

BOOK REVIEWS



Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures I: Methodologies, Paradigms and Sources

Edited by Suad Joseph et al. Leiden: Brill, 2003. xlix+632. US\$326.

Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures II: Family, Law, and Politics

Edited by Suad Joseph et al. Leiden: Brill, 2005. xxviii+837. US\$326

Reviewed by S. Margot Finn, Program in American Culture, University of Michigan

The first two volumes of the six-volume *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (EWIC) offer a guide to and preview of everything the EWIC project will offer to scholars, students, policymakers, activists, and general readers interested in the intersection of gender studies and Islamic studies/area studies. The encyclopedia canvasses “all facets of life of women” in “the civilizations and societies in which Islam has played a historic role” (I:xxi) from the rise of Islam in the former territories of the Persian and Byzantine Empires to modern Indonesia. General editor Suad Joseph, along with the other five members of the editorial board and forty-one international advisory editors, has crafted an invaluable and easy-to-use reference tool that simultaneously serves as an elegant model of contextualized, critical, feminist knowledge production. However, the most significant contribution of the EWIC may ultimately be the intervention it makes in the emerging field of “women and Islamic cultures.”

The encyclopedia is carefully constructed to manifest the “interdisciplinary, trans-historical, and global” aspirations of the EWIC project (I:xxi). The chronological and global range of the entries embraces the

broadest possible conceptualization of “women and Islamic cultures.” Given the EWIC’s investment in contextualizing knowledge production, I was surprised that information on contributors’ disciplinary affiliations was not included in the list of contributors or bylines. However, even a cursory survey of the list of contributors for Volume II confirms their disciplinary and geographical diversity, from historian Tomoki Okawara of Tohoku University, who wrote the entry on “Household Forms and Composition” in the Ottoman Empire, to social anthropologist Pnina Werbner of Keele University in Stratfordshire, who wrote the entry on “Networks” in Western Europe, to C  n  n Arin, who cofounded three organizations, including the Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation, and provided the entry on “Law: Criminal” in Turkey. Despite the many different approaches, the editors’ mandate to contextualize information and avoid essentializing provides some consistency, at least regarding the most critical goals of the encyclopedia.

Volume I: Methodologies, Paradigms, and Sources documents the history of the EWIC project and offers historical, geographical, and methodological context for the 341 topical entries in Volumes II-V. It also includes a bibliography of publications on women and Islamic cultures in European languages since 1993 and indexed by name and subject. The extensive introduction by Joseph details the nine-year process involved in shaping a feminist, interdisciplinary encyclopedia and explains the most important editorial decisions. Forty-six historical entries direct readers to resources for inquiries on each of the historical periods covered by the EWIC, subdivided by region, and call attention to gaps in available resources and research. While the organization necessarily constructs chronological and regional categorizations, the divides in Volume I aren’t consistent with the divides in the topical entries of Volumes II-V, as the editors determined that different topics demanded different geographies and chronologies. I wholly agree with Joseph’s suggestion that this inconsistency is a “useful frustration” (I:xxxvii) that may complicate comparative work but also prevents the canonization of arbitrary areas or periods.

Thirty-two disciplinary entries summarize and evaluate the assumptions and methodologies used in academic disciplines addressing gender and Islam. Entries on fields ranging from philosophy and economics to folklore and sexualities and queer studies offer readers

another way to situate the information included in the later volumes. Concise histories of the disciplines are followed by examples of research with each discipline illustrating the strengths and limitations in a way that is perfectly accessible to any reader, regardless of field of study. The disciplinary entries constitute such a useful innovation in encyclopedic knowledge production that it is impossible not to share Joseph's regret that they were not able to find an author for an entry on Islamic archeology and didn't receive the entry on sociology in time to include it.

Some entries are less successful than others in following the editors' mandate to contextualize information. The thematic entry on the "Rise of Islam: Sixth to Ninth Century" makes repeated reference to "medieval fiqh" without glossing over the term or suggesting where and when, for example, "medieval fiqh expanded the interpretation of legal sexual relationships to mean legitimate relationships, that is, marriage or concubinage with slave-women" (I:7). The thematic entry on "Legal and Jurisprudential Literature: Ninth to Fifteenth Century" says there were "many different schools of law" and suggests that "the early schools of Medina and Mecca tended to be more restrictive toward women than their Syrian and Kufan counterparts" (I:39) but offers no sense of the development of or geographical range of influence of those schools and no context for more general assertions like "other misogynist traditions call upon women to avoid venturing outside their homes except for dire necessities..." (I:37). The occasional generalizations don't substantially diminish the utility of the thematic entries as framing devices for the topical volumes and the EWIC project.

Volume II: Family, Law, and Politics is the first of four volumes organized by topic; *Volume III: Family, Body, Sexuality, and Health*, *Volume IV: Economics, Education, Mobility, and Space*, and *Volume V: Practices, Interpretations, and Representations* will follow in 2006. *Volume VI* will be a cumulative index. Entries within the topic-centered volumes are arranged alphabetically, and the forty-three overviews and sixty-six regionalized topics in Volume II include adoption, constitutions, gossip, modesty discourses, youth culture and movements, and particularly substantial offerings on family relations and discourses, kinship, law, and political-social movements. The cumulative result is a vast survey of how laws negotiate the relationships between the state and family, how state policies affect the family, how the institutions of law and the family deal

with and affect gender, and how politics, laws, and family structures and concerns are gendered from Central Asia during the Tsarist period to Canada in the 1990s.

While the chronological and regional coverage is impressive, space and length limitations produce some frustrating gaps and inconsistencies. For example, the entry on "Postcolonial Dissent" by Julie Shackford-Bradley historicizes the analytical framework of postcolonial criticism and analyzes the development, challenges, responses, and ramifications of the practice of "postcolonial dissent" in Malaysia and Indonesia. By giving concrete examples of actions by activist organizations and their impacts on legal systems and people, Shackford-Bradley makes the abstract concept of postcolonial dissent comprehensible and accessible, even to readers with no prior experience with the term and without oversimplifying or making broad generalizations. Unfortunately, the entry on Malaysia and Indonesia is the only subdivision of the topic "Postcolonial Dissent." Accordingly, a reader seeking information on women's role in the anti-colonial revolutionary movement in Algeria will find a few sentences in the "North Africa" regionalized entry under "Political-Social Movements: Revolutionary" and a few more in "Political-Social Movements: Protest Movements" but nothing as comprehensive, attentive to the particular history of Algeria, or well situated within relevant academic discourses.

The topical divisions are also inevitably problematic and in many cases eliminate the recognition and analysis of gestalt. "Political-Social Movements: Feminist," "Political-Social Movements: Protest," and "Political-Social Movements: Peace" are hopelessly entangled, and teasing them apart for the purposes of encyclopedia usability naturally creates false boundaries. Some divisions seem unnecessary. Because "Civil Society," "Civil Society and Democracy Ideologies," and "Democracy Ideologies" exist as separate topical entries, the entry that talks extensively about civil society in Turkey is structurally severed from the very useful overview by Elizabeth F. Thompson and from the entries on "Democracy Ideologies" in other regions. These and other entries seem to want a "see also" note that would direct readers to closely related entries (particularly ones in other volumes) that would provide important context or comparisons. The division of "Political-Social Movements: Islamist Movements and Discourses" from "Political-Social Movements: Islamist

Movements and Discourses and Religious Associations,” which consists of a single regionalized entry on Canada, also seems unnecessary. Readers should be prepared to skim the contents for multiple related entries and to pay attention to topical overlaps.

Careful readers will doubtless find far more gaps and overlaps than I have identified here, but I think they will also find that the EWIC editors and contributors have crafted a timely and critical guide for researchers and information seekers that manages to de-essentialize categories like women, Islam, and Islamic cultures in its simultaneous breadth and specificity. Furthermore, the EWIC challenges fields that have been slower to respond to the interventions made by gender and women's studies, like economics, political history, Middle East studies, as well as those that haven't yet adequately addressed Islamic cultures in their midst such as Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe and to rethink their methodologies by pursuing the many gaps in what we know about women and Islamic cultures.

Women, Gender, and Language in Morocco

Fatima Sadiqi. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003. ISBN 90-04-12853-0. 336 pages.

Reviewed by Deborah Kapchan, New York University

Fatima Sadiqi's newest book is an oeuvre unto itself. The title—*Women, Gender, and Language in Morocco*—is completely apt to the comprehensiveness of the volume. It covers not just the intersection of these topics but their separate intellectual histories, providing the reader with a deep understanding of context in order to fully gauge the meaning of gendered expression in Morocco. A theoretical syntactician, Sadiqi notes in the very beginning of the book that “finding out about...‘established’ and ‘taken for granted’ ideas [about gender and culture] is as necessary a step to take as actually carrying [out] academic research on women, gender, and language.” She thus sets herself the ambitious task of exploring the agency of women within Morocco's cultural and linguistic “structures of power” (xvi) from both a theoretical and ethnographic standpoint.

Chapter one provides the scholarly background for her discussions.