Piety in a Niqab

Piety in a Niqab:

A Lens Held over the Women of İsmailağa Jammah

By

Fatma Zehra Fidan

Piety in a Niqab: A Lens Held over the Women of İsmailağa Jammah

By Fatma Zehra Fidan

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Women are among the most prominent agents of social change and transformation and form the mainstay of the 'modernization project', one that raises societies to greater efficacy and to the highest level of cultural development. The position of women can be counted among the basic criteria by which societies are judged, regarding their level of advancement and civilization; indeed, the social status that women possess within a given country or society is often assumed by lawmakers to be a national status symbol, thereby making women an indispensable element of any modernity project. However, the relationship that exists between the status of women and religion—both of which make significant contributions to the formation of social reality is counted among the most important factors limiting or preventing such modernization efforts. Even though the nature of the relationship between the social status of women and religion varies according to individual and societal interpretations of religion, especially concerning the three largest monotheist religions, this relationship has traditionally disadvantaged women, who have consequently been excluded from social arenas due to their societies' interpretation of the three main Abrahamic faiths.

Modernity and piety, which are not mutually exclusive—in that they do not demand compromise from one another as opposing or immiscible ingredients in the mortar holding social reality together—lie at the center of the multi-dimensional debates on women's social status. Based on religious antagonism, modernity was, initially at least, enthusiastically acknowledged. The new world order that failed to fill this gap appeared in a world that had wriggled out of a multitude of holinesses, one beset by contemporary arguments that have, ultimately, come closer to a much-needed piety. On the other hand, this rapprochement appeared in a way that saw modernity force religion to be dependent on it within the wider context of capitalist survival, and not one based on abandonment due to religious antagonism. Religious approaches, those unable to take a firm stand against the arguments of modern society and the coercive effects of capitalism, have tried to survive by blending holiness with modernity through different forms of legitimization. The hostility between these two concepts in Turkey, and indeed globally, has relented over the last few

decades; Islamic-based piety has become reconciled with modernity and has attempted to reconstruct itself by adapting to modern society. Islamic women's movements have been very successful in their struggle to become a part of public spaces through their own religious identity and appearance. Consequently, women have started to take part in society in Islamic dress—the most distinct indicator of piety. This can be seen as signifying a process, one consistent with feminist theological interpretations of Islamic women's movements, and one that, to some extent, saves the women concerned from the *chains of slavery*.

Discussions about female piety are multifaceted and, despite its relatively favorable course in the present day, the piety of women—which is among the most important aspects of woman's issues—requires and deserves a sophisticated analysis. The experiences of piety among women, within the context of modernity, were discussed in our study *Modernlik ve Dindarlık Arasında Kadın* (*Woman Between Modernity and Piety*). The study showed, through a hermeneutical interpretation of sacred texts, that modern pious women have found a place among different aspects of life and that, if this is to be regarded as an achievement, it may be used to legitimize and/or renounce the more obvious demands of piety. This modernist approach encourages women to construct their own identity, be responsible for their actions and discourses, and realize their own direction by continually reconstructing themselves according to an ongoing hermeneutic interpretation of religious texts; as opposed to encouraging women to identify themselves with that which is outside of religion and religious concerns. According to this approach, Islamic dress, a visible symbol of piety among women, becomes secondary to serving religion; religious beliefs and loyalty having become principles to be followed by active mental and emotional processes. In the final analysis, it will be shown that the modern *Islamic Mujahedeen* (*Islamic warriors, strugglers*), those committed to their mission with a sense of total *dedication*, have become important figures in modern society.

Throughout our academic journey, wherein we trace the piety of women in Turkey, we were aware that the results of *Modernlik ve Dindarlık Arasında Kadın* could not be generalizable to society as a whole. When the piety of women in Turkey is considered as a whole, along with the diversity of interpretations regarding the religious rules determining women's status and spheres of activity as social actors, it becomes evident that an analysis of such a subject cannot be purely scientific. Our efforts to understand the piety of women in Turkey have made us change our

direction and focus on a specific religious group—the women of İsmailağa Jamaah.

İsmailağa Jamaah, whose followers never forgo their male or female attire, have attracted our attention for some time. The group's obligatory clothing style, which does not seem appropriate for modern society and was consciously opposed to Western conventions, encouraged and even forced women to wear a *niqab* (*a garment of clothing that covers the face and the body*) and men to wear a robe-turban. It was understood that the followers of the Jamaah did not want to appear in public spaces, and even when this was demanded, their attire would not be considered important. Cübbeli Ahmet *Hodja*, the most prominent face of the Jamaah in the media, and a vocal spokesperson for the organization has recently tried to increase public awareness of the organization. Despite this, however, the real mission of the Jamaah is based on *invisibility* rather than visibility. In particular, women's lifestyles among the group members reflect this tendency toward *invisibility and anonymity.* Information concerning the history of the Jamaah that we were able to collate was based on the observations and statements of certain people affiliated with the Jamaah; thus, this does not claim to be a strictly scientific research approach. Among the things we have learned is that the women in the Jamaah do not go to public schools and that their followers are antagonistic to anything associated with Western culture, including the mass media, the wearing of wedding gowns, and listening to music, including *chants* and religious music. Assuming this information is correct, the diversity of ways that women's piety can be articulated and expressed, as it is experienced in modern society, becomes apparent once again, and the curiosity about understanding its background encouraged us to research this subject. Therefore, an interest in those members of a social union that are completely different from the profiles of the women considered among our previous studies has compelled us to investigate the women of the İsmailağa Jamaah closely.

The Jamaah was established under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmut *Efendi* as a branch of the Naqshbandi-Khalidiyya *Ṭarīqah* (*order, sect*). The principles of the Jamaah are based on the Qur'an and the *hadiths* (*traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*); that is, the fundamentals of Islam as laid down by Sheikh Mahmut *Efendi*. The Jamaah, which has been ruled by this charismatic religious authority for more than forty years, has become increasingly well-known owing to Cübbeli Ahmet *Hodja*, the most familiar face of the Jamaah. As previously mentioned, the most important objective of this study is to investigate the lives of the

women in the Jamaah rather than generate detailed theoretical knowledge about the organization as such. Certain questions concerning the lives of the women of the Jamaah are significant from a socio-religious perspective: What are the methods by which the women of İsmailağa Jamaah understand and interpret their religion? What sources do they use to create their pious identity? How did the women actively construct their own space as subjects? What is the place of religion and religious interpretations, and how are they used in these areas? What are the experiences of women who distance themselves from modern appearance, and who position themselves against the extension and domination of modernity? Has the imperious manner of modernity affected the women of the Jamaah, and if so, how? What is the difference between the lives of women in the Jamaah today and in the past, and how is this difference perceived by these women?

This research is conducted with the aim of answering these questions. We hoped to utilize an anthropological perspective as we did in our previous study (Fidan, 2015), and to understand the lives of the women of the Jamaah by encountering them and involving ourselves accordingly. Unfortunately, we failed in our first attempts to meet the women in the Jamaah. Learning that we were researchers, the women either did not accept our interview request or preferred not to come to the appointment as promised. We interviewed just four women in our first attempt but were only able to record one of these interviews. The woman who volunteered for this recorded interview was a university graduate and still felt bound to the Jamaah. She was not recognized as *a follower* within the Jamaah anymore, however, as she wore an *abaya* (*simple, loose over-garment, a robe-like dress, worn by some Muslim women*) instead of a *niqab*. She was responsible for convincing the other three women, who subsequently agreed to be interviewed for the study, to take part.

According to the ethics of scientific research, we made clear at the outset our intention to interview the women of the Jamaah; however, we later learned that the women's relatives and other members of the Jamaah had various fears and apprehensions about such interviews. They said that they could not trust anyone these days given that they were often regarded as militants of the 'Daesh'; moreover, they were afraid that their Jamaah would be damaged as a result of the interviews. Again, we discovered that the women who first agreed to meet with us, but who had later changed their minds, had been deterred by their male relatives. Considering the chaos that abounds regarding Turkish national security, this attitude was understandable from those who had decided to live secluded lives; hence, we did not persist. Upon the initial rejection of our interview request due

to the followers' doubts, we returned to Izmir from Istanbul and tried to find a different way of conducting our research. At a time when our hopes for reaching the Jamaah were fading, the organization unexpectedly reached out to us through an Instagram account, whose profile image showed a woman with a distinctive Islamic-style of dress. The account posted photographs of women in *tasattur* (*an Arabic word referring to a covering or a garment that covers the body according to the Islamic dress codes for women*) symbolizing attractive signs of both modernity and piety. The account also showed the user quoting excerpts from Cübbeli Ahmet Hodja's talks; the woman responsible was acting as if she were a spokeswoman of the Jamaah. Consequently, we sent a message to this individual who seemed to want to attract our attention and asked her to communicate with us. Our hopes were well-founded and the user, Almira, duly contacted us. We spoke to Almira in detail about our thoughts and the starting point of our research, hoping to convince her to participate. Almira described herself as a follower of the Jamaah and the daughter of a wealthy family. She said she had felt great sorrow at witnessing her sibling's death. Whereas the Jamaah remained in an unshakable place regarding her emotional processes and feelings, and even though it did not impact on her life as it normally does among its followers, Almira absolutely believed that its principles were true. The person at the other end of the telephone must have believed in the true intentions of the researcher, for she acted as a conduit by which we could contact the Jamaah and consequently became an important contributor to this study. Almira paved the way for our research by contacting her own *hodja* (*a teacher especially on religious courses, in communities or schools, or state-officials who work in mosques for religious practices*) and Hodja *Hanim* (*Lady*), one of the most prominent woman opinion leaders in Turkey. Even though we did not have a lengthy conversation, she was able to provide us with valuable information about the Jamaah's historical and present activities throughout the time we spent together. One statement she made was: "Do not make a judgment about my Jamaah by just looking at me! Rather my *nafs* (*soul, lower self*)..." and, indeed, the young woman was a striking figure from out of the cyber world and appeared as a combination of modernity and piety. Almira was aware that such a situation was contrary to the norms of the Jamaah and she, with her presence, did not want to *convey improper thoughts or suggestions* to her Jamaah, which has a special place in her heart.

We stayed four days and five nights in the *madrasah* (*Islamic religious school*), whose door was opened by Almira, so we were able to experience, in person, the lives of women within the Jamaah. We had the

chance to meet and converse with various women who came to the house of Hodja Hanim during this short period of time. We asked many questions of Hodja Hanim, who hosted us and received us as her own important guests. Whenever she was available, she replied to all of our inquiries in detail. One of the most significant benefits of staying in this *madrasah* was that we had a chance to participate in the 'ceremony of seeing the Sheikh' on the 8th November 2014.[1] This communal activity made it possible for us to see the strong bond that existed between the women and Sheikh Mahmut *Efendi*, the spiritual leader of the Jamaah and the one responsible for determining the principles of its women—here we were able to witness their passionate love for him. Through all of these experiences, and from behind the wide-open doors of the Jamaah, we were able to collect data on the religious life of the women in the organization. We had the opportunity to converse with many women while conducting our research, which we completed in six months. Nevertheless, abiding by the general principles of the Jamaah, we were only able to conduct recorded interviews with six women. The notes we made during these interviews were subsequently converted into data along with all of their detailed information.

Our research was undertaken during two distinct periods in the city of İstanbul, after which it progressed once we had established contact with an individual in Manisa. Our study continued for another six weeks while we visited and conversed with our contact. Each meeting was limited to just one or two days each. We spoke to a *hodja*, who had been educated in a *madrasah* but was required to move to Manisa because of her husband's job. In these meetings, we learned how other services were conducted within the *madrasahs*. Additionally, so that we could determine the perspective of the men in the Jamaah regarding its women, we listened to Cübbeli Ahmet *Hodja*'s sermons, both on Lâlegül TV and on videos downloaded from the internet. In fact, we hoped to interview Cübbeli Ahmet *Hodja* to understand better how men in the organization looked at women from their male perspective.

The traditional appearance of female piety and the space it has found within modern society was investigated by the researcher as follows: After

---

[1] Due to the fact that my telephone had malfunctioned on the day the followers of the Jamaah were scheduled to see their Sheikh, I was not able to take a photograph of the massive crowd who were in attendance; therefore, I had to cut the photograph of the ceremony, which was, without a doubt, extremely important for them, out of a newspaper as a replacement.

an investigation into women's piety in Turkey, both modern and traditional approaches regarding women in Islam were assessed and analyzed within the first section of this research. As the Jamaah reflects traditional Middle Eastern societies more than it does Turkey, the research issue was analyzed within the context of theological debates regarding the former. This part ends with some brief information about the Jamaah and its founder Sheikh Mahmut *Efendi*.

The second section primarily determines the religious interpretations behind why women in the Jamaah wear a *niqab*. Subsequently, the researcher investigated the reasons why the women in the Jamaah are excluded from the educational opportunities and working lives that the Turkish state encourages for all its citizens. *Madrasahs*, where the followers of the Jamaah are educated, and the methodology of the organization's lifestyle is legitimized according to a system of interdependent principles serving as the fundamental dynamics of social life, were then examined. The role of Sheikh Mahmut *Efendi*, the founding father of the principles of the Jamaah, and the role he played in the lives of his followers were then assessed within this context. The so-called 'degeneration' of the Jamaah, its motives, and the measures believed to have been taken by the Jamaah against this degeneration in recent years were also clarified.

Researching a complex subject such as the piety of women involves several challenging aspects. Perhaps the most important challenge in this study was that the researcher described herself as 'a pious Muslim' and felt close to religion and piety in her emotional and mental processes. However, scientific research demands that researchers suspend their convictions, personal beliefs, and prejudices, and conduct their investigations by objectively evaluating the relevant data. Therefore, the distance that researchers must maintain between their personal values and their work establishes the boundaries of scientific objectivity. This kind of problem is always high on the agenda for social scientists as it imposes such important scientific and ethical values on them. While trying to stand outside the emotional and intellectual atmosphere our beliefs imposed on them, the researchers tried to remain within and maintain these scientific and ethical constraints to understand better the social context concerned, and provide a better understanding than is possible by 'just standing there.' Furthermore, throughout the research, we were very careful not to hurt the feelings or upset the women of the Jamaah, who opened the doors of the *madrasah* to us, welcomed us with such warm hospitality, and responded to our exhaustive questioning. The readers can discern for themselves if

and how such seemingly self-contradictory positions can nevertheless coexist within such a research project. We would like to thank the women of the İsmailağa Jamaah individually, as each of them allowed and facilitated this study. We hope that other researchers will continue and expand upon our research so as to produce original works related to this subject in the future.

FEMALE PIETY IN TURKEY

Modern society as it exists today in Turkey emerged as both the product of and reconciliation of conflicts. Irreconcilable differences between modernist thinking and religion have taken different shapes over time, and the gap between these two concepts has deeply—although not completely—impacted on the formation and continuity of the social world. The main concerns of the sociology of religion are centered on the means by which individuals within a society perceive religion, why they believe in that religion, how they relate to the sacred and holy within their religion, and how they transform their lives in the context of these relationships. These issues are exceptionally important concerning, as they do, the recognition of a society that is entering a new process of reconstruction, one in which piety and modernity are blended together. The various contradictions and clashes between modernity and religion have started to subside, soften and even be resolved. This process can, at least in part, be attributed to a changing understanding of piety. An understanding of piety-oriented change and transformation within modern society is, therefore, sociologically significant.

One of the cornerstones of the 'modernity project' in Turkey—just as in the rest of the world—is the societal role of women. Such projects maintain that societies will change if the women within them are given more freedom. The fact that most of the revolutions that took place in the Republic Period in Turkey were female-oriented is a clear sign that such projects were conducted successfully. Reforms to the Turkish civil code and the practices they changed or caused have allowed women certain rights, such as being granted suffrage and the right to stand in elections, the right to an education, and the right to divorce their spouse. While these reforms were akin to the ongoing demand of women for greater freedom, they also paved the way for the status of women in Turkish society as it exists today.

In Turkey, a country in which a peculiar version of the modernization program has been drawn up, the piety of women has become increasingly popular in recent years as one of the most important aspects of democratization. Modernity (that has placed itself as directly antipodal and contrary to religion) has not accepted certain elements of religiosity and

religion; thus, a fierce struggle against certain aspects of religion has emerged. *Tasattur*, which is considered as a requirement of Islam, has been interpreted as an equivalent to political movements threatening the Republic of Turkey's secular principles (Motha, 2007); consequently, women in *tasattur* have not had the opportunity to engage fully in their society by appearing in public spaces. In a country where political oppression and ideological interventions were legitimized, legal sanctions against women wearing clothing that ascribes to Islamic codes have continued despite, ironically, the political liberalization that started in the 1950s. Anti-Islamic discourse has considered modernity as a process that tries to eradicate and transform those women who chose to be in *tasattur*, especially in public spaces, which is considered to herald the disappearance or destruction of Islamic identity (Najmabadi, 1993).

The Islamic women's movements that have emerged under the slogan of 'Islamic resurrection' have had a profound influence on religion, politics, and society, both inside and outside the Islamic world (Brenner, 1996). These movements have arisen with the claim that women can practice religious duties while still enjoying worldly pleasures. The results of research by Göle (1998), Özdalga (2006), Acar (2010), and Arat (2010), show that descendants of those women who once left their veils and *niqab*s, in order to release themselves from the bondage of a religious lifestyle, have once again identified with a public agenda and a new freedom movement. Those women, who say that they have decided to live by Islamic codes through their own volition, separate themselves from 'traditional' Islam, the form upon which their families and ancestors depended, thereby showing voluntary religious dependence. Those who claim that Islam is not against science and progress, and who claim they can be actors in the world that puts religion in the center of their lives, are often highly educated. However, their attitude towards scientific progress and development often changes when they became involved and employed in public spaces. Distancing themselves from the idea of the 'employed woman' in modern society, these women consider motherhood and marriage as indispensable female roles but nevertheless engage in professional work for economic reasons if they have to. These individuals favor employment for women, but only if workspaces are segregated according to gender—they assume that the work women carry out in public institutions is one that suits and bolsters their honor and greatness and that such segregation has nothing to do with their 'inferiority' (Fidan, 2012).

Throughout the 1990s the situation in Turkish society changed. Certain features that Islamic women displayed reflected the vestigial transformation

of female piety. These Islamic women, who, to some degree, secured their independence from male hegemony in the last decade of the 20th century, entered a process of explorative subjectivity by investigating their own identities more seriously than before. One of the major differences of these women who summarized their role as 'existing at home and at work with their Islamic identity,' is that they do not see *visibility* as a problem (Çayır, 2000). Until the end of the 1990s, this process can be considered as the moment when Muslim women in *tasattur* came to the fore and presented themselves as a vanguard, thereby making Islam more visible in their respective societies.

This change became evident in different social areas as the 1990s gave way to the 2000s. Indeed, changes and breaking points regarding the perceptions and tendencies of female piety have both clarified and bifurcated in two separate studies related to the subject. (Fidan, 2015; 2016a). Those women who describe themselves as 'pious Muslims' and who have an Islamic ideology, say that the claims of 'pious women' have, to a considerable extent, become redundant, and that the ideas they advocated so strongly in the early days of the movement resulted from an 'incorrect understanding and interpretation of Islam'. Due to a number of reasons that changed over time—but all of which incorporate modernist ideological and capitalist thinking—the radical Islamic *mujahideen* of the 1980s and 1990s have argued that working, for a pious woman, is an activity that protects her honor rather than one that suggests a position of inferiority. This idea has changed so dramatically among these women that dressing in *tasattur*, which was so strictly advocated decades earlier, has lost its symbolic meaning, while the Islamic societal *mujahid* evolved from an 'invisible, educated' woman to a 'visible, educated, and working' one.

There are several reasons behind this change in women's religious thought.[2] The development and change of piety among women are attributable to several causes. One of these is that marriages made with the hope of realizing the dream of *Asr-ı Saadet*—the period of happiness during which the Prophet Muhammad lived as a messenger of Allah—did not last; often after such marriages broke down, and the women concerned became unemployed, penniless, and helpless as a result of their divorce. A further cause is a re-examination by such individuals of the religious beliefs that formed and structured their daily lives. Additionally, the

---

[2] For a detailed analysis of the subject see: Fidan, F. Z. (2015). *Modernlik ve Dindarlık Arasında Kadın*. Istanbul: Opsiyon.

qualities that 'pious men' demand from 'pious women' have changed to parallel modern societal conditions (Fidan, 2016a). Furthermore, the centralization of the hope of living an excellent Islamic life through the reinterpretation of Islam's[3] holy texts has generated another cause per this development; such a life is now seen as 'living Islam, as one who has good morals'; *tasattur*, though subordinated, is important within such a distinction and represents one of the most significant features of female piety (Fidan, 2015).

The group of women we interviewed for this research had all changed their goals in accordance with female piety. They defined themselves as belonging to İsmailağa Jamaah and organized their daily lives according to its mission, drawing their strength from the *old*, despite the undeniable influence of modern arguments across every aspect of their society, and do their best to protect tradition and ensure its survival. It is no coincidence that we chose to investigate the İsmailağa Jamaah, which is about forty years old and based on the Naqshbandi sect. We knew that the women in this sect wore the *niqab*, accepted this style of dress as an indisputable religious code, and were not in favor of the idea that women could secure a profession through education or working in public places. Furthermore, the researchers were also aware that many of the women in the sect had developed a deeply negative attitude to the incursion of modernity, through the conduct of their lives that was oriented toward *taqwa* (*fear of Allah*), maintaining this attitude according to the fundamental principles of the Jamaah[4]. Our assessment of the women of the Jamaah sought to determine whether modern arguments had touched their lives, and, if so, how, and the extent to which such arguments affected them.

Our attempt to understand the appearance of the women of İsmailağa Jamaah within modern society confirmed, to a great extent, our expectations of the Jamaah as an organization; one that included pious women who reject all modernist approaches, as reported in previous

---

[3] For activities, life practices, and the thinking of the women who formed their religious tendencies and identities according to their interpretation of Islamic holy texts and, more specifically, Risale-i Nur, please see: Fidan, F. Z. (2015). *Modernlik ve Dindarlık Arasında Kadın*. Istanbul: Opsiyon.

[4] According to our understanding and knowledge, although not based on scientific findings, the women in the Jamaah reacted against everything related to the West, including Western dress. For example, dressing in long and loose clothes, even among other women (so to more accurately pertain to *taqwa*), not watching TV, and not taking photos, are examples of this aversion to Western ideals and lifestyles.

studies on the subject: (Göle, 1998, 2010; Özdalga, 2006; Acar, 2010; Arat, 2010 and Fidan, 2015; Fidan, 2016a). This attitude, which stands in direct opposition to that of contemporary feminist theology—which encourages the reinterpretation of the holy texts of Islam and attempts to draw pious Muslim women into visible, social life—is trying to open up a space according to its own core principles and arguments, yet it does not belong to the modern world, and maintains its existence with methods peculiar to itself. The irresistible effect of modernity's daily routines has nevertheless touched İsmailağa Jamaah and has begun to influence the women of the Jamaah to such an extent that it may jeopardize the lifestyle the Jamaah upholds. The main aim of this study is to understand how the women of the Jamaah live their lives according to Islam. This understanding will include an assessment of how these women developed their ideologies against 'modern attacks,' and how they organized their lives based on their ideological missions, despite the influence of modernity. To summarize, our aim was to determine whether modern arguments have affected İsmailağa Jamaah's mission over the last 40 years and, if so, how this came about. Questions such as: 'How has the Jamaah protected itself?' 'How have the women in the Jamaah interpreted this change?' 'Have attacks from modernity led them into oppositional or resistant actions and activities, or have they directed them toward more protective strategies to maintain themselves and their mission?'

While looking for answers to these questions, it was necessary to assess the opposition to modernity and the anti-traditional sentiments that have recently been evident in Islamic thought so as to understand better the daily life arrangements that we can define as the 'reconstruction of tradition.'

Women in Islam: Conflict of Tradition and Modernity

The Islamic perspective on evaluations regarding women is one that generates a multipolar debate. Women, who are the most important indicators of social change and transformation, maintain their importance and conduct according to many different Islamic and anti-Islamic discourses. Indeed, different strains and discourses within Islam often have different opinions and interpretations concerning women and their role in society. This vague understanding of women's issues reveals multifaceted claims about a woman's place, position, responsibility and, the nature of the pious female self in society. Whereas these arguments can result in a reconsideration of those problems and challenges facing and relating to

women and religion, they seem far from reaching a permanent solution or answer.

The traditional Islamic view, which is considered to be particularly valid in Middle Eastern countries, has been criticized along with more general criticisms regarding the aforementioned geographical region. Consequently, women in Islam have, to some degree, been shaken by feminist theological protests. Due to its relation to our subject, we will investigate traditional Islamic approaches to women before addressing Islamic feminism, which positions itself as a counter-discourse.

In Muslim societies, where Islam has a privileged place, debates on gender are generally characterized by cultures and ideologies of the past (Barkow, 1972; Hale, 1992; Golley, 2004; Rahman, 2016; Rahman, 2016a). From this perspective, Islam is coded as unchangeable and ahistorical; accordingly, women are absorbed by non-historical gender roles, thereby avoiding any analysis of the relationship between gender and religion. This position is accompanied by a deliberate rejection of the modern interpretation of Islam, underestimating the effect of Islam on women's lives and putting pressure on women through a process of enforced passivity. Such repression includes strategies that do not allow women to construct a genuine identity according to their own wishes, while simultaneously imposing traditional gender roles on them. This results in an acceptance of the inequality that women are subjected to and forces women to obey cultural roles (Pal, 1990; Hale, 1992; Rahman, 2016a).

According to a traditional religious understanding of Islam, the education of women (Ahmed, 1986; Horvatic, 1994; Bradley, 2012) and the presence of women in social and professional spheres, are seen to be unacceptable (Barkow, 1972, Moghadam, 1989; Ross, 2008; Rahman, 2016a); while, in addition, women's involvement in political and social activities is seen as unsuitable. Accordingly, it is often argued that women are incompetent in these areas (Pal, 1990). The humanist role of women is integrated with domestic roles by excluding them from all non-domestic areas and categories of society and social existence (Barkow, 1972; Moghadam, 1989; Golley, 2004; Predelli, 2004, Kamali, 2008; Mahmood, 2011). Indeed, in traditional Islam, women were limited to physical tasks based on the reproduction of new generations. Social acceptance of women has traditionally been associated with their obedience to familial males and their husbands (Pal, 1990; Hale, 1992).

Pal (1990) highlights the position of women according to a traditional religious understanding by giving examples from Maududi. According to Maududi, women are responsible for managing and overseeing life in the home and maintaining domestic peace; for taking care of their children, and teaching them their first religious and life lessons.[5] The fact that women are seen as too incompetent to work outside the home is not merely due to their physical inadequacy, but also because they are considered unsuited to economic, political and administrative affairs. A woman's very nature is seen as one equipped purely for domestic duties and reproduction. Therefore, women are responsible for those domestic affairs that are appropriate to her nature, while men are seen as responsible for the multifaceted responsibilities outside of the home (Pal, 1990; Pal, 1990).[6]

This representation of women, which is evident in Maududi's words, has caused such an understanding of women to become dominant in traditional societies.[7] Many researchers substantiated this typology based on Islam in

[5] Amina Wedud-Muhsin (2005) argues that the Qur'an alludes to a clear link between the function of childbearing and females, but it does not define a specific job peculiar to females regarding childcare and parenting. In her opinion, motherhood in the Qur'an is not the psychological and cultural perception of 'motherhood', but refers, rather, to a merely biological motherhood. Throughout this study we examined the relation between motherhood and piety (Fidan, 2015a, 2016b, 2017); no statements supporting this claim were found. In the research we have carried out in Turkey, even highly educated, working, and *pious* women were observed as perceiving and defining motherhood within the framework of a traditional religious understanding. It has been revealed that this cultural effect imposed by traditional religious understanding is also influential on academic women who define themselves as *feminist, non-pious women*, and that their functions relating to motherhood are, in fact, construed in a very different sense to those motherhood theses of modern feminist approaches.

[6] Following this argument based on human nature, Maududi clarifies his point of view, saying that woman is inferior to man. According to him, not even a single woman worthy of Avicenna, Kant, Hegel, Omar Khayyam, Shakespeare, Alexander, Napoleon, Saladin, Nizam ul Mulk, or Bismarck has hitherto existed, which would be hugely unlikely given random chance, hence proving their inferiority (Pal, 1990).

[7] Pal (1990) states that in patriarchal families there is a distance between men and women that cannot be explained purely by the marital relationship, the main duty of the woman in these families being motherhood, but she does not have such a solid foundation regarding childcare and education. In such an environment, there is no opportunity by which a girl—who has learned to obey her husband, other men in her family, and her mother-in-law, without question, and at every stage of

the Middle East, claiming that this typological distinction does not stem from the rules of Islam itself but rather from the traditions and customs of individual nations (Pal, 1990; Khan, 1995; Fish, 2002; Rahman, 2016a). Khan (1995), who examined Maududi's claims in detail, argues that these arguments have no bearing on Islam.[8] Khan has reinterpreted those Qur'anic verses on which Maududi based his ideas regarding women, and has considered other verses in response. According to him, the claim that men are superior to women is groundless because the Qur'an addresses women and men equally. Common forms of addressing the reader in the Qur'an, such as: 'Tell the women and men who believe...' are a radical message, especially when delivered to their first audience, a tribal society that did not welcome the birth of a girl. In the modern age, however, relations between men and women have been redefined (Khan, 1995).

Khan (1995), when analyzing the verses[9]upon which the traditionalists, who have fought against equality between the genders, base their claims,

---

her life—to learn social skills and to understand other people. When a girl is 10–12 years old, she develops deep fears about the male world, a world that she has no means of accessing or understanding. The distance between a woman and her husband is also seen between the girl and other boys in her family. This derogatory positioning has been reinforced by prohibitions that prevent the development of a more active life. In this case, the only role model for the girl is her mother; however, her mother's situation is far from being well positioned to provide her with hope or guidance (Pal, 1990).

[8] The sociologically important point in these discussions is that Maududi, who says that the "tragedy of woman is not only biological but also sociological and ideological", bases his thesis on women in the Qur'an. As a religious Muslim sociologist, especially one who is careful to stay within the limitations of Islam, Fazlur Rahman, who lived at the same time and in the same geographical region as Maududi, opposes Maududi's viewpoint. In his opinion, the subject of women, like many subjects in the Qur'an, must be re-read, understood and interpreted; the holy text must be allowed to confront the modern world in the *right* way (Rahman, 2016a). Rahman's allegation has been influential in the west as well as in Middle Eastern societies and has paved the way for Islamic feminism. The fact that the same text is read and interpreted by societies with different tendencies and perceptions, and that the reflection of the information obtained per this mental process in everyday life is based on this difference, is undeniably important in a sociological sense. Our main goal in this research is to understand the background of these reflections.

[9] "O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to Allah), then be not soft in speech, (do not talk to them attractively) lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy, or evil desire for adultery, etc.) should be moved with desire, but speak in an honorable manner". (33:32).

reminds us that these verses are valid for the wives of the Prophet, but not for all Muslim women. According to him, the attitude of the traditionalists in this regard is untenable, for the Qur'an has no desire to confine women to their homes, except women who are being punished for an immoral deed. The writer invites Muslims to understand the verse (4:34),[10] a verse upon which traditionalists often base their arguments, with greater accuracy and depth. Khan (1995) argues that the relationship between the two genders is based largely on reciprocity rather than inequality, and cites other verses in response to these claims (2:187) [11](Pal, 1990).[12]

Kecia Ali's (2015) evaluations of the 4th verse of the Surah Nisa (often a focus of heated debates concerning gender differences), is of particular note here. In his opinion, traditional (classical) interpretations of this verse emphasize man's authority and woman's obedience, whereas modern interpretations of the verse accentuate the financial responsibilities of the man that are complementary to his marital responsibilities, and that concern the limitations of his power over his wife. Many Muslims[13]

"And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance and perform *As-Salat* (*worship*) and give *Zakat* (*obligatory of giving*) and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah wishes only to remove *Ar-Rijs* (*evil deeds and sins*, etc.) from you. O members of the family (of the Prophet), and to purify you with a thorough purification". (33:33).

[10] "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them excel over the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore, righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (they do not stay alone with other men). As to those women on whose part you see ill conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful), but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great". (4:34).

[11] They are *Libas* (*body cover, or screen*) for you and you are the same for them. 187.

[12] Fazlur Rahman says that this verse in particular emphasizes male superiority (depending on economic responsibilities) and cannot be considered independent of the socio-historical conditions of the time of the Prophet. According to him, the economic inequality based on gender inequality does not remain unchanged. Despite their continuing inequality, women can acquire the same knowledge and wisdom that men have accumulated throughout ages (Pal, 1990; Rahman, 2016a).

[13] Al-Hibri (1997) evaluates the interpretations of the verse based on different meanings of the word "*kavvam*" (*head, boss, leader, guardian or even consultant, guide and manager*). The author says that examples of hierarchical intensive positioning are generally seen in traditional interpretations, that the concept has meanings appropriate to theme regarding "managing, directing and organizing the

acknowledge modern interpretations that uphold the idea that marriage is a union of equal parts, and an environment wherein complementarity is of greater importance and concern that hierarchy between spouses. According to Ali, the verse is a "difficult verse" that could lead to a Muslim tradition wherein the male is regarded as dominant and misogynistic in many regards. However, it is possible to read the Qur'an in an egalitarian way, and modernist interpretations are exemplars of such interpretations.

The main feature of Ali's (2015) approach, one that distinguishes it from other gender-based issues in Islam, is that his position—as a supporter of Muslim women's rights—is far from the extreme claims of both traditionalists and modernists. Ali points out that, although individual responsibilities are not generally emphasized without referring to gender in the Qur'an, the areas of activity that men conduct themselves in, and the moral agency with which they do so, are of a broader nature than that of women, especially in terms of sexuality and marriage. According to him, this does not mean that women's feelings and desires are not taken into consideration; indeed, the Qur'an gives considerable and important responsibilities to male believers as regards their familial and sexual roles, and calls on them to fulfill these responsibilities.[14]

Mernissi (2004), on the other hand, evaluates Islamic reflections on the status of men and women according to a different perspective.[15] Drawing

---

work of the people" and that, while these are not hierarchical in nature, they are susceptible to hierarchical and authoritarian interpretations. According to Al-Hibri, acceptance of the meaning of *authoritarian* in authoritarian societies, due to the multiple meanings and interpretations of the concept, is understandable. However, as the world changes and evolves into to modernity, a less hierarchical meaning of the concept has emerged.

[14] Ali (2015) does not agree that this approach in the Qur'an imposes the superiority of man by advocating patriarchal norms. For him, although the Qur'an grants men the privilege of moral agency in marriage, divorce and polygamy, it does not defend moral agency in intimate or sexual relations between husband and wife.

[15] Wedud-Muhsin (2005) states that complementarity between the genders is based on the peace between the man and the woman, pointing out that the Qur'an states they both perform physical, social and moral functions. Based upon the verse: "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy (30: 21)", Wedud-Muhsin says peace between spouses may not always come to fruition, but that there is a compulsory bond between the two genders as a reflection of the complementarity existing in every entity according to nature (Wedud-Muhsin, 2005: 47).

attention to Akkad's 'open theory,' she highlights the complementarity of the two genders. She also cites Al-Ghazali's 'implicit theory' wherein the woman is described as a 'hunter,' and the man is seen as her 'prey' (Mernissi, 2004). According to Akkad's Freudian theory, the most basic feature of man is the desire for power and conquest, and that of the woman is a desire for submission, and a desire to be conquered. Thus, while man always wants and searches, the woman exposes herself and waits. Mernissi argues that Masochistic theory is revived once more in Akkad's statements and plays an important role in the perception of the self for both genders. In his implicit theory, Al-Ghazali argues that *qaid* power (*the power of tricking and fooling men through cunning and intrigue without the use of force*) is the most effective and destructive element in Muslim society. Mernissi argues that, because of these two theories, having proven themselves so appropriate to Muslim societies, all the regulations regarding social interactions and spaces are carried out based on the *qaid* power of women (Mernissi, 2004).

Due to these controversial interpretations regarding the treatment of women in Islam, it is clear that no reformative arrangements, concerning the status of women in Muslim societies, are apparent or forthcoming. Ahmad (1986), who believes that it is difficult to pinpoint the impact of Islam on women, bases this argument on the view that Islamic debates on women's issues are historically-centered or, rather, ideologically-centered. This finding is important because the ideology that governs the debates about women and women's issues is not independent of the female body and sexuality; nevertheless, they are fueled by them. A woman's body-oriented separation is crucial for the organization and the maintenance of societal order, while the religious approach to the topic is also of vital importance in itself.

Spatial Separation and Social Gender Roles

The female body is one of the most important milestones of social change and societal transformation, while also playing a key role in the construction of religious identity. Indeed, the female body can be said to be the basic mechanism by which the perceptions of gender and sexuality are produced. It is a historical fact that societal gender approaches are produced in different forms within the context of religious perception and interpretation. At the same time, the female body also represents an important area as regards societal norms, practices, and values. This is because bodies, in and of themselves, have no natural, socio-cultural or

historical background—they have always been marked and determined in this regard by social pressures (Pereira and Ibrahim, 2010; Kayli, 2011; Fidan, 2014; 2014a; 2015b; 2017).[16]

The traditional orientalist framework has declared women to be the cause, *fitna (seduce, tempt or lure)*[17] of the present and future sins of Muslim men (Göle, 2010; Vis et al., 2011). The reason for the continuous use of the concept of *fitna* in those issues related to Islam and sexuality is that it is perceived as an element of danger and potential chaos for society as a whole.[18] The tendency to direct and supervise sexuality stems from this

---

[16] Feminist theoreticians claim that 'gender', as it is seen today, is a cultural interpretation or construction. The question as to the kind of attitude or mechanism this construction takes place within is an important one. If gender has been constructed culturally, is it therefore possible to construct it in a different way? Alternatively, does the existing construction imply a sort of social determinism that does not allow for agency or transformation? In the light of evaluations based on the anatomical characteristics of gender formation, human bodies are coded as passive recipients and practitioners of relentless cultural phenomena. Thus, when the culture creating social gender in this context is understood per such a system, one later codified into law and social norms, it, not biology, becomes a destiny (Butler, 2008).

[17] The concept of *fitna* has very rich associations and a wide range of semantic meanings. Its root is based on the meaning of "evil" or "going astray". In a social and religious sense, it implies conflict within the society or the *ummah* (The Muslim nation comprising Muslims from all around the world, from all different countries). At the same time, it is clearly referred to as sexuality, wherein women are considered as the conveyors of *fitna* because they seduce men and encourage them to commit a sin (Kandiyoti, 1997). Another meaning of the term *fitna* is beautiful woman, a beautiful woman analogous to the Western *femme fatal*, who causes men to be unable to master their *nafses*. In the sense that the Muslim feminist Qasim Amin uses the term, *fitna* can be interpreted as the chaos resulting from the sexual disorder created by women (Mernissi, 2004).

[18] According to some feminists such as Nira Yuval-Davis, all fundamentalist (i.e. political) religious movements, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims have defended women's bodies symbolically through authoritarian political, cultural, and social control mechanisms. Opposing Yuval-Davis, who says pronouncing freedom for women is a 'social catastrophe', Kandiyoti makes the argument that the reality of these discourses is blurred. According to Kandiyoti, attention has been shifted from this challenging class. There are religious and ethnic disagreements on women's attire and behavior in contemporary Muslim societies. In this sense, Islam has become a populist instrument of resistance against 'Westernized' elites within these societies (Werbner, 2007).

perception.[19] Based on the organization of sexual behavior in Islam—which is not perceived as it is in some other religions, in that it is perceived as a *danger*—sexuality can be understood in two ways: as a positive confession of the desires of the flesh; or, conversely, as a repressive project aiming at destroying the female subject, within whom the negativity of uncontrollable desire is contained. The second view implies that the thing that stands opposed to social order is not sexuality but, rather, 'lust,' the uncontrolled element of sexuality (Kandiyoti, 1997).

The 'danger' that is attributed to the female body and sexuality has been accompanied by the spatial separation according to gender in Muslim societies (Hassan, 1999). Initially, this arrangement is brought about with the intention of fulfilling religious duties and rules, and to protect its male and female adherents from 'sins,' and thoughts thereof. However, the idea behind the spatial separation of men and women necessarily implies that women and men occupy those social areas that are most appropriate to their natures and that they have come to a 'correct' realization of themselves. Nevertheless, the subjectivity of a Muslim woman, as Kandiyoti points out, is contradictory. Muslim women's lifestyles, which are based on gender discrimination, have been portrayed either as examples of routinized oppression or, alternatively, of affluence and opulence which pass in 'parallel worlds', where there is more psychological freedom for them than for Western women who compromise themselves because they live with men (Kandiyoti, 1997). Golley states that women's movements in the Arab world have been influenced by the West, but they were not conducted independently from Arab culture (2004) and that the arguments of the West regarding Arab women are also laced with oriental

---

[19] Ghannouchi violently opposes women being considered as *fitna,* and bases his argument on references to the sacred texts of Islam. He says that the feelings and tendencies in human nature are never condemned, and that there is no purpose in subduing or stymieing them. This view, which Al-Ghazali and many other Islamic scholars emphasize, is more agreeable if the emotions and tendencies that a person is equipped with are used in the correct way. According to Ghannouchi, the fact that a woman is a *fitna* for a man means that women act as a good test for man and his virtue; this does not imply any negativity concerning women as a phenomenon or group. Indeed, while Allah says, "your goods and children are a *fitna*", He also says "goods and children are ornaments of the world's life". Therefore, *fitna* not only concerns women but also men. The Prophet of Islam highlighted common tests concerning this issue, saying that "men have difficulty in the affairs related to women, and women have difficulty in affairs related to men" (Ghannouchi, 2011).

evaluations.[20] According to Golley, even in contemporary societies in the West, individuals see Arab woman as living in purdah, in seclusion or else within close relations; or else in a harem with other women and their children. Golley argues for the refutation of such a Western perception of Arab women, and argues that feminism is not as remote from Arab women as those in the West might think; indeed, women in the Arab sphere need a positive change as much as any other group or society of women globally. According to the author, Arab women who are accused of being the 'pawns of Arab men' use the veil or *tasattur* as a means of empowerment rather than oppression, and support a social separation model that excludes them from men in public life, one which is implied by the concept of *harem* (*forbidden by religion, prohibited*). Likewise, Leyla Ahmad argues that Muslim women, rather than being oppressed and ostracized beings, are, in fact, a source of strength and mobilization and that such activities are also conducted by men and for men in sexually integrated societies.[21] Conversely, Ahmed points out that the activities in the harem are engaged in by women and for women,[22] and supports the psychological contentment and submission of those women who advocate spatial separation for the

---

[20] Western feminist theory has often been accused of being Western-centered, but its applicability to non-Western contexts and its applicability to non-Western spheres have often been impossible or difficult. Indeed, concepts propounded by Western feminists have rarely been used in analyses describing the situations of women living in Islamic societies and, similarly, the experiences of women living in Islamic societies have not been systematically used to critically evaluate feminist concepts. Consequently, this has often resulted in the tendency to insist on traditional Islamic approaches and consider Islam as a holistic ideology that automatically determines the practices of women without additional materials or guidance (Kandiyoti, 1997).

[21] In his study of honor killings and the construction of social gender in Arab society, Abu-Odeh writes—based on an interesting experience—that women, when in social spaces created for men, are unwelcome. The experience used is described accordingly: In a Middle Eastern restaurant, there is a man dancing with feminine figures in the middle of a group of other men, who dance around them in a circle. A woman who has come from outside the circle, and who evidently wants to dance in the middle of the group, has not been accepted by the men and stands, ostracized, on her own; the dance then continues without the involvement of the woman (Abu-Odeh, 2004).

[22] In harem areas where some activities are free for women, they share life among themselves, exchange information, and make jokes and tell stories about the male world. In some Arab countries, certain concepts—such as the 'holy woman', sibyls and the practicing of sessions for repelling witches or strengthening female groups—remain popular (Golley, 2004).

sake of comfort and happiness, rather than as a result of oppression. Claiming that Western women lack such practices, Ahmad argues that the claim that women in spatially separated societies are more oppressed than other women is groundless (Golley, 2004). However, Ahmad's argument is far from reflecting the general conditions of women in Middle Eastern societies; Daisy H. Dwyer's Moroccan work indicates that, while showing a pattern of submission interwoven with resistance and protest, women claim that they are more inclined to clashes because of the fixed idea that they are inferior to men (Kandiyoti, 1997).

The multidimensionality of the debates on this subject is clear, but it is obvious that the separation of women outside of the home and their invisibility in public life characterizes traditional Islamic convictions. Such arguments concerning 'contact with strangers'; the universal restrictions on the participation of women in non-domestic life consequent to a traditional interpretation of Islam, that is, the organization of women's vital practices separated from society; women being seen as the cause of *fitna* and the demand that they live in *tasattur* to protect their chastity[23]; the separation of women according to the allocation of societal duties based on age and sex; and the emphasis and conflation of masculinity and power within society, are all well-established theories concerning this subject. Indeed, in many cases, these theories have also been accepted by women (Moghadam, 1989).[24]

---

[23] The traditional Muslim outfit has been determined according to the teachings of the Qur'an with the aim of creating a pure and modest society (Reece, 1996). The necessity for women to wear unattractive clothes is based on the Qur'an, which supports the social separation of men and women (Khan, 1995). Indeed, *tasattur* (*the hijab or headscarf*) literally means 'curtain' or 'barrier of spatial dimension' (Ruby, 2006; Hargreaves and Vertinsky, 2007). Although traditional Muslim clothing is considered to be a form of persecution against women in the West, many Muslim women living in Western countries prefer to wear traditional clothes (Droogsma, 2007). Reece's (1996) study of Muslim women living in North America revealed that all female participants in the research agreed that they must be veiled during the process of worship. Similar results were obtained in the study by Read and Bartkowski (2000). In addition, American Muslim women have stated that the wearing of traditional Islamic clothing by women believers reflects their commitment to Islam and allows them to interact with Muslim society, and that the traditional attire of Muslim women is seen as a reminder of a life that is in accordance with Muslim beliefs and values—per the Qur'an's orders (Dunkel, et al. 2010).

[24] According to Kandiyoti, on the basis of women in the Middle East, accepting social sexual roles determined for them without causing a problem is due to them

One of the 'natural' social manifestations of spatial separation is Muslim women being kept away from education and working life.[25] We thought it would be appropriate to mention the women's education system in Pakistan because it is similar to the approach used by İsmailağa Jamaah regarding the education of women, the main subject of our study. It is accepted that there is a discrepancy between Islamic values and beliefs and women's education in every part and every social stratum of Pakistan. Regardless, women's education is seen as an inevitable key in the context of countries' achievements concerning there developmental goals, the empowerment of women and equal rights for all adult citizens.[26] Women's

---

having a network of female supporters within the traditional patriarchal approach. According to Kandiyoti, women's solidarity and cooperation in the Middle East takes place within an intense patriarchal context, one that preserves the privileges of men. The nature of the lifecycle of the patriarchal family provides evidence regarding both the secondary position of the woman in Middle Eastern societies, as well as the internalization of this situation psychologically by those women. Domestic arrangements, that is, the fact that girls marry at an early age, the authoritative position of the boy and the devaluation of girls, as well as the appreciation of women only according to a hierarchy based on age, are a common situation, not only in Islamic societies but also in South Asian and East Asian societies such as China. However, some applications in the Middle East that profoundly affect women's psychology differ from those of other societies. Women in this region start life under extremely negative power relations. Although giving birth to a boy affects the power hierarchy in the family, women cannot be empowered unless they become a mother-in-law. The expectation and hope of assuming a position of similar power within this order in the future is quite effective regarding the internalization of the system within women's minds (Kandiyoti, 1997).

[25] Hibri (1997) argues that the tendency not to educate women in Islamic countries is based on patriarchal policies rather than Islam, and that this approach is not compatible with Islam. According to him, though the Prophet of Islam was illiterate, the first revelation sent to him on behalf of humanity was "Read!" Furthermore, many Qur'anic verses and the words of prophets are full of the virtues of learning and the possession of knowledge. Consequently, it would be impossible for such a religion to ban women from education. The verse Hibrî exemplifies this: "So high above all is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, (O Muhammad), do not hasten with recitation of the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge.'" (20:114) These additional hadiths are only two of the Prophet's words related to the same subject: "The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets" and "Seek knowledge even if it is in China..."

[26] During the period of Nawaz Sharif, who came to power after Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, the Education Policy of 1992 emphasized the necessity of religious education in shaping social life per the direction given by Islamic teachings;