



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

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Both Muslims and non-Muslims see women in most Muslim countries as suffering from social, economic and political discrimination, treated by law and society as second-class citizens subject to male authority. This discrimination is attributed to Islam and Islamic law, though it varies considerably in its impact, according to both class and region. Since the late 19th century there has been a mass of literature tackling this issue, some from a feminist or human rights perspective, some taking the form of an apology for Islamic law.

Recently, exciting new feminist research has been challenging gender discrimination and male authority from within Islamic legal tradition, and this book presents some important results from that research. The contributors all engage critically with two central juristic concepts, rooted in the Qur'an, that lie at the basis of this discrimination, concepts which place women under male authority. One refers to a husband's authority over his wife, his financial responsibility towards her, and his superior status and rights. The other is male family members' right and duty of guardianship over female members (e.g., fathers over daughters when entering into marriage contracts) and the privileging of fathers over mothers in guardianship rights over their children.

The contributors, scholars from different disciplines and backgrounds, were brought together by Musawah (Arabic for equality), a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, launched in 2009. Musawah aims at producing new knowledge to help build grass-roots movements and to mobilize for change.

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