Women in Morocco: Re-conceptualizing Religious Activism

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Abstract

The recent political upheavals in the Arab world were marked by women's significant presence in struggling for democracy alongside men. Muslim women activists in Morocco have particularly gained legitimacy in the context of the Arab Spring, which has brought the Justice and Development conservative political party to power. This has contributed to a shift from the elite liberal state feminism to a more legitimate religious activism. This introduces new spaces for contention, taking into consideration that following the 2003 Casablanca bombings, Morocco has taken a series of measures to absorb the growing momentum of political Islam. One such measure has been to restructure the religious field by means of reforming and controlling the dynamics of religion in Morocco; this was primarily marked by the significant entry and deployment of women in the religious field as religious leaders and scholars. These state-trained female religious authorities offer spiritual counseling and religious instruction to different social segments. Therefore, they redefine parameters of religious authority and define a new model of activism that seeks to cultivate collective pious conduct within society and thus contribute to a comprehensive social reform.

Therefore, this article explores the dynamics of female religious authority in Morocco in light of the current social and political changes. I examine how these women construct authority as religious leaders and how they endorse the state's authority to control the dynamics of religion in Morocco and curb the voices of individuals or groups that operate outside of official Islam. I argue that despite the fact that these female religious authorities are viewed as instruments of state propaganda, they are gaining wider legitimacy and contributing greatly to the social welfare of their communities, which makes their "official" entry into the religious domain a serious step toward democracy and positive change.

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Contextualizing Female Religious Activism in Morocco

The recent political upheavals in the Arab world have led to dramatic changes due to the great discontent of people with their authoritarian regimes. In the Middle East and North Africa, massive populations have chosen Islamic parties as a substitute for the old corrupt systems. Although Morocco managed to survive the Arab Spring, it could not entirely avoid its turmoil. A number of angry protests took place in major cities and were led by the February 20 Movement,[1] which demanded the right to social equality and democracy and showed discontent with prevailing corruption. King Mohammed VI responded swiftly by drafting a modified constitution that garnered popular support by promising more democracy and the protection of human rights. As a consequence, the moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) won the November 2011 parliamentary elections. In an interview with the *Jakarta Post*, Moroccan Ambassador to Indonesia Mohamed Majdi said: "The new constitution enshrines the democratic values of the separation of powers, independent judiciary, freedom of expression, freedom of thought and respect for minorities."[2] He also added: "The new constitution also allows for [the] greater political representation of women, enhanced good governance, accountability, respect for human rights and morality in public life."[3]

This revolutionary change in Morocco was marked by women's significant presence in struggling for democracy alongside men, especially among conservative political groups. For the first time in the country's history a veiled political figure, Bassima Hakkaoui, took over the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family, and Social Development. Although the modified constitution recognizes gender equality and equal political representation for women, Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane's ministerial cabinet included only one female minister. This caused unease among the secular-liberal activists who viewed this as a decline in women's rights.

In an interview with PJD member Iman El-Yaacoubi, she said that the party "democratically elects its ministers" and that "the women of the party participate in these procedures and the appointment of one female minister from our ranks was a democratic choice made by all the members of the party, regardless of gender." She added that "[f]or years our party has had the most female representation in parliament which shows the explicit trust the party has in women, but choosing the ministers has to take into account the ministries the party won and not their gender."[4]

Undoubtedly, Morocco's Islamist movement recognizes women as equal political actors. This includes groups that operate within the political system, such as the political party of al-Adala wa Tanmiya (PJD), and others that operate outside of it, such as the al-Adl wa al-Ihsan (Justice and Charity) Islamist group. The PJD stems from the Unity and Reform movement, a party that was officially formed in 1998 and became a political force when it won 42 out of 295 seats in the 2002 national legislative elections.[5] The PJD accepts the monarchy's legitimacy and acts within the state's political framework. It steers clear of any criticism of the wider political system and focuses on such social issues as corruption, education, and the place of women within society. Al-Adl wa al-Ihsan, an Islamist movement that serves as the main oppositional group, advocates the Islamization of society and the political system and challenges the monarchy's legitimacy. It was established by Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine in 1987, who had been an active member of the Boudchichi Sufi order,[6] which he left in early 1970s.

Both groups advocate gender equality and social justice within an Islamic paradigm, which allows women greater opportunities for political participation and leadership. As a group that creates an independent religious space to redefine politics, al-Adl sa al-Ihsan considers women to be the cornerstone of any desired change or reform. Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine's daughter Nadia Yassine exhibits the integral role women play within the group – she is not only the spokesperson of the group to the western media, but also the founder and director of the women's section, which attempts to revive the active role of women in society based on Islamic teachings and suggests re-readings of Islamic texts to counter misogynistic voices. Similarly, the PJD seeks to foster the image of a modern and democratic country based on an Islamic ideal. This is reinforced through women's increased participation in politics not only as active members, but also as parliamentary representatives, seeking thereby to reflect the image of a modern and moderate Islamic party.

But as a response to the growing momentum of political Islam, in its most recent and unprecedented measures the Ministry of Islamic Affairs has endorsed women's presence and authority in the religious sphere through the training of female religious preachers (*murshidāt*) and scholars (*'ālimāt*). Since 2003, women have been participating in the Hasaniyya Ramadan lecture series[7]; they have been assigned significant responsibilities within the Supreme Religious Council as well as local councils, among them offering spiritual counseling and religious instruction to different social segments. This shift toward their "official" participation within the religious sphere was prompted by the May 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca. The tragic magnitude of the

event urged Moroccan authorities to reconsider the state's religious policy. This included adopting Sufism as the counnty's official discourse in order to monitor the transmission of the religious discourse in mosques and other institutions, and thus represented a shift toward a more moderate religious expression.[8] This was primarily reinforced by appointing Ahmad Taoufiq, who is affiliated with the Boudchichi Sufi order, as the minister of Islamic affairs. This is also enhanced by the royal support of Sufi brotherhoods all over Morocco, a policy designed to revive their historical role and embrace the spiritual component of Moroccan Islam.

The terrorist attacks of September 2001 in the United States and May 2003 in Casablanca coincided with the increase of images of religiosity within society; this demand was primarily absorbed by non-official institutions such as Islamist movements and the Salafi stream that has found its way into Morocco through television and unstructured preaching within mosques and private spheres. Hence, reviving the Sufi tradition was incumbent in the midst of these changes. In an interview with al-Jazeera, former minister of culture Ben Salem Himmich asserted that Sufism in Morocco goes beyond a relationship of opposition with the Salafi stream: "It is a religious heritage which Morocco takes pride in and strives to protect. It can be positively utilized to reinforce universal values such as tolerance and openness, values which are inherent to Moroccan Islam."[9] In addition to reviving the Sufi groups' religious and social roles, the restructuring of the religious scene nurtures further ideological motives. It is viewed as a means to restrict non-official Islam by reshaping Morocco's religious identity. Sufi brotherhoods are currently assuming the responsibility for reshaping religious practice in accordance with official Islam. This was primarily reinforced by engaging intellectuals, academicians, and political leaders to reinforce official ideology and legitimize the Moroccan regime.

Al-Arabiya news published an article on how Morocco fights extremism with Sufism.[10] According to it, Sufism is currently promoted as a peaceful form of religiosity and is enjoying tremendous state support; this includes financial support by making royal donations to *zāwiya*s.[11] Sufism is also promoted in the media, and television channels are dedicated to broadcasting programs on Sufi thought as well as Sufi chanting. A series of lectures and seminars has also been launched recently in order to familiarize Moroccans with its principles and practices.

According to the same article, Rashid Moqtader, an expert in Moroccan Islamic movements, holds that the Moroccan government deals with emerging powers depending upon their nature and influence in the political arena. As

he told al-Arabiya, "the state uses one power against another … through financial, legal, or moral support."

Moqtader cited the state's support for Islamists in 1970s to counter the growing influence of leftist trends and the empowerment of Salafi movements to fight opposition parties like the Justice and Charity group, which was known for its Sufi disposition. For Moqtader, the decision to use Sufism to curb the influence of jihadi movements and political Islam is also related to the American strategy followed since the 9/11 attacks: "In addition to military incursions, the United States has been resorting to Sufism to fight al-Qaeda and similar organizations throughout the Muslim world."

Tellingly, although the Moroccan spring reshuffled the political dynamics in Morocco, it did not seem to affect Sufism's relationship with the state. After the king responded by drafting a modified constitution, Sufi orders emerged on the scene to show their support for the new constitution. This was especially true of the Boudchichi order, which urged its followers to march in the streets in favor of the constitution. The order's support was broadcast far and wide, given its imposing role in the country's religious and political arenas.

Like his predecessors, King Mohammed VI bears the title of *amīr al-mu'minīn* (commander of the faithful) and is a descendent of Prophet Muhammad, which underscores Islam's status as the country's official religion; the annual renewal of allegiance also endorses his legitimacy as both the spiritual and political leader of Morocco. With his ascent to the throne in 1999, "a new era of reform had begun,"[12] as Marvine Howe observed, for "the new king appeared determined to correct the cruel abuses of a despotic state and lead the country firmly on the path to a modern democracy."[13] A number of reforms and initiatives, which mainly included recognizing women's issues and honoring their demands, were introduced. This included revising the family law in favor of women to achieve an egalitarian family model and a rethinking of gender dynamics at both the social and political levels.

The project of "the national action plan for integrating women in development" engaged the Moroccan sociopolitical scene throughout 1999 and was officially presented the following year. It placed great importance on such major issues as education and health, and economic as well as sociopolitical empowerment for women. That being said, pressure was put on the government to hold back the project, for it was seen as disruptive to the family institution and threatening to the fundamentals of Islam. Official scholars requested that the project be revised in accordance with Islamic law and claimed exclusive authority to interpret the sacred texts. Mass marches took place on March

12, 2000; a million people, mainly Islamists, protested in Casablanca, whereas 30,000 people showed up in Rabat to support it. The Rabat marches, organized by female activists and political parties,[14] paved the way for introducing the revised family code (the Moudawana) in 2004, which sought to reconcile Morocco's adherence to the Maliki school of jurisprudence to secular standards of women's rights. This undertaking engendered reconsiderations of sacred texts to empower women and counter discriminatory cultural tendencies. This was further complemented by including female religious guides and scholars whose vital role lay in reaching out to women in underprivileged and marginalized areas of the country.

State-Sponsored Female Religious Guides: Promoting Gender Equality and Moderate Islam

The year 2006 was marked by the collaboration of women with the state in countering terrorism via training female religious guides (*murshidāt*). The integration and deployment of these women have been integral, for not only do these policies present Morocco as a model country in endorsing gender equality, but they also reinforce and restructure the role that women have always fulfilled in mosques and other academic and religious institutions. In addition, it has allowed them to operate at different levels in order to access society's different categories with an emphasis placed on women and youth, as well as carrying through a social dimension to their religious mission.

In an interview with the *Telegraph*, Rajaa Naji El Mekkaoui, a professor of law at Rabat's Université Mohamed V and a designer of the *murshidāt* program, said that "[b]efore the Mourchidat, women had no one to answer their questions … They will try to find the answers in other areas, from fundamentalist Imams – and this is a big risk to society."[15]

The program graduates fifty *murshidāt* and 150 imams every year.[16] The title they are given corresponds to the services they offer. Before their admission into the program, candidates take exams that assess their knowledge of Islamic sciences and their memorization of the Qur'an: men are required to memorize all of it, whereas women only half of it. The candidates are also required to be under forty-six years old and have a bachelor's degree. During the year-long program, students are trained by senior scholars from the Supreme Religious Council, as well as academics appointed by the king. They take courses on a wide range of disciplines, such as Islamic sciences, Arabic language, sociology, economics, law, and history as well as the art of preaching and public speaking. The *murshidāt* work according to a contract and receive

a monthly salary of 5,000 DH ($580). Arrangements are usually made for them to work in locations close to their families.[17]

The *murshidāt* have the advantage of accessing women, especially in underprivileged and deprived areas of the country. The government's primary purpose is to curb extremism by offering religious counseling to women so they can be a voice of tolerant and moderate Islam within their families and surroundings. The *murshidāt*'s primary space of activity is the mosque. However, their work extends to other institutions as well, such as schools, prisons, and hospitals. They thus redefine the parameters of religious authority and shift from predominantly private forms of religiosity to a legitimated public expression that disrupts the commonly held assumptions about male official religious authority as being more legitimate.[18]

The entry and deployment of women within the religious sphere does, however, question the impact that these female religious authorities have on the wider community and the extent to which they contribute to the empowerment of Moroccan women.

The Danish Institute for International Studies' most recent report on Muslim women's activism in the Arab world presents a criticism related to the *murshidāt* training program, which primarily included the argument that it does not really represent something new as there were always mosque preachers (*wa'iẓāt*) who until the present day fulfill their preaching tasks in affiliation with local mosques and local religious councils.[19] As a consequence, the author adds, this renders the program a non-genuine effort that imposes the state's interpretation of "Moroccan Islam" and legitimizes the king's authority as the commander of the faithful.[20] This training program is also viewed as a way to polish Morocco's image in the western media and reflect the image of a modern and democratic country that endorses women's participation in all spheres. So, having the *murshidāt* as female representatives of the state gives credit to Morocco and portrays the king as an advocate of gender equality. "Morocco is a country which has succeeded in fighting against terrorism; which has a 'spiritual security' and which has succeeded in establishing moderation and to keep moderation (*wasaṭīyah*) – in order to appear in front of international audience as being open to the dialogue of civilizations and as having fought against terrorism," a *murshidah* stated.[21]

According to the same report, Asma Lamrabet, a Moroccan physician and coordinator of a group in charge of revising the religious texts from a feminist perspective, said that "[w]omen are the alibis of modern discourse… the Moudawana, the *murshidāt*… These (reforms) are used to say that one is (a) democrat. But this is mostly façade, 'state feminism.'"[22] For many Moroccans,

this training program also serves as a means to restrict people's freedom and curb the voices of individuals or groups that operate outside official Islam. According to one *murshidah*: "The state/ministry wanted to marginalize the Islamists; they wanted to occupy the space of the Islamists. If you say that you are a *murshidah*, everything is open to you (youth clubs, prisons etc.) – places, which are not accessible to the Islamists. So they seek proximity/closeness with (the) people via the *murshidāt* – and, at the same time, a distancing from the Islamists."[23]

Similarly Nadia Yassine, who believes that her movement's relevance does not only lie in teaching women how to practice their faith but suggests a comprehensive sociopolitical reform within an Islamic paradigm, also believes that the program is but a measure to curb the voice of the Islamist movement. According to the *Telegraph*, Maryem Yafont, head of the Justice and Charity's women's section, argues that the Justice and Charity movement has long had women acting as informal *murshidāt*: "We've been carrying out a program of education and training for women in Morocco for more than 20 years in mosques. We believe this [*mourchidat*] initiative by the ministry was in response to our activities in the mosques and an attempt, in other words, to cut off our movement's work."[24]

Surprisingly enough, the first group of *murshidāt* to graduate contained a number of candidates who were affiliated with the PJD and the Justice and Charity movement and whose current work requires that they commit to the state's policy in relation to religious affairs. According to the *Telegraph*, this points out the double purpose that the *murshidāt* serve for the king, who wants to keep both the West and a rapidly growing Islamic movement happy.[25] On the other hand, state feminist and political groups have not displayed any open criticism of these state-sponsored religious training programs, because they go hand in hand with the dynamics of the monarch's authority as the grantor of national and religious security and endorse the monarchy's control over the sociopolitical and religious domains. So any open criticism could suggest criticism of the regime.

However, despite the limitations that question these female religious authorities' legitimacy, they hold the potential of contributing to the social welfare of their communities. No doubt, women have long been active in the domain of religion both in private and public spaces and within informal and more official structures. Therefore, the novelty of integrating them within the religious sphere does not separate women's engagement with religion from its sociohistorical context; rather, it helps identify new ways for women to (re)position themselves, express their religiosity, and redefine religious au-

thority. This suggests shifts in the social order: women claim agency, reshuffle public and religious spaces, and negotiate the dynamics of social structures. Through their participation in the religious domain, they define a new model of activism that seeks to cultivate collective pious conduct within society, as opposed to western and secular perceptions of female religiosity as a form of docility and subjection to traditional structures.

It is commonly held that advocating women's rights is a battle led by secular and liberal groups, not by women who work within a religious paradigm. For these female religious authorities, therefore, religion should not be perceived as an obstacle to women's rights. Rather, they articulate the importance of reviving Islamic thought and reconsidering religious texts in order to promote new roles for women. They disapprove of rejecting the established tradition of Islamic thought, because they believe in using the same traditional tools to contribute to and enrich the scholarly tradition of Islam. They believe that the Islamic religious discourse in its primary form (the Qur'an) was addressed to both men and women at an equal level, which entails the responsibility of women to receive the divine message via studying and understanding it.[26]

These women are therefore redefining Islamic authority and gaining legitimacy. They have succeeded in attracting a broad following across different social classes, as opposed to women's rights groups that have limited outreach capability. These have had an influential impact on the sociopolitical changes in Morocco, which notably included battles to reform family laws; however, female religious authorities seem to be having a more influential role in promoting the rights of Muslim women. They have proven to be more accepted by the masses because they represent the voice of moderate "Moroccan Islam" and have easier access to different settings due to their official status. Thus they are unlike female activists who operate within Islamist movements, for these latter activists usually face limitations because of their non-official status and thus have a limited outreach capability. For many women, attending activities organized by these female religious authorities offers them an interactive atmosphere to share their ideas and concerns within a social context, especially since they have a chance to interact with female scholars whom they can ask the most intimate questions. Therefore, within this space the practice of religion becomes institutionalized and engages the attendees in a collective moral conduct encouraged by Islamic teachings, which articulates the impact of female religious authorities on the wider community and paves the way for comprehensive social reform.

In her article "Social and Religious Change in Damascus: One Case of Female Islamic Religious Authority,"[27] Hilary Kalmbach analyzes the phe-

nomenon of female religious authority within Damascene religious circles. She examines how transformations in Islamic authority have created a heterogeneous framework for the participation of women. She argues that the nineteenth- and twentieth-century reforms reduced the ulama's social, legal, and educational influence and paved the way for individuals without a clerical education to teach and preach Islam. Moreover, she contends that as women rose to prominence as Islamic activists, Islamic education began to become accessible to female students.[28] She further states that the ulama's authority was reduced when their knowledge of legal rulings was deemed irrelevant by indigenous modernizers; at the same time, mass education and literacy increased the number of individuals who began to challenge their authority through their own reading of key texts. This further opened the door for secularly trained intellectuals to dismiss the ulama's absolute knowledge and claim their own authority to interpret religion.[29] Therefore authority is claimed in new ways, which allows further opportunities for women to access the practice of religious authority.

The increased participation of Moroccan women in the religious domain represents a significant shift in the structures of religious authority; they are appropriating such core religious spaces as mosques, *medersa*s, and religious councils as well as attracting a broad female following. These female religious guides and scholars are, however, faced with limitations that question their legitimacy before the longstanding male-dominated religious tradition. Although they have access to teaching and leading activities in mosques as well as attending institutions of higher religious education, they still face limitations in the practice of deconstructing patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. Women's role becomes constructed as merely reformist through the use of socio-religious activities, for the latter depends largely on personal charisma and the capacity to relate to one's audiences, rather than classical or formal training. This creates gendered patterns within religious structures and endorses men's monopoly over the production of knowledge and the interpretation of the text. As a consequence, this generates unequal distributions of power and knowledge as well as hierarchical power relations that determine socioreligious and political differences based on gender differences. However, women find the latter to be empowering as they are shaping new forms of religious authority and breaking ground for comprehensive socioreligious reform. Although they comply with patriarchal structures, they are contributing to promoting women's roles and presence within the public sphere and shifting agency not only by teaching but also by leading activities in mosques as well as other settings. All such activities limit men's control of the public sphere.

Regardless of their teachings, which cannot contravene patriarchal discourses, Kalmbach asserts that the presence of qualified "moral" female instructors for women's lessons groups has caused a partial retreat of male instructors from this sphere, which increases both their authority and influence because they embrace the norms that restrict their activities and do not seek to radically change the status quo. Attempts by female religious leaders to challenge limitations while demonstrating their compliance with central tenets can be seen as performances that increase their legitimacy within a given social context.[30]

Rethinking power relations beyond the binary opposition of the dominant vs. the subjugated produces a discourse of empowerment within structures of dominance. This is consistent with Michel Foucault's discussion of power. In the first volume of his *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault problematizes the traditional model of power in which power is viewed only as negative, repressive, and limiting. He traces the traditional conception of power through the juridico-discursive model, which determines that power comes from above, from a sovereign or the state. Although this conception prevailed in the Middle Ages, political thought is still largely shaped by the idea that power is expressed through the strict adherence to laws.[31] Contrary to this, Foucault proposes a more complex understanding: power as relational, as the "multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization."[32] According to him, the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole.[33] He therefore invites us to understand the complexity of exercising power even in its more "peripheral" effects.[34] Power is not necessarily to be seen within the framework of an institution or a structure, or as a certain strength with which one is endowed; rather, it is a complex strategic situation in a particular society.[35]

Foucault further argues that in order for power to be exercised, there has to be someone who resists; a power relation is defined through resistance. He asserts that "where there is power, there is a resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."[36] According to Lila Abu Lughod, Foucault invites us to question our understanding of power as always and essentially repressive. In her ethnography of Egypt's Awlad Ali Bedouin women, Abu Lughod discusses the rich and complex details of resistance that can be traced within social power.[37] She describes that the sexually segregated women's world is their first arena of resistance in which they enact all sorts of minor defiances of the male-enforced

restrictions by using secrets and silences to their advantage. According to her, women embrace prohibitions and restrictions in their support for the system of sexual segregation, yet resist by fiercely protecting the inviolability of their separate spheres in which that defiance takes place.[38] Abu Lughod, who advocates a shift in perspective regarding forms of resistance, questions whether official ideology is really ever hegemonic or whether cultural or verbal resistance counts as much as other kinds of power.[39]

Morocco's female religious authorities are currently benefiting from the dissolution of the ulama's exclusive authority. They are redefining the parameters of power and engaging the regulatory discourse that constructs their subordination in new ways that re-conceptualize the religious discourse and bridge it with practical realities. They define religious scholarship and authority as the capacity to reconcile the different segments of society with religious practice, through a comprehensive socio-religious reform, and through an expansion of women's social and religious space beyond the mosque.

Conclusion

Morocco is the country in which the revolutionary fervor of the Arab Spring produced significant reforms without threatening the regime's legitimacy. This has presented Morocco as a model country due to its moderate increment of Islamic democratization and its resilient protection of human rights. However, despite the apparent acknowledgment of popular demand, the monarchy has ceded none of its powers. Therefore, the reforms that followed the Arab Spring only endorse the monarch's hegemonic control over the political scene and maintain his legitimacy as both the political and religious leader through his status as the commander of the faithful. Beyond preserving the country's religious unity, the king's religious authority limits the ability of the Islamist movement and other opposition forces to negotiate the monarchy's legitimacy. Religious reform, which Morocco has engaged in since 2003, endorses the king's authority as the guardian of official Islam and the grantor of religious security. The latter was marked by deploying female preachers and scholars as active actors in countering extremism. Although these female religious authorities may be viewed as instruments of state propaganda, this restructuring of the religious sphere has nevertheless offered them a framework within which they can exercise their religious activities with full autonomy and legitimacy and thus carve out space for leadership within religious institutions.

Endnotes

1. The February 20 Movement is a social movement founded by young Moroccan activists in early January 2011 after the fall of President Ben Ali in Tunisia. On February 20, 2011, it started nationwide protests that demanded social and political reform.
2. Anjaiah Veeramalla, "Morocco Moves on Despite Arab Spring, Eurozone Crisis," *The Jakarta Post*, 30 Jul. 2012, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/07/30/morocco-moves-despite-arab-spring-eurozone-crisis.html.
3. Ibid.
4. Estito Imad, "Female Minister in Morocco's New Government: One Too Many?" 23 Jan. 2012, http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/3562.
5. Richard Youngs and Michael Emerson, "Political Islam and European Foreign Policy: Perspectives from Muslim Democrats of the Mediterranean" (CEPS: 2007), 15.
6. The Qadiri Boudchichi order is a major Sufi order in Morocco as well as in different parts of Europe and the United States.
7. The Hasaniyya lectures, a series of lectures presided over by King Mohammed VI every Ramadan in his royal palace, and are attended by high ranking officials and religious authorities from all over the world.
8. Meriem El Haitami, "Restructuring Female Religious Authority: State-Sponsored Women Religious Guides (*Murshidāt*) and Scholars (*'Ālimāt*) in Contemporary Morocco," *Mediterranean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2012): 232.
9. Bekkali Mostafa, "Al-Siyāsah Tughāzilu Taṣawwuf bi al-Maghrib," Rabat, 29 Aug. 2010, http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/6edf8710-d4e6-45b2-a42a-d9444426c9b9.
10. Hassan al-Ashraf, "Morocco Fights Islamist Extremism with Sufism," al-Arabiya News, 26 Sept. 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/09/26/120366. html.
11. A *zāwiyah* is a Sufi lodge; it usually functions as both a mosque and a place where rituals and gatherings take place.
12. Marvine Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.
13. Ibid.
14. Zakya Daoud, "Le plan d'intégration de la femme: Une affaire révélatrice, un débat virtuel," http://aan.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/volumes/1999/Documents/chro_plan-integr-femme.pdf, 9-10.
15. Sally Williams, "*Mourchidat*: Morocco's Female Muslim Clerics," *The Telegraph*, 26 Apr. 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3672924/Mourchidat-Moroccos-female-Muslim-clerics.html.
16. In the Moroccan context, *imam* is defined as "one who leads the daily and Friday prayers in the mosque." State-trained imams fulfill further tasks, such as taking charge of different mosques to monitor the religious discourse delivered in them and holding counseling programs within the communities surrounding the

mosques. The term *murshidah* (pl. *murshidāt*) is translated as "religious guide." The *murshidāt* work mainly (but not only) with women; they offer religious counseling in mosques and other institutions and, in addition, are responsible for coordinating and overseeing the various activities taking place in other mosques.

17. El Haitami, "Restructuring Female Religious Authority," 229.
18. Ibid.
19. Julie Elisabeth Pruzan-Jørgensen, "Islamic Women's Activism in the Arab World: Potentials and Challenges for External Actors" (Danish Institute for International Studies: 2012), 53.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 54.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Williams, "Mourchidat."
25. Ibid.
26. El Haitami, "Restructuring Female Religious Authority," 233.
27. Hilary Kalmbach, "Social and Religious Change in Damascus: One Case of Female Islamic Religious Authority," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no.1 (April 2008): 37-57.
28. Ibid., 8.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 19.
31. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 87-88.
32. Ibid., 92.
33. Ibid., 94.
34. Ibid., 93.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 95.
37. Lila Abu Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (February 1990): 42.
38. Ibid., 43.
39. Ibid., 47.