The hajj has always had far-reaching political ramifications, but today, after a half century of sponsorship and regulation by governments around the world, it is more politicized than ever. In most countries, hajj administration is tainted with favoritism and corruption. All the major pilgrimage programs are explicitly tailored to benefit voting blocks and businesses at home while cultivating prestige and influence abroad. Frequently, pilgrim management is so politicized it subverts the central values of the hajj. Instead of promoting unity and equality, it divides Muslims along every conceivable line—ethnicity, language, class, party, region, sect, gender, and age.

Debates over the politics of pilgrimage revolve around three key questions. Do pilgrimages tend to fall under the control of entrenched authorities—secular and religious—or do they remain independent social movements inherently hostile to hierarchy and hegemony? Do pilgrimages encourage universal and egalitarian identities or do they harden parochial loyalties already dividing nations, sects, and social groups? And are modernization and globalization destroying pilgrimages or making them more vigorous than ever—reducing them to quasi-secular tourism or turning them into truly worldwide expressions of spiritual
revivals? Although there is truth in both explanations, Western narrators tend to view the hajj as a bulwark of the status quo whereas Muslims overwhelmingly see it as embodying irrepressible demands for equality and universal community—a vision that inevitably contradicts parochial identities, including nationalism.

Muslims and the Politics of Difference
Peter Hopkins and Richard Gale

in Muslims in Britain: Race, Place and Identities
Published in print: 2009 Published Online: September 2012
Publisher: Edinburgh University Press
DOI: 10.3366/edinburgh/9780748625871.003.0011
Item type: chapter

This chapter addresses issues regarding multiculturalism. European anxieties and phobias in relation to immigration and cultural diversity focus on Muslims more than on any other group. The relation between Muslims and the wider British society and the British state has to be seen in terms of the developing agendas of racial equality and multiculturalism. A key indicator of racial discrimination and inequality has been numerical under-representation. It is shown that while Muslims raise distinctive concerns, the logic of their demands often mirrors those of other equality-seeking groups. The issue between ‘equalising upwards’ and ‘equalising downwards’ is about the legitimacy of religion as a public institutional presence. The emergence of Muslim political agency has thrown British multiculturalism into theoretical and practical disarray. The political integration or incorporation of Muslims has become the most important goal of egalitarian multiculturalism and is pivotal in shaping the security of many people across the globe.

Women, Religion, and Political Agency in Iran
Shahla Haeri

in Contemporary Iran: Economy, Society, Politics
Published in print: 2009 Published Online: October 2011
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195378481.003.0004
Item type: chapter

This chapter analyzes the social context of the relationship between religion, state, and women in Iran since the revolution of 1979. Highlighting women's growing concern with palpable injustices in their legal and political status and in their social relations, it discusses the apparent paradox that a robust and vibrant women's movement is in the
making in the Islamic republic, not despite but because of the revival and implementation of serious legal restrictions and discriminatory political practices against their interest. It also analyzes the manner in which the development of structural incongruities and fundamental inconsistencies in the Islamic state's rhetoric and policies (whether legal/political, religious, or economical), have led to women's awakening to their legal and sociopolitical inequalities. These challenges have in turn motivated women of different backgrounds, classes, and ethnicities to mobilize and to come together to search for common grounds.

‘Alima Bint al-Huda, Women's Advocate
Joyce Wiley

in The Most Learned of the Shi’a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid

Published in print: 2001 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on Bint al-Huda, Baqir al-Sadr's sister, who led the movement to educate and uplift Iraqi Shi'i women. Educated at home by her brother, Bint al-Huda devoted her life to the education and uplifting of her Shi'i sisters, relying on Qur'anic support for ideas of gender equality. She explored ways to reach her audience that her male colleagues would probably not have even considered. To illustrate her vision of the ideal Islamic life, she wrote novels that deplored both subservience to men and Western values. Though Ayatollah Khu'i ruled that women could not be mujtahids, he still funded her religious school for girls in Najaf, suggesting that she was able to work effectively with the ulama—even the most conservative among them. However, she was far less successful in her dealings with the Ba'thist government. On April 8, 1980, Saddam Hussein's government executed both Bint al-Huda and her illustrious brother.

Feminist Edges of the Qur’an
Aysha A. Hidayatullah

Published in print: 2014 Published Online: April 2014
Item type: book

This book is a study and critique of feminist interpretation of the Qur’an, examining its dynamic challenges to Islamic tradition and contemporary Muslim views of the Qur’an. Hidayatullah analyses major feminist readings of the Qur’an by Muslim women beginning in the late 20th
century, synthesizing their common concepts and methods, and tracing their collective trajectory as key to the development of the nascent field of feminist tafsir (exegesis). Her examination grounds feminist tafsir in its historical and political contexts and studies its works side-by-side in order to clarify the recurring interpretive methods that link them together. In addition to helping readers understand the field as a whole, the author critically assesses feminist impasses in the Qur’anic text and the field’s appeals to equality and justice, offering a radical critique of feminist approaches to the Qur’an. She argues that the feminist exegetical endeavour has reached a point of irresolvable contradiction by making claims about the Qur’an that are not fully supported by the text. Hidayatullah also outlines major challenges to the authority of feminist interpretations of the Qur’an, questioning the viability of current strands of feminist Qur’anic interpretation and proposing a major revision of its exegetical positions. Feminist Edges of the Qur’an is a work of Muslim feminist theology that advances conversations about feminist tafsir and asks bold questions at the “edge” of Qur’anic interpretation.

The Difference
Irfan Ahmad

in Religion as Critique: Islamic Critical Thinking from Mecca to the Marketplace

Published in print: 2017 Published Online: May 2018
DOI: 10.5149/northcarolina/9781469635095.003.0007
Item type: chapter

Chapter 6 documents vibrant critiques of Maududi’s Janus-like neopatriarchate. It shows how people connected to the Jamaat criticized Maududi’s position on such issues as veiling, women’s participation in the public domain (including work and cinema), questions of eligibility to become head of state, studying in co-educational institutions, and issues of gender and knowledge. It also accounts for the factors enabling Maududi’s critique. It concludes by discussing what such critiques of Maududi’s neopatriarchate mean. Is it theoretically productive to describe such critiques as inaugurating an Islamic feminist discourse? Here, as elsewhere, the chapter reflects on the author’s earlier understanding to signal a reassessment. The key contention here is that the diverse critiques of Maududi’s position on women makes it clear that Islam, contra assertions by many feminists, can also be a critical language for empowering women.
Women in the Nation of Islam and the Warith Deen Mohammed Community
Dawn-Marie Gibson and Jamillah Karim

in Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam
Published in print: 2014 Published Online: March 2016
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on dialogue between women in the Nation of Islam (NOI) and those in the Warith Deen Mohammed (WDM) community. It explores the two groups' levels of engagement with mainstream Islam, engagement with concerns in the Black community, and conceptions of gender equality, especially as it relates to women's leadership in mosques. Having found that encounters and conversations between women of the two groups are few and far between, the chapter proposes what women of the two groups would want the other to know about their practice and understanding of Islam in light of mutual misconceptions. It highlights women's voices as they might respond to these misconceptions, providing women's views on various topics, including the continued relevance of the NOI in a context in which Sunni Islam prevails as the version of Islam practiced by most African Americans and the controversial practices of female imams and polygyny.

Confronting Feminist Edges
Aysha A. Hidayatullah

in Feminist Edges of the Qur’an
Published in print: 2014 Published Online: April 2014
Item type: chapter

This chapter considers the possibility of exegetical authority’s constitutive maleness, noting resistance to feminist interpretation for producing results that depart radically from traditional assumptions about male–female relations and due to the vulnerability of feminist arguments that the Qur’an’s interpretation cannot be equated with its human interpretations. The author also revisits feminist interpretation’s assumptions about sexual difference, calling for the treatment of sex as a fluid and historically contingent concept and sexual difference as a shifting relation of interdependence. After noting the problems of practical prescriptiveness, the author outlines the theological questions.
that emerge in the aftermath of her analysis and claims a position of “radical uncertainty.”

Intratextual Method
Aysha A. Hidayatullah

in Feminist Edges of the Qur’an

Published in print: 2014 Published Online: April 2014
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199359561.003.0006
Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses the feminist interpretive method of reading the Qur’an intratextually (i.e., in view of its textual holism) by comparing verses and terms of the Qur’an to one another instead of reading them in isolation, as well as by reading verses in light of what the exegetes have identified as the Qur’an’s overall aim of advocating justice and equality for all human beings. The chapter notes the premodern and modern precedents of this strategy in the concepts of the Qur’an’s nazm (internal coherence) and tafsir al-Qur’an bi-l-Qur’an (interpreting the Qur’an by means of the Qur’an itself). The chapter traces the use of the feminist exegetical arguments that no sound interpretation of the Qur’an may contradict the Qur’an’s overarching principles of male-female equality and marital harmony, and that all verses should be read in light of the Qur’an overall trajectory toward justice and social transformation.

Initial Conclusions
Aysha A. Hidayatullah

in Feminist Edges of the Qur’an

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Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses conceptions of equality in feminist Qur’anic interpretation and the challenges of reconciling male–female difference and equality in the Qur’an. The author critically examines feminist Qur’anic interpretation’s tendencies toward apologia and inconsistency, and the problems of manipulating the text and forcing feminist meanings upon it. The chapter notes that the exegetes have attributed problematic meanings of the text to the interpretive errors or linguistic difficulties of human beings rather than to the text itself, but observes a new turn toward acknowledging problems in the text itself. The author notes the need for feminist interpreters to take responsibility for their own
interpretive interventions rather than claiming that male–female equality is purely self-evident in the text or that their interpretations reflect true Islam, since such claims run the risk of participating in interpretive authoritarianism and absolutism.

A Critical Reassessment
Aysha A. Hidayatullah

in Feminist Edges of the Qur’an

This chapter discusses the problem of feminist Qur’anic interpretation’s inclination toward methodological rigidity and critically revisits its readings of the Qur’an. The author argues that feminist exegetical conceptions of equality are historically specific to contemporary norms and concludes that they are perhaps not fully reconcilable with the Qur’anic text. Distinguishing between “mutuality” and “hierarchy” verses of the Qur’an, she argues that in the Qur’an’s revelatory context, the coexistence of these two types of verses may not have produced a contradiction. The author outlines her disagreement with the position that the Qur’an does not prescribe gender roles and the assumption that mutuality rules out hierarchy. She notes instances in which the functional inequality of men and women in the Qur’an perhaps cannot exist except as an effect of ontological inequality between them, and calls for new ways of thinking about the nature of the Qur’an’s revelation.

Wasatiyyah and Globalization
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

in The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur’anic Principle of Wasatiyyah

This chapter advances a perspective on advantages and disadvantages of globalization, as well as how it is perceived by the weaker economies, and the Muslim world generally. On one hand, globalization has the potential to provide for easier communication; a more effective means of addressing matters such as human rights, public accountability, women’s issues, and dealing with corrupt dictators; and an expansion of trade and foreign investment, which, in turn, often accelerates social mobility.
and strengthens the middle class. On the other hand, globalization tends to bring about greater disparity between the haves and have-nots, as well as popularizing a consumer culture and placing greater emphasis on materialist possessions that erode traditional values. After delving into both sides of this phenomenon, the chapter discusses the view that the Islamic principle of unity (tawhid) has strong pro-globalization characteristics.

State, Islam, and Gender Politics
Jocelyne Cesari (ed.)
in Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective

The existing literature on women’s rights and Islam falls short of addressing the relationship between the religious debate on women’s rights and the existing rules of law in Muslim-majority countries. This chapter will bridge this gap by analyzing the status of women in the legal systems of Egypt, Turkey, and Morocco. It will evaluate the influence of Islam on the shaping of these laws, compared to other factors like culture, socioeconomic development, and education. Except in marginal cases like Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan under the Taliban, women’s rights in politics, the economy, and education have advanced in all Muslim countries. But there are some limitations placed upon women’s rights using religious arguments. Everywhere, personal rights about family life, sexuality, and dress code remain discriminatory against women. In this regard, the woman’s body has become the main site of the politicization of Islam, by state and non-state actors alike.

Law, Gender, and Nation
Vrinda Narain

Contemporary democracies have emphasized the recognition of religious and cultural diversity through policies of multiculturalism that recognize minority rights. In this regard, the status of Muslim women in a democracy with multiple legal systems, such as India, is
representative of these new forms of democratic politics. While the Indian constitution guarantees equality to all citizens in the public sphere, in the private sphere of the family, the state enforces explicitly discriminatory personal laws as a demonstration of its commitment to minority rights, posing serious challenges for Muslim women’s equality. In this context, evaluating the success of legal pluralism through the implementation of Muslim personal law cannot ignore the negative impact of this understanding of legal pluralism on gender equality. Against this backdrop, this chapter examines how notions of secularism, religious freedom, and the protection of minority rights mediate the legal status of Muslim women in India.

Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Iran
Ziba Mir-Hosseini

in Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective
Published in print: 2017 Published Online: May 2017
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Item type: chapter

Since the 1979 Revolution that brought clerics into power, the struggle for women’s rights in Iran has conventionally been framed as a polarized conflict between “Islamist” and “secularist” ideologies. This view has masked the real battle, which has been between despotism and patriarchy, on the one hand, and democracy, pluralism, and gender equality, on the other. An unintended consequence of the revolutionaries’ merger of religious and political authority has been a growing popular understanding of this struggle. This chapter examines the shifting dynamics of relations between theology, gender, and politics in the Iranian Islamic state, which, in the aftermath of the 2009 presidential election, gave birth to a rights movement with women at the forefront. By then, the traditional cultural value of namus (sexual honor) for many Iranians was outweighed by the notion of haqq (rights), especially the right to vote and to have one’s vote counted.

Exceptionality and Equality
Fallou Ngom

in Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of Ajami and the Muridiyya
Published in print: 2016 Published Online: June 2016
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190279868.003.0002
Item type: chapter
This chapter examines how the chanted hagiographic ‘Ajamī poems successfully diffused among the masses the powerful master-narrative of the Muridiyya; Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba’s primordial mission of intercession, salvation, and mercy; the origin and meaning of the pledge of allegiance that calls for Murīd disciples’ submission to their leaders; and aspects of the ‘Ajamization (enrichment) of Islam in the Muridiyya. The chapter also explores the nexus between Murīd memories of Bamba’s teachings on equality between all people within the Muslim community, the struggle for the legitimacy of ‘Ajamī as a valid medium for religious discourse, and the present-day assertive Murīd African identity that welcomes aspects of the Arab and Western cultures and yet consistently rejects acculturation into either.

God’s “Signs” and Democracy in Islam

Raymond William Baker

in One Islam, Many Muslim Worlds: Spirituality, Identity, and Resistance across the Islamic World

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: August 2015
Item type: chapter

The values of justice, equality, and freedom provide the foundations for democracy. New Islamic intellectuals argue that in Islam all three of these values find their place as God’s “signs” to guide the building of the world. They clarify the Qur’anic position on the core values supportive of democracy while countering distorted traditional and extremist views that are actively hostile to democratic aspirations. The New Islamic scholars focus on elaborating the link between justice, the preeminent Qur’anic value, and both equality and freedom. They reason that the realization of justice and freedom depends on the political and social freedoms that democratic governance fosters. In their scholarly work, the New Islamic intellectuals insist that Islam has more than adequate reserves of reason and culture on which democrats in Islam can draw to guide efforts of interpretation as well as practical experiments to build democracy on Islamic ground.
This final chapter contextualizes woman-led prayer within broader discussions of authority, tradition, and change. It first analyzes Islamic feminist discourse on woman-led prayer, female leadership, and androcentric ritual norms, emphasizing theological and social assumptions. It then engages with Christian feminist approaches from Delores S. Williams, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Traci C. West that grapple with notions of community, male imagery of God, tradition, and ritual. The chapter concludes with Muslima theology and argues for the necessity of embodied egalitarian ritual, a dynamic view of tradition, and reassertion of the transformative space between ideal and real community (umma).