

## BOOK REVIEW

**Between Feminism and Islam, human rights and Sharia law in Morocco, social movements, protest, and contention series**, by Zakia Salime, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 195.

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In *Between Feminism and Islam*, the sociologist and feminist activist, Zakia Salime, presents an innovative reading of Moroccan feminism for several reasons. First, by devoting her monograph to Morocco's contemporary feminist movement, Salime contributes to promoting research on this topic among the academic community. Indeed, studies interested in Morocco's feminist movements are rare. Moreover, in general, researchers addressing this topic are content with simply citing the movement's major events chronologically.

Second, by adopting a methodology that transcends current semiotic oppositions between feminist/anti-feminist, modern/anti-modern and secular/religious, Salime engages in a novel reading of women's movements in contemporary Morocco. Past studies in this field often situate the feminist movement and the Islamist women's movement in opposition to one another. This opposition appears legitimate given that feminists work for the promotion and implementation of international treaties related to protecting women's fundamental rights internally, while Islamist women denounce the cultural imperialism of international law, and make demands for the application of *Sharia* (Islamic law) within national borders. Therefore, the feminist movement and the Islamist women's movement seem irredeemably antagonistic. This is where the force of Salime's monograph resides, and thus her principal contribution: the author studies these two movements relationally rather than comparatively.

By analysing the exchanges and complex interactions between these two movements, Salime highlights the interdependence of their trajectories as well as their respective impacts on state policies related to gender – and to public debates on women's rights. Indeed, through interviews, archival research, participant observation and the analysis of discourse, the author demonstrates that the exchanges and interactions between these two movements gave rise to a double dynamic: the feminization of the Islamist movement, and inversely, the Islamisation of the feminist movement. If, generally, researchers interested in women and feminist movements accept that the Campaign for One Million Signatures initiated the autonomous feminist movement in Morocco, Salime suggests rightly that this constitutes a partial reading of the Campaign's consequences. Salime explains that the Campaign also gave rise to the Islamist women's movement. In this regard, the author recalls that following this event, Islamist women mobilized, and positioned themselves in relation to global feminism, as well as in relation to their marginalization among Islamist organizations dominated largely by men. This mobilization resulted in the immediate feminization of Islamist groups.

But if feminist activities influence the activities of the Islamist women's movement, in turn, the activities of the latter impact the feminist movement. Contrary to the popular belief that

feminists are westernized and, therefore, are cut off from their religio-cultural reality, Salime illustrates through her research that feminists maintain a permanent and coherent dialogue with their daily reality. For instance, feminists engaged in a critical self-reflection following the Islamist march in Casablanca in 2000. As a result of this internal examination, the movement revised its activist approach. While continuing to adhere to the discourse of universal rights and to international treaties and conventions for the protection of women's human rights, feminists reinterpreted the precepts of Islamic law to find compatibility between Islamic law and international human rights law. In other words, the feminist movement adopted, additionally, a religious discourse for the purpose of engaging in 'activism from below', which Salime qualifies as the Islamisation of the feminist movement.

Finally, by inscribing the exchanges and interactions between the feminist movement and the Islamist women's movement in the political reality of their time, Salime illustrates successfully that women's movements are essentially political movements. Thus, these movements maintain exchanges and complex interactions with the political sphere's principal actors. For example, during Casablanca's Islamist attacks of 2003, the feminist movement appeared as a double agent of modernity and democracy. Consequently, the movement became the primary barrier protecting against the menace of radical Islamism. Certainly, as a result of this political climate, feminists achieved one of their principal demands: the reform of the Family Code. However, the progress of women's human rights conceals the political instrumentalisation of the plight of women and feminists. On the one hand, the monarchy seems to impose feminism from above when, in fact, the feminist movement has worked for decades to reform women's legal status. On the other hand, via the reform to the Family Code, the monarchy appears to adhere to international demands for democratization in the Middle East and North Africa, without actually altering power structures.

By proposing an interdependent reading of the feminist movement's activities and those of the Islamist women's movement, Salime has succeeded at making an important contribution to the study of Moroccan feminism. Beyond this contribution, however, Salime's monograph may interest equally researchers, professors and students from various fields, particularly those interested in women and gender studies, Islamist movements, and contemporary Middle Eastern and North African politics and history.

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