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# Men In Charge?: Rethinking Authority In Muslim Legal Tradition



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## Men in Charge?

RETHINKING AUTHORITY IN  
MUSLIM LEGAL TRADITION



## **Synopsis**

Both Muslims and non-Muslims see women in most Muslim countries as suffering from social, economic and political discrimination, treated by law and society as second-class citizens subject to male authority. This discrimination is attributed to Islam and Islamic law, though it varies considerably in its impact, according to both class and region. Since the late 19th century there has been a mass of literature tackling this issue, some from a feminist or human rights perspective, some taking the form of an apology for Islamic law. Recently, exciting new feminist research has been challenging gender discrimination and male authority from within Islamic legal tradition, and this book presents some important results from that research. The contributors all engage critically with two central juristic concepts, rooted in the Qurâ™an, that lie at the basis of this discrimination, concepts which place women under male authority. One refers to a husbandâ™s authority over his wife, his financial responsibility towards her, and his superior status and rights. The other is male family membersâ™ right and duty of guardianship over female members (e.g., fathers over daughters when entering into marriage contracts) and the privileging of fathers over mothers in guardianship rights over their children. The contributors, scholars from different disciplines and backgrounds, were brought together by Musawah (Arabic for equality), a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, launched in 2009. Musawah aims at producing new knowledge to help build grass-roots movements and to mobilize for change.

## **Book Information**

File Size: 2318 KB

Print Length: 302 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1780747160

Publisher: Oneworld Publications (January 19, 2015)

Publication Date: January 19, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00Q3FLN0W

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #750,859 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #46

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Law #166 in Books >

Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Law #3060 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social

Sciences > Gender Studies > General

## Customer Reviews

"Men in Charge" is an excellent and stimulating read that confronts learned patriarchy in Islam. Drawing on key religious texts and principles, "Men in Charge" pieces together the legal story of women in Islam across the ages while providing the understanding that patriarchy can be confronted. In fact by the very existence of this book, it is being confronted. These authors and researchers and NGOs involved represent a critical and increasingly growing movement of Muslims who believe in the rights and roles of women as equal citizens and who are fighting for and making change that does not go against key religious texts, but aligns society more closely with the modern expectations and values of Islam.

This book is for anyone who takes their faith seriously and wants to honour the eternal principles in the Quran whilst looking honestly at the patriarchy which the Quran has seemingly fostered.

A great book that presents information based on evidences for most part. In Muslim societies actually women are in charge so I am not sure what prompted the authors to write this book. At times the book appears to be a hodgepodge logic and selective readings from sacred texts to support authors' point of view. While it is absolutely true, the dignity given by Islam to men, women, children, the elderly, the animals, and others is unmatched even today. It is also true that often cultural elements take over the religious rulings; however, to become obsessive to show that "women are equal in all manners to men" is a political motivation not religious one. In Islam some matters men get preference but in other matters women get preference. The book does not explain:<sup>\*</sup> Why earlier Islamic women did not question the male leadership and service to the household? Islam has a rich assortment of amazing women who transmitted tradition and interpretations in Islam.\* If everyone is equal in say and authority, how do you break a tie?<sup>\*\*</sup> It is men in Islam who have given rights, respect and dignity to women not only in Islam but the whole world. These rights, respect and dignity were previously denied to women. Why would these men then interpret the Quran to subjugate women?<sup>\*\*</sup> What about the verse that says that men have one degree over women which is then offset by more responsibility that men must carry as well? Good book overall.

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