, does not suffice to ensure a successful mobilization of the target publics. Aminzade (2001) reveals that any emphasis on the impacts of the political opportunity structure at the expense of the significant role filled by human agency is bound to produce a handicapped approach to the industry of collective action. In a recent assessment of the political process theory,¹ resource mobilization theorists pointed to the lacuna of neglecting the decisive role of leaders and organizers in smoothing the passage from condition to action. In their comment on the neglect of salient role held by inspiring leaders, McCarthy and Zald (2002: 543) state “we were almost silent, at least theoretically, on the issue of strategic decision-making.” According to social movement theory, leaders are defined as “strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movement.”² They assume diverse responsibilities such as inspiring commitment, mobilizing resources, creating and organizing opportunities, directing collective action, framing demands, and influencing movement outcomes.

This chapter assumes that the success of the Movement of Unification and Reform³ (MUR henceforth) in mass mobilization against gender issues is significantly attributed to the variable of leadership. In an attempt to account for this attribution, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the structural implantation of the MUR’s leadership, the social composition of its elite and

¹Political process theory focuses chiefly on the political and cultural structures that either facilitate or inhibit collective action. The main political process theorists are Sidney Tarrow (1994) and Charles Tilly (1987).

²Morris and Staggenborg, 2002, p.1

³The Movement of Unification and Reform is a Moroccan Islamic movement affiliated to the Party of Justice and Development.

ground leaders, and the legitimate authority they have acquired in their process of engaging with public activism. The rationale behind this analytical approach is to address how the aggregation of these elements have served as empowering factors in the generation of a successful mobilization against gender projects suggested by liberal feminists in Morocco.

The Structural Implantation of the MUR's Leadership⁴

The MUR as an influential Islamic movement displays a well-cemented organizational structure of leadership both vertically and horizontally. It aims to ensure a smooth and vertical ordering and horizontal links among the various nodes across the leadership diagram (see the diagram below on page 102). The structural organization of the MUR is designed to cover the overall Moroccan territory and make it under the control of the upper level of leadership.

As shown in diagram (1)⁵, the apex of the movement leadership is occupied by the president who is elected by members of the executive bureau and regional delegates. In accordance with the literature of social movement theory, the president embodies the type of “top leadership.” Immediately below the president, there are two leading nodes: the executive bureau and the consultative council. The former is composed of fifteen members⁶, whereas the latter is constituted of a vast array of committed activists.⁷ These two bodies constitute the core of “team leadership,” which is assumed to be the mastermind of the movement realm of decision-making. They are considered, according to political process theorists⁸, as “political entrepreneurs” whose primary role is to act on emerging political opportunities to maintain the organizational survival of their movement and to sustain its activism in the public realm. As discussed in the political literature, Morocco has undergone a considerable process of controlled political liberalization which has engendered a new configuration of the political panorama. Accordingly, the MUR movement, due to the excellent agitation of their elite leaders, has managed to benefit from this opportunity structure and subsequently obtained an official recognition which has been facilitating its public activism. As such, the achieved legal status has

⁴ In delimiting the levels of Leadership, I follow Morris and Staggenborg (2002) in considering four leadership tiers : top leadership, team leadership, binding leadership, and bridging leadership.

⁵ I draw on Morris and Staggenborg (2002) in adopting this type of leadership taxonomy.

⁶ The president + ten elected members + four regional delegates

⁷ The number of consultation council's members exceeds 100 persons.

⁸ Charles Tilly(1978) ; Sidney Tarrow (1994)

Islamist Leadership and its Impact on Mass Mobilization Against Gender Issues

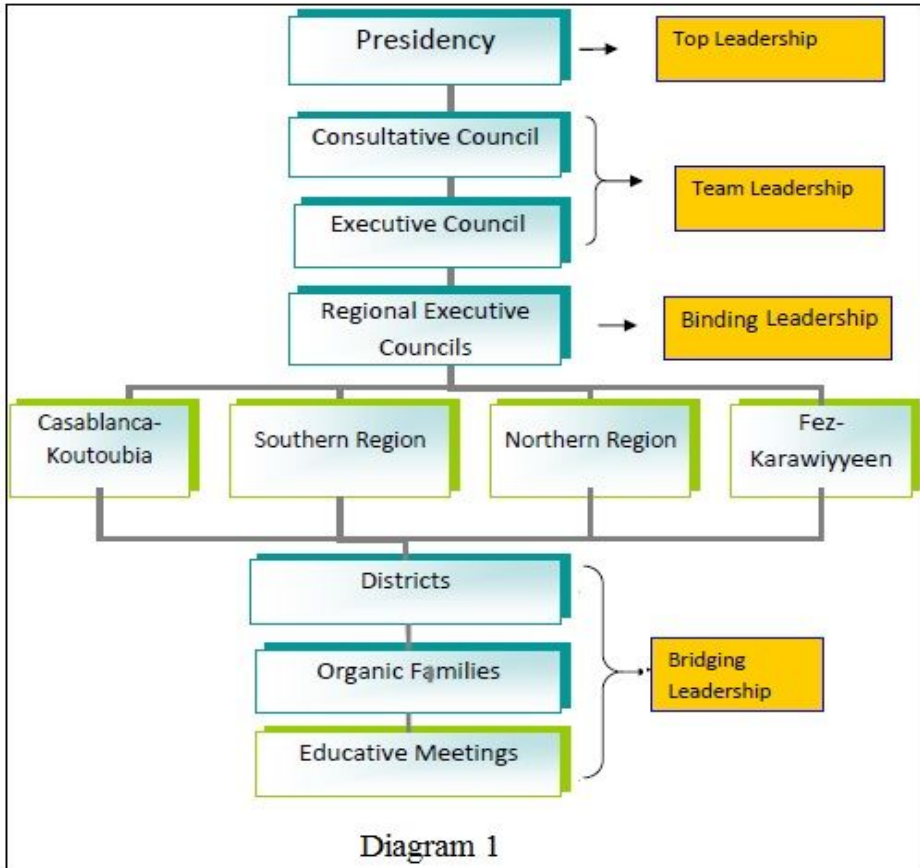
considerably contributed to the enlargement of the movement's adherents and sympathizers have been no longer subject to the negative side-effects of underground militancy.

With the aim of evading the centralization of power and decision-making, the MUR has taken the necessary measures to attain a thorough coverage of the Moroccan geographical setting. To this end, four regional nodes of leadership were implanted (see diagram 1). The nodes are super headed by elected delegates who also hold membership at the executive bureau. The rest of every node's members are elected by local committed adherents. This type of leadership is referred to as "binding leadership" whose task is to bind the four nodes of regional leadership and coordinate their activities for the aim of facilitating the transfer of messages, instructions and information both vertically and horizontally. At the grassroots level of leadership activities, there is a host of local leading poles⁹ that supervisethe work of ground organizers and activists. These poles form the backbone of what is termed "bridging leadership", being composed of grassroots organizers who hold the task of inspiring commitment and facilitating the conditions for recruitment. Their major role is to operate within local contexts to create what Alberto Melucci (1989) calls "networks of shared meaning."

In this concern, the MUR movement has set up a range of locally-based socializing nodes in every city. These are named *al- jalasaat at-tarbawiyya*(socializing sessions)¹⁰ due to their overarching role in brightening the spiritual, cultural and political consciousness of potential movement joiners. These sessions are animated by members of the bridging leadership or sometimes by delegates from the binding leadership. They usually take place once a week (almost every Friday afternoon), and they are sex-based in that female gatherings are directed by female socializing leaders, and male gatherings by male socializing leaders. Other social activities such as naming ceremonies and funerals provide an equally important opportunity structure for socializing attendants in accordance with the movement's ideological lines. Some bridging leaders who share strong ties with the people targeted for socialization offer religious lessons that aim to amplify Islamic norms and values required for enhancing spiritual commitment. These leaders introduce their movement as a proper site for receiving potential joiners who are in need of an in-depth religious socialization. The rationale behind this invitation is the desire to make these occasional socializing sites as an *avant-garde* to more consistent ones that occur within the official affiliations of the movement.

⁹Approximately a node per every city

¹⁰There is a socializing gathering in every neighbourhood.



The entire pyramidal structure of the movement constitutes an amalgam of committed leadership tiers in that all members, from the apex to the bottom, possess an institutional and formalized membership. The MUR's stakeholders strictly capitalize on the concept of graduation in their upward mobility toward the mainstream leadership positions. This leadership apparatus, though it is overly well-structured, is backed up by a paralleled body of external leaders belonging to the Party of Justice and Development (PJD henceforth). Research has shown that outside leaders play the role of movement “supporters” who link the movement to the larger society and disseminate its messages and ideology in areas beyond the outreach of internal leaders. Such leaders also tend to bring forth fresh viewpoints, social contacts, skills and tried experiences that help to enrich deliberations needed for the forging of important decisions and actions.¹¹ Their contribution was plainly manifested in the extra-ordinary back up they displayed during the most hotly moments of contention against the

¹¹For more details on the role of external leadership, see Ganz (2000).

National Plan of Action to Integrate Women in Development¹². In this regard, the PJD leading figures presented themselves as the articulating voice of the MUR movement within the realm of institutional politics, particularly in the parliament and state media.

In brief, this structural fabric of the MUR facilitated the processes of resource mobilization and framing alignments needed for motivating people to protest against gender reforms incorporated in the Nation Plan of Action. Top leadership created opportunities for collective action and communicated discursive frames for their ground leaders to assemble supporters ready for the passage from precipitating conditions to potential actions. The harmony among the leadership structure was indeed effective in producing a tremendous solidarity against the stand of liberal women's associations and their perception of gender change.

The Social Composition of the MUR's Leadership

It is strongly thought that the social composition of the MUR has played a considerable role in generating sound mobilization against gender issues. In this regard, the movement's multiple layers of leadership have been demarcated by various social statuses. Leaders' social composition varies substantially across the differentiated tiers of the leadership diagram¹³. Nevertheless, the study, in its attempt to develop a proper grasp of the social fabric of the leading and organizing apparatus, adopts certain variables which can be employed as analytical tools. Among the focal variables that are of great use for the task of decoding the social makeup of the MUR's influential leadership and its impact on the industry of collective action, the study on gender and occupation. The choice of these two elements is justified by their major role in the process of building collective identities and, by extension, collective actions.

¹²A plan of Action presented in 1999 by the Ministry of Social Protection, the Family and Childhood in collaboration with local women's organizations and some international donor agencies.

¹³Here I refer to diagram (1)

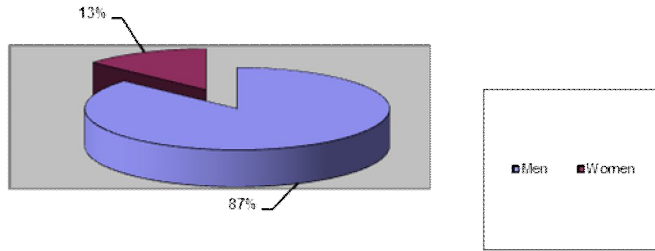
A critical analysis of the data collected during the conduction of my field work¹⁴ reveals that the variable of gender is very telling about the nature of the MUR's leadership composition. In fact, the four tiers of leadership structure are gender-bias. The degree of gender inequality in the community of the MUR is plainly reflected in top levels of leadership (top and team tiers of leadership). As indicated by graph (1), the presence of women at the higher levels of leadership is overly weak. Beside the presidency which always has a male face, only 13% of women possess membership among team leadership of the movement.¹⁵ By contrast, men monopolize the upper tiers of leadership structure (87%) and thus determine the shape and content of decision-making industry. The absence of women from the key matrix of decision-making provides evidence that women still face numerous obstacles in articulating and shaping their own interests. This is, in essence, attributed to the fact that key decisions are formulated through male outlooks in order to mesh men's norms and values, and in some cases their lifestyles; whereas women's interests are glossed over once they contradict or menace the ideological line of the movement.

¹⁴I mean the fieldwork conducted for my doctoral thesis defended in 2011 under the title "Islamism and Contentious Politics over Family Law in Morocco: A Social Movement Theory Approach."

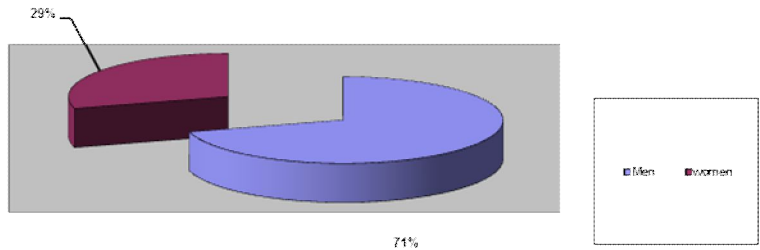
¹⁵Women hold barely 2 positions in the executive bureau.

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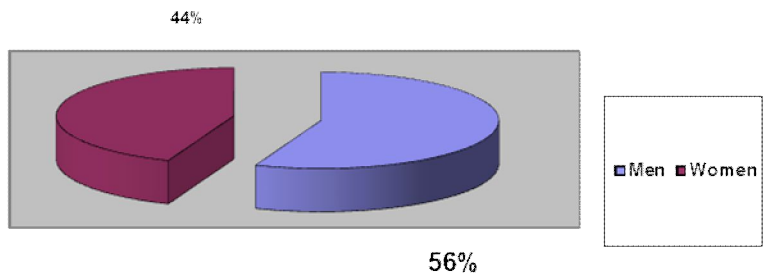
Graph (1) Team Leadership : Sex



Graph (2) Binding Leadership : Sex



Graph (3) Bridging Leadership : Sex



This logic appeared clearly during the era of protest over the National Plan of Action. Most of the important remarks on the content of the Plan were designed

by the first category of leaders who were, and still are, almost males.¹⁶ Accordingly, it was not surprising to find the traces of a masculine spirit expressed by the movement cabinet of leadership. This spirit has tried to legitimate itself through assuming the role of protecting women's identities and rights in accord to Islamic prescriptions. Paradoxically enough, legitimacy has also been sought through what I can call "the masculinization of feminine/feminist stands". This matter emanates from pushing women to publicly endorse totalizing discourses and decisions avowed by male leaders. The harmony which characterized the production of key decisions and the forming of coherent front against the project of family law reform basically resulted from the dominance of the masculine model of leadership in the movement, and the absence of female agitating voices that could otherwise enrich deliberations related to the formulation of fair and balanced attitudes toward the Plan of Action. The subordination of women at the level of decision making does not point to the passive female agency within the movement. On the contrary, women have been very dynamic as "social actors" at the level of micromobilization (graph 2) and (graph 3). They have been assuming responsibility as binding and bridging leaders who carry out the tasks of socialization and recruitment, and enact decisions and recommendations emanating from the apex of the movement structure.

This vertical ordering of decision-making generates negative repercussions for women's issues though they are well represented at the regional and grassroots level (29% as bridging leaders, and 44% as bridging leaders). Worse than that, their activism after the official launching of the National Plan of Action was in line with the patriarchal spirit. They played a significant role in mobilizing a larger pool of female sympathizers to paradoxically stand against the audacious reforms proposed by their liberal sisters. Women organizers, through their dispositions to reproduce the masculine views and attitudes and to canvass a broader base of female adherents, served, consciously or unconsciously, as legitimating agents who contributed to the success of the MUR in motivating many women to side against their strategic gender interests.

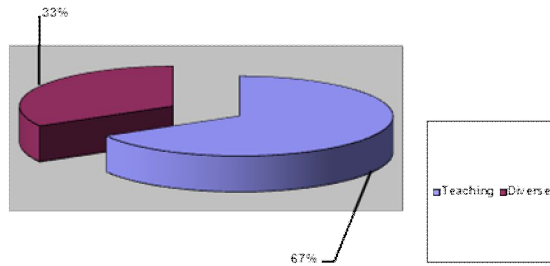
¹⁶Even the very limited number of women present in team leadership was compelled to duplicate masculine voices.

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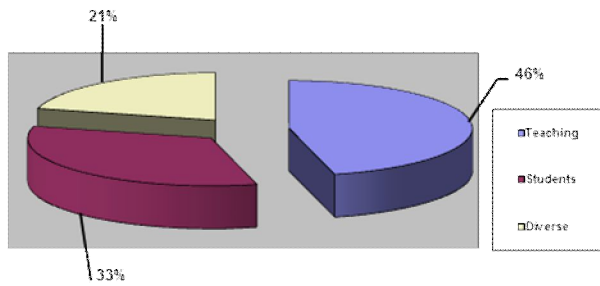
Accordingly, within the MUR movement, women and men collaboratively work to masculinize collective action around various protest issues. Though men dominate over key decision-making, women play a central role either in the legitimation of this gender-bias, or in the feminization of patriarchy. This state of affairs, I do argue, was responsible for the success of mass-mobilization against the National Plan of Action, when men and women alike took to the street shouting with a harmonious voice for the Islamization of any potential reforms.

The tremendous ability of the MUR to mobilize the masses against the question of gender is not only achieved via the masculinization of leadership, but also through the nature of professions being exercised by major leaders across the entire organizational structures. The fact of belonging to the field of education both as teachers or students (graph 4 and 5 for binding leaders; graph 6 for bridging leaders) facilitates attraction and recruitment of a vast base of followers and sympathizers. Their daily contacts with pupils and students at public and private educational settings have forged opportunity space for enlarging the pool of the movement's constituency. This does not mean that the movement's members and sympathizers are all from the field of education. Actually, there are other adherents belonging to a host of varying fields, but they are targeted almost by leaders or organizers displaying educative and socializing qualities.

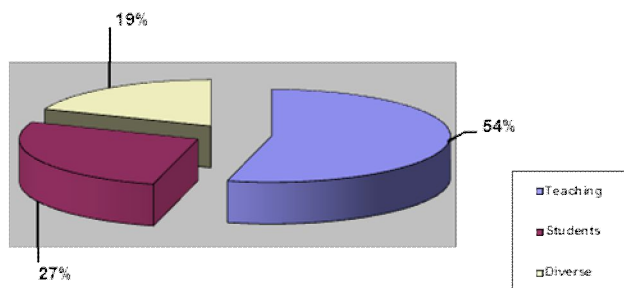
Graph (4) Team Leaders : Profession



Graph (5) Binding Leadership : Profession



Graph (6) Bridging Leadership: Profession



In addition to the importance of leaders' professions as socializing agents with a good command of pedagogical and discursive skills, the cognitive opening of potential recruits serves as an incentive for the construction of a collective identity that can be easily mobilized under necessary conditions. The cognitive opening is made possible by religious seeking and disposition for moral devotion.¹⁷ The latter facilitate the embracement of the MUR's religious discourse and make adherents more willing to join the movement. The work of the elite or grassroots leaders in this case becomes easier and their discourses and instructions are gratefully welcomed by movement participants. Religiously-laden decisions—or at least those transmitted through a religious language—take the form of moral obligations that need to be carried out without any interrogation. This matter of fact was, to a great extent, obvious when the movement leaders framed the National Plan of Action as a threat to the cultural identity and social cohesion of Morocco. Following this frame master, adherents were taken easily to the barricades with a generalized belief of performing a religious and moral duty as constructed by movement leaders.

The Legitimate Authority of the MUR's Leadership

Effective and successful mobilization, to my mind, cannot be guaranteed solely by the active role of leaders and cognitive opening of potential adherents. The legitimate authority of leaders sounds crucial to the construction of trust capital needed for the credibility and efficacy of any kind of collective action. As for our case, the authority of the MUR's leadership stems from religious and linguistic charisma, moral righteousness, and the repertoire of militancy. As such, it was the formidable linkage of these types of legitimacy that justified the spectacular mass-response to leaders' call for collective action to hamper "secular" gender projects in Morocco. For a proper grasp of the effect of legitimacy on mobilization, I shall beneath accounts for three types of legitimating qualities appropriated by the MUR's leaders.

Drawing on Max Weber (1947)'s writing about the notion of charisma, Diana Kendal et al. (2000: 438) define this concept as "power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment, which inspire loyalty and obedience from followers." In considering this view, the aim is not to suggest that the leaders of the MUR are endowed with a divine power not accessible to ordinary persons. It is, in fact, conceptually misleading to assume that these leaders display a sense of Prophetic charisma, which Max Weber emphasizes in his

¹⁷Lofland and Stark (1965: 868).

sociology of religion. The movement's leaders do not present themselves as supernatural or superhuman persons being divinely empowered, but they show certain acquired attributes that help ascertain the positive reception of catchy messages among the category of rank-and-file. In this regard, the main eloquent leaders of the MUR display a spectacular linguistic and religious charisma¹⁸ which plainly points to their possession of an intellectual and religious background.

The educational capital is, undoubtedly, the key resource for the mastery of linguistic and religious charismatic authority. Most of the MUR's influential leaders are exercising teaching at several universities. Accordingly, their academic expertise and experience, being religiously laden, enables them to acquire a good repertoire of Islamic knowledge mostly in classical Arabic. This matter of fact, to my argument, substantially sharpens their communicative and discursive skills in their roles as movement leaders.

Likewise, linguistic and religious charisma is not solely acquired through the process of formal education and/ or the exercise of education-related occupations. Rather, the leader's *parcours* of ground militancy in tolerated and clandestine organizations alike have had a considerable impact on the promotion of discursive and argumentative strategies. In this respect, the power and effect of charismatic authority— be it linguistic or religious— sounded pertinent in the process of building a collective attitude against the main measures of gender reform included in the National Plan of Action. The authority of religious arguments and their articulation through an eloquent language spoken by influential leaders was essential in the creation of like-minded followers who took to the streets arguing against the proposed gender package.

In addition to the role of linguistic and religious charisma in validating the legitimate authority of the MUR's leaders, moral righteousness, from its side, presents an empowering pillar to the credibility of leadership functioning. It is one of the most important ingredients feeding the trust capital which is gluing the multi-layered segments of the MUR movement. Most of my informants¹⁹ point to the influential role of leaders' good conduct in gaining the loyalty and solidarity of the movement members and sympathizers.

Moral righteousness, as a legitimating quality, manifests itself through articulating a set of behavioural properties that work to construct the basis of a

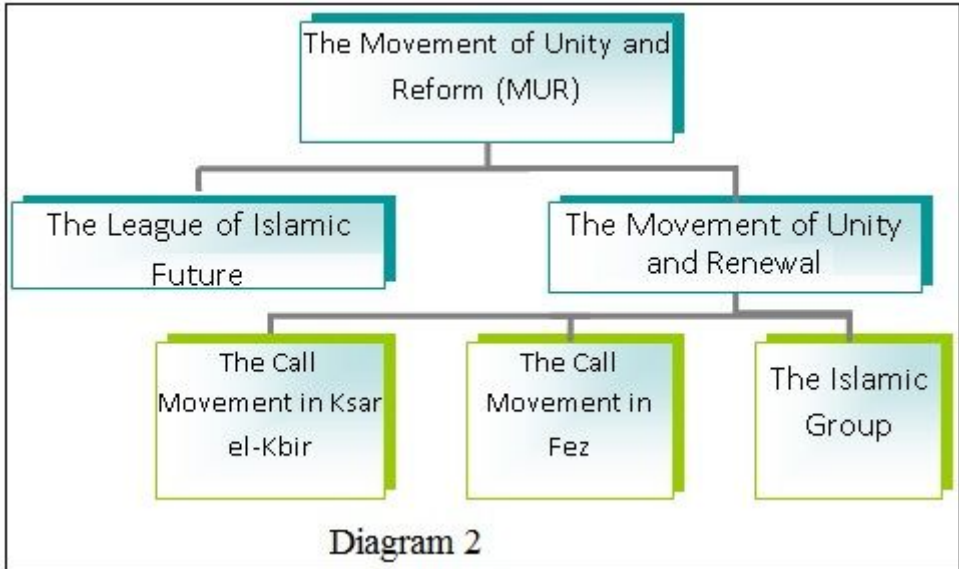
¹⁸ Among the main charismatic leaders of the MUR, we can find Mohamed Raysouni, AbdellahBaha, Mohamed Yatim, Mohamed El-Hamdaoui, Mouqri' Abu Zaid.

¹⁹ Most of my informants about this point are grassroots members who belong to Fez-based node.

good reputation. Most of the movement leaders carefully and consistently display the qualities of self-devotion to the Islamic faith, regular religious practices, honesty, trust, credibility, accountability and transparency. These qualities undoubtedly bring the movement followers to blindly follow righteous paths as designed by their “well-reputed” leadership. The success of the bigger demonstration against the National Plan of Action in 2000 in Casablanca was partially attributed to the perceived credibility of the message as derived from the social and moral legitimacy of its articulators. In this regard, Alison Brysk (1995:577) reveals that “...since the credibility of information is judged in part by the credibility of the source, we would expect speakers with greater social and *moral* legitimacy to succeed more often at persuading others.” The reputation of the MUR leaders was responsible for ensuring the loyalty of their adherents to protest against what they perceive as a cultural rape to their social and moral fabric. The images of the leaders as true believers charged with a sacred mission to defend Islamic religion were stimulating for potential followers and sympathizers to garner after the movement leaders in their struggle to abort the gender project suggested by the Plan of Action.

The legitimate authority of the MUR movement leaders also derives from the rich repertoire of their active militancy as agents of re-Islamization. The current leadership fabric of the movement is a combination of outstanding figures who reveal a confluence of different trajectories of Islamic activism. As mentioned earlier, some of the outstanding leaders started Islamic activism in the early eighties as high school or university students who subsequently revolted against the ideological choices of their supervising association of the Islamic *Shabibaal- Islamiyya* at the time. Others joined them, usually through the process of bloc- integration, in the mid-nineties.

As shown by diagram (2), the majority of upper level leadership of the MUR movement came out from different pre-existing organizations. Some were leaders in the *Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (Islamic group) which emerged as an offshoot of the dissolved *Shabiba*. Others spring from *Jami'atDa'wa* (Islamic call) in Fez and Ksar el-Kbir. On the same path, a group of intellectuals, who were forming the so-called *Rabitat al-Moustaqbal al-Islami* (the League of Islamic Future), joined the constructed alliance just a couple of years later. As a result of this melting pot, the emerging aggregate of leaders enrich the guiding cabinet of the movement with their accumulated skills and experiences. Their different backgrounds and *avenues* have remarkable impact on the generation of useful ideologies and mobilizing strategies, and the formulation of effective decisions which ensure the attainment of beneficial outcomes derived from successful collective action.



The outcome of their rich and diversified experiences in leadership positions echoes gratefully among the pool of followers. The latter cede agency to the movement leaders to speak and act on their behalf thanks to the legitimacy they have acquired through a long journey of militancy to anchor Islamic norms and values in the Moroccan society. On the basis of this, some leaders are framed as true “*mujahidiin*” who are devoting their lives to the Islamic cause.

In the same line of argument, the articulated leadership status is conceived as an authority that empowers the loyalty and solidarity of the MUR’s adherents. As such, the vertical ordering of information and decisions go down very smoothly and their enactment often culminates in successful mobilization of human and symbolic resources. During the heat of political contention over the National Plan, decisions being taken by renowned and well-reputed leaders were projected among the masses as sacred obligations dictated by divinity through the mediation of some righteous men displaying a real mastery of religious grammar and moral correctness.

Conclusion

In short, it can be inferred from the above discussion that the success of the MUR leaders in engendering a powerful mobilization against the proposed measures by the Plan of Action to modify the Family Law stems principally from the internal structure of the movement’s leadership and the perceived

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reputation of its leaders. The latter have successfully contributed to the generation of a vehement process of collectivizing resources and mobilizing participants to contend against the feminist thesis of gender reform. The political role of elite leadership coupled with the social role of grassroots leadership have spawned and secured the public protest of a larger proportion of Moroccans who displayed fierce opposition toward the attempts of “secularizing” the family law. To my mind, upper level leaders, in fact, have skilfully asserted an opportunity space for activism free from state coercive response; whereas the ground leaders have competently conjugated the afforded opportunity structure to enlarge the social base of the movement. These two intersected and complementary roles can be considered as a direct catalyst for the spectacular mobilization of the MUR against gender package as proposed by liberal feminists and their allies.

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On the Interpretation of the Quranic Verse

'And the male is not like the female' (3:36)

Rachid El Ouardi

Introduction

This chapter discusses the Qur'anic verse 'and the male is not like the female' (3:36). This verse, or more exactly part of it, as will be shown below, has recently constituted an area of some kind of debate, as enhancing a "superiority" of women over men, or vice versa, following who reads it and in what ways. My aim in this chapter is twofold: first, to show that within the huge traditional literature, there is a tendency amongst a number of exegetes that this verse has been associated with a meaning away from the notion of social inequality between man and woman, in as much the way as put very clearly in many other verses in the Qur'an; second, to highlight that the call for revisiting some of the earlier ideas and interpretation found in many exegetical works can be traced back to famous Muslim scholars, which suggests that the Qur'an is the divine revelation that is open to interpretation, regardless of time and space.

Qur'an Interpretation

The Qur'an is the central religious text of Islam, and the book of divine guidance and direction for all Muslims; at-tafsir, on the other hand, is for them of a great importance and is a sacred branch of Islamic sciences. The main reason for that lies in the fact that all matters concerning Muslims' life are essentially related to how the word of Allah is interpreted, and to whether they lead a living in the way Allah has decreed for mankind. At-tafsir of the Qur'an refers to the accurate understanding of the Qur'anic text, in conformity with the fundamental principles of Qur'anic interpretation (*usul at-tafsir*); these are branches of knowledge which are necessary to help understand the Quranic text, as Ibn Taymiyya puts it clearly in his introduction (*muqaddima fi usul al-Tafsir*)¹. Therein, he states the general principles that could help understand the Qur'an, its interpretation and its meanings. Furthermore, the book was also intended to help the reader select the accurate Qur'anic interpretation from others, and to serve as a criterion in identifying the correct opinions. He asserts

¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *muqaddima fi usul at-tafsir*, edited by Zerzour Adnane, 1972, 2nd edition, p. 33.

that there are many tafsirs in which strong opinions are mixed with weak ones, the true with the groundless; some of these tafsirs are based on valid reasoning, some are not². Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes that Muslims are in need for an understanding of the Qur'an which does not deviate from the truth.

It is believed by Muslims that there is no single authentic interpretation of the Qur'an; also, there is hardly any major issue which Muslims, or more exactly Muslim ulemas, completely agreed on. The areas of disagreement are mostly due to the ways the Qur'anic text is interpreted, given the multiplicity of sects and schools of thought in the Islamic tradition.

The most significant aspect of traditional Qur'an interpretation lies in the fact that all known exegetical works were exclusively done by male scholars, although Islamic history does mention a number of feminine religious figures in Muslim societies who were known for their contribution in the domains of Qur'anic and Hadith sciences³. However, to my knowledge, up to now no written material in the subject by women is ever reported during the entire history of Islamic thought, apart from some very limited works by Aisha Abderrahmane Bent Ashshatie (died in 1998) who wrote *at-tafsir al-bayani li-lquran al-karim* (التفسير البياني للقرآن الكريم) first published in 1962, and Mayyada Bint Kamil Al Madi who wrote *ad-durra fi tafsir surat al-baqara* (الدرّة في تفسير سورة البقرة), first appeared in 2006.

In the introduction of her book, Aisha Abderrahmane, while praising traditional exegetes whom we must respect for their efforts in Qur'anic studies, appeals to the necessity for continuing the study and analysis of the Qur'an, asserting that Qur'an interpretation has remained –as traditional exegetes themselves admit it- one of the sciences of Arabic which is still in progress⁴.

²The text in Arabic is as follows : "فإن الكتب المصنفة في التفسير مشحونة بالغث والسمين (Op.Cit.: 33) والباطل الواضح والحق المبين، والعلم إما نقل مصدق عن معصوم، وإما قول عليه دليل معلوم"

³ See for instance Afaf Abdulghafur Hamid (2008) for a brief and concise informative article on this topic, particularly with regards to Hadith.

⁴ The original text is:

"ولكن التفسير ظل – باعترافهم – من علوم العربية التي لم تتضح ولم تحترق، وهذا الاعتراف يفسح لي العذر حين أتقدم إلى هذا الميدان الجليل في حدود جهدي وطاقتي واختصاصي، كما يشفع لي حين أضطر أحيانا إلى رفض بعض أقوال لهم وتأولات واتجاهات، قد أراها، والله أعلم بعيدة عن روح العربية الأصيلة، مجافية نصا وروحا، لبيان القرآن الكريم"

Aisha Abderrahmane, 1962,p: 17.

Not only was she daring to take such a stance, but she pointed out that among Qur'an commentators, there were some who were likely to be affected by certain subjective circumstances, such as their doctrine or school of thought. Thus, she called for a better study of the Qur'an and a deeper understanding of its content and intent, on grounds entirely congruous with the Qur'anic intent, and on the basis of a very specific liberal method, permitting the commentator to go deeper in its core meanings, away from understandings associated with its text by interpretations that are mainly sect-centered and tendency oriented, and by inadequacies or misreading of non-Arabic interpretations⁵.

The verse 'And the male is not like the female'

In the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Islam, women are viewed as an important part of the whole cosmos. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Qur'an contains a special chapter called 'surat an-nisae' (women). However, the verses concerning women are also to be found in other surats of the Qur'an, such as in surat al-baqara, suratal-maida, surat an-nur, surat al-ahzab, surat al-mujadala, surat al-mumtahana, and surat at-talaaq, etc. The Holy Qur'an contains indeed hundreds of teachings which apply both to men and women alike; the specific verses of the Quran, which address themselves to man or woman, deal with either their physical differences or with the role each of them is supposed to take in society.

(وليس الذكر كالانثى)

'And the male is not like the female'

is one of the ayats that has been assigned a number of interpretations, with more or less additional understood meanings, in all exegetical books; it is a verse whose reading has recently generated some controversy among a number of Muslim scholars, and is taken by some of them as incarnating the 'male superiority over female', or by some others, though a few, as validating the female voice and position, and bringing her out of 'patriarchal' shadows, on view of the meaning assigned to its content and the lesson associated with its intent.

⁵ The original text in Arabic is:

"درسه [أي القرآن] وفهمه وتذوقه، على منهج دقيق محرر، ينفذ من وراء الحجب التي أسدلتها التأويلات المذهبية والطائفية، والأذواق الأعجمية، إلى الجوهر الكريم في ذروة نقائه وجلال أصالته"

(Op.Cit.: 17)

The context of the verse:

The sentence under study is part of Verse number 36, itself part of the ayats of Chapter III of the Qur'an, called 'Surat Aal Imrane (the House/Family of Imrane⁶, a Jewish House). Anna/Hanna, the wife of Imrane, Mary's mother, said after she had reached old age and wished she could have a child, and supplicated God to grant her offspring. Allah accepted her supplication, and when she became aware that she was pregnant, she vowed to make her child a servant of the Temple/Sanctuary of Jerusalem.

(إذ قالت امرأة عمران رب إني نذرت لك ما في بطني محررا فتقبل مني إنك أنت السميع العليم(35) فلما وضعتها قالت رب إني وضعتها أنثى والله أعلم بما وضعت وليس الذكر كالأنثى وإني سميتها مريم وإني أعيذها بك وذريتها من الشيطان الرجيم (36))

[(Remember) when the wife of Imrane said: O my Lord ! I have vowed to you what is in my womb to be dedicated for your services, so accept this from me. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knowing. Then when she gave birth to her, she said : O my Lord ! I have given birth to a female child, and Allah knew better what she bore, and the male is not like the female, and I have named her Maryam, and I seek refuge with You for her and her offspring from Shaytan, the outcast]

(وليس الذكر كالانثى) is a verse which has been subject to numerous readings, appealing to a specific meaning/intent by the Qur'an, on the basis of both 'language structure' (particularly, simile a rhetoric component in Arabic) and 'atta'wil' – interpreting the verse by looking for its meaning beyond the real words- on the view that the verse may have a different inner meaning from that of the apparent one, based solely on purely linguistic ground.

Arabic grammar-based interpretation ' Simile(at-tashbih)'

In terms of Arabic rhetoric, all exegetical works rightly emphasize the necessity for linguistic knowledge for understanding the appropriate meaning of Qur'anic verses; they all consider that 'the verse' is a simile structure introduced by negation. A simile is linguistically viewed as a figure of speech commonly

⁶ Imrane is the name of Mary' father in the Qur'an, Hanna is her mother's name in some exegetical books. In the Biblical tradition, her parents' names are Joachim (father) and Anne (mother).

Source: <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org>

On the Interpretation of the Quranic Verse ‘And the male is not like the female’

involving the juxtaposition of two entities, concepts or things in order to enhance appreciation of one of them.

In English, simile is defined as follows:

Oxford Dictionary of English (1998, 2003)

“Simile is a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e. g. as brave as a lion)”.

Meriam Webster’s 10th Collegiate (1993)

“Simile is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by like or as (as in cheeks like roses)”.

In Arabic, on the other hand, the definition does not seem to differ; it is, nonetheless, of paramount significance to highlight the symbolic character of such a rhetorical component in this Semitic language, and to deconstruct its inner meaningful structure, to get into the underlying relation between the two compared entities in the aforementioned verse (male and female). So, What does simile incite us to infer in Arabic?

For Ibn Qayyim Al Jawziyya (Died in 751 A.H.)⁷:

The position of the likened should be higher than that of the likened-to.

For Al-Asqalani (Died in 852 A.H.)⁸:

“The reality of simile is the annexation of an incomplete entity to a superior complete entity.”

He adds⁹:

“In simile, the likened-to should be equal to the likened in all properties.

⁷ The Arabic quote is ‘رتبة المشبه به أعلى من رتبة المشبه’ , Ibn Qayyim Al Jawziyya , Uddat aS-Sabirin wa dhakhirat ash-shakirin, p : 111

⁸ The Arabic original quote is : ‘ حقيفة التشبيه إلحاق ناقص بكامل’ , Al-Asqalani, Vol. I p : 28.

⁹ The Arabic quote is : ‘ لا يلزم في التشبيه تساوي المشبه بالمشبه به في الصفات كلها’ Op. Cit. p :28

Pragmatically, simile is employed in Arabic for clarification, identification, praising or blaming. Simile components in Arabic are:

- the likened-to,
- the likened,
- the simile element, and
- the simile feature/property.

In the light of what has been pointed out, and applying the principles of simile in Arabic, the interpretation of the verse '*and the male is not like the female*' should be as follows:

the likened-to is 'the male'

the likened is 'the female'

the simile element or particle is 'like' (ka-)

the simile feature or property is not mentioned(it is understood).

Relying on Arabic language rhetoric prerequisites, namely that the likened is taken to be better or more powerful or more complete than the likened-to, there is room to say that this Quranic verse gives woman a better position than that of the man, in some respect, since it places the male as 'the likened-to' and the female as 'the likened'.

The verse '*And the male is like the female*' sets a given resemblance between the two; the simile approximates the characteristics of 'the male' to those of 'the female'; the affirmative structure leads the hearer to think of ways in which the two entities might be comparable. Similarly, the negation leads the hearer to think of ways in which the two entities might not be comparable.

The structure is introduced by negation (*x is not like y*), which means that x is different from y and y is different from x; they are two different entities, in some respect, i.e., simile property.

What is here the simile property? The male and the female are different in what?

This simile seems here to build an open similarity, and this open similarity is negated (x is different from y in terms of z). What this z is or might be is where different interpretations intervene, I mean 'atta?wiil', which calls

for other elements than only language, and which is found in almost all exegetical books.

Some exegetes interpretations

I will sketch some of the famous traditional exegetes, belonging to different times, so as to see how the exegesis proceeds in interpreting the verse, and whether the interpretation has been affected in some way.

a) Ibn Abbas (Died 68A.H./664 A.D.)

Verse 3: 35

Remember, O Mohammad (when the wife of Imrane) Hanna, the mother of Mary (said: My Lord I have vowed unto Thee that which is in my belly as a consecrated (offspring)) a servant at the Sanctuary of Jerusalem. (Accept it from me. Lo! Thou; only Thou, art the Hearer) of prayers, (the Knower!) of the answer and of that which is in my womb.

Verse 3: 36

(And when she was delivered) what was in her womb and it was a baby girl (she said: My Lord! Lo! I am delivered of a female) a baby girl. (Allah knew best of what she was delivered. The male is not as the female)in service and weakness¹⁰.

b) Al-Tabari (Died in 310A.H./ 922 A. D.)

Al-Tabari, while interpreting (And the male is not like the female), he focuses on the reasons , explaining that the male is not like the female: **a)** for what I consecrated the boy to; **b)**for the male is more capable than the female for serving the Sanctuary; **c)**for the difference between them in terms of menstruation; **d)**for the tradition was that only males were accepted for that job (serving the Sanctuary).

c) Ibn kathir (Died in674 A.H./ 13TH c)

There is not much which he added to the information provided by Ibn Abbas or Al-Tabari. This is how he interpreted the verse: (O my Lord! I have vowed to You what is in my womb to be dedicated for Your services, so accept

¹⁰ Ibn Abbas, tanwiir al-miqbas min tafsir Ibn Abbas.

this from me. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knowing) meaning, You hear my supplication and You Know my Intention. She did not know then what she would give birth to, a male or a female.(Then when she gave birth to her, she said: "O my Lord! I have given birth to a female child, - and Allah knew better what she bore.)(And the male is not like the female) in strength and the commitment to worship Allah and serve the Masjid in Jerusalem¹¹.

d) Al Jalalayne (Jalal Eddine As-Syoti & Jalal Eddine Al Mahalli, 15th c)

This is how they interpreted the verse: 'and when she gave birth to her, a girl, and she had been hoping for a boy, since only males were consecrated to the service of God, she said, apologetically 'O, Lord; I have given birth to a female' – and God knew very well what she had given birth to: a parenthetical statement constituting God's speech (a variant reading 'for wada'at, 'she gave birth' has wada'atu 'I gave birth' making these Hanna's words ' and God knows very well what I have given birth to); the male, that she had asked for, is not as the female, that was bestowed upon her, because he is designed for the service (of God), while she would not be suitable on account of her lesser physical ability, her private parts, the effect of menstruation on her, and so on¹².

e) Ibn Hazm (Died 456 A.H./ 1064 A.D.)

The denial by the Quran that 'the male is like the female' appeals to denying the sameness of sex; man and woman are not the same physically and psychologically, they do not have the same capabilities. As a result, the sameness of sex denial is absolutely not a denial of equality between man and woman that, in the Islamic social perspective, is related to equality in rights and duties¹³.

f) Al-Tabatabaiy (1904-1981)

He asserts that the verse (And the male is not like the female) is Allah's speech, not the speech of Mary's mother. This is a confirmation from Allah that what He gave her was better than she wished; the boy would not be able to

¹¹ Ibn Kathir, tafsir Ibn Kathir.

¹² Al-Jalalayne, tafsir al-jalalayne.

¹³ Ibn Hazm, al-faSlu fi lmalal wal-'ahwa'i wn-nihal, Volume 4, p : 204. The quote is :
"وقد قال قائل من يخالفنا في هذا، قال الله عز وجل: "وليس الذكر كالانثى"، فقلنا وبالله تعالى التوفيق: فأنت إذا عند نفسك أفضل من مريم وعائشة وفاطمة لأنك ذكر وهؤلاء إناث. فإن قال هذا الحق بالنوكى وكفر، فإن سأل عن معنى الآية قيل له الآية على ظاهرها ولا شك في أن الذكر ليس كالانثى، لأنه لو كان كالانثى لكان انثى، والانثى أيضا ليست كالذكر لان هذه أنثى وهذا ذكر، وليس هذا من الفضل في شيء البتة"

achieve what the girl would be prepared for, the boy would not be like this girl, she would be greater and more prestigious¹⁴.

Al-Tabatabaiy seems to insist on the fact that most exegetical works (particularly, traditionalist exegesis) tried hardly to find a reason for a reading of the verse as conveying the meaning of 'male 'betterhood over female', which he cannot withstand and is criticizing in his exegesis¹⁵.

g) Ibn Achor (20th c)

There is a sense of apology to God from the part of Mary's mother, for she would not be able to fulfill her 'nadr' by consecrating her waited boy to the service of the Sanctuary. This is simply because male sex is not identical to female sex; the boy that she wished is not equal to the girl that was given to her, had she known the future highly prestigious status of this baby girl. The gift of Allah (the girl) is better, God knows this fact but she does not. The negated simile (i.e., the denied simile property) in the structure could be taken to mean 'a sense of superiority' and 'the male' is placed at the front for it is the sex wished in the intent of the speaker. However, the negation here could be understood as a construct that the negated/denied '*likened*' is weaker than the '*likened-to*'¹⁶.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that our understanding of Islam depends largely on our understanding of the Holy Qur'an. Additionally, what we read the Qur'anic verse to be saying is highly related to who reads it and in what conditions, both intrinsically (for the commentator himself) and extrinsically (for a number of circumstances, namely the general conditions surrounding the interpreter).

The process of interpretation of the verse (for Ibn Hazm, Ibn Achor and Al-Tabatabai) seems to lead to the understanding of the meaning in totality (socio-historical context) in addition to the specific principles which can be identified for particular circumstances (the text intent/ understood meaning, how it is articulated as socio-moral norms and values). The lesson taken from this

¹⁴ Al-Tabatabai, 1997, p : 196

¹⁵ The Arabic quote is :

وقد أخذ أكثر المفسرين قوله: و ليس الذكر كالأنثى، تنمة قول امرأة عمران، و تكلفوا في توجيه تقديم الذكر على الأنثى بما لا يرجع إلى محصل، من أراد فليرجع إلى كتبهم

Op.cit. : 199.

¹⁶ Ibn Achor, 1984.

verse remains indeed a powerful teaching device for the community of the faithful (Maryam's mother and her community at that specific time and place, and all human beings at all times and everywhere).

Others (Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Al-Jalalayne, and many others) present a traditional thematic exegesis that emerged during the prophetic era, and which is still in effect, and which is based on information from earlier Muslims, knowledge about abrogating and abrogated verses, the reasons of revelations, in addition to Arab language knowledge.

The verse is open to interpretation, as is the whole Qur'an, which is one of the Qur'an timeless miraculous aspects. The reasons for this are various; firstly, the Qur'anic text is a very rich text which can be understood in many ways; secondly, the symbolic or allegorical nature of its language carries a rich social and cultural content, which makes its meanings change according to the change of the socio-cultural background; thirdly, many new issues emerged and various changes are continuously taking place, whose answers could not be possible to find in traditional medieval works, while enhancing the significance of the divine text, forever and whenever.

The controversy will continue, as to whether this particular verse is privileging woman over man (feminine reading) or man over woman (masculine-oriented interpretation or patriarchal reading). Needless to say, these are at the ultimate opposite ends; and the ongoing debate of such nature will always keep both of them away from the real intent of the Qur'anic text. All their claims are blasphemous and seem to be in direct contradiction to a number of Qur'anic verses which assign both sexes an equal rank before Allah, as creatures of His with roles for each to take in society. The Quran is addressed to all mankind and for all times. For the naked eye, the Qur'anic verse under study superficially stipulates that it is confined to a particular people at a particular era in a specific area ; but the reality is that it addresses all people at all times. What one sees here is just a level of Reality (with capital r) that we construct cognitively. However as one reads deeper into the meaning of the verse, relating it to many other verses in the Qur'an, one may find the signs and symbols manifesting themselves in newer ways. These new ways of understanding the Quran is even found in some traditional books, which only requires to be well read and correctly understood, away from any kind of prejudice or stereotypes.

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Moroccan Feminine Sufism: The Case of Lalla ‘Azīza Sksāwiya

Aziza Ouguir

Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore Sufism, its characteristics and the way medieval Moroccan Sufism handles gender by discussing the figure of Lalla ‘Azīza Saksāwiya, a 14th-century woman saint. In recent decades, feminist scholars have started to take an interest in the relationship between Sufism and gender. Exploring the ways Sufism and politics of feminism intersect they have produced important studies on gender and Islam.¹ But some issues regarding Moroccan women’s historical participation in Sufism and sanctity as yet remain under-researched, especially the impact of the history of Moroccan religiosity on the overall discourse on women and feminism today.² In this article I will address this issue, by going into several relevant aspects.³

First I will explore Islamic mysticism and its relation to gender in general terms. Several studies show that Sufism is gender neutral and even egalitarian in character. I will present some examples of mystic women in Islamic history to illustrate this gender neutrality and uncover these women’s religious authority and leadership role. I will especially highlight the life of female Moroccan saint ‘Azīza Sksāwiya by discussing her hagiographic and oral life stories, focusing on the ways she constructed a saintly personality that empowered her as an authority and leader with a great impacts on her community. Through the study of hagiographic records and the conduction of interviews with her descendents and venerators I explored the dynamics of ‘Azīza’s Sufism, as conveyed in the life stories. Against the dominant

¹ Amri 1999; Buitlaar 1993; Dwyer 1978; Sadiqi 2008; Rausch 2004.

² See Ferhat 1995

³ In an attempt to bridge this gap, this paper presents some of the results of my doctoral thesis whose focus was on female religious agents in Morocco in particular the women saints and their reception by women venerators and feminist of modern Morocco.

conventional norms regarding women's roles, 'Azīza comes forward as constructing a religious personality that challenged patriarchy.

Sufism

It is important to highlight Sufism and its characteristics. Although Sufism is broadly defined as the mystical dimension of Islam, it is multifaceted. Etymologically, the word "Sufism" is derived from the Arabic word *ṣūf* meaning "wool", in association with the woolen cloth that the Sufis put on as a sign of their renunciation of worldliness and of their desire of closeness to God. Such proximity could be achieved through the pursuit of spiritual advancement. To reach God, the Sufi engages in the Sufi path as it is practiced and prescribed by *Tarīqa* (Sufi orders) whose branches have spread all over the world.⁴

The definition of Sufism as mentioned above offers a variety of designations for a Sufi. The central figure in Sufism is the friend of God (*wali* Allah) that I use here interchangeable with the term "saint". Moroccans use the term "siyyid" to address a saint. This word means "lord" or "master". The term "lalla" is also used to refer to a woman saint. The term *majdhūb*, which means to draw out or pull out, constitutes another word to name a holy "inhabited by a holy spirit" man.

A friend of God is recognized by a number of characteristics: he or she is locally recognized as a "reminder of God"; he or she constitutes a channel through which divine sacredness is revealed. Saints present Islamic virtues and divine norms. They propagate their values, moral conducts and good social acts among people. They are known by their strong moral and exemplary conducts and behaviors. They are also known by their strong desire to follow a mystical life, achieve a spiritual advancement and by their engagement in intense exertion to reach God. Saints become holders of *baraka* (divine grace) that God bestows on his friends as a gift for their hard spiritual exertion. Hence, saints are sacred persons whom people show great respect and admiration.

Al-Ghazālī (n.d) explains the meanings of Sufism, its principles and rules. According to him, there are different views and guidelines that were agreed upon by many Sufi scholars but criticized by others in the quest of spirituality and the achievement of sainthood. Al-Ghazālī stressed the importance of the human heart as a source of one's spiritual illumination. The

⁴ Examples of these Sufi orders are Mevlevi Sufi order, which was inspired by and founded in honor of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammed Rūmī (13th century), Naqshabandi Sufi order, which is named after its founder Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshaband (14th century) and the Qadiri Sufi order, which is founded by 'abd al-Qāder Jilānī (12th century).

heart plays the role of its holder's guide. This role, however, al-Ghazālī stresses, emanates from the Sufi's knowledge of Shari'a (Islamic law) and Sufism. He argues that Shari'a is acquired through one's senses, and Sufism emanates from one's inner heart and prevails in the universal world. Thus, the purification of the heart and its tranquility emanates first from Islamic law, and then flourishes and gains a spiritual illumination from the inner knowledge of Islamic religion. The Sufi, then, has to perform the guidelines of Islamic law and experience Sufism to become a friend of God.

From al-Ghazālī's approaches to mysticism, one understands that a Muslim mystic is required to undertake a "way" to reach God and to become a saint. On the Sufi path, the Sufi is exposed to several types of work. Before the Sufi engages in the path, he or she has a *nafs 'ammāra bi sū'* (the evil soul) that guides the person to worldliness. To free the Sufi from material desires and evil actions, he or she chooses to engage in hard spiritual life until he or she listens to the blames of al-Nafs al-lawwāma (the blaming soul) and achieve al-Nafs al-muṭma'inna (the peaceful soul). The latter imposes on the Muslim to renounce worldliness and to reconsider his or her inner spiritual desires and to assure the success of the soul over the material desires of the body.⁵ At this stage, the Sufi reaches the divine and becomes a Sufi. After having shedding some light to Sufism and its properties, I now will discuss Sufism and its relation to gender.

Sufism and Gender

From the grammar in our discussion above of the Sufi path to the divine, it may seem that only men were included as subjects of piety. However, women are also allowed to have access to the practice of Sufism. We have seen that the Sufi disciple has to abstain from any sexual performance, which is a first indication that we are dealing with an ideal of gender neutrality. Gender is not considered in the practice of Sufism. Throughout my study of hagiographic records on male and female Saints, I found that men and women could equally have access to the mystical world. Both could enter the Sufi world, and both could achieve God closeness. The archives show that men and women are present in the different types of Sufism, including orthodox and popular Sufism.⁶ There are male and female *majdhūb* as well as knowledgeable male and female saints.⁷

⁵ See al-Ghazālī (n.d)

⁶ Orthodox and popular Sufism are two types of Moroccan Sufism. Orthodox Islam is strictly base on the Qur'an and Sunna. Whereas popular Sufism is also based on the

The religious scholar Ibn Arabi (12th century) made it very clear that Sufism is opened to men and women. He was in fact taught Sufism by a woman. Both could live equally their piety and spirituality. Ibn Arabi explicitly states that women can reach the highest stages of Sufism.⁸ Ibn Arabi thus believes in women's abilities to achieve a strong piety and to become agnostic, the highest stage of Sufism. This is highly stressed in his discourses on his female spiritual guides Fatima of Cordova and Fatima al-Mutana. He approved the great impact these Sufi women had on his piety and spirituality. He described these pious women as his spiritual leaders and masters that taught him how to reach God.⁹ Some other hagiographers and spiritual masters whose piety was positively impacted by women are Ibn Taymiyya (14th century) who met a Sufi woman called Ummu Zaynab Fatima bint al-Abbās al-Baghdādiyya and whom he introduced in his work not only as a spiritual leader of the *ribāt* al-Bghdādiyya but also as a jurist (*faqīha*). He explicitly approves of her performing sermons and of her religious leadership. Abd Rahman Sulamī (10th century) and Farīd Dīn al-Aṭṭār (12th century) are other spiritual masters who stress women's role in Sufism.

These hagiographers and spiritual masters support gender neutrality in the practice of Sufism and the achievement of sainthood. In their hagiographic compilations, Ibn Arabi, al-Aṭṭār, Ibn Taymiyya, Sulamī and al-Tādilī (12th century) use the phrases *al-rijāl* meaning ideal actors in addressing male and female saints. Al-Tādilī, a Moroccan Sufi jurist, is continuously repeating the expression "*kana/kanat min ahl al'ilm wa al-'amal*" (he or she was among the people of religious learning and practice) in his saints' entries.¹⁰ These hagiographers included Sufi women and men in their compilations and addressed them in equal terms. They eliminated gender in their discussion of spiritual perfection.¹¹ They focused on Sufism as a practice which accounts primarily on the individual's inner state and not on his or her physical side.

Whereas the Sufi masters and hagiographers only implicitly conveyed a gender egalitarian perspective, several contemporary authors¹² have emphasized this spiritual side of Islam in explicit gender egalitarian terms. According to these feminist scholars Sufism reflects the true spirit of the Qur'an, in that it is gender egalitarian in character. According to them,

Qur'an and Sunna but includes practices and believes belonging to local culture. For more details (see Ibn Khaldūn 1960).

⁷ See al-Kettanī 1900

⁸ Ibn Arabi 1985, vol. 2, 35

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See al-Tādilī 1997

¹¹ See Shaikh 2009; Dialmy 2008

¹² Ahmed 1992; Barlas 2002; Wadud 1993

Sufism's emphasis on the inner spiritual side of Islam covers the heart of Islam, comprising fundamental Islamic principles of gender equality and social justice.

Women in Islamic History

Turning to Islamic history we indeed find a number of women who were able to develop into highly esteemed persons, who marked history with their piety and legacy. An example in case is the Prophet Mohammad's wife Khadija, who experienced the Prophet's first revelations, shared his mystical life, and sustained him during his divine mission. The Prophet said to her that the angel Gabriel (*jibrīl*) presented her his greetings and promised her a house in paradise as a gift for her piety.¹³ Aicha also is so spiritual and so intermingled with the Prophet's divine mission that she observed the Prophet in the company of Gabriel.¹⁴ These exemplary women, therefore, approved women's participation in the realm of piety and spirituality. Then, the original sources of Islam promote gender equality and contradict androcentric and patriarchal interpretations of spiritual aspiration.

In the history of Islam, women continued to mark their spiritual empowerment. Rabi'a al-'Adawiya (8th century) was an important heroine of Islamic mysticism. She was a woman who expressed her deep love to the Divine openly and publicly. She was the pioneer of unconditional love for God in Sufism and the first to reveal her emphatic feelings to her creator. Her *mujāhada* (hard spiritual work) helped her to purify herself and spirit and to find God in her heart. Her spirituality exceeded that of her male counter parts; in an anecdote, Rabi'a displayed superiority over Hassan al-Basrī, the great Sufi master. The latter submitted to her strong spirituality.¹⁵

Like Rabi'a, women in the Islamic world proved to be exemplary models of Islamic mysticism. In his *Dhikr al-Niswa al-Muta'abidāt al-Ṣūfiyāt*, abū 'abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī presented the lives of eighty-four women saints and Sufis who belonged to the glorious early years of Islam and to other different parts of Muslim world. Like other hagiographers, al-Sulamī wanted to expose the presence of the first generation of mystic women. He presented their biographies in a single book as proof of the presence of women in the early years of Islamic mysticism. Similarly in his *Salwa al-Anfās* al-Kettānī refers to fifty holy and women saints from Fes. What one gleans from these exemplary women of Islamic mysticism is that Sufism offers an understanding different

¹³ al-'abādī 2004

¹⁴ Skali 2007

¹⁵ 'Attār 1996

from and in contrast with the androcentric and patriarchal definition of gender roles in the *fiqh* which misrepresents the egalitarian spirit of Islam. Islamic mysticism here opens new avenues for women and men to live equally their religiosity and piety. Both Moroccan religious women and their counterparts in the Middle East created spiritual selves that gained them religious authority and in actual practice overturned traditional gender ideologies. To highlight this point, I will discuss the hagiographic story of ‘Azīza Sksāwiya, one of Marinid Moroccan women saints.

Lalla ‘Azīza Sksāwiya (14th century) ¹⁶

Traditional hagiographic lexicons (*manāqib*) constitute the primary source on the lives of Awliya Allah in Morocco. There are, however, some traditional hagiographers who show a particular interest in women’s spirituality and religious agency. The most important hagiographic work on ‘Aziza is the work entitled: *‘uns al-faqīr wa ‘iz al-ḥaqīr* (the convivial company of the wandering poor, and the honourable strength of the contemptible) by the jurist and hagiographer ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Quṣṭantīnī, known by the name Ibn Qunfud. This hagiographic manuscript begins in traditional manner with a short introduction in which the author identifies himself and gives praise to God and asks for blessing and invocations upon the Prophet. Ibn Qunfud’s manuscript consists of an organized arrangement of the narratives, which include the miracles, visions, and discourses with God and teachings of saints that he encountered or heard about or found in documents. Ibn Qunfud’s hagiographic work relies on al-Tādīlī’s work, *al-Tashawwuf*, because of his inclusion of a large number of major Moroccan male saints. Although it includes more detailed entries on male saints than females, it remains important from the perspective of this paper because it addresses his personal experience with the Moroccan saints, including ‘Azīza.

¹⁶ Before embarking on ‘Azīza Sksāwiya’s life story, I would like to shed some light on the medieval Moroccan context where the figure of ‘Azīza operated and developed. She lived in the 14th century, a time during which Morocco witnessed a great propagation of Sufism not only in urban spaces but also rural ones. It was also in this age that Morocco experienced a dreadful political decline that emanated from the weakness of the central authority, resulting in socio-political crises. Heavy taxation was imposed on local tribes, Muslim Spain had fallen into the hands of the European Christians, and Portugal forces conquered Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. In this decadent atmosphere, Moroccans, both urban or rural, were left to themselves to face their precarious situations. They sought the Shurfa and holy families’ protection and security; they believed in their charismatic grace. Al-Jazūlī, the “Axis of age” was one of the greatest spiritual masters of his time. His followers exceeded one thousand murids who later on founded their own zawiyas and became social protectors for Moroccans (see al-Nāṣirī 1954).

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The details of 'Azīza Sksāwiya's background are not known. She belonged to the Sksawa high Atlas tribe. Her shrine still stands in Imintanut town (south of Marrakech) and still enjoys great popularity among the inhabitants of southern Morocco. Ibn Qunfud mentioned in his work that he heard of her when he was in al-Qarawiyyīn in Fes. He then records that he travelled to the Saksāwa tribes in the Atlas and met `Azīza there:

I heard of her in al-Qarawiyyīn mosque....

I saw Lalla `Azīza on a mountain called Qihra (free). She blessed me with her Divine grace. I stood with her, and I studied with her. Then, she left me to meet her tribes' men and women. I saw her putting a veil on her head before she got out to meet her people. She delivered a lecture to men and women who were always around her. She was eloquent in speech and in preaching. Abū `Āmir al-Ḥanṭaṭī, the governor of Marrakech who headed an army of six thousand soldiers, had, arrived planning to conquer Saksāwa tribes. He was advancing with his armies, but `Azīza stopped him and engaged with him in a long conversation. When he finished his conversation with her, he came to me and said: "Oh! Faqīh! What a surprise? This woman is a wonderful person. She answers me before I ask. She knows in advance what I have in my mind. She knows my ideas and my thinking. I have never seen a person like her. I find myself unable to reject her demands. Indeed, her arguments are so pertinent and convincing that I decide to leave the Saksāwa tribe in

peace.”¹⁷

Oral literature constitutes an important additional source on `Azīza's life story. Her living descendants whom I encountered in her shrine still chant her life story to her pilgrims. Her descendants reported the following story:

Lalla `Azīza was born in the Saksāwa tribe and grew up in a Sufi family. From childhood, `Azīza learned God's words, commands and rules. She also worked as a shepherd for her family. She used to guide her goats into the mountains where she prayed to God and lived peacefully in retreat. The Sufi girl was continuously scolded by her father for leading the goats to mountain slopes where there was no grass. One day her father followed her to the mountains and found her praying to God. He shouted at her because she did not guide the goats to the banks of the river where grass was in abundant. “Father,” Lalla `Azīza said “Look at what your goats are eating.” The father turned to his goats and found their mouths full of herbs. From that time on her father and the whole tribe believed that Lalla `Azīza was a “tagurramt”¹⁸ sent to them by God.

The narrator stopped for a while, then carried on reciting the story:

It is said that one day, Lalla `Azīza was alone with her goats in the mountains and a young man who wanted to marry her followed her. The young man wanted to kidnap her, but she suddenly disappeared in front of his eyes. The Sultān of Marrakech

¹⁷ Ibn Qunfudh 1965, 86

¹⁸ “*Tagurramt*” is a Berber word which means a great woman saint.

also heard about her sainthood and invited her to live in his castle. There, Lalla `Azīza continued to study religion and the Islamic sciences. People said that she even traveled to Tlemcen to study in Abū Madyan's zāwiya, and when she came back to Marrakech, her sainthood had grown and was propagated. The Sulṭān proposed marriage to her, but she refused his proposal, so the Sultan threw her in jail and ordered her jail guardian to offer her a poisonous food, but she refused to eat. Since Lalla `Azīza finally could not stand the hunger, she decided to eat the poisonous food. She said: "In the name of God I will eat it, and for the sake of God I will die." It is also said that the Sulṭān ordered his servants to build her two shrines, one in her native tribal territory and the other in Marrakech.¹⁹

Both the oral and written stories thus provide some details about `Azīza's mystical development and experiences.

Lalla `Azīza: the Woman Saint

As the narratives above show `Azīza chose the Sufi path to become a saint. She comes forward as overwhelmed by a desire for spirituality since early age. She is presented as a Sufi girl who lived in a Sufi family, but who desires to be in retreat. This is clear from her insistence to be alone with her cattle in the mountainous areas, where she enjoyed God and His universe. Her strong desire for spirituality and piety is also clear from her resistance to her father's orders. She followed her desire for retreat, did not respond to her father's commands and remained alone in the mountains. `Azīza also comes forward as striving to develop her own piety, taking the mountain as a space where she could live in the company of the Divine.

¹⁹ Mohamed, interviews, June 2011

Another aspect of `Azīza's piety is her ability to perform miracles. From the stories, `Azīza developed miraculous skills since her childhood. Her descendents report that she made her goats healthy, and their mouths full of herbs and grace. Her father and his tribesmen were surprised because they wondered how the goats became so healthy though they were always in mountainous spaces where there was no grass. They wondered how the Sufi girl succeeded to perform this miracle. From the oral stories it is her strong piety to God that empowered her to be unlike the other shepherds whose goats were thin and unhealthy.

Miracles related to shepherding and the protections of the cattle indicate the importance of this woman saint, since in rural society shepherding and the protection of the cattle constitute the most important source of income. For rural people this woman saint's miracles and *karāma* are very powerful, since they meet the hardships of their rural lives. `Azīza's miracles allowed her to successfully fulfill the role of shepherd and to support her family economically. Her extraordinary skills made the whole tribe consider her a saint who performed miracles and deserved to be respected and venerated.

The stories above also describe `Azīza's rejection of conventional marriage, thus using celibacy as a self-technique to develop her sainthood. She is presented in the stories as a beautiful Sufi girl who was sought for marriage. Many tribesmen proposed to her, but she refused them all. She could have lived the life of a married woman, but she did not want to. She was even asked for marriage by the Sulṭān and rejected him as well. Her refusal of marriage displays that her heart was so occupied by God that she had no free space to love a man. `Azīza refused conventional marriage because she was totally devoted to the Divine and did not want to be controlled by dominant matrimonial relations. Thus, `Azīza had chosen Sufism and the search for 'ilm (knowledge) as strategies to achieve a saintly personality and religious authority.

Learning and Education

Azīza did not change herself into an ordinary saint; she developed a religious personality through her quest for orthodox religious knowledge. `Azīza belongs to a Sufi lineage, which marked the history of her region Saksāwa by knowledge and the status of highly scholarly '*ulamā*' and Sufi jurists.²⁰ She lived in an orthodox religious space that was dominated by men and ignored women. Through Sufism, she, as a woman, succeeded in following the path of knowledge and achieving an orthodox religious education that used to be

²⁰ al-Manūnī 1979

assigned only to males. `Azīza's example is but one among others of highly educated women in Marinid Morocco who had chosen education as a tool to change themselves. `Azīza was impressed by her scholarly religious environment and engaged in the search for knowledge. As her story shows, she wanted to change herself, following the model of murīd traveling from one space to another for the search of education and religion. Her overwhelming desire for religion impelled her to leave her family home, which was located in rural Saksāwa tribal territories, and to move to Marrakech to study religion. She even traveled to Tlemcen in Algeria to study Sufism in Abū Madyan's zāwiya.²¹ There she became one of his disciples. Thus, she achieved the status of `ālīma through her continuous traveling to religious centers searching 'ilm (science) from other highly scholarly 'ulamā'.

Azīza's quest for knowledge empowered her to become a preacher and a lecturer, enabling her to maintain followers and disciples who benefitted from her knowledge. Once back in Marrakech, her religious reputation spread and people gathered around her to listen to her sermons and lectures.²² Her hagiographer, Ibn Qunfudh, acknowledged her scholarly status. Her religious knowledge gained her great fame and a positive reputation that seemingly reached orthodox religious centers like al-Qarawiyyīn. He also confirms his respect for her status as a knowledgeable and able teacher, by personally studying with her and seeking to learn from her (see the hagiographic story above). This shows that she was a scholar whose knowledge impressed male Sufi jurists like Ibn Qunfudh, who acknowledged her as being superior to him in intellectual and spiritual matters. This enhanced `Azīza's reputation as a scholar and saint, and contributed to making her sainthood and religious expertise more widely known and publicly visible and accessible. This shows that `Azīza refused to remain an ordinary Sufi woman. Instead, she chose to satisfy an overwhelming desire to learn about Islam and Sufism. She succeeded in transforming herself into a Sufi and a knowledgeable and highly educated woman. Then, `Azīza's educated personality gained her power and political leadership that I will discuss in the following section.

²¹ Abu Madyān al-Ghut is one of the axial saints and highly scholars of medieval Morocco (See al-Tādīlī 1997). A zawiya is a religious order where the mystics and disciples learnt mysticism, Qur'an, Hadith and fiqh.

²² Venerators, interviews, June 2011

Political Leadership²³

Although women were denied political rights and access to legal and political decision-making leadership positions in the past, `Azīza constituted an exception. She proved to the dominant society her abilities to be a political leader, which was particularly notable in a rural context, where women's rights and life conditions were harsher in comparison to those of women in the urban centers. She was the exact opposite of those women saints who confined themselves to caves and private spaces and of those male saints who in vain tried to attain public power. `Azīza achieved a mode of orthodox sainthood that empowered her to become a powerful public political and social leader.

From her hagiographic record, `Azīza was engaged in jihād against the political leaders, not against the Iberians but against the central authority and against its plan to place the Saksāwa tribes²⁴ under its control. As a leader of her tribe, `Azīza challenged Muḥammad al-Ḥanṭāṭī, the governor of Marrakech, and his plan to put the Saksāwa tribe under his control (see the story above). She defended the autonomy of her tribe. She acted on behalf of her tribesmen and tribeswomen to eliminate the threat to their stability and autonomy. With her rhetorical speech she inhibited al-Ḥanṭāṭī's power and his political intentions. Her miraculous religious rhetoric impelled this man of great authority to submit to her demands, change his plans and leave the Saksāwa tribes in peace. Although Ibn Qunfudh did not transmit exactly what `Azīza said to al-Ḥanṭāṭī, it is possible to assume that she called for respect of God's instructions to embrace love, peace, humanism and mutual assistance among Muslims, and that she instructed the governor that respect for life was essential. She likely performed the role of a preacher who spoke out against violence, war and destruction. `Azīza's success in influencing the powerful elite with her strong spiritual image, and convincing them to withdraw from their destructive plans, emanated from the saintly power and religious authority that she had developed and that empowered her to defeat her enemies.

²³ To understand `Azīza's political empowerment, we need to place her story in its historical context, i.e., from the end of the 13th century till the end of the 14th century. `Azīza lived during the last years of the Marinid dynasty. In this era, the Saksāwa tribes were like most other Berber tribes in dissidence (*sība*). Confrontations between dissident tribes and the central authority were increasing. The Marinid central authority in Marrakech was in its decaying years. It entered into controversial relations with the Waṭāsiyyīn. The dissident tribal territories became a space of refuge for the poor, homeless and refugees. People who fled from the makhzen turned not only to dissident tribes but also to zāwiyas for security. The Iberians (the Spanish) had also started to conquer the coastal regions and port cities. Under these conditions, the Waṭāsid dynasty had defeated the Marinid's weak political system and conquered Fes which turned the capital of its new dynasty (see al-Nāṣirī 1954).

²⁴ Sksāwa tribes remained for two centuries in dissidence (see al-Nāṣirī 1954).

Another instance where `Azīza's political power was displayed was in her resistance to the Sulṭān's injustice. The Sulṭān was impressed by her sainthood and therefore invited her to his palace. But the growth of her sainthood and its popularity made the Sulṭān fear her and later on imprison her. This sheds light on the traditional and controversial relations between the political corpus and religious people, which were current in 14th-century Morocco.²⁵ It also reveals the oppositional relations between, on the one hand the Sufis and saints, whose power emanated from their divine grace and impelled people in pre-colonial Morocco to respect them, and, on the other hand, the political rulers who had begun to lose their legitimacy. The Sulṭān failed to realize that `Azīza's popularity was due to her developed saintly personality that appealed for justice, love, peace and non-violence. The Sulṭān's failure to follow `Azīza's example resulted in his use of violence against her, which entailed her imprisonment and death.

`Azīza's resistance to the Sulṭān is exemplified in her choice to die rather than to submit to his wishes. The Sulṭān tried to make her eat poisonous food. She first resisted him by refusing to eat the poisonous food, but she later resisted him by choosing death rather than living a life of humiliation, injustice and oppression and by imposing on the Sulṭān the way he should bury her sacred body. Her resistance to the Sulṭān shows that a rural Berber woman from the mountains could counteract the power of the ill political system of her time. She indirectly instructed the Sulṭān and taught him moral lessons, such as the way to gain God's love and people's admiration and support. The Sulṭān's decision to build her two shrines, one in Marrakech and the other in her tribe, demonstrates her victory and the power of her saintly personality, which retained its great power even after her death. Having two shrines dedicated to her shows the power of the sainthood `Azīza developed which survived her death and remained an eternal force among not only the elite but the common people as well.²⁶

`Azīza's ethical spiritual self-formation involved not only religious, but also social and political self-change. Her strong piety and highly religious knowledge empowered her to have religious and political authority. From her hagiographic and oral life stories, `Azīza was selected by her dissident tribesmen as the leader of the Saksāwa tribes. She proved that women were able to reach a political leadership. `Azīza achieved a religious authority and political leadership that impressed her community.

²⁵ al-Nāsirī 1954

²⁶ `Azīza's shrine still observes a strong veneration in the Atlas.

`Azīza's saintly status and image, which resulted from the way she reached sainthood, empowered her to have and exercise a public political power. Her saintly personality permitted her to have an impact on the common people as on the elite. The 'ulama' also showed her great respect and admiration. This is clear from the admiration and respect evident in Ibn Qunfudh's descriptions of her being surrounded by the men and women of her tribe (see the story above). `Azīza succeeded in achieving a form of popular sainthood that extended into the countryside and urban centers. The power of her sainthood enabled her to play the role of the political leader of her tribe. Her stories portray her as a knowledgeable woman who delivered her knowledge and education to her tribesmen and as a political leader who sought people's help, sustenance, justice and peace for her community. Her saintly personality empowered her to be close to her people, serve their needs and become aware of her people's problems. Her method for dealing with her tribesmen and women when they encountered crises and problems demonstrated her skills in the political arena. She made her tribe a center of refuge, security and reconciliation. She took on the role of the arbiter saint who sought people's reconciliations.²⁷

From the stories above Aziza comes forward as an important religious authority and a legitimate leader of her tribe. Her people chose her as their political leader, complying with her demands and orders (footnote).²⁸ It was obviously 'Azīza's religious leadership that gained her legitimate power among her community. She was a saint whose charismatic authority empowered her to perform extraordinary practices, as well as be a knowledgeable personality. Finally, 'Azīza is presented in the stories as a brave warrior who fought the enemies and defended courageously her tribe's autonomy. Local traditions and customs usually appointed the brave warrior as a leader. But 'Azīza's power was based on her status as a saint, scholar and a warrior at the same time.²⁹ It was her multifaceted personality that made her a legitimate leader of her tribe. She is recognized as well as a religious leader by some important scholars and hagiographers who give her a space in their writings and record her life story in history.

²⁷ Saints in medieval Morocco used to not only defend tribal territory against the *makhzen* (central authority), but also among tribes in a context where the central authority wielded no authority and where controversial relations over water, lands and animals prevailed. For more details see Hammoudi 1974, vxv.

²⁸ See her life story in particular the incident with the governor of Marrakech

²⁹ According to Weber (1963), holders of authority have the right to perform religious social and political roles and are considered legitimate leaders of their communities that have chosen to comply with their demands. Weber involves three ways to establish leadership legitimacy. These include charismatic, legal-rational and traditional. For more details see Weber 1963 and Gaffney 1994.

By means of all self-techniques mentioned, `Azīza undertook a lifelong project of ethical self-formation, developing herself into this charismatic multifaceted personality. As discussed above Sufism is open to men and women to become Sufis and saints. Both could equally achieve sainthood. The search of knowledge and education enabled `Azīza to develop a free style of spirituality that, working on the limits of the dominant patriarchal patterns, culminated in an alternative way of life for a woman. In other words, `Azīza refused to become an ordinary woman and submit to her tribal dominant norms that privilege men and discriminate women. Instead, she engaged in Sufism and constructed a new personality, different from that prescribed by the conventional dominant culture, and that in fact challenged the patriarchal patterns of her time. Through Sufism and education, she was able to develop an ethical self-formation that contradicts the cultural dominant norms, reaching authority and leadership, and as such the stories on her life as narrated convey equality effects, and even egalitarian effects.³⁰

Such an ethical self-formation that implicitly or explicitly challenges forms of domination can be called, in the words of Michel Foucault a freedom practice.³¹ Freedom practices are at stake when individuals practice self-techniques in the context of religious or philosophical movements that emphasize the importance for people to create their own free state of being, different from that assigned by local dominant moral codes or rules. The ethical formation of the self in such movements that offer self-techniques to stylize a personal ethical and / or religious life consists of a conscious, continuous practicing of certain preferred ethical self-techniques, aiming for a specific chosen life project. `Azīza's example shows that Sufism comprised such self-techniques that allowed her to develop her own ethical and religious way of life that subverted the dominant gender norms. From her example, that by now means is an exception, we can distill that women's freedom practices are endemic to Moroccan history. And from it we can approve that as Leila Ahmed (1992) affirms "the beliefs on which feminism rests are endemic parts of

³⁰ According to Stuurman, there is a difference between equality effects and egalitarianism. He argues: "(It is useful to distinguish between equality and egalitarianism. Egalitarianism denotes the conscious pursuit of some specific variety of equality, while discourses and concepts of equality refer to specific senses in which persons are deemed equal in particular respects. The relation between equality and egalitarianism is one of potentiality: concepts of equality are not necessary egalitarian. On the other hand it is obvious that ideas of equality can easily spill over into egalitarian discourses', which hold that when things are alike they should 'receive similar treatment'" Stuurman 2004: 24-26.

³¹ Foucault 1997 see also Vintges 2007

Islamic civilization”.³²

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed Sufism’s gender neutrality. To highlight this point I selected one of the most important Moroccan women saints called `Azīza Sksāwiya, and I approached her as agent, discussing the way she actively sought and pursued paths to sainthood and constructed a saintly personality that simultaneously transgressed patriarchy.

As is evident from the data and analysis elucidated in this paper, my research results challenge the conventional image of Moroccan Muslim women as passive victims of patriarchal religious ideologies. Through my research, an alternative discourse emerges of historical women being active religious figures who were engaged in creating and transforming their religious roles and who gained a public religious, social and political authority. Moroccan people now turn to these historical women saints and try to revive their glorious past for peace, sustenance and also moral lessons. Feminists also reconsider these historical religious women in their feminist discourses and re-articulate them as historical feminists who have to be highlighted to underpin women’s rights in contemporary Morocco. Lalla `Azīza Sksāwiya remains an important example and reference for the question of Moroccan women today. Her story empowers contemporary Moroccan women to have access to political and legal leadership.

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³² Ahmed 1992

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Towards New Strategies of 'bringing up' Masculinity in Morocco

Mohammed Yachoulti

Introduction

This chapter addresses the multiple ways of constructing and passing on masculinity in Morocco in particular and in the Arab Muslim world in general and suggests ways of intervention. Specifically, it seeks to examine the construction of masculinity in different 'communities of practice'¹ for the sake of deconstructing extremist and violent doings and understandings of masculinity. The chapter is an accumulation of the researcher's experience of studying and working on gender issues in Morocco since 2004. The chapter argues that, since every context or 'community of practice' has some influence on the process of learning and doing masculine activities, challenging and reconsidering these extremist notions of masculinity will always be possible.

The aim of the chapter is to identify how understanding of masculinity is passed on or transmitted to new generations in Morocco in particular and in the Arab Muslim world in general. This would help, in its turn, in identifying how and where to wipe out, rebuild, change or challenge extremist understanding of masculinity and therefore influence the actual performance of doing masculinity. Indeed, as the case with many other cultures and societies, masculinity in Arab Muslim societies teaches "us to be powerful, dominant, in control, defensive, and violent". We are not allowed to "show our weaknesses otherwise we will not be accepted in society"(Janhazeb 2010). This fact is dangerous because it shapes and fuels the ideology of male supremacy which is so deeply connected to violence, and other oppressions (Ibid). With this chapter, I don't aim or claim radical or rapid change of the status quo; my objective is to induce people in different "communities of practice" to reconsider the way we

¹ In this chapter, I use the concept as developed and used by Paecher Carrie in her book *Being Boys, Being Girls: learning masculinities and femininities*(2007). For here "community of practice is a location in and through which individuals develop their identities, in relation to other members of the community and to members of other communities. It is where individuals come to understand what it is to have a part in community identity and the behaviors and practices that are associated with it" p 7

use our influence and pass on our ‘tough’ and ‘violent’ constructions of masculinity in the process of bringing up new generations.

To this effect, the chapter is divided into two parts. The first one discusses the concept of masculinity and how it is conceptualized and theorized both in the West and the Arab-Muslim world. I believe that this will allow both investigating and understanding the specificities of the concept in each context. The second part traces the different contexts and mechanisms of constructing masculinity in Morocco in particular and the MENA in general. Tracing this trajectory of teaching, learning and doing masculine will allow us the chance to suggest strategies of interference for the sake of challenging and reconsidering those extremist notions of masculinity.

Masculinity or masculinities: understanding the concept

In their book titled *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, Pilcher Jane and Imelda Whelehan (2004) define masculinity as “the set of social practices and cultural representations associated with being a man”. (P 82) Similarly, Kimmel Michael (2008) defines masculinity as “a unified set of personal characteristics, behaviors, and beliefs—including physical strength, assertiveness, emotional detachment, and competition”. (p 5). These “social roles, behaviors, and meanings [are] prescribed for men in any given society at any one time” (Ibid p 5). Following these two definitions, it is worth arguing that dealing with masculinity and its counterpart femininity does not necessarily entail dealing with personal choices of individuals or with concepts personally in isolation of society. Rather, it goes beyond personal choices to mean socially constructed gender identities and roles imposed upon an individual. In other words, children learn and develop gender identities from an early age and gradually begin to avoid behavior they believe inappropriate to their sex. Carrie Paecher (2007) states that

When a baby is named as a boy or a girl, he or she is thus placed in a constellation of overlapping communities of practice or masculinity or femininity, through which he or she will learn, from more established group members (such as parents and siblings) what is to be male or female in that community. Thus boys can be seen (broadly) as apprentice men, learning through observation of the men they encounter and peripheral participation in their activities what is to be a man in the local communities of practice in which they live. Girls, similarly, are apprentice women, taking part with

adult women in activities pertaining to womanhood in those communities. P.7

In patriarchal societies and cultures, boys are always taught that in order to be 'real men', they must take on a tough disguise. This disguise allows them to show only certain parts of themselves and their identities that the dominant culture has defined as manly. These include risk-taking, physical toughness, aggression, violence, emotional control and overt heterosexual desire.(Abu jabber. 2010-2011).So to speak, man constructs an image of himself on the basis of what society expects of him. Man's perception is accumulated from his societal experiences and his socialization processes.

The plural form masculinities is also possible; it is used to describe and recognize ways of being a man. This form is true as the cultural representations of men vary historically and culturally, between societies, and between different groupings of men within a single society (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). Also, "the replacement of the unitary concept of masculinity with pluralized concept of masculinities occurred because it was recognized that there are hierarchies among men, as well as between women and men, and the power relations of gender are complex and multifaceted" (Peterson 2003.p57). However, in the MENA region, it should be noted that that neither Standard Arabic nor its varieties (Moroccan Arabic is a good example) have a plural form of masculinity. In fact, this linguistic aspect is one way of legitimating masculinity as a homogeneous category that resists any attempt of change or unpacking.

Actually, Connell Raewyn is the first to develop a theory of masculinity as part of his broader, relational theory of gender. His theory is an accumulation of "the ideas, theories, experiences and understandings [he] had been accumulating and refining over nearly three decades of researching, teaching, reading, writing and thinking about class, gender, psychology and sociological theory" (Wedgwood.2009, p333). Indeed, Connell (1995: 71) pictures masculinity as "a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture". In other words, for Connell "gender is the end-product of ongoing interpretations of and definitions placed upon the reproductive and sexual capacities of the human body. Masculinities (and femininities) can be understood, therefore, as the effects of these interpretations and definitions: on bodies, on personalities and on a society's culture and institutions"(Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). In his theory, Connell goes further to argue that "masculinities occupy a higher ranking than femininity in the 'gender hierarchy' characteristic of modern Western societies". For this reason, he uses the word 'hegemonic masculinity' to describe "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently

accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell 1995 77 cited in Paecher 2007. p13). Hegemonic masculinity is thus not only with a considerable power, vis-vis women, but at the same time made “as an ideal type against which various ways of doing man can be constructed and performed”. (Paechter. 2006.)

Below this ideal level, Connell suggests “subordinated masculinities” as forms which do not match with the qualities of the first one. The most important of these is homosexual masculinity. This form includes a range of masculine behaviors which do not fully match up to the macho ideals of the first form. At the bottom of this gender hierarchy is femininity which is always subordinated to masculinity.

On the other hand, while masculinities studies are now experiencing a tremendous boom in the West, Lahoucine Ouzgane (2006) argues that studies of Islamic masculinities are surprisingly rare. In his own words, Ouzgane says: “masculinity in Islamic cultures has so far remained an under-examined category that secures its power by refusing to identify itself” (p1). Indeed, for him, scholarly attention to gender issues in the MENA has been focused almost exclusively on a quest to understand what is femininity and how it is made and constructed in the Arab Muslim societies. The best examples to mention in this regard are Fatna Sabbah’s *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious* (1984); Fatima Mernissi’s *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1987); Fedwa Malti-Douglas’s *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word* (1991); Leila Ahmed’s *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992) and Marnia Lazreg’s *The Eloquence of Silence* (1994) among others (cited in Ouzgane 2006). On the other hand, there are no significant studies that make Muslim men visible as gendered subjects, and masculinity in the Arab Islamic cultures has so far remained an unrecognized and unacknowledged category viewed in essentialist terms and perceived as natural and self-evident (Aghacy. 2004). Ouzgane maintains that apart from “*Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East* (2000)², there are very few studies that render Muslim men visible as gendered subjects and that show that masculinities have a history and are part of gender relations in Muslim cultures. For him, *Imagined Masculinities* is thus the first serious

² -The book presents the work of fifteen academics, journalists and writers of various cultural backgrounds, all of whom share the premise that masculinity, like femininity, is socially constructed with complex webs of power relations. For Ouzgane, the book examines some widespread rites of passage by which male identities are constructed and desirable versions of masculinity achieved: male circumcision, a boy’s expulsion from the women’s hammam, military service, and the Palestinian rituals of resistance to the Israeli army.

collection that addresses the different aspects of being and becoming a man in the modern Middle East.

Generally speaking, the concept masculinity originates in the west and has different forms and hierarchies. Thus, the plural form masculinities is used to include all sub-forms and sub-categories. In the Arab Muslim world, however, the concept is still a homogeneous category that resists any sub-categorization. So far, the concept is defined as unit “of distinctive practices defined by men’s positionings within a variety of [...] social structures”(Ouzgane 2006. P2). This connotes only one fact that forms such as homosexuality suggested by Connel are not recognized and not yet included under the concept of masculinity in the Arab Muslim World.

Constructions of masculinity: contexts and strategies

Commonly known, the first constructions of doing masculinity takes place early in childhood. First, children are presented to the constructions of masculinity by their parents and siblings and then by their extended relatives. Second, they are presented to them by their neighbors and to a considerable extent by societal institutions such as kindergartens. Third, they are presented to them by the school system. Finally, they are presented to them by their peers and the outside community. In every context of these, there is a never-ending web of relations and every one of them has some part to play in the process. Some are renewed throughout life and thus are fundamental to the individual while others are circumferential and of less importance (Jackob. 2011). Of course which context is considered the most important vary depending on the socio-economic, cultural, geographical conditions of each family. In other words, family life, values and social status are always reflected in child-rearing practices, their education, and socialization practices.

Interestingly enough, since every context of these has some influences, our task and hope as educationalists, pedagogues, activists to challenge and reconsider those extremist notions of masculinity will be always possible. However, the success of all this depends on our readiness to defend and discuss our alternatives in case or when they are challenged.

The family

Paechter (2007) argues that when a family names the baby’s sex, the family performs an act which places the baby into a clear category, from which we then expect to make predictions about its future. For her, this performative act is extraordinarily powerful because “the distinction between male and female is fundamental to how we understand ourselves as human beings” (P6). In her

own words, “when a baby is named as a boy or a girls, he or she is thus placed in a constellation of overlapping local communities of practice of masculinity or femininity, through which he or she will learn, from more established groups members (such as parents and siblings) what is to be male or female in that community. This performative act governs how individuals are treated, the roles they play and take in society and how they are assumed to behave. In Morocco, families usually socialize their children by formulating gender roles for both men and women. They educate their children based the on binary opposition that men are strong, but women are weak. Men can work and women cannot. Men can earn money while are incapable of doing so. Men have enough space inside and outside their houses but women must stick to their harem (Abdelaal. 2011). They also tolerate a considerable amount of bad behaviors from boys without defining them as deviant behaviors. They are considered as signs of men’s virility and a strategic way of exercising power. This is dangerous because it alienates children namely boys from embracing their humanity, impedes them from seeing new possibilities within themselves, and prevents them creativity. Therefore, to reduce this

- We, as educationalist, pedagogues and activists, should find interest in opening spaces where we can discuss with families these strategies, which ones we make use of and how they play part in the construction of performance of masculinity that we pass on to the next generation.(Jackob. 2011).

- As educationalist, pedagogues and activists, we can use mainstream media to provide models that teach a variety of possible doings of ever day life. In other words, through medial namely television, we can give families strong alternatives to the dominant ways of performing masculinity.

- Families should be taught how to let their children have broader understandings of themselves and their gender

- Civil society activists working with children should start to make the personal political, to act as resistant participants in some of our own local communities of masculinity and femininity practice, work together with each other and with our children to form different possibilities for masculinities and femininities (Paecher 2007).

Neighborhoods and societal institutions (kindergartens)

In both local neighborhoods and societal intuitions such kindergartens, boys and girls are taught and expected to have a specific manner of speech, special

behavior and gestures. Generic statements about females and males like “boys don’t do that”, and “girls don’t do that” are omnipresent in both contexts among peers, elder neighbors and babysitters. Also, in both contexts, the division of games proper to boys and girls is highly encouraged. Any indifference to these features will result in continuous teasing and therefore rejection and isolation. In other words, for a male to behave in any manner that is generally perceived as “feminine” is to be stigmatized by his male peers, and the worst insults for boys are those that deprive them of their “manhood.” If a boy is not aggressive, dominant, tough, athletic, unemotional, he cannot be a “real man” or ‘a proper man’. So the question in this regard is how to support boys to do their gender and experience different masculinities and overcome the localized image of ‘real boy’?

At the level of kindergartens

- The ministry of education should make sure that these kindergartens provide a variety of play materials, toys and activities and avoid labeling them as being ‘for boys’ and ‘these for girls’.
- The superhero play things particularly those that involve physical activity including guns, sobers, bats and outdoor equipments usually nurture violence and aggression. Therefore, caregivers or babysitters should learn to treat those superhero plays with caution and recognize their limitations in the future.
- The ministry of education should provide special trainings for caregivers and babysitters of how to take care of their language to ensure that they don’t reinforce boundaries between boys and girls. It should train them how to challenge generic statements about females and males so that a child says “boys don’t do that” will find an example of “a boy who does” (Paecher. 2007).

At the neighborhoods level

Civil society organizations operating at the neighborhoods level (usually called *widadiyat*) can play a role in this regard.

- They should provide enough spaces and playgrounds and then actively support boys and girls to take parts in activities that the community constructs for the other sex.

- They should provide regular ‘soft play activities’ that prevent boys from exaggerating their masculinity. That said, they should prevent boys from activities that encourage violence.
- They should work to keep the kids from bullying each other based on their gender. To do this, they can carve graffiti that range from simple written words to elaborate wall paintings in the neighborhoods and discuss with them what it means to respect each other.
- They should collaborate with parents and families and involve them in regular campaigns, activities and meetings to sensitize them about the negative outcomes of seeing men and women as static role-models for boys and girls respectively without considering the unique needs of these boys and girls as individuals (Jackob 2011).

School system

Moroccan school still reflects in many cases the segregated gender socializations and roles in society. Both school programs and the pedagogic practices of teachers still reinforce the segregated gender roles in society. A female is often modeled in school programs as an excellent house-keeper, a virtuous wife and a devoted mother while her activity is restricted to home, her father or husband deals with the outside world. He is the protector and supporter of his women (Davis 1983). Similarly studies show that teachers or educators in general try to “describe both boys and girls in binary terms perceiving boys as comparatively ‘rough’, ‘boisterous’, ‘physical’, ‘competitive’ and ‘interested in exploring things’ while girls are considered to be more sedate, ‘chatty’, ‘eager to please’, ‘calm and attentive’(cited in Paecher 2007 p 65) . As a result of this, there is a tendency “to provide activities that boys are expected to enjoy in order keeping them of mischief”(cited in Paecher 2007 p 65). This will in its own turn nurture feelings of masculine supremacy, power and aggression. For this to be reduced,

- Teachers need to have enough gender awareness to avoid treating boys and girls differently as this makes each group imagine how these teachers feel about them.
- Teachers should be given much support in understanding in detail the construction of masculinity and femininity in school. This will help them to construct suitable interventions that do not reinforce stereotypes.

Towards New Strategies of 'bringing up' Masculinity in Morocco

- Policy makers, educationalists, teachers and textbook designers should provide books and activities with a range of models of masculinity and allow teachers to discuss them with children.
- Policy makers, educationalists, teachers and textbook designers also need to reconsider the impact of textbooks on girls and boys from different backgrounds and of different abilities and make reforms accordingly (Paecher 2007).

Community

The American black feminist Bell Hooks(2004) says:“In patriarchal culture males are not allowed simply to be who they are and to glory in their unique identity. Their value is always determined by what they do.” (p. 11).In Morocco, as a good example of patriarchal culture, boys are taught to be anti-female. For a male to behave in any manner that is generally perceived as “feminine” is to be stigmatized by others, especially male peers. Also, the masculine image is based on being the protector and the defender of the family’s honor. In other words, boys are usually taught the necessity to defend the honor of the family so as to appear or be “real men”; the system locks women in closed spaces while at same time forces men (be they their fathers, brothers or husbands) to protect them and defend their honor. Further, boys are always encouraged by society’s norms to have natural leadership potential and strength. To be strong is often synonymous with being powerful which is to be masculine. Therefore, the exertion of power becomes an act of masculinity. Indeed, these messages and others received about masculinity and femininity are usually shaped, established, and standardized by mainstream media, namely television. This is dangerous because as the radical feminist-activist and author Robert Jensen argues, a world in which “masculinity is shaped by dominance, aggression, conquest, and violence is a world that is unsafe and unsustainable.” (cited in Janhazeb 2010) .Therefore, the question that pops up in this regard is how to reduce this and therefore avoid or contain this potential danger within local communities?

-As educationalist, pedagogues, civil society activists and policy designers, we should teach people namely men that they shouldn’t be afraid or feel threatened to deconstruct the social norms of masculinity and change the way it operates in our daily lives.

-We should also teach namely Moroccan men and make them understand that these extremist constructions of masculinity alienate us

from embracing our humanity and prevent us from seeing the possibilities that there is something new within ourselves, something we can create (Janhazeb 2010).

-Moroccan men should understand that abolishing those violent sides of masculinity is not anti-male, nor is it harmful to their personality. But, they should embrace it as a bold struggle for personal and societal transformation (Janhazeb 2010).

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would state that society constructs masculinity through social and historical contexts reinforces it through its web of relations. Therefore, if we want to carry out the of challenge deconstructing the actual teaching, learning and doing masculine, we have to bear in mind that our constructions and alternatives will also be questioned and challenged and we should be ready to discuss and defend them. Also, for any change to occur there must be some curiosity and enthusiasm as there is no challenge without curiosity and then we should accept the potential conflict it may involve. Our task then is to take this conflict as the first step towards a constructive dialogue bearing in mind that common understandings and reciprocal respect should always be our main goal.

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Biographies of Contributors

Colette Apelian is an art and architectural historian and eLearning expert who has organized online curricula for Berkeley City College and Central Michigan University. Her publication topics include contemporary art, vehicle decoration, and the electrical and transportation networks in Morocco.

Souad Belhorma is a Ph.D. candidate at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University. She is the author of the book *The Participation of Women in the Labor Force: Women Workers in Primary Schools as a Case Study* (2012, Lambert Academic Publishing). She holds an MA in cultural studies and certificates from courses on women's rights, human rights, gender based violence, and youth awareness.

Rachid ElOuardi holds a Ph.D. in linguistics from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University at Fès. He is a researcher in language, culture and gender studies. He has participated in many national and international conferences, and is an active member of several non-government organizations, especially the ISIS Center for Women and Development, and the South North Center for Intercultural Dialogue and Migration Studies.

Moha Ennaji is professor of linguistics and cultural studies at Fès University. His most recent publications are: *Moroccan Feminisms: New Perspectives* (Africa World Press, 2016, co-editor), *Minorities, Women and the State in North Africa* (Red Sea Press, 2015, Editor), *Muslim Moroccan Migrants in Europe* (Palgrave, 2014), *Multiculturalism and Democracy in North Africa* (Routledge, 2014, Editor), *Gender and Violence in the Middle East*, co-edited with F. Sadiqi (Routledge, 2011). Moha Ennaji is the President of the South North Center for Intercultural Dialogue and Migration Studies.

Sanja Kelly is the director for *Freedom on the Net*, Freedom House's assessment of global internet freedom. In that capacity, she oversees all research, writing, and administrative operations for the project, and manages a team of over 70 international analysts. She has authored and edited numerous articles, reports, and books examining internet freedom, democratic governance, and women's rights. She regularly briefs the private sector, government agencies, and NGOs on internet freedom

trends, and is frequently interviewed by domestic and international media. Her commentary has appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, Al-Jazeera, Fox New, CNN, and other outlets.


Aziza Ouguir obtained her BA degree in linguistics at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra. She also holds a postgraduate degree in linguistics and gender studies from Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah in Fes. In 2013, she obtained her PhD degree from the University of Amsterdam, school of humanities the Netherlands. Her PhD thesis is titled “Female Religious Agents: Old Practices and New Perspectives”. It is a research project which studies Moroccan female religious women, in particular historical women saints and their reception by women venerators and feminist activists of Morocco today. Her field of study focuses on Moroccan feminine Sufism, women in Islamic History, gender issues and feminism. At present she is an employee at the municipal council of Khemisset city.

Driss Rhomari is a researcher and professor at the Teacher Training College in Tangiers, Morocco. He studied English Literature and Gender Studies in Fès, earning him a Doctorate from the Gender Studies program at Sidi Mohammad Ben Abdellah University. During the 2006-2007 academic year, he was a grantee in the multi-disciplinary research program “German-Arab Dialogue” of Oldenburg University in Germany. His project dealt with the Islamist movement in Morocco. His research interests include language teaching, gender, Islam and cultural studies.

Fatima Sadiqi is Professor of linguistics and gender studies. She has written extensively on Moroccan languages and Moroccan women’s issues. She is the author of *Women, Gender, and Language in Morocco* (Brill, 2003), acclaimed by many critics as the first book on feminist linguistics in the Arab-Islamic world. Her Harvard Fellowship allowed her to start her new book *Berber Women’s Religious Expressions*. Fatima Sadiqi has also co-authored, co-edited, and co-translated a number of books and articles. She is Editor-in-Chief of *Languages and Linguistics*, an international journal, and serves on the editorial board of the *Language and Gender*, the first international journal in the discipline. Her recent interest in gender and migration is part of her concerns with how language, gender and mobility interact with culture in a fast-changing planet.

Oifae Tribak is a graduate student at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University. She holds a BA and an MA degree in English literature and Cultural Studies. Her research interests cover language, culture, gender, and women studies. She has participated in many seminars and academic workshops on these topics.

Mohammed Yachoulti graduated from Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences, Fez- Morocco with a BA degree in English literature, an MA in Gender Studies and a Doctorate in Linguistics & Gender Studies. Currently, he is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Arts & Human Sciences, Moulay Ismail University-Meknes. He is interested in gender and politics, social movement studies and migration. His recent publication is *Civil Society, Women's Movement and the Moroccan State: Addressing the specificities and Assessing the roles* (2012, Lamber Academic Publishing). He has also participated in many national and international conferences and workshops on gender, civil society, and migration.

A woman in a white dress is shown from the waist up, looking down. The background is a solid red color. On the right side, there is a large, white, circular graphic element that resembles a stylized 'C' or a partial circle. The text is positioned to the right of the woman, within the red area.

The authors of this book recommend girl's education, economic independence, and emancipation combined with activism and media to be used as tools to fight violence against women, and to address systematically family, community and state's involvement in the right policies to fight violence against women. They also recommend the reform of education, critical thinking, and reduction of the parity index through more schooling for girls, addressing gender equality in family, school, civil society, and use of social media to combat violence against women.