WOMEN AND ISLAM
WEEK#5

By Dr. Monia Mazigh
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Title of the book: “A Most Masculine State: Gender, Politics and Religion in Saudi Arabia”
Author: Madawi Al-Rasheed
Cambridge University Press, 2013
She is Saudi-Arabian-born. She is a visiting professor at the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

She is the granddaughter of Mohamed bin Talal Al-Rasheed, the last prince of Emirate of H’ail.
Saudi women are either superstars or victims of their own society and religion.

The author asks the following questions:

“Are society, culture, and religion responsible for the extreme marginalization of Saudi women in the public sphere?”
Women discrimination in Saudi Arabia is situated in the evolution of the state from one relying on religious revival to one anchored in religious nationalism.

Women are central to political (nationalistic) and religious projects.
“If there is anything unique about Saudi Arabia, it is the long historical association between the state and religion to which women have been central.”
In the 7th century, Arabia became the cradle of Islam. Two holy cities: Mecca and Medina.

In the mid 18th century, Al Saud, emerged as a minor tribal rulers (Najd). They joined forces with the Wahhabi Islamic movement.

Between 1902 and 1927, Abdul-Aziz Al Saud carried a series of wars to finally establish the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1930.

Immense reserves of oil were discovered in 1938.
Wahhabism is named after an 18th century preacher: Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792)

He started a reform movement in the remote, sparsely populated region of Najd

He called for a purging from widespread Sunni practices as the veneration of saints and the visiting of their tombs and shrines

“A corpus of doctrines", and "a set of attitudes and behaviour, derived from the teachings of a particularly severe religious reformist who lived in central Arabia in the mid-eighteenth century" Gilles Kepel
1945: OIL FOR MILITARY PROTECTION
The insurgents called for the overthrow of the House of Saud that they accused of corruption and religious permissiveness.

Consequences: stricter adherence to Wahhabism.
Several and major unrest in Qatif (Eastern region)

Shia presence in Saudi Arabia: about 10% or 15% of the population (about 20 million native Saudi)

Sectarian outburst of violence between Shia minority and Sunni Majority

Beginning of Shia mobilization in Saudi Arabia
In the 1990s, a new Saudi Arabian culture started to emerge: post capitalism, globalized, consumption culture, neo-liberal market economy

How religious authorities reacted to this new economic environment?
How to keep this immorality away from Saudi youth and especially women

They would issues fatwas to dissuade the youth from adopting this impious way of life but

In the new Saudi novels, the female heroines “seek personal freedoms rather than social rights for themselves as a group”
“The political and religious forces have combined to generate the seeming obsession separating men and women in the public sphere, from the market to mosque, university, and school; the regulation of marriage to foreigners, subject to the requirement of obtaining permission from the Ministry of Interior; the guardianship system imposed on women; and many other legal restrictions”
On one hand, you have a state that encourages a neoliberal type of economy: consumption, malls, urban shopping, flourish the cosmopolitan fantasy.

On the other hand, we have a state that forbids mixed encounters, control sex and desire to remind people about their commitment to “religious nationalism”.

CONTRADICTORY SOCIETY
The oil economy had a tremendous impact on gender relations, marriage, and sexual life.

The state turned a natural instinct into an obsession.

Is this segregation model viable?
While the oil economy contributed to the consolidation of the obsession with women bodies with sex and enforcement of sex segregation, the recent neo-liberal monetization, privatization, consumption, and excessive advertising since the late 1990s are all contributing factors that have pushed young Saudi to Jihad.
“While secular Arab nation states have, since the 1950s, espoused women and their emancipation as legitimate causes under the rhetoric of national development, the Saudi state declared women in need of protection, welfare, and paternalistic support under the umbrella of Islam”
WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv4Mb_TAfBU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv4Mb_TAfBU) Song
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rUn2j1hL0o&list=RD1rUn2j1hLOo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rUn2j1hL0o&list=RD1rUn2j1hLOo) The Economist
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuaR6zjQuUE&list=RDtDEv4CtHD1A&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuaR6zjQuUE&list=RDtDEv4CtHD1A&index=5)
The vectors of oppression that consign Khadija to remaining in this conflictual and violent marriage can be traced not so much to culture or traditional forms of gender inequality as to poverty.

- Poverty is the result of: local family history, political economic transformation (concentrated wealth, oligarchy, dictatorship)
- Endemic poverty in many Muslim countries
- Neoliberalism policies
WHO ELSE TO BLAME

- The oppressive regimes after the independence
- The educational system
- Cultural habits
Women all across the Muslim world still suffer from:

- Lack of education
- Lack of economic opportunities
- Lack of rights
LITERACY RATES IN MUSLIM WORLD

Adult Literacy Rates in Comparison*

- **OIC**: Adult Total 71.7, A. Female 64.2, A. Male 79.3
- **Other Developing**: Adult Total 82.5, A. Female 77.5, A. Male 87.8
- **Developed**: Adult Total 98.6, A. Female 97.5, A. Male 98.7
- **World**: Adult Total 80.1, A. Female 74.6, A. Male 85.9

*Source: World Bank WDI and UNESCO, UIS Data Centre.*

*The weighted averages calculated by using the latest available data for each group.*
MENA countries have made impressive achievements in closing gender gap in education.
The combined annual GDP of 57 Muslim countries remains under $2 trillion.

- USA $10.4 trillion
- China $5.7 trillion
- Japan $3.5 trillion
- Germany $2.1 trillion
POVERTY IN ARAB WORLD

Figure 3: Poverty Rates at National Poverty Lines in Arab Countries (% of Population)

FEMALE IN LABOUR FORCE

WHO OR WHAT ELSE TO BLAME

- Patriarchy has been in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions for centuries before Islam.
- The “ijtihad” or reinterpretation of the religious text hasn’t been achieved so far (reformists, Musawah).
- Colonialism: women have been always used as a pretext to invade regions and exploit its natural and human resources.
- Women have been used by “secular” AND “religious” groups to advance their agenda.
The socio-economic environment discourages women from working despite encouraging them to get an education, especially in oil-rich Gulf nations.

- Patriarchal state institutions system
- Inhospitable business environment

Source: http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/despite-high-education-levels-arab-women-still-don-t-have-jobs
WOMEN IN MOROCCO

- https://player.vimeo.com/video/28629433
- Islamic Feminism and Secular feminism in Morocco
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fbj5-pTQ7aw
YOUR THOUGHTS...