



An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and Secularism in Women's Islamic Movements

Sherine Hafez

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As the world grapples with issues of religious fanaticism, extremist politics, and rampant violence that seek justification in either “religious” or “secular” discourses, women who claim Islam as a vehicle for individual and social change are often either regarded as pious subjects who subscribe to an ideology that denies them many modern freedoms, or as feminist subjects who seek empowerment only through rejecting religion and adopting secularist discourses. Such assumptions emerge from a common trend in the literature to categorize the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ as polarizing categories, which in turn mitigates the identities, experiences and actions of women in Islamic societies. Yet in actuality Muslim women whose activism is grounded in Islam draw equally on principles associated with secularism.

In *An Islam of Her Own*, Sherine Hafez focuses on women's Islamic activism in Egypt to challenge these binary representations of religious versus secular subjectivities. Drawing on six non-consecutive years of ethnographic fieldwork within a women's Islamic movement in Cairo, Hafez analyzes the ways in which women who participate in Islamic activism narrate their selfhood, articulate their desires, and embody discourses in which the boundaries are blurred between the religious and the secular.

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