Feminization of Public Space: Women's Activism, the Family Law, and Social Change in Morocco[*]

Fatima Sadiqi and Moha Ennaji

0.Introduction

The feminist movement in Morocco is constituted of two complementary hardcore

components: the feminist writings[1] that empower women as individuals and women's activism in

feminist associations. This movement is characterized by overall chronological continuity and

constant dialectic interaction with co-existing democratic and powerful political actors, such as

the monarchs, political parties, human rights NGOs, youth NGOs, and international NGOs and

governments. The most spectacular impact of the Moroccan feminist movement resides in its

gradual feminization and, hence democratization, of the public sphere. This impact has triggered

significant social and discourse changes in the public sphere. An example of such changes is the

recent 2004 Family Law reforms. Admittedly, the feminist movement is not the sole actor behind

the new and spectacular legal reforms, but this movement acted as the major pooling force

behind it. This force is attested in triggering unprecedented public debates that preceded,

---

[1] Writing in this context is understood in its larger meaning which includes oral texts as well.

accompanied, and followed the new Family Law. These public debates involved practically all public actors ranging from social, to economic, religious, and political actors. These public debates and the Family Law show that women's feminist ideas and associations were inserting themselves in the public sphere, changing the terms of participation in this sphere, and making women and gender issues a matter of national dialogue and contention for the first time in Morocco's history.

An understanding of the role of the Moroccan feminist movement in the feminization of public space necessitates a historicization of this movement and raises three main questions: What is the nature of the cultural background against which the feminization of space took place? What is the impact of this feminization on the Moroccan feminist movement itself? In what ways has the product of this movement, the Family Law reforms, been instrumental in the politicization of women's issues and the democratization of Morocco? In an attempt to circumvent and relate the issues that these questions raise, this article is structured into three main sections: Section 1 deals with the public/private space dichotomy in Moroccan culture, Section 2 with the gradual growth and complexity of the feminist movement, and Section 3 with the new family Law and the overall context which makes of it a democratization tool in the public sphere in Morocco[2].

1.The Public/Private Space Dichotomy in Moroccan Culture

The dichotomy public space/private space has received considerable attention from feminist scholars working in various disciplines. Thompson (1994) retraces the public/private

---

[2] Our main sources of data and information are existing literature, our own writings in the field, official documents and NGO documentation.

dichotomy to a Greek legend in which human actions take place in a space that is divided into two: public space, the visible male world called "Hermean" (the Greek God of communication), and private space, the invisible feminine world called "Hestian" (the Greek Goddess of home). Hermean space is inherently concrete; it is the space where the philosopher exercises his thinking, the citizen practices his politics, and the researcher explores the complexities of the human intellect. As for the Hestian space, it is the space of everyday life which is essentially characterized by domestic chores and the satisfaction of survival needs. In more recent times, the dichotomy public space/private space has been investigated within the social hierarchy of men and women. Within the tradition of research on Morocco, this approach makes the separation of the public and private spaces so rigid that the two spaces are mutually exclusive: the public space is the street and the market place where men evolve, and the private space is the home where women live (Belarbi 1997; Bourqia 1997). This view associates the public space with the outside/exterior and the private space with the inside/interior, implying that the outside is the place of power where the social constraints are produced and the inside is the place where this power is exercised. This view of space is in accordance with the Arab-Muslim patriarchy which is based on strict gender-based space dichotomy (Mernissi 1975; Saadawi 1982). In (Sadiqi 1997), this approach has been applied to the Moroccan context and one of the findings is that the public space is a men's space which dictates the social norms, while the private space is women's space[3]. The two spaces are strictly dichotomized and interact in a dynamic way in the sense that one does not exist without the other. It is true that women can be in some public spaces – for example, on the street, but they cannot stay there as men are encouraged to. Rather, they must do their business and move on. Also, men do not generally spend any time in the

---

[3] It is true that many socially unprivileged men feel powerless in the public sphere and seek more power at home. However, whereas only some men are oppressed in the public sphere for social reasons, women are not culturally welcome in this space.

kitchen, for example, so the taboo works for them, too, though with very different consequences.

It is in this interaction that gender identities are constructed and power negotiated. The private space is culturally associated with powerless people (women and children) and is subordinated to the public space, which is culturally associated with men who dictate the law, lead business, manage the state, and control the economy, both national and domestic. This space dichotomy is so rigid that even nowadays the only public spaces accessible to women in some places are the ḥammam (public bath) and the siyyid (the tomb of a dead saint). Even in these spaces, women have to respect the special time allocated to visits. Also, Moroccan families often highlight the fact that their female members are closely tied to their homes; the "ideal" woman in Moroccan imagery being one who leaves her house only when absolutely necessary.

The strict public/private space dichotomy has been significantly disrupted ever since women started to take jobs outside home from the 1960s onward (although in rural areas women have always worked on their families' farms). This significant change in women's lives was a result of poverty and education: poor women worked as domestics or in low-paid sectors of industry and educated women secured jobs that their education allowed them (cf. Barkallil 1990; Filali Meknassi 1994). As a consequence of women's salaried work, the public/private space dichotomy started to be reorganized. The first cause of this space reorganization is the transition from the tribal mode of production to a structure of dependence which was brought about by colonialism and later modernism (Barkallil 1990). As a result, the large-scale family which included grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other members of kin shrank to a nucleus of parents and children, especially in urban areas, as a result of women's work outside home. The Moroccan Arabic expression for women working outside the home is xarjat txdam (She went out to work) (cf. Belarbi 1997). "Going out" expresses "going" from one space to another; the verb

xarjat (She went out) further marks the "going out" as a movement from the private/interior to the public/exterior[4]. The first women who took paid jobs were either rural women who emigrated to urban areas or women who lived in the suburbs of big cities. Most of these women were poor (divorced or widows) and were not proud of their jobs (Barkallil 1990; Filali Meknassi 1994). Although upper and middle social classes in the fifties and sixties encouraged the education of girls, they considered the work of women, and hence their money, as a dishonor to the family. For these, women's education aimed at producing good housekeepers and child rearers, not money-earners. The public space was seen as a "dangerous" space where women might meet with men who were not part of the family. This explained the fact that work outside the home was considered inadequate or inappropriate for women. According to Mernissi (1994), only women from lower social backgrounds and whose husbands had poor incomes were actually interested in work in the before and right after independence.

Even in the private space, where women have real power (Schafer-Davis 1979); men are "inserted" to satisfy their needs (food, rest, procreation) and some of men's most important life experiences, such as circumcision and marriage, take place in the private space. Thus, Moroccan men have "official", that is, socially sanctioned, power over both the public and private spaces which they direct and control. This control is supported by the law: the 1993 Moroccan "Personal Status Code" (articles 34 and 35) give a man the right to be polygamous and to divorce his wife or wives. The law also gives him control over his wife or wives: she (they) should obey him, take care of his children, respect his family and never leave the house without his permission. Thus, men not only dominate and manage the private space, but control their wives'

---

[4] Although in the West much is made of World War II and Rosie the Riveter, the representative of women who worked in factories since men, in the military, were unable to do so, many women - especially those of modest means – were already working in factories, and the overwhelming majority of teachers (in elementary and secondary education) were women as were all nurses, hairdressers, steamstresses, etc.

movement in public space as well (Bourqia 1997). In modern times, polygamy has decreased because economic and social conditions have changed. Many Muslim men cannot afford more than one wife, and their attitudes differ from those of their (grand)fathers. However, for the very poor, the reasons are economic in the first place. The fact that polygamy still has legal sanctioning makes it a powerful social weapon of subordinating women.

This reorganization of space has been greatly enhanced by continuous changes in the economic and educational levels of families. In urban areas, women have had more and more access to power-related public spaces; they have special types of dress for public and private spaces. In rural areas, women do not have access to power-related public spaces and do not have special types of dress for public and private spaces, if we exclude lħayk or the djellaba which are used for errands outside the neighborhood.   Further, rural women are generally excluded from the administration, do not usually go to the mosque, and are generally poorly educated in religion. The last point explains the fact that the spread of Islamist movements is a typically urban phenomenon. However, so far as women are concerned, rural vs urban location does not determine for what reason one wears the hijab, as the choices for veiling are various and range from faith to modesty, political affiliation, etc. (Rafea 2000).

Thus, rural and urban women differ as to the degree of access to the powerful public space. If rural women are relatively absent from the mosque, administration, they are present in the fields and the market place. As for urban women, their access to jobs has individualized them in the sense that it has offered them a space where they are called by their own names, and not associated with their fathers, husbands, or sons. Most women who work have not given up their domestic duties. In spite of the fact that women have started to invest the public space, their traditional function in the private space is maintained (Belarbi 1997). Moroccan women are

conscious that housework valorizes them inside the house, that is, in the eyes of their husbands and children; they generally cling to their status as "homemakers" even when they are wealthy and have domestics. Working women usually shun praising their domestics in front of their husbands, out of fear of loosing "moral" control over the household. Housework also valorizes a woman in her larger family as well as in society. It is in accordance with the concepts of being ḥadga (hard-working) and Sbbara (extremely patient) which are venerated in the Moroccan society (Schaffer-Davis 1979).

Given this, in the reorganized space, working women have to accommodate two types of work: domestic and production work. The former is learnt in childhood and the latter acquired through education and training. This accommodation imposes new habits and new time management on Moroccan women. Not only do these women have to be at their jobs at specific times of the day, they also have to mix with male colleagues. This is bound to engender new social representations of women in society, as well as new behaviors and attitudes. Outside the home, women fulfill themselves as individuals, as Moroccan citizens with rights and responsibilities; inside the home, they fulfill themselves as housekeepers and rearers of children. A type of dialectical relationship is established between Moroccan women's public and private spaces. Women talk about their "private space" worries (domestics, marriage problems, children, cooking, etc) in public spaces and about their "public space" worries (promotion, politics, etc.) in private spaces.

The street is another area which has been affected by the reorganization of space. Although women are seen on the street, the latter is far from being a welcoming space for them. Moroccan streets constitute a rather aggressive domain for them. Women on the street are generally insecure and subject to sexual harassment. Insulting back a man or a group of men is

considered very rude by everyone present even if the woman is wronged. The most socially accepted policy is to suffer the humiliation and hurry home or somewhere safe. People would not generally interfere to defend a woman in the street, especially if she is young. If a woman is involved in a public dispute, her family members are usually ashamed to be associated with her because it is a taboo for a woman to insult, shout or even speak loudly in front of other men. Indeed, rape is very seldom declared unless the woman is deliberately accusing a man with the aim of marrying him. On the street at night, only women accompanied by males are relatively secure. One or more women alone in the street at night are generally taken to be prostitutes and may be sexually harassed. Women alone in cafes and women smoking or drinking in public are taboo. Many women smoke and drink in all-women groups or in women's space like the hairdresser's or the ḥammam (public bath). Women's reactions and sometimes even words are considered taboo in the street. Moroccan women constantly feel that they are "violating" male space when they are in the street, especially at night. This explains the relative absence of spontaneous mixity on the street.

In this way, Moroccan women who work do not occupy the whole range of public space; the zones which they invest are quickly transformed into private spaces, as both private and public topics are discussed in this public space, and the logic of the private space is transposed into the public space. For some women, wearing the veil allows greater movement in public space, because veiled women have access to the public space while remaining symbolically in private space. The veil is regarded by many Moroccan women as a means to accede to the outside world while remaining inside. This is particularly true for women who sell goods on the street or perform jobs where they are in direct contact with male "strangers" when working as cashiers, saleswomen, cinema ushers, and even businesswomen. As a result, contemporary urban

Moroccan women hardly dissociate between their roles as daughters, wives or mothers from their roles as agents of production, all of which constituting their identities. The fact that women may keep their issues private, despite changes in their lifestyle should be understood against the public/private space dichotomy described above.

Although still gendered, the reorganized space renders the dichotomy men/public and women/private more complex. Indeed, migration from rural to urban areas makes the dichotomy very relative as it situates it in larger contexts, in which rural women who emigrate to urban centers associate the countryside with private space and the urban areas with public space; likewise, Moroccan emigrants living in Europe consider Morocco a private space in which the self is expressed and culture and traditions kept alive (Belarbi 1997). In the case of these emigrants, private space is Morocco, which for them evokes home and family. In addition, although most of the Moroccan public institutions (schools, universities, administrations) resemble Western institutions, space is organized differently in the Moroccan context as it is still gendered in particularly local ways. For example, men and women may use different entrance doors, praying spaces, etc.

Given these facts, the dichotomy public/private sphere is not static, especially now that Morocco is experiencing important socio-economic transformations. There is both a continuum and a dialectic relationship between the public and private spaces, giving rise to a number of intermediate spaces. The space complexities render a rigid dichotomization of space too reductionist as it does not account for lived reality. Women's work outside the home and migration (either from rural to urban areas or from Morocco to Europe) have created deep social mutations that resulted in more interactions between the public and the private spaces and a re-establishment of men and women in a common space given their collective participation in social

dynamics.

The struggle of Moroccan women to secure a place in the overall economic structure is most appreciated if we realize that Moroccan women are the first victims in economic hardships. Like most developing countries, Morocco has been hit by recurrent severe economic crises since the late 1970s. From that period onward, the country has adopted "structural adjustments" to restore the country's economic and financial balance. These policies were imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As champions of liberalism, these two institutions have hardly been concerned with the fate of the poorest. The most under-privileged classes are paying a high price for the adjustment, the first victims in this process being poor women who are the victims of the decrease in employment prospects and the drastic cuts in social budgets. In Morocco, the social sectors of health and education are the hardest hit by budget cuts. Education expenditure per capita decreased at a rate of 11% from 1983 to 1989, resulting in a general decline of 8.7% in school enrolment rates between 1985 and 1990. In a society where female education is considered less important than that of males, it is girls who are most directly affected by this decline: the school enrolment rate declined at 7.8% for boys and 10% for girls. Peasant girls are the worst hit with a 13.6% decline rate (Sadiqi 2003; Ennaji 2005).

Likewise, female job opportunities are more directly hit by economic crises than male opportunities. In times of crises, women are excluded from stable and high-paying jobs and, instead, are encouraged to take up precarious and low-paying jobs in the informal sector. Starting from the mid-1990s onward, poverty has become more and more female (Ennaji 2004b). The loosening of family ties and accelerated urban expansion have broken traditional solidarity. This tendency is reinforced by an increase in divorce and has resulted in an increase in the number of

female heads of households. In cities, it is in the lower classes that one finds the largest number of female heads of households (Ennaji with Sadiqi to appear). Consequently, poverty typically affects the families supported by a woman's salary. Likewise, women benefit less than men from economic and social progress in periods of growth. They constitute the most vulnerable social group and the least protected one. This situation is due neither to fate nor chance; it is the result of a systematic depreciation of women's work and status in all fields. This is in accordance with the prevalent view that women are not treated on an equal basis with men in the public sphere of work; women have to fight for many considerations that are taken for granted by men.

Thus, in spite of the great benefits that working women derived from their jobs, the reorganization of space in Moroccan culture did not bring about equality of sexes. Colonialism and modernism in Morocco established the "work-money-modernity" order, and brought about new techniques of exploitation, such as the division of the Moroccan society into traditional (rural) and modern (urban) areas. As cities created anonymity, Moroccan urban women were confronted with a psycho-sociological conflict inside their society: a clash between an essentially tribal superstructure and a production system whose economic logic was alien to the traditional communal mode. Modernization benefited upper and middle class women to the detriment of rural women who, up to present times, suffer from illiteracy. In fact, according to the Department of Statistics (2004), 68% of rural women are illiterate.

Another modernity-related problem is that in the domain of work, the law does not mirror social inequalities. Women face the same problems as men in jobs: an increase in the cost of living, a decrease in job opportunities, and health and housing problems. In addition, women face problems that are specific to them, some of which are common to all women, and others that differ according to social class, legislation, etc. The law of the time gave absolute pre-eminence

to men and favored married women (articles 1 and 36 of the "Mudawana"[5]). This encouraged social prejudice and male discriminatory behavior towards women (Ennaji 2005b).

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the legal texts which regulate social legislation do not discriminate between men and women with respect to individual relations in jobs and protective safety measurements, as well as in salaries, work hours, and health, women suffer from handicaps related to their jobs: huge gaps in their professional training, a very high illiteracy rate, unsatisfactory socialization, weak representation in the unions, and the failure of statisticians and other analysts to treat domestic work as employment. Even in trade-unions that are supposed to defend workers' rights, managers do not encourage female employment, especially in periods of economic crises. Women do not generally participate in union/social activist causes because of domestic chores. In addition, husbands and fathers do not generally favor women's attendance of union meetings, which are usually held in the evenings. In all-female professions, some women join unions but they have little chance of reaching positions of high responsibility. At the 1990 Conference on the Moroccan National Union of Higher Education, women constituted only 10% of the delegates. Moroccan trade unions, even the ones that are affiliated with leftist political parties, marginalize women by relegating them to subordinate organizations. For example, the Moroccan "Union Travailliste" (Labor Union) created "L'Union Progressiste des Femmes Marocaines" (Progressive Union of Moroccan Women) in 1961 to distance women from decision-making.

This section has been an attempt to demonstrate that although the public space is unliberating for the poorer sections of women, it did empower the socially privileged. It is in this

---

[5] The "Mudawana" is the legal name of the "Personal Status Code", which later became the "Family Law". The "Mudawana" may be defined as a set of laws which regulate family law in Morocco, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. The 1957 "Mudawana" was based on "Shari'a" (Islamic law), more specifically on the "Maliki" law.

space that the Moroccan feminist movement was born.

2. The Growth of the Moroccan Feminist Movement

The beginning of the Moroccan feminist movement goes back to 1946, the year in which the "Akhawat Al-Safaa" (Sisters of Purity) Association[6] issued a document which embodied a number of legal demands, among which the abolition of polygamy and more visibility in the public sphere. This document is considered the first "public" voice of Moroccan feminist movement[7]. Some of these pioneer women wrote articles in the mainstream newspaper of the "Istiqlal" (Independence) Party: "Al-Alam" [8]. Their views were generally supported by the male liberal nationalists of the time.

The first voices of women in the public sphere were made possible by the liberal views of key political male actors such as individual thinkers, the monarch, and political parties. "Akhawat Al-Safaa" belonged to the middle and upper classes of the city of Fes, and all of them had an influential male parent in the then sole popular party: the "Istiqlal" (Independence) party.

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish the pioneer women's feminist views from the then prevailing male "feminism" which targeted the promotion of women from larger perspectives in which society as a whole, and not women as individuals, constituted the priority[9]. Thus, although they belonged to the same historical era (the Protectorate and Post-Independence), Allal Al-Fassi, a Salafist (a religious reformist) and a prominent nationalist, who

---

[6] This association was part of the "Istiqlal" (Independence) Party.
[7] Cf. "Women Writing Africa. The Northern Region". (to appear). Feminist Press.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Such feminism took its roots in the nineteen century "Nahda" (Renaissance) era in the Middle East and embodied male larger visions of what a targeted society could be. The "Nahda" scholars, such Jamal Eddine Al-Afghani and Mohamed Abdou, sought the "emancipation" of women as part of the overall development of society.

studied and lived in Egypt, dismissed polygamy, not because it harmed women as individuals, but because it was a practice that "tarnished" the image of "modern" Islam[10], and Mohamed Hassan Ouazzani, a modernist intellectual, who studied and lived in France, called for equitable inheritance laws, not only because these laws were harmful to women as women, but also because equitable inheritance laws were "tokens" of a modern egalitarian society. The two men had different societal projects and sought the "emancipation" of women to suit these projects: an "enlightened" Islamic state in the case of Al-Fassi and a European-style state in the case of Ouazzani.

The newly independent state[11] espoused these male feminist views for more or less the same reasons. For example, in 1957, King Mohamed V unveiled his eldest daughter in public and called for the necessity to emancipate women in order to develop society. After this symbolic gesture, thousands of women in cities unveiled, and religious preachers in mosques associated unveiling and working outside home with nation-building. As for the political parties (conservative and otherwise), they included "feminist" ideas in their electoral campaigns, although the more one went into their core priorities, the less "feminist" these ideas became, as is most attested in the structures and orientations of these parties which bluntly reproduced the same patriarchal visions they claimed to fight.

Overall, men's feminist views were different from women's: while the latter's aimed at improving women's lives, the former's were more abstract as they formed part of their "remedies" to the "backwardness" of Morocco. Feminist men of the time endeavored to prove that Morocco could not progress without educating and training women. The interest in

---

[10]   In his "Al-Naqd Ad-Daati" (Auto-Criticism), Allal Al-Fassi made several criticisms of the Moroccan family law and in which he called for the abolition of polygamy, judicial regulation of repudiation and divorce and the equivalent of a set of alimony for repudiated women.

[11] Morocco obtained its independence from France in 1956.

educating women that the intellectuals, the state, and political parties called for was not motivated by a genuine interest in the liberation of women as individuals, but by larger social projects. As a result, middle and upper classes sought in educating their girls some kind of social prestige which they used to boost their personal social status[12]. Likewise, although the state and political parties played a crucial role in inducing women to seek regular remunerated work outside home, this inducement did not emanate from clear and active policies to integrate women in the job market; rather, women's work was part of unplanned consequences of state policies as well as of development requirements.

Although male feminism did not target the empowerment of women as individuals, the middle and upper classes women gained from it in two fields: education and job opportunities, that is, the means of entering the public sphere. It was the new post-independence bourgeois class that produced the first women pharmacists, jurists, medical doctors, university professors, etc. The general feminist trend of these women was liberal in the sense that they readily embraced "modern" ideas and practices without rejecting their local specificities, including being Muslim[13]. This liberal trend was accompanied by changes in dress, as well as other social practices, such as the adoption of the French style and way of life. However this style never succeeded in replacing traditional Moroccan practices and ways of life, including dress.

Women's feminist ideas started to be manifested in journalistic and academic writings (mainly sociological and literary). As such, the general feminist trend of these women links with the "Akhawat Al-Safaa" journalistic practices. Journalistic writings included newspaper reports and magazine articles. These writings circulated widely among the educated population. The

---

[12] Walters (1999) argues that girl's education in Tunisia was partly geared towards producing more marriageable daughters, thereby, increasing the status of the family.

[13] We will later deal with the dichotomy liberal feminism/Islamism.

Moroccan feminist writer Leila Abouzeid started her carrier as a journalist in the early 1970s and wrote under a man's name, and Zakia Daoud remains a Moroccan professional journalist and a fervent feminist.

Journalistic discourse, couched in Arabic and French, evolved around two major issues: (i) a cult of domesticity and (ii) feminist ideology. The cult of domesticity included topics that were meant to improve women's health, productivity, education, nurturing skills, household management, childrearing, and "how to" be a better, more effective wife and mother. As for feminist ideology, it included selected biographies of national and international feminist figures. Indeed, using some sort of feminist hagiography, biographies were used as a means of publicly exposing feminist ideas without directly implicating the writer. It is not just exposing readers to feminist ideas, but also authors' indirectly espousing such a stance. Both types of journalistic writings aimed at stressing the development of women through the development of their gifts, while highlighting their domestic roles. They were also meant to promote the rights of women to remain in the work force. In parallel to journalistic writings, women of the 1960s and 1970s started to write novels and produce sociological analyses. Some of these women, like Khnata Bennouna, belonged to leftist political parties and some readily espoused leftist ideology. Both the journalistic and academic writings challenged patriarchy without displacing or dismantling it.

Along these journalistic and academic writings, women started to organize themselves in political parties. Examples are the "Union Progressiste des Femmes Marocaines" (Progressive Union of Moroccan Women), which was created in 1962, and the "Union Nationale des Femmes Marocaines" (National Union of Moroccan Women), which was created in 1969. These were professional, not straightforwardly political, organizations. Likewise, more and more women became skilled politicians in opposition leftist parties such as the "Parti du Progrès et du

Socialisme" (Progress and Socialism Party) and the "Parti de L'Union Socialiste du Front
Populaire" (Socialist Union of the Popular Front).

In the subsequent years, that is in the 1980s, and with the advent of mass education, more
outspoken feminist journalistic and academic writings were produced by women. Magazines
such as 8 Mars[14] (March 8), created in 1983 and Kalima (Word), created in 1986 and censured in
1988, addressed feminist issues and aimed to show that gender roles, sexuality, and even division
of labor were neither divinely prescribed nor ordained by nature, but had a historical origin. In
parallel, more outspoken women's voices made themselves heard in the academic sphere:
Mernissi (1987) argues that Moroccan women's unequal status is attributed to the political and
economic systems which exclude them[15]. Leila Abouzeid (1983) wrote 'am Al-Fiil (The Year of
the Elephant)[16] where she brilliantly depicts how Moroccan women, who participated in the fight
for independence, were fulfilled and had an identity during the nationalist fight, but after
independence, felt discarded and useless as the national leaders often re-married younger wives
and adopted French-style ways and manners in which indigenous ways of life and illiteracy
hardly had any place .

Along with the journalistic and academic writings, women's associations (also called
local NGO's) started to see the light of the day. The first post-independence women's
association, "L'Association Démocratique des Femmes Marocaines" (The Democratic

---

[14] This magazine ceased to appear for more than a decade before it resumed its activities in 2004.

[15] It is important to note that the details of feminist struggles and conditionings differ for each Muslim country. For example, Tunisia's political elite positioned Tunisian women very differently but capitalizing on their civil rights. This does not mean that Tunisia is a panacea for women, but its history contrasts in critical ways with Morocco's. Indeed, national differences indicate that the 'Arab Muslim' world is not an undifferentiated whole.

[16] The expression "Year of the Elephant" is an allusion to a famous period in the history of Islam during which foreign tribes riding elephants marched on the sanctuary at Mecca. Elizabeth Fernea with Robert Fernea (1985) explains the title by stating that the battle was not won by arms and superior numbers of warriors but by "flocks of birds which miraculously appeared and bombarded the elephants with clay pellets". The birds were like ordinary men and women who brought about Morocco's independence.

Association of Moroccan Women) started, like the "Akawat Al-Safaa" association, as a division

of a political party, the Party of Progress and Socialism, this time. Soon after, another strong

women's rights association, "L'Union de L'Action Féminine" (Female Action Union) was

created. These two associations were soon followed by a plethora of similar, but smaller,

women's associations which have emerged to combat violence against women, gender-based

legal and cultural discrimination, under-representation of women in government and the

economic sector, and illiteracy. These associations have given Moroccan women the opportunity

to become skilled in the public organization of their demands, the public articulation of their

resources, as well as a good opportunity to gain credibility on the public scene. Moroccan

feminist associations produced many feminist militants who later became national public figures

like Latifa Jbabdi, Nouzha Skalli, Amina Lemrini, and Latifa Smires Bennani.

These associations were greatly helped by international organizations. As liberal

feminists and proponents of women's rights across the world have launched worldwide pressures

to stop gender-based discrimination and promote women's rights, using powerful organizations

like the United Nations, the government of Morocco was constantly being asked to send official

delegations and address women's issues in world-wide events like the United Nations Decade for

Women (1975-1985) and specific U.N. meetings (Mexico City 1975; Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi

1985, Beijing 1995, etc.)[17]. Likewise, Morocco ratified the Convention to End Discrimination

Against Women (CEDAW) on August 26, 1993. CEDAW was ratified by Morocco with

reservations to articles 2 and 16 which concern marriage and its dissolution and national identity

and how it is not passed from mother to child, respectively. These reservations were justified on

---

[17] It is worth noting that participation in international events like these carries an importance and a cachet in Morocco, as well as in North Africa and other countries, that it does not in the U.S. at least, perhaps because though the U.S. government may send delegations, the active and engaged participants are mainly from groups having nothing to do with the government, especially for women's issues.

the grounds that Moroccan officials wanted to reconcile Western views with the Moroccan legal system; they considered that the two articles that were opposed conflicted with the Code of Personal Status "Mudawana".

By questioning the sexual division and the ideology on which it was based, the journalistic, academic and associative discourse of liberal feminists questioned patriarchy. In such a discourse, women's condition was not considered a "natural state", but a state that had historical origins and women's work was seen as production, and not merely reproduction. As such, this discourse tackled issues which, until recently, were taboo, such as female sexuality and the various forms of violence against women. This discourse sought to politicize women's collective consciousness of their oppression and denounced the indifference of political parties, which often used women's issues to enforce their political agendas and demarcate themselves from the fundamentalist rhetoric, to the reality of women's lives.

This overall stance of Moroccan feminists explains their bitter disappointment with the first Code of the Personal Status "Mudawana", which was instituted in 1957, that is, only one year after independence. The Moroccan feminist movement is deeply associated with the "Mudawana" as the latter constitutes the locus of the legal and civil discrimination against women. The disappointment of liberal feminists with the "Mudawana" was partly due to the fact that Allal Al-Fassi's liberal ideas were not incorporated in the "Mudawana" although the man was called upon for the drafting of this document[18]. Another aspect of liberal feminists' disappointment is the fact that the "Mudawana" was based on the religious "Maliki" law, at a time when other codes were based on civil law such as the Penal Code and the Constitution. For

---

[18] In 1957, only one year after independence, King Mohamed V created a commission to work with the Minister of Justice to codify Family Law in Morocco; this commission consisted of ten "Ulemas" "Islamic scholars" and three figureheads of Moroccan "Salafism" (religious reformism) among which Allal Al-Fassi.

example, many Moroccan laws such as the ones relative to bank interest and the sale of alcohol bypass the precepts of religion although the Qur'an is very clear on these issues.

The fact that the "Mudawana" was masterminded by men only and was based on religious law was meant to make it "sacred" and not open to public debate. The "Mudawana" also defined women as minors by limiting their rights and allowing polygamy. The Code was seen by liberal feminists as a "betrayal" and a way of distancing women from the public sphere (Daoud 1993; Woodhull 1993).

Mernissi (1987) denounced the undemocratic practices of the former national male leaders who suffered from torture at the hands of the French colonizers in order to achieve democracy and equity but who then treated half of their societies unfairly by institutionalizing a Code of Personal Status that denied them rights. Mernissi deconstructed the patriarchal biases in gender representation at the official level and postcolonial undemocratic societal projects. She underlined the inconsistency between the conservative nature of the Code and the promotion of a liberal economic system. While the Moroccan Constitution granted women equal political rights with those of men, the Code of Personal Status inscribed them as essentially domestic beings with limited rights. According to Mernissi, postcolonial Morocco designated male supremacy and female subordination as symbols of cultural specificity and political legitimacy.

From the 1980s onward, the Moroccan feminist movement had to deal with a serious challenge: Islamism[19]. In general, Islamists don't have a deep theological or judicial ("fiqhic") knowledge which leads to require from themselves and from others rigorous religious practices based on the literal reading of the founding texts (Qur'an and Sunnah). In opposing the West,

---

[19] Islamism may be defined as a social movement or organization based on the exploitation of Islam for political aims. More precisely, any such movement or organization that tries to exercise power in the name of religion only. Given its westernmost geographical position in the MENA region, Islamism reached Morocco last. Moroccan Islamists do not constitute a homogeneous group: they range from conservative, to moderate, to radical.

Islamism opposes modernity, and in doing so, it makes a confusion between the West and modernity and takes the West, which may be defined as an incomplete historical manifestation of modernity, for modernity itself. Instead of criticizing the West in the name of modernity, Islamism rejects modernity and opposes the Self and the Other in an anti-historic way, using women as the weaker, and hence more accessible, sex .

Liberal feminists quickly realized that the Islamists targeted women, especially the lower classes, through their call for veiling and their carefully packaged discourses that comforted the patriarchal tendencies among men, especially young unemployed males who were easily led to think that women's work outside home robs them of opportunities. They also realized that by pushing politicized women to demand rights from a religious perspective, they were trying to recuperate the discourse space and fruits of years of efforts by liberal feminists.

The main strategies that liberal feminists used were: a gradual downplay of the "religious" role of the veil in their writings and practices, more and more usage of Arabic and Qur'an and Hadith, a call for more flexible readings of the Qur'anic texts, a gradual inclusion of the children's oppression in women's issues, and a reinforcement of Islam as culture and spirituality. These liberal feminists also endeavored to draw the attention of the younger, often veiled, generation to the real problems that women faced: absence of legal protection in front of the law. These feminists made an excellent use of the media in depicting the social misery of women and children victims of divorce, thus targeting the very social issues that the Islamists capitalized on. By doing this, the liberal feminists maintained their focus on the necessity to reform the Family Law.

Overall, the liberal feminists of the 1980s sought to assert themselves and affirm their own identity and the existence of their own history in spite of the powerful Islamic movement.

They did this through journalistic writings, associative work, and anthropological, sociological, and political studies, as well as through narratives and poems. These feminists were conscious that if they rejected Islamic precepts, they would face a double sanction: in Morocco, they would fail to connect with the vast majority of Moroccan women who are poor, illiterate and deeply religious, and outside Morocco, they would be accused of not representing their own authentic culture.

This trend in the feminist movement was strengthened in the 1990s at the journalistic, academic and associative levels. In the late 1990s, Moroccan liberal feminism was enhanced at the academic level by the creation of centers for research on women as well as graduate programs on gender/women studies at the university levels in Rabat, Fes, and Meknes. These programs have typically been established in state or public Universities, not in private institutions as was the case in the Middle East (Badran 2002).

At the level of associations, while the majority of Moroccan women's advocacy NGOs are concentrated in the urban centers of Rabat, Casablanca, and Fes, local NGOs, women's and development organizations have emerged in smaller cities and towns across the country since the late 1990's to address problems unique to women in their regions. In 1992, "L'Union de L'Action Féminine" launched a huge campaign to establish equality between women and men on Women's International day on March 8 of that year. This association sent a letter to the Parliament calling for changes in the "Mudawana" and secured a million signatures to support its demands. The demand was strongly opposed by the Islamists, and as a result, King Hassan II, in his capacity as "?amir al-muuminin" (Commander of the Faithful), created a Commission of "Ulemas" (religious scholars) and judges to review the proposed changes and suggest recommendations. None of the members of this Commission was a woman (Taoufik 1993). On

May 1 1993, the king announced changes in articles 5, 12, 30, 32, 48, and 148 such as limiting the marriage tutor control as the woman needed to give her consent and sign the marriage contract; women over 21 who did not have a father were allowed to contract their own marriage without a tutor; before taking a second wife, a husband needed to inform his first wife; a woman could ask for a clause in her marriage contract to the effect that her husband would give her a divorce if he took a second wife, but it was up to the judge to either declare or not the divorce; a man's application to divorce his wife needed to be addressed to two notaries and the wife needed to be summoned to court. The mother was given the right to legally represent her children if their father died (but according to article 142 the mother still could not dispose of the children's property) and in cases of divorce child custody was given first to the mother and secondly to the father. Finally, some type of family counseling institution was to be created to help judges with family disputes. The 1993 reforms were a real disappointment and a step backwards for women's associations because of the child custody issue. Custody was given to the mother and then the father but, in case of the mother's remarriage, custody was given to the father instead of the maternal grandmother.

In spite of their disappointment, liberal feminists considered the 1993 changes big symbolic gains because they made the debate on the "Mudawana" public for the first time in the history of Morocco, a sign that the Moroccan feminist movement was making significant headway. Indeed, the biggest success of this movement was its ability to bring a "sacred" religious document into the heart of public debate: the "Mudawana" was not only examined, but criticized and even changed. This meant that women's issues were finally open to public discussion and debate. This is a remarkable achievement given the information about the public/private dichotomy in Section 1.

In 1998, the first socialist government took power in Morocco and in March 1999, Mohamed said Saadi, the then Secretary of State for the Family, the Children and the Disabled, presented the "Plan d'Intégration des Femmes dans le Développement" (The Plan for Integrating Women in Development), also known as "The Plan". Of the 214 points that this Plan contained, 8 concerned changes in the Family Law, such as the abolition of polygamy, which immediately infuriated the Islamists who saw in the "Plan" an outside maneuver to destabilize Moroccan society. On March 2000, two marches were organized: one in Rabat supporting the "Plan" and one in Casablanca opposing it. The Feminist movement was at the forefront of the supporters of the Plan. Human rights NGOs, democratic NGOs and political parties also supported the "Plan". As for the Casablanca march, it was supported by the Islamists. The Casablanca march was characterized by the great number of veiled women who marched in separate rows from men. The latter march was meant to be show of force on the part of the Islamists who managed, through unprecedented mobilization, to attract greater numbers of people and to launch their first political party. The "war" between them and liberal feminists took bigger dimensions. The "Plan" failed, and Mohamed Said Saadi lost his post. The failure of the Plan was a real blow for the feminist movement which, nevertheless, kept fighting. In addition to universal laws and global feminism, liberal feminists concentrated more and more on "maqasid Sahri'a" (Goals of Shari'a) instead of "Shari'a"[20] . Seeing that the state would not favor the rise of Islamism in Morocco, the feminist movement started to rally with the state, thus further politicizing women's issues. This process was greatly enhanced by the coming of a Mohamed VI, new young king in July 1999.

---

[20] Whereas "Shari'a" rules are more based on a rigid and literal reading of the Qur'an and Hadith (the Prophet's Sayings), "maqasid Shari'a" target the contextualization of these rules within changing historical eras.

By the end of the last century and the beginning of the new one, the Moroccan feminist movement has started to become very visible in the public sphere of power. From its inception to the end of the 1990s, the discourses of the Moroccan feminist movement ranged from a deconstruction of the family and social oppression, through that of the legal oppression, to that of political oppression. As such, this movement evolved through various historical periods and managed to ensure continuity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, and with the coming of the new king, the feminist movement in Morocco is increasingly becoming a political actor, an indispensable tool of democratization.

3. Women's Activism and the Democratization of the Public Sphere: The politicization of Women's Issues and the New Family Law

The impasse that the Moroccan feminist movement reached in 2000 changed dramatically with the coming of the new king, Mohammed VI. One month after he took power, King Mohamed VI said in his August 20, 1999 address:

> "How can society achieve progress, while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence, and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted them by our glorious religion? "

A series of high-profile female royal appointments followed this statement: in March 2000, for the first time in the country's history, the king appointed a female Royal Counselor; in August 2000, the King appointed a woman to head the National Office of Oil Research and Exploration; in September 2000, he confirmed the first-ever female ministerial appointment, and in October 2000, he appointed the first woman to head the National Office of Tourism. Similar appointments at political and religious posts followed in subsequent years.

In addition to the king's disposition to enhance women's position in the public sphere, the Socialist Party, led by Abderrahmane Youssoufi, set the ground in May 2002 for the democratization of the Parliament by approving a proposal, backed by the King, that sets aside 30 seats for the election of women in the national elections of September 2002.

These top-level political actions greatly boosted the feminist movement in Morocco and confirmed its recognition as a powerful political actor in the public sphere. Although feminist journalists and writers continued to focus their efforts on legal demands, they expanded their domain of action to various related areas. Hence, they endeavoured to assert that law is a social construction, that inequality and social relations are socially constructed, and hence subject to historical variability, deconstruction and reconstruction on the basis of equality. They demanded a re-examination of the social, political, economic structures and an analysis of the judicial norms with respect to men-women relations in order to fight the ambivalence in men-women social relations. On other fronts, liberal feminists reduplicated efforts to introduce gender as a powerful tool of analysis in various public institutions.

As for women's associations, they became more and more active, proving, thus, more accessible to women than the institutional political parties as they do not require extensive material resources or influential connections. Two main types of women's associations may be

discerned at the eve of the twenty-first century: the ones that focus on service provision by filling gaps left by the deficient state structures in terms of social and economic development, such as addressing concrete problems on the ground using available means, and the ones that focus on advocacy and lobbying with the aim of defending a vision of society where women's legal and civil rights are respected. Both types of women's associations kept a dialectical relationship with the broader civil society (Human rights associations, youth organizations that involve women's issues, etc.). This advocacy and lobbying tightened the link between women's associations and other actors of civil society.

Women feminist writers such as Mernissi started to be directly involved in the work of women's associations. Mernissi (2003:123) explains :

Pour faire fructifier notre capital social, on a besoin de

donner confiance aux 13 Millions d'adultes qui existent dans

notre pays, hommes et femmes, ruraux et citadins pour qu'ils

puissent devenir des ''hallalin al machaki''. Car il faut que

nous, les 13 Millions d'enfants deviennent de superbes

démocrates, de merveilleux communicateurs, des pionniers

de la Méditerranée de la tolérance.

[To fructify our social capital, we need to give confidence to

13 million adults who live in our country, men and women,

rural and urban in order for them to become problem-solvers,

because we, the 13 million of children, should become superb

democrats, marvelous communicators, pioneers in the

Mediterranean of tolerance[21].]

Overall, women's associative work started to assume political, social and economic functions, hence strengthening institutional politics. Politically, local activism bridges the gap between women and the institutional political sphere mainly through local activists' networks with more urban/political women's NGOs. Socially, the increasing proliferation of women's associations allowed women to assume more powerful social roles as leaders and managers of public affairs. Economically, NGOs have allowed many women to acquire economic independence through self-generating incomes such as micro-credits.

On a more general level, women's associations started to become carriers of alternative projects of transformative gender roles in Moroccan society, and this protects and guarantees an effective exercise of public freedoms favouring the emergence of pluralist collective identity based on the universal values of the culture of citizenship, for bottom-up development and for empowerment (Kandiyoti 1991, Joseph 2000). Indeed, women's associations endeavoured to promote participation, social mobilization, and associative lobbying that encourage good governance and a culture of responsible citizens, not passive subjects, thus working towards a dynamic participatory and equitable democracy (Moghaddam 1995; Chadli 2001; Roque 2004). They have become real schools of democracy which encourage women to get involved in decision- making in local public affairs and to empower women at all levels of governance. NGOs have enabled women to critically assess their own situation, create and shape a transformation of society.

---

[21] The translation is ours.

Because of the social, economic, and political issues they persistently address, women's NGOs, and civil society in general, gradually became the raison d'être of the Moroccan political class not only because of the disposition of the latter as mentioned above, but because of external pressure and pressure from political parties and other human rights NGOs. The government and political parties have realised the need to take account of these new areas of participation and mobilization. The challenge facing the women's NGOs is to elaborate autonomous strategies and to establish themselves as forces for innovation, political pressure and proposals, to push the state to revise its policies. The NGOs autonomy is a basis for genuine partnership with the state and for co-operation with political parties. For the time being, Morocco is perhaps a unique example in the Arab world - a country where the battle led by feminine NGO activists has begun to have a tangible impact on national human rights and development policies. Support for these movements remains essential, not just for Morocco, but for the sake of social development throughout the region. Moroccan women's activism helps to promote awareness and knowledge of legal rights among women, to develop networks between women's NGOs and community-based groups, and to ensure a broader spectrum of participation in the public sphere.

The impact of the feminist movement was vividly felt after the May 16, 2003 Casablanca bombings. Liberal feminists have been very swift in strongly reacting to the terrorist attacks and they were among the very first who took to the streets. They brilliantly seized the event to take a "historical revenge" on the Islamists. Their strong public presence was greatly enhanced by the significant diminution in power of the Islamists after the Casablanca attacks.

Overall, the dialectic relationship between the monarch, political parties, the Parliament, and human rights NGOs, on the one hand, and the feminist movement, on the other hand, led to

the promulgation of the new Family Law[22]. More than in any period of Morocco's history, the new Family Law is both a subject of its own and a means of studying other topics such as changing notions of state authority, individual decision-making, gender practices, family planning, and family size. It is felt to be an important document that concerns all the components of society, as its impact is attested at the legal, political, religious, socio-cultural, and intellectual levels. At the legal level, the Family law is a central piece in the Moroccan judicial arsenal because it touches on practically all the other aspects of the Moroccan legal system; at the political level, women's judicial status in the family is linked to demands for democracy and full citizenship; at the socio-cultural level, the Family Law has been associated with the controversial notion of emancipation[23]; on the intellectual level, the new Family Law has been and is still at the heart of the antagonism between two major positions: the conservatives and the modernists[24].

In spite of the fact that the new Family Law is more "audacious" than the "Plan", it succeeded; why? There are three reasons behind this success: first, unlike the Plan, the new Family Law is first proposed to the Parliament, thus implicating all the representatives of the people; second, it was presented as a "project of society", and third, it resolves the notorious issue of reference by blending social reality, the "Shari'a" (Islamic law), and the philosophy of

---

[22] The new Family law is presented as a body of rules, practices, and beliefs that govern the home. Its policies govern all aspects of family life from courtship, marriage and child rearing to spousal violence, divorce, and inheritance.

[23] Women's emancipation has always been characterized by passionate debates. The reason is not simply because of the implications on the social and individual lives of Moroccans, but because this emancipation entails a redefinition of the functions and roles of men and women, as well as that of the relations between individuals and between individuals and the group.

[24] The domain of confrontation is women's rights in the private sphere, the family. The issue at stake is reference ("le referential"). For conservatives, reference needs to stem from identity "going back to the source" and "what singles us out as different: the "Sahri'a". For modernists, reference needs to stem from universal values. The antagonism is a mirror of the socio-cultural rift within Moroccan society. It is an expression of the ambivalence in the Moroccan judicial and political systems. This ambivalence had local and international causes. It should be pointed out that such antagonisms have always surfaced in the major transitional phases of Morocco's history.

human rights. The new Law is designed around three axes: equality between spouses, family equilibrium, and the protection of the children[25]. The inclusion of children was instrumental in passing the law. It circumvented the thorny issue of "illegal" children in a skilful way: by respecting international laws protecting children's rights, single mothers were given legal visibility.

Although the new Family Law is more audacious than the 1999 "Plan", the latter failed. The reason for the success of the former is the change in overall political context and the weakening of the Islamist ideology after the Casablanca 2003 terrorist bombings. The new Family Law led to many improvements in other laws, such as the criminalization of violence against wives, the law against sexual harassment in the workplace, and the mother's citizenship law. Overall, the new Family Law improves women's status before, during, and after marriage. It

---

[25]   Equality between spouses
           The concept of equality is attested in the following innovations:
-    The legal age of marriage is 18 for both sexes
-    Equality in family legal responsibility: both spouses are legally heads of the family.
-    Equality in rights and duties: abolition of the right of obedience in return to catering.
-    No tutorship for "major" women.
-    Severe constraints on polygamy, almost impossible
-    Repudiation and divorce in the hands of the judge. The judge also handles consensual divorce, compensation divorce, "shiqaq" (impossibility of cohabitation).
-    -Girls and boys choose which parent to live with at the age of 15.
-    Grandchildren (from the daughter) inherit in the same way as those from the son.
-    The sharing of accumulated property and benefits gathered during marriage
Guarantee of Family Equilibrium
-    The public ministry automatically intervenes in any application of the Family Code
-    Establishment of Family Courts. 12 are already operational throughout Morocco (Royal letter addressed to the Ministry of Justice on October 12, 2003).
-    Reinforcement of means of reconciliation through family
-    Creation of a Fund for family assistance
-    Recognition of Moroccan marriages contracted abroad according to the legislations of the host countries
Protection of Children's Rights
-    In the interest of children, the right of the mother's tutorship is not lifted if the divorced mother remarries or if her residence is far from that of the father.
-    In the interest of children, the judge may alter the order of the family members eligible to tutorship: the mother, the father, the maternal grandmother, etc.
-    The social status of the child is taken into consideration at the moment of divorce: decent dwelling, the standard of living should be similar to that he/she was leading before divorce
-    Recognition of paternity when the child is conceived during courtship, that is, before marriage is formalized by a contract.

strengthens the position of women in the private and the public spheres. However, two issues remain pending: the implementation of the law and the issue of religion.

So far as implementation of the Family Law is concerned, it differs from region to region but in general it is meeting with resistance because of various reasons. First, the Family Law is still very poorly known in rural and sometimes urban areas[26]. Second, many male judges resist the application of the law. On the other hand, even when the Family Law guarantees women's rights, the impact of patriarchy, tradition, illiteracy, and ignorance may prevent women from invoking their rights or reporting crimes against them, such as rape, child abuse, sexual exploitation and domestic violence. For many feminists, The new Family Law can be adequately implemented only in a democratic context. Another problem is that the new Family Law is about married women. It leaves out: single women, who are not Moroccan but who are married to Moroccans.

In addition to the problem of implementation, the Family Law has not totally abolished four institutions: polygamy, repudiation, separation by compensation ("talaq al khol'"), and the sensitive question of inheritance which the Family Law has not touched upon. These institutions were not abolished because, on the one hand, the reforms had already been audacious enough, and on the other hand, polygamy is allowed (albeit in a form that is debatable) in the Qur'an (as the King himself acknowledged, stating he cannot forbid what is allowed) and that inheritance is clearly outlined in the Qur'an.

This raises new questions for the feminist movements. The religious will one day emerge in a different form with secularization being more and more at stake in some feminist NGOs. Some feminist associations raise the question of secularization on the basis that the latter does

---

[26] A recent study of "Leadership Féminin" (a local women's association) reveals that 87% of women in 6 rural areas in Morocco do not know anything about the new Family Law.

not exclude religion. Secularization is important for the continuity of the feminist movement. The road is still long for Moroccan women to become full citizens, for equality to leave discourse and enter homes, and for democracy to prevail in both the public and the private space.

5. Conclusion

The feminist movement has greatly contributed to the feminization of a once male-dominated public space in Morocco. By espousing universal values and adopting local, appropriate and pragmatic strategies, this movement has succeeded to involve the major political actors in the promulgation of the new Family Law reforms. These reforms are by far the most important achievement of the Moroccan feminist movement, for they have succeeded to demystify the "sacredness" of "Shari'a" (Islamic law) and have fundamentally contributed to the democratization of the public space and the implementation of human rights on the ground. Male feminism, which once constituted the necessary background for the birth of the Moroccan feminist movement, is now joining this movement without jeopardizing the latter's independence from other actors. The major issue today is to seek efficient ways to implement the new Family Law through the sensitization of women, men and families to the important changes that have been introduced in the Personal Status Code and to incite judges to apply the new law without any reservation.

In the long run, the public debating of once private family issues will force Moroccan society to face the intricate issue of the role of religion in an increasingly secularized public space where women are increasingly visible as actors; this is the next big challenge of the Moroccan feminist movement.

Bibliography

Al-Fassi, Allal

1966 Al-Naqd Ad-dati "Auto-Criticism". Beirut: Dar Al-Kashshaf.

Badran, Margot with Fatima Sadiqi and Linda Rashidi, eds.

2002 Language and Gender in the Arab World. Language and Linguistics. Issue 9.

Barkallil, Nadira

1990 La Naissance et le Développement du Prolétariat Féminin Urbain.

   Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Rabat, Morocco.

Belarbi, Aicha

1997 "Réflexions Préliminaires sur une Approche Féministe de la Dichotomie Espace

   Public/Espace Privé, in Etudes Féminines. Ed. by Bourqia, R. Faculty of Letters, Rabat,

   pp. 73-82.

Bourqia, Rahma, ed.

1997 Etudes Féminines. Faculty of Letters, Rabat, Morocco.

Chadli, El-Mostafa

2001 La société Civile ou la Quête de l'Association Citoyenne. Publications Faculté des Lettres

   et des Sciences Humaines, Rabat.

Daoud, Zakia

1993 Féminisme et Politique Au Maghreb. Casablanca: Eddif.

Ennaji, Moha

2004a "Civil Society, Gender and Social Cohesion ", in Ennaji, Moha (ed.). Ennaji, Moha

   Société Civile, Genre et Développement. Fes-Saiss Publications.

Ennaji, Moha

2004b "Moroccan Women and Development", in Sadiqi, Fatima (ed.). Femmes

Méditerranéennes. Fes-Saiss Publications.

2005a Multilingualism, Cultural Identity and Education in Morocco. New York: Springer.

Ennaji, Moha

2005b "Social Policy in Morocco". UNRISD Publications.

Ennaji, Moha with Fatima, Sadiqi

To appear. A Gender Analysis of Migration in Morocco. Mohamedia: Imprimerie Fedala.

Fernea, Elizabeth with Robert A. Fernea

1985. The Arab World: personal Encounters. Anchor: Doubleday.

Filali Meknassi, Rachid

1994. Femmes et Travail. Casablanca: Editions Le Fennec.

Joseph, Suad, ed.

2000 Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Kandiyoti, Deniz, ed.

1991 Women, Islam and the State: Women in the Political Economy. Philadelphia:

Temple University Press.

Mernissi, Fatema

1975 Beyond the Veil : Male-female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society. New York:

Schenkman Publishing Company.

Mernissi, Fatema

1987 "Etat et Planification Nationale", in Portraits de Femmes. Ed. by Alahyane, A. et   al.

Casablanca: Le Fennec.

Mernissi, Fatema

1994 Dreams of Trespass. Tales of a Harem Girlhood. Addison Wesley.

Mernissi, Fatema

2003 ONG Rurales du Haut-Atlas. Les Aït Débrouille Rabat : Editions Marsam.

Moghadam, Valentine

1995 Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle-East. Boulder:

    Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Rafea, Aliaa

2000 "The Meanings of Hijab", in Sadiqi, Fatima (ed.). Feminist Movements: Origins

    and Orientations. Publications of the Faculty of Letters. University of Fes.

Roque, Maria-Angels

2004. La Société Civile qu Maroc. IEMed Publications.

Saadawi, Nawal

1980 The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World. Zed Press.

Schaefer-Davis, Susan

1979 Patience and Power. Rochester, Vermont: Schenkman Books Inc.

Sadiqi, Fatima

1997 "The Image of Moroccan Women in Public Spheres", in The Idea of the University.

    Faculty of Letters, Rabat, Morocco.

Sadiqi, Fatima

1999 "Aspects of Moroccan Feminism", in Sadiqi, Fatima (ed.) Mouvements Féministes:

    Origines et Orientations. Fes: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres, Fes.

Sadiqi, Fatima, ed.

1999. Mouvements Féministes: Origines et Orientations. Fes: Publications du CERF,   Faculté des Lettres, Fes.

Sadiqi, Fatima

2003 Women, Gender and Language in Morocco. Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

Taoufik, Ahmed

1993 Mudawwanatu Al-Ahwali Ashaxsiyyah ma'a akhiri tta'dilat "The Code of the Personal Law and the Latest Amendments". Casablanca: Dar Al-Thaqafa.

Thompson, P.J.

1994 "Beyond Gender", in Stone, L. (ed.). The Education Feminist Reader. New York   and London: Routledge.

Walters, Keith

1999 "Opening the Door of Paradise a Cubit": Educated Tunisian Women, Embodied Lingusitic Practice, and Theories of Language and Gender", in Bucholtz, Mary et al (eds.). Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse. New York: Oxford University Press.

Woodhull, Winifred

1993 Transfiguration of the Maghreb. Mimmeapolis and Londong: University of Minnesota Press.

Women Writing Africa. The Northern Region. To be published in 2007 by the Feminist Press, New York.