

Call for Papers

Egypte Monde Arabe

Female Religiosities in Egypt: What Forms of Engagement?

Over the course of the last two decades, new and diverse female actors emerged who became increasingly involved in the various religious fields in Egypt and across the Arab world. In her study, Bénédicte du Chaffaut¹ alludes to the gradual feminisation of both the Christian and Islamic religious fields. This tendency became more visible between 1970 and 1990, raising questions about the position and role of women in Egyptian religious movements, as well as questions about the oppressive nature of religious institutions and movements. However, reducing critical analysis to issues of masculine domination or the study of religious texts comes at a risk of ‘essentialization’ and overlook the significance of any form of women’s engagement within the religious sphere.

This issue aims at thinking of female religious involvement in terms of resistance, flexibility and contestation. Can we think about religious vocation as a vehicle for women’s emancipation (through mobility, media visibility, presence in the field of preaching, political involvement)? To what extent can women appropriate religious spaces and institutions that are, *a priori*, oppressive and managed by male intellectual religious elites? What’s the space for women engaging in the religious field, who have to negotiate socio-religious norms constantly in flux? In what ways can an investigation of the religious field provide us with insights about masculine domination and the subjectification of bodies?

Additionally, the phenomenon of feminisation of the religious sphere occurred in parallel with the democratization of religious sciences, which allowed more and more women to access religious knowledge. Ellen Anne McLarney² highlights this issue in her work on the emergence of Islamic intellectuals during the period of the *Sahwa Islamiya* (Islamic Renewal). For their part, Saba Mahmood³ and Marion Holmes Katz⁴ analyse the

¹Bénédicte du Chaffaut, « Femmes en mouvements... chrétiennes et musulmanes », *Revue Islamochristiana* : n°37(de l’Institut pontifical des Etudes Arabes et Islamiques, coordonnée par Bénédicte du Chaffaut), pp.1-15, 2011.

²Ellen Anne McLarney, *Soft Power: Women in Egypt’s Islamic Awakening*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.336, 2015.

³Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton University Press, pp.272, 2012 (Firstedition: 2005).

appropriation of places of worship and the various discourses regarding the subjectification of women attending mosques. These observations raise several questions about women's participation in the production and transmission of religious knowledge, as well as the active role that religious female intellectuals seem to have played in debates concerning the socio-religious norms that govern women and men. We are thinking for example about of Karima Kamel's book, *Divorce of Copts*, published in 2006.

This issue seeks to deconstruct the postulate according to which "secularized spaces are in essence more favourable to women than religious spaces" (Bénédicte De Gasquet: 2010⁵). This will allow us, on the one hand, to think about the empowerment of women in the religious field through different achievements and forms of commitment; on the other, to grasp the limits of these authorisations and vectors of secularisation of the religious discourses and ritual practices.

This issue will be organised around three axes:

The first axis, **Religious Women in Movement**, intends to shed light on the path of Christian and Muslim women intellectuals who are- or were-engaged in the field of religion. We are thinking in particular of the three generations of Islamic feminists, who, since the Nahda period (especially with the figure of Malak Ifni Nasif and later Bint al-Shati') and up to the present day (with the figures of Oumayma Abu Bakr and Heba Raouf Ezzat) have sought to reclaim religious interpretations by deconstructing and reinterpreting religious text. This section aims at giving an account of the life trajectories of these women who distinguished themselves through their initiatives or writings, and to put into perspective the political, historical and religious contexts of their actions.

The second axis, **Women and Religious Movements**, proposes an analysis of the militancy of women engaged in Christian and Muslim movements. What is the representativeness of the women involved? What roles and places do they occupy in these movements? What forms of socialisation are developing? What impact did the Revolution have on these movements? What role did these women play in the politicization of religious movements and the

⁴Marion Holmes Katz, *Women in the Mosque: A History of Legal Thought and Social Practice*, Columbia University Press, pp.432, 2014.

⁵Béatrice De Gasquet, " Genre ", Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Régine Azria. Dictionnaire des faits religieux, Presses universitaires de France, pp.431-439, 2010.

emergence of religious political parties in recent years? What types of discourse do religious institutions propose regarding the participation of women in religious life?

The third focus will be on **the Impact of the Arab Springs on Religious Circles and on New Forms of Female Engagement**. Here our attention will focus on the active participation of women during revolutionary demonstrations and new forms of protest against figures of religious authority (creation of youth movements; creation of the TV Channel Maria, for and by niqabi women; women preaching on tele-evangelical chains ...).

Abstracts or article proposals (1 page maximum), in French, in English or in Arabic, must be accompanied by a provisional title and biographical information (affiliation, contact details...). They should be sent to the following address: naima.bouras@yahoo.fr

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Notification of selected abstracts: April 15, 2018

Deadline for the submission **of the manuscripts**: 31 August 2018

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