Before trying to go into the details of the issue of young Jordanian women’s religious beliefs and practices, let me relate an incident that can be seen as emblematic of the kind of questions I pursue in this article.

While I was doing anthropological research for my PhD thesis in Jordan between 1997 and 1999, I was sitting in the office of a Philosophy professor at the University of Jordan, Amman. Over a cup of coffee we were talking about how his students have changed over the years and he noted:

People have become more religious and the influence of fundamentalism has grown considerably. I only have to look at my students: Ten years ago, there were girls sitting in the front row of the lecture room with mini-skirts and sleeveless tops. Today, you won’t see anybody like that, the girls all veil up and wouldn’t mix with the boys. And also among my colleagues—how often did I have arguments with teachers from the faculty of shari’a? They’ve got so much influence on the students! Or look at the Students’ Council, that’s dominated by the Islamists.

And then he went on talking about one of his students in particular:

I had this student once, she was really bright. She wrote her dissertation on Foucault, a brilliant piece. She wanted to continue to do her master’s degree, and I encouraged her very much. But then she got married, started wearing this jilbaab—before, she didn’t even wear a hijaab—and wanted to work on religious philosophy. I asked her why she had changed so radically, from a critical thinker to a religious conformist who doesn’t ask questions. She said, she found that religion contained more truth for her than Foucault. I asked her, where this sudden enlightenment came from, and she replied that her husband had encouraged her to do more religious studies. It’s a pity!

**DOING RESEARCH IN JORDAN**

While in Jordan, I was often confronted with the notion that religiosity among the population in general and among women in particular is on the rise, a view that seemed to confirm what I had read before I got there. I had set out to do anthropological research on political Islam in Jordan, but soon changed my focus, since I did not seem to get any anthropologically relevant information on this issue. Since I had befriended various female students at the University of Jordan in Amman, and frequently discussed not only problems of their (and my) daily lives, but also religious issues, I shifted the focus of my research towards their experiences. As I have mentioned above, I came to Amman with the assumption that Jordanians had become increasingly religious of late—headlines in Western media of Islamic “fundamentalism” and “Islamism” at the back of my mind. I soon found out that this picture did not match reality, at least not the reality I experienced while I was there.

Jordan is a relatively small and, many would argue, insignificant country in the Middle East. Most of the country is desert, there are few towns and cities, and the majority of the population is living in either the capital Amman, or Irbid in the north, and Aqaba and Al-Karak in the south. Between 50% and 60% of the population are said to be of Palestinian origin (Salibi, 1993; Yorke, 1988). This is a consequence of the fact that most Palestinian refugees, who have left what is today Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip during and after Israel’s wars with Arab countries in 1948, 1967, and 1973, came to Jordan, where the majority of them were put up in refugee camps all over the country (Augustin, 1987; Nyrop, 1980).

Many of the arriving Palestinians were Christians, yet there has, for centuries, been a Christian minority on the East Bank of the River Jordan (Betts, 1979). Between 5% and 10% (again depending on the sources) of the population of what today is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan are Christians, mainly Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic (Fargues, 1998; Pacini, 1998). They have always been well integrated into the Jordanian tribal system and generally had very good relations with their Muslim compatriots (Allison, 1986; Haddad, 1992). This went as far as members of both communities practicing similar religious rituals until the first half of the twentieth century, and officials of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem refusing to send representatives to the Christian tribes on the East Bank of the River Jordan on the grounds of their “unorthodox” behavior (Allison, 1986). As a consequence, many priests on the East Bank were until fairly recently rather un- or under-educated (Allison, 1986; Haddad, 1992). Even though after the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 and 1973 Wars, the Christian (as well as the Muslim) communities of Jordan experienced a considerable increase in members, the ratio between the two religious communities remained roughly the same.

The position of women in the various Muslim and Christian communities in Jordan differs, but not to an extreme extent. In many respects, their situation can be compared to those of other women in the region, as it has been described in studies on women in the Middle East (Ahmed, 1992; Kandiyoti, 1991, 1996; Macleod, 1991, among others). Unsurprisingly, within the region the greatest similarities seem to exist between women in Palestine and those in Jordan. Similarity of patterns in their lives seem to cluster around issues of education, work, political participation, legal status, freedom of movement, marriage, the significance of family relationships, and increasing manifestations of religiosity, including discussions about veiling practices (Hammami, 1990; El-Guindi, 1999, among others). Diverging dress codes seem to be not only the most obvious, but also possibly the most superficial difference between Muslim and Christian women in Jordan. Even though Christian women in Jordan are subject to different Personal Status Laws than Muslim women—which has, for instance, consequences regarding Christian women’s (non-existent) right to divorce—their position in society is fairly similar. Christians themselves would, of course, deny this and claim that they grant “their women” considerably more freedom than do their Muslim compatriots. This claim seems to hold true to a certain extent with regard to women’s participation in the labor force, their level of education, or their freedom to travel abroad (Allison, 1986; Haddad, 2001). This might, however, also be linked to class differences, since Christian families in Jordan are more likely to be part of a middle or upper middle class, and these families, like their Muslim counterparts, are generally more liberal in their attitudes towards women and can offer them more opportunities. What needs to be stressed here, is that there are major differences within the country regarding the situation of women, yet less so on the basis of religious affiliation than with regard to their demographic backgrounds: Variations exist between rural
and urban families, those of Palestinian and Transjordanian origin, and linked to these between families of various class backgrounds and with varying economic opportunities, as a majority of Palestinians continue to live in refugee camps under conditions of poverty.

This is a very rough sketch of the environment, in which I conducted my research. I realize that this picture is highly essentializing and in this article try to particularize it. Most of my research took place in the capital, Amman, among highly educated, middle-class, young women. Using a snowballing sampling system, starting from one Christian and one Muslim student, I got to know an increasing number of young women, in- and outside Amman, Muslim and Christian, current and former students of universities and colleges, and conducted interviews with forty women (30 Muslims and 10 Christians). Frequently, these “interviews” were more in the shape of conversations as I sat with many of those women for hours and hours talking, obviously not only about issues related to my research. Our conversations were usually in Arabic, but sometimes in English, German, or French, depending on the language knowledge of the women involved in the conversation. On the other hand, as an anthropologist being engaged in participant observation as a major research tool, nearly everything I heard, saw, felt, experienced, and discussed was an important fragment in the mosaic I was trying to piece together about young women’s religiosity and coping strategies. I was trying hard to undo the hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched by stressing our friendship, talking about my personal life, and emphasizing time and my getting more familiar with the environment and more intimate with a number of young women, I also felt that what I had read about the differences between feminine and masculine religiosity and spirituality might also hold true in the Jordanian context. Some research conducted among mainly Christians in Western societies seems to indicate that there are gender variations in religiousness (Francis & Wilcox, 1996, 1998; King, 1995; Miller & Hoffmann, 1995; Ozorak, 1996; Thompson, 1991; Wilde & Joseph, 1997). This, however, is a question, which I cannot pursue here, due to the lack of empirical data.

The questions I would like to address in this article are, first, whether the religiosity of the majority of young women in Jordan has indeed increased as drastically and surprisingly as it was indicated by that professor, or whether religiosity can be considered a consequence of their upbringing and socio-economic environment. Secondly, I would like to ask whether Christian and Muslim religiosity discriminates against female believers, as it is often claimed, and—more significantly—how the interpretations of the women I interviewed can actually empower them. Finally, I question the assumption that the situation of Muslim young women in Jordan differs greatly from that of Christian young women in the country, a claim that is often put forward, especially by Jordanian Christians.

By looking into these issues through the young women’s words and my own interpretations of some of the issues raised I aim to shed light on how this specific group of women perceive and live their religiosity (or non-religiosity in a number of cases) against a backdrop of the undeniably increased significance of Islamist discourses in Jordanian society (Al-Kilani, 1994; El-Said, 1995; Hourani et al., 1997; Roald, 1994; Satloff, 1986; Taraki, 1996).

I have to emphasize here that when I use the term women I refer to this very particular group of young women, whom I interviewed in the course of those 2 years. Whenever I point to the generalizations of studies in the field of women’s religiosity in Middle Eastern societies, I mean to particularize them by offering my analysis of this very specific group of young women and their distinctive characteristics. This, of course, does not mean that this particular group is in itself homogeneous, the major distinction being that of religious affiliation—Christian and Muslim—and I am trying to pay attention to these differences. But there are commonalities between...
RELIGIOSITY

The professor mentioned at the beginning is not alone in assuming that increased religiosity can easily be deduced from a change in dress codes, in media and everyday language, and from a growing and stricter adherence to religious rituals such as fasting during the month of Ramadan. His notion of religiosity also implies that religious people are prevented from asking critical questions and behave in what he sees as “old-fashioned and conservative” ways. I do not intend to question the increase in what is commonly thought to be manifestations and signs of religiosity—even during the 2 years that I spent in Jordan, the so-called “Islamic” dress code among men and women became more popular, religious issues were frequently discussed in the media and everyday conversations, the number of publications on religious issues increased, and religious rituals continued to become an important part of people’s lives. With regard to women, this notion of rising religiosity is usually boiled down to their wearing a hijaab. I am, of course, not the first to question the assumption that these manifestations are necessarily linked to increased personal “religiosity” or that religious beliefs are automatically translated into a fixed set of behaviors and dress codes (El-Guindi, 1999; Hammami, 1990; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Macleod, 1991; Zuhur, 1992, amongst others). Moreover, it is difficult to assume that religiosity is intrinsically linked or can even be equated to “backwardness” and “uncritical conformity”. I will take up this question later.

Before I proceed let me first clarify what I mean by “religiosity”. I am not talking about “religion” in a general sense, but I understand “religiosity” as being a vital part of “religion”. The women I interviewed helped me to come to a better understanding of what is implied in their notion of religiosity. For example, I was talking about the issue to women I had known for a while and with whom I had developed quite a close relationship by then. Mariam, a Christian university student from Aqaba, was studying, like her younger sister in Amman. I asked her how to best translate “being religious” into Arabic. This triggered a long discussion about various concepts of “religiosity”, and we were soon joined by some other friends. Sitting in the university cafeteria, drinking tea, we tried to explore the issue in various languages. The basis was the English expression of “religiosity”, which was then discussed in Arabic, in French (one of the women came from Algeria and three studied French), and in German (three of the women studied German). I insisted on finding an Arabic definition, as I needed to ask other women who did not speak any foreign languages the same question. The basic aspects of the notion of “religiosity” they came up with was a division into the categories of mu’mina and mutadayyina, roughly translatable as “believing” and “practicing”.

Since then, I asked women whether they considered themselves to be either mu’mina or mutadayyina, both, or none. The results of this separation of religious belief from religious practice in the questions are, in a way, predictable. The absolute majority of the women I asked claimed they were believers, only a tiny minority said explicitly they did not believe. When it comes to practicing religion, however, only two third were positive about it. I suggest that “religiosity” refers to beliefs, the more spiritual aspects of religion, while I will talk of “religious practices” when I look at the manifestations of these beliefs in terms of dress, behavior, or habits.

The self-evaluations that these young women offered me seem to point to the significance of religiosity in their lives. Of course, one could argue that many of the young women would not admit to not believing when religion is a major topic of the interview. Yet, I did not rely on interviews alone, but found their answers were confirmed by my observations, in repeated interviews, and through the close friendships I developed with some of them.

In order to get a better understanding of how the particular kind of religiosity of the women I interviewed developed in the course of their lives, and to determine their religious or non-religious familial backgrounds, I would now like to turn to some aspects of their socialization. How do these young women become familiar with the precepts of their respective religions? What kind of religiosity do they “construct” for themselves and how does this differ from what their parents practiced?

PASSING ON RELIGIOSITY

Some of the most powerful influences with regard to the formation of religious or non-religious attitudes are family traditions and socialization patterns. The frequency of church or mosque attendance, the significance of prayers and fasting, the visibility of sacred texts or images in the home, or the frequent use of religious language in a family have a crucial impact on children (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997; Muuss, 1996; Starrett, 1998). This might change at a
certain age, when other influences become more salient, most notably during adolescence and young adulthood. Family influence might be radically overturned, so that individuals from a non-religious family background convert or become extremely religious, or individuals from a religious family background turn away from religion. 6

I wanted to know from the women I interviewed at what age they (consciously) considered themselves (non-) religious, exploring possible conversion experiences. I also asked if the development of their (non-) religious orientation was in any way linked to certain persons or events. Furthermore, I inquired about the ways in which they had learned about religious beliefs and practices.

About one third of the young Muslim and Christian women said that the religious or non-religious worldviews they hold today are the same as those of their childhood. One fourth of the Muslims and another third of the Christian women, however, said they have reshaped the attitudes with which they grew up. They either hold different views from their families today, or emphasize the attitudes they grew up with more strongly. Many of the women I interviewed said they thought more consciously about issues, attitudes, or behaviors emulated during childhood. This is often followed by a decision as to whether or not to adopt a religious life-style, which is then more or less consistently followed. 7

"Aliya’s experiences can exemplify this:

I’ve been religious since I was a child, because my parents were fairly religious. We’ve always been fasting, my dad goes to the mosque on Fridays. But although I’d generally say I’m a believer, this religious feeling becomes particularly strong at times when I’m more in need of God than at other times.

"Aliya’s experiences, favored by a fairly religious environment at home, seem to make religion, or God for that matter, very accessible when she is “in need of God”. She appreciates this experience and holds on to this pattern.

The majority of women I interviewed likewise largely carried on their parents’ religious behavior. I did not hear of many major “conversion” experiences, i.e. someone turning radically towards religion after having enjoyed a socialization in which religiosity did not play a major part, or someone turning away from religion after having been socialized in a religious way. Two rare cases illustrate what I mean by these radical turns.

Hind is the oldest daughter of highly educated middle-class parents, for whom religiosity did not play a major role either in their own lives or in the education of their children. When Hind was 17, she decided to make religion a more important determinant in her life. She began to wear a hijaab, then a jilbaab, she started praying regularly, fasting, and asked her mother not to use certain ingredients in her cooking; she read more frequently about religious topics, and decided to study sharii’a (Islamic law). Her family, especially her mother (the father was largely absent on business), was not at all happy with her decision, but Hind persisted. Her younger sister also adopted this religious life-style and decided to study sharii’a as well. This seemed to be particularly embarrassing for the father, a dentist, who wanted them to study “something serious.” When mother and daughters were together (and I with them), they seemed to get on quite well with each other. When I was alone with either of them, however, they would complain and mock each other. The mother would take me to the kitchen and show me what Hind had asked her to do and not to do:

Look, she told me not to use nutmeg, because that’s supposed to be intoxicating. She was hiding it away at the bottom of that cupboard, and I took it out again. We had serious arguments about it. Now, I just leave it there and use it when she can’t see it. Ramadan is also a bit difficult, because she wants me to cook for iftaar, but I still eat during the day and Jamal [the youngest son] doesn’t fast either. In a way, it’s a bit stupid that whole situation, but what can I do?

When we were alone, Hind, who got married to a religious man, but visits her mother very frequently, would tell me about the problems she has with her parents:

Of course, they didn’t like my decision to wear a hijaab, they wanted me to take it off, but they got used to it in the end. And then, you should have seen our fights over what I should study. Of course, my father wanted me to study science or so, but I wasn’t good enough for that in the first place. The options then were Arts or sharii’a. He thought Arts would be much better than sharii’a, but I decided for the latter. I wanted to learn more about my religion, not just adopt unquestioningly the traditions about which I had learned when I was younger. He wouldn’t have that. But I said either sharii’a or nothing. Well, they accepted it eventually. But I’m glad I’m living with my
husband now, because he’s a practicing Muslim. It makes life much easier. Although I do miss my mother and my sister and I come here [to her parents’ house] very often.

Hind’s radical turn towards religion puts considerable strain on the relationship with her parents, as her decision seems to invalidate some of the norms and values her parents have tried to teach her. Despite this obvious turning away from her parents’ ideals and principles (and those of many others in society, as she said) she still feels a great deal of affection for her family. Convinced that her lifestyle is the “better” one, she is trying to bring other family members to follow in her footsteps, which she successfully managed in the case of her younger sister.

An example for young women turning away from the kind of religiosity they have experienced in their families, is that of Reem. From a rural background in the north of the Kingdom, she came to Amman to study English at the university. In her family religion and traditional values have always played a major role in the socialization of the children. The girls wore scarves and long skirts. Her conservative parents did not want Reem to study at the university, but she insisted and, after 2 years of struggle, she was eventually allowed to do so. Very independent, she was first living in a students’ hall of residence, and later moved into a private flat, which she shares with European and American language students. She dresses in jeans and T-shirts, often wears a baseball-cap, and dreams of emigrating to the US. After her move to Amman, she openly renounced anything to do with “religiosity”—dress, behaviour, language, rituals. Reem says, she cannot believe in a God that sets up rules which are so decidedly restrictive with regard to women. Her father and brothers still expect her to return to the village after her graduation, but she is trying to bring other family members to follow in her footsteps, which she successfully managed in the case of her younger sister.

My mother keeps telling me that I should fast, that I should say ‘In sha’ Allah’ [God willing], and that she would pray for me, but I told her that I’ve got an American boyfriend and that I want to emigrate. I think, deep down, she knows that I won’t come back and that I won’t have anything to do with religion. I don’t believe in God, not in a God that gives mankind rules which are so discriminating against women!

Of course, Reem had decided that religion has nothing to offer her even before she came to Amman, but she was not able to show this openly, because the pressure of the family and the village community was too strong. Once away from that environment, she was able to express her attitudes through her behavior and lifestyle. In the beginning, she wore a scarf every time she returned to the village, but abandoned this eventually.

Apart from the family, there are other agents and institutions that can help to increase the knowledge about religious practices and beliefs. One important source of information seems to be schools. There exist, however, considerable differences as to the significance of religious school teaching for Muslim and Christian women. The young Muslim women I interviewed criticized the quality of the knowledge they gained at school. They were taught the basics of their religion, learned about the sacred texts, about rituals and religious traditions, but not much beyond that.

For Christian women, the situation seems to be different. The Christian women I interviewed told me that if they attend government schools, they do not get any religious education at school, but often learn about their religion in meetings and groups organized by the Church, such as Sunday school, or youth groups. If they, however, attend Christian schools, a major focus of the curriculum is religious education. Therefore, Christians tend to get a more thorough religious education during their childhood and adolescence than Muslims. For Muslims, the social, familial environment seems to play a more crucial role in learning about religious dogma and practices.

It seems obvious that some of the young women I interviewed turn towards or away from religion because of the ways they grew up, because of the influences that played out in their education. This, however, still does not explain why women should turn towards a religion that is patriarchal in character and in many instances discriminates against female believers. Is the assumption correct that living according to religious precepts deprivileges Muslim and Christian women? Are female members of those religious communities indeed “second class believers?” And if so, how do the young women I interviewed deal with this, how do they re-interpret the religious sources and practices in ways that can actually empower them?

**GENDER INEQUALITIES IN RELIGION**

Ozorak (1996) devised a scheme of women’s reactions to the usually demeaning treatment of women in religions such as Christianity and Islam. While some women, according to her, perceive tensions caused by gender inequalities in their religion, others do not. If
they deny the existence of gender inequalities, adherence to that religion does not pose any major problems for them as women. The majority of the young women I interviewed, Christians and Muslims alike, do not perceive any tension regarding the situation of women, or at least do not question it. If, however, they feel that women are indeed not treated as equals to men by their religion, they have, according to Ozorak (1996), two options: they can either abandon religion, which in the case of Jordan hardly ever takes place, or they try to adjust their beliefs in various ways. The inequalities can be accepted as justified, or they are perceived as unfair. In the latter case, women reject the religious establishment and resort to an “individualized” form of belief. They could also adopt behavioral strategies, such as requesting equal treatment, participating in feminist activities and discussions, or requesting the use of gender inclusive language. Or they could resort to cognitive strategies, such as an alteration of the focus of their worldview away from these tensions, downward comparison with people who are “even worse off” than they are, an appeal to tradition by stressing the distorting power of social traditions on religious norms, or the substitution of images, symbols, and language.

The majority of the women I met adopt one of three strategies, if they become aware of any gender inequalities in their religion. They either accept them as justified, find their own “individual” religiosity (usually different from the dogma of the religious establishment), or they apply cognitive strategies to cope with perceived gender inequalities within the dogmatic framework.

A beautiful example of how a young Muslim woman created “her individual religiosity” is the story Lina, a language student, sent to me. She could not accept the inequalities inherent in her religion and criticized it frequently. Although these are not her own words, she thinks them much closer to the truth than the one taught in religious dogma:

One day in the Garden of Eden, Eve calls out to God: ‘Lord, I have a problem!’ ‘What’s the problem, Eve?’ ‘Lord, I know you’ve created me and have provided this beautiful garden and all of these wonderful animals, and that hilarious comedic snake, but I’m just not happy.’ ‘Why is that, Eve?’ came the reply from above. ‘Lord, I am lonely. And I’m sick to death of apples.’ ‘Well, Eve, in that case, I have a solution. I shall create a man for you.’ ‘What’s a ‘man,’ Lord?’ ‘This man will be a flawed creature, with many bad traits. He’ll lie, cheat, and be vainglorious; all in all, he’ll give you a hard time. But, he’ll be bigger, faster, and will like to hunt and kill things. He will look silly aroused, but since you’ve been complaining, I’ll create him in such a way that he will satisfy your ah, physical needs. He’ll be witless and will revel in childish things like fighting and kicking a ball about. He won’t be too smart, so he’ll also need your advice to think properly.’ ‘Sounds great,’ says Eve, with an ironically raised eyebrow. ‘What’s the catch, Lord?’ ‘Yeah, well… you can have him on one condition.’ ‘What’s that, Lord?’ ‘As I said, he’ll be proud, arrogant, and self-admiring… So you’ll have to let him believe that I made him first… So, just remember… it’s our secret… Woman-to-woman!’

Very much tongue in cheek, this is Lina’s way of expressing her definite dissatisfaction with what religion, in this case Islam, has to offer her as a woman.

The story of the creation of “mankind”—similar in the Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious holy texts and traditions—is obviously not the only part of religious dogma that portrays a picture of women as inferior to men, or to be more precise, that views male believers as superior to and closer to God than female believers. Muslim as well as Christian scholars (mainly female) have re-read the sacred texts and traditions in order to replace the prevailing interpretations that are commonly offered by male theologians and scholars, and thus come to a different understanding of the position of women believers in their respective communities (e.g. Byrne, 1995; Hassan, 1996; Stowasser, 1992, 1994, 1998; Wadud-Muhsin, 1992; Young, 1994, and others). The predominance of male interpretations of religious sources as well as men’s domination in the clerical hierarchies caused me to label both Islam and Christianity “patriarchal” religions. Against this backdrop the question arises of how such religious dogmas that more or less overtly discriminate against women can appeal to women.

One strategy of coping with such inequalities is, according to Ozorak (1996), to cognitively reconstruct them as justified. Men seem to figure more prominently in much of the history of the respective religions, which in itself can be seen as proof for the religious superiority of men. Therefore, religious role models are often male, even for women believers. They are portrayed as the “better believers”, which justifies their superior position.

I asked the young women I interviewed about their religious role models and what makes them so
special. To my surprise, only a quarter of the Chris-
tian women could think of any historical or living
person whom they consider a role model. In contrast,
three quarters of the Muslim women cited a role
model in terms of their religiosity. What was even
more astounding, though, was that these role models
were, with the exception of Mother Teresa, all male.
The reasons those young women, Muslim as well as
Christian, gave for their choice were not only related
to the religious or holy nature of their role models,
but also, and maybe even more significantly, to their
humanitarian qualities. One of the Muslim women I
interviewed, for instance, admires her role model, the
Prophet Muhammad, for his close relationship to
God:

He [the prophet Muhammad] is special because he
is the messenger of God to all of us and because
God has chosen him as a guide for us. God has
taught the Prophet with the best of manners,
which should be an inspiration to us all. He is
endowed with all kinds of praiseworthy character
traits, all the religious knowledge, and the Islamic
law (shari‘a); [they are all] united in the person
of the Prophet.

Yet, it is also the love these role models show for
their neighbors that count. Caring for the poor and
needy, “strength, courage, and a resoluteness to stand
up for the right thing”, as well as “prudence,
patience, a strong personality, and justice”, and
“sincerity, faithfulness, and modesty” are some of
the character traits that make role models stand out of
the crowd for the young women I interviewed.
Sincerity and honesty figured most significantly
among them. These character traits are generally
highly valued for men and women alike, but they
can be translated into different kinds of behavior,
which are more closely linked to the respective
gender roles. I would, however, argue that many of
those character traits are traditionally very closely
linked to feminine roles in society. Ascribing such
characteristics to male role models might, therefore,
be a conscious or unconscious way of bringing
together ideals of femininity, especially with regard
to “modesty”, and prominent male figures in the
history of religion and, thus, to avoid tensions.
Ozorak (1996) labeled this kind of coping with
gender inequalities of religions “cognitive strategies”
in order to adapt one’s beliefs to social realities. By
ascribing feminine characteristics to their role mod-
els, these young women cognitively manipulated the
image of these role models, and, thus, facilitated the
process of relating to a historical person or—by
association—to God, who is traditionally also por-
trayed with masculine features.

Choosing and manipulating religious role models
is only one way of coming to grips with patriarchal
religions. The reasoning of many of the young
women I interviewed indicates that they indeed apply
some of the strategies suggested by Ozorak (1996).
In a sense it justifies men’s superior position within a
religious framework. Yet, cognitive strategies of
ascribing certain characteristics to those role models
help to manipulate them and, thus, to create some
kind of “individualized” religion that might differ
from the notions of the religious establishment and be
closer to their own experiences. And yet, these
women, who decide to lead a religious life, are
always part of a community of believers and in one
way or another involved in community life. What is
their share in the activities of their communities and
how do they shape and construct their participation?

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE
CEREMONIAL LIFE AND RITUALS OF
RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

I was discussing the issue of Middle Eastern women
and religion in a wider sense with an office clerk, a
Muslim, who was not particularly religious. We were
in the house of an acquaintance, talking about all
kinds of issues that were related to my research and
my experiences in the Middle East. I shared my
observations about women’s mosque attendance with
them, explaining that I thought women in Egypt and
Syria go to mosques far more frequently and in
greater numbers than women in Jordan, and I was
wondering why this should be so. The immediate
answer I got was: “But women are not supposed to
go to mosques, it’s haram (religiously forbidden)!”
I was quite taken aback, as I was sure that this was
not the case, and yet, being told so by a Muslim, a
man my father’s age, and in such a strong tone, I
began to doubt my own judgment. I contradicted him,
arguing that although Jordanian women might not
attend mosques as frequently as their male compa-
triots or as women in other parts of the region, they
are certainly allowed to do so according to religious
precepts. He would not accept that and I prepared for
a long argument, when another man came in and
joined the conversation. We briefed him about our
discussion and he gave me full backing, which was
rather embarrassing for the other man.

This episode illustrates two aspects of women’s
participation in the ceremonial life of their religious
communities. Firstly, there exist many misconceptions
and, secondly, women’s active participation in reli-
igious ceremonial life is traditionally rather restricted. Studies of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish women seem to provide evidence that although women generally play a crucial part in their respective religious communities, they are often excluded from leading positions in public ceremonies, from the clergy. This has been shown for Christian women by, for instance, Ruether (1994) and Young (1994) and for Muslim women by Abdul-Rauf (1979), Ascha (1987), Asghar (1992), Badawai (1980), Hassan (1996), Hekmat (1997), Khan (1990), Lemu and Heeren (1976), Ram (1981), Siddiqui (1992), Subbamma (1988), and Wadud-Muhsin (1992) amongst others. Loewenthal, Amos, Goldblatt, and Mullarkey (1994) discussed the situation of Jewish women in this respect.

Like other spheres of life, such studies divide the religious spheres of monotheistic religions into public and private domains. Men’s ceremonial duties are said to be centered in the public arena, whereas women’s are usually placed in the private domain. While it is generally acknowledged that the “private” domain—the household and the family—constitutes an essential part of the life of a religious community, the public domain is not only more visible, but also more influential in terms of the religious, ceremonial, political, and doctrinal decisions that are taken for the community. Obviously, there have been, throughout history, remarkable women, who did indeed hold important and influential positions in the ceremonial and clerical hierarchies as, for instance, Esposito (1998, p. xiii), Maher (1974, p. 62), and Walther (1995, p. 52) have shown. These women are often used as role models for contemporary women to take courage and justify their venturing into the male-dominated public ceremonial life as well as their criticism of prevailing interpretations of religious sources.

Although none of the women I met thinks that their involvement in the public ceremonial life of their religious community is prohibited on religious grounds, as did the man mentioned above, they do not seem to go to great lengths assuming more active roles in this sphere. I recall entering mosques in Syria and Egypt without difficulties. Obviously, I was wearing a scarf, a long-sleeved blouse, and a long skirt, and remained in the background, where the women were usually praying. In small village mosques there was usually a separate gallery for women at the back of the mosque. In Jordan, however, it was often impossible for me, as a foreigner, to enter a mosque to begin with. When I went to the mosque at the University of Jordan for the first time together with Salwa and Wafa’, two language students, this was not an easy endeavor. Although I wore a long-sleeved blouse and a long skirt and had borrowed a scarf from one of my friends, I was asked to put on a special white cloak that covered me from head to toe. We climbed up the stairs to the women’s gallery, where there were only very few women. Downstairs, on the men’s floor, which we could see, there were quite a few men gathered for afternoon prayer. My friends made a considerable effort to appear relaxed, but we were all very tense. We only spoke in whispers and left soon after the two of them had finished their prayers. This situation was fairly new to me, as I was used to another atmosphere in mosques—busy, people chatting, children playing, visitors praying or meditating. Here, the atmosphere seemed to be less relaxed, which could, of course, be partly due to my presence.

Other observations and hints dropped in conversations gave me the impression that the young women I interviewed were not only under-represented in mosques, as Esposito (1998, p. xiii), Maher (1974, p. 62), and Walther (1995, p. 52) also point out, but that they also do not feel very comfortable in and around the building of a mosque. There is something about it that seems to make them behave differently from other places where they usually spend their days. This does, however, not mean that they refrain entirely from the ceremonies and rituals that are often linked to mosques. The more relaxed social gatherings, which I mentioned earlier, for instance, can be found in the prayer rooms that exist in the building of the faculty of shari’i’a. There, women get together not only to pray, but also to talk, to study, or to drink tea. Men are completely banned from these rooms. When I first came there, again with Salwa, I was immediately at the center of attention. I was not wearing a scarf and remained in the “ante-room” of the main prayer room. After first curious but hesitating glances, some of the young women approached us, Salwa explained my situation, and we entered into a conversation. The atmosphere seemed to be very relaxed despite the seriousness of some of the issues that were discussed. Apart from religious, academic, and political topics, much of the talk focused on everyday issues. Here, laughter and talk seemed to be easily reconcilable with the fulfilment of “serious” religious duties such as prayer, and the exclusion of men also made it inevitable that women exercised all the ritualistic functions that are necessary for those purposes.

The situation of the Christian Orthodox women in Jordan in this respect is not much different from that of their Muslim counterparts. They are generally not represented in the clergy, do not fulfill leading ceremonial functions in church services, but represent a crucial part of the religious community. However,
compared to Muslim women, they attend churches far more often. Going to Sunday service is a family affair, including men, women, and children. In Jordan, Sunday is not a public holiday, so that services usually take place in the evenings after people have returned home from work and school. They dress up for mass, attend the service, and usually stay on for a social gathering of the community. There are other meetings during the week and on special occasions, and women play a vital role in community activities. Because Christians of the host of dominations which I outlined earlier, are a religious minority in the country, there exists a strong sense of community, which can cross the boundaries of these denominations. Sometimes church buildings are shared between two congregations, Sunday services take place one after another, while on special occasions such as Easter or Christmas they are held together. Here, again, women play a prominent and vitalizing role in the communities; they are active participants in the services and the religious rituals that are practiced there. This evident difference to their Muslim counterparts is further fostered by another difference—with regard to religious practices, Christians as a minority in Jordan lack alternative places to gather to practice their religion.

Closely related to places of worship are various religious rituals, such as communal prayer and fasting. In contrast to other rituals, prayer is usually performed more frequently and has communal as well as individual connotations. If praying is being directly linked to attending a mosque or a church, one could assure that prayer does not play a notable role in the lives of most women in Jordan, since they are usually not regular mosque or church goers. However, when I asked young women about this, only a tiny minority of women said that they never pray at all. While none of the Christian women I interviewed neglects prayer altogether, only 7.5% of the Muslim women generally do not pray. The others pray either from time to time or regularly. Yet, whereas most of the Muslim women pray regularly, most Christian women pray but occasionally. There is a striking difference between Muslim women, who tend to pray more often according to a certain pattern, and Christian women, who more often resort to occasional prayers when they “feel the need to do so.” This might be related to the slightly diverging notions of prayer in Islam and Christianity. In very crude terms, I would say that Muslim prayers are more formalized and more strongly linked to physical performance than Christian prayers, although Christian Orthodox prayers can also be quite formalized (compared to, for instance, Protestant prayers).

Yet, there are also more personal, individual forms of prayer, which do not necessarily have to be said in public places of worship. The most important place for prayer for the young women I interviewed is probably the home. However, Muslim and Christian women differ considerably in their choice of the place to pray. While the absolute majority of Muslim women I interviewed mentioned only their home as the place where they usually pray, two thirds of the Christian women answered that they pray in a church and sometimes at home.

All in all, praying seems to be an important ritual for the women I interviewed and an important part of their religiosity, maybe slightly more so for Christian women than for Muslim women.

Another ritual with communal as well as private aspects for both Muslims and Christians is fasting. There are various occasions, on which Muslims and Christians are supposed or encouraged to fast. Yet, the most notable periods of fasting are the month of Ramadan for Muslims and Lent for Christians. However, while nearly all of the Muslim women I interviewed said they fast, only half of the Christian women said they did.

Compared to the fasting of Muslims during Ramadan, Christian fasting seems to be less strictly prescribed and was not one of the “pillars” of religion. From an individual point of view, Muslim and Christian fasting might not differ that much, as one can decide to keep it or not and attribute individual meaning to it. However, as a communal ritual, there are differences between fasting during Ramadan and that during Lent. While during Ramadan the majority of people in Jordan do not eat, drink, or smoke in public, which can be considered a strong incentive for members of the Muslim community to participate, during lent everyone in the environment will continue eating. Not only because Christians are a minority group, but also among members of the Christian communities it is not easy to find out who is fasting and who is not. During lent it is much easier to break the fast unnoticed than it is during Ramadan. The fact that Christian fasting is not part of the fundamental religious commandments combined with the fact that it lacks the communal dimension associated with Muslim fasting might explain why this ritual appears to be far less significant for the religiosity of the Christian women I interviewed.

The Muslim women, on the other hand, claimed nearly unanimously that they were fasting. Various reasons can account for this. I was told that people are imprisoned if they are caught eating, drinking, or smoking in the streets during the month of Ramadan.
I have not checked if this is actually true, but I have never seen anyone breaking the fast in public during Ramadan. Christians adhere to that rule as well. The communal aspects of this ritual, which is one of the basic precepts of Islam, are very strong. During Ramadan, there is hardly any conversation that does not include some aspect of the fasting—doing shopping, complaining about the lack of energy, cooking, getting home in time, TV programmes, closed shops and offices, and so on.

This communal experience in a society that is predominantly Muslim certainly fosters the adherence to the religious duty of fasting. As far as I can tell, the majority of young women do indeed stick to it, not only in the public eye, but also in private, when they would have the opportunity to “cheat”. I could not observe any woman eating or drinking clandestinely, although I have been to their homes during Ramadan, or at the toilet in the university, a place where young women would, for instance, smoke, another public taboo. In contrast, I met several men, who openly admitted that they were not eating, drinking, or smoking in public, but that they were always doing so when they were not being watched. While for many men, the communal, “public” side of fasting seemed very important, though they might not feel the need to adhere to it “in private,” for many women the individual, spiritual side of fasting seemed paramount. For them, the differentiation between communal and individual aspects of fasting becomes irrelevant, which is why they tend to adhere to the religious precepts in all situations.

The Muslim women I met tend to perceive fasting as mainly a religious duty, whereas Christian women are inclined to emphasize it as a form of spiritual exercise. Christian and Muslim women alike point to the closeness to God through fasting, which often results in heightened control of the soul and one’s physical desires, and which has repercussions on one’s relationships to other people, particularly an empathy for the poor and needy. Many of the Muslim women I interviewed added to these reasons the aspect of religious duty (fārīda).

Fasting as a marker of religiosity, although very important, seems to be less crucial than prayer for the women I interviewed. However, fasting seems to be a more significant quality of a “good believer” for the Christian women than for the Muslim women I interviewed. Such ritualistic aspects of religiosity as prayer and fasting are, of course, only parts of the notion of “being religious”, albeit essential parts. In the following section I would like to address the question of which other aspects characterise a mu’mina and/or mutadāyyina, according to the young women I interviewed? And by trying to answer this question in the case of young, middle class Jordanian women, I would also like to demonstrate that despite assertions by many Jordanians (and Westerners) that the worldviews and behavior of Christian women in Jordan differs greatly from those of Muslim women they seem to have lots more in common than what separates them; at least in the case of the particular group of women I interviewed.

INDIVIDUAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Most of the women I interviewed described praying and fasting as two of the most important features that characterize a “good believer”. Following their answers, I would subsume them under the category of “God’s commandments” (faraa‘ id, ‘awāmir, al-wasaayaa al-‘ashr), crucial for most of them when they describe markers of religiosity. Someone, whom both Christian and Muslim women amongst those I interviewed would consider a “good believer”, keeps God’s commandments and shows a certain pattern of behavior, as a young Muslim woman points out:

A good believer should be committed to religion and practise it in its entirety; he or she should do good deeds, should have good intentions, should pray, and practise all the commandments that religion has given the believers. Also, a good believer follows the traditions of the Qur’an and is committed to keeping the Islamic shari‘a with all its commandments that God has given the believer. He or she believes in the existence of God and his power, fulfils Islamic duties, and shows morals and understanding.

A young Christian woman supports this view:

Being a believer should show in one’s behaviour. A good believer shows sound behaviour and a noble character, as being a believer from one’s heart reflects on one’s practical life without trying to impose that on others. Instead, a good believer cooperates with and respects people, is a role model in patience, has a lively heart, and fears and loves God. Because believers have duties towards the creation and towards people, they must show their sound intentions, do good deeds to others, should have a pure soul, and abstain from hypocrisy.
These exemplary views, which in their contents were generally confirmed by the other women I interviewed, demonstrate that for them religious beliefs and religious practices are profoundly intertwined and difficult to separate. According to most of my respondents, it can be expected that a personal belief in God and in the truth of religion should almost inevitably translate into certain sets of behavior with regard to other people as well as to the fulfillment of religious duties. It is, therefore, also difficult for an outsider to distinguish between religious beliefs and religious practices. All I could do during my research was to take their assertions of the significance of religious beliefs in their lives seriously, and then to discover how they explained certain kinds of their behavior—such as being honest, helpful, patient, adhering to a certain dress code, fulfilling religious commandments, etc.—in the light of these beliefs.

Indeed, honesty and sincerity are essential results of a believer’s personal relationship to God, of keeping God’s commandments. This aspect seems to be of particular significance for most of the Christian and Muslim women I interviewed. The demand for honesty also implies tolerance and a condemnation of religious zeal and fanaticism.

The notion of religiosity that these young women hold entails far more than the mere fulfillment of and obedience to the rules set up by their respective religions. Being religious for them has a lot to do with charity, with one’s behavior towards other people, with responsibility for God’s creation, but also with spirituality. It is the love for God, the closeness to God, experienced through various rituals such as prayers or fasting, that enables believers to love their neighbors and to do good. A “good believer” differs from someone who is not thought to be serious about his or her religion, from a hypocrite, in inward conviction, respectful, caring treatment of, and love for others. This counts more for the women I interviewed than public adherence to rules.

The life of such a believer does, however, not always have just positive aspects. Obviously, being a believer can have many rewards, but there are also costs that have to be paid for a religiously oriented life-style.

Women who consider themselves religious would, obviously, more often point to the positive sides of being religious, while women who do not think they are religious stress the negative aspects more frequently. Both tend to defend their point of view. The advantages of being religious are usually perceived of in terms of spiritual and mental contentedness, calmness, security, fulfillment, and empowerment to do good deeds. The disadvantages are generally linked to other people’s behavior and attitudes towards a religious person that can make life difficult and embarrassing at times.

One positive aspect of being religious, as one young Christian student puts it, is:

A religious worldview can make it easier to deal with the realities of life and its many changes, because religious faith can offer a sense of security and, therefore, trust in yourself.

Again, this is supported by one Muslim student:

Believing in God and being religious gives me an enormous feeling of security and trust; I can trust in myself, in other people, and first and foremost in God. When you are in constant contact with God you somehow always feel serene, because you know that God will be by your side in all kinds of troubles.

The sense of security, spiritual and mental well-being, and a feeling of closeness to God have repercussions on the behavior towards other people or creation as a whole. Thus, feeling at home with a religion does not only, in the words of a young Muslim student, offer “sincerity and security, but also teaches good morals (akhlaaq)”. And these good morals, this flawless behavior, have consequences for the living together with other people, as one young Christian woman explains:

Because religion shapes the behaviour of the individual and because he or she senses a spiritual repose a believer is able to feel love and empathy for other people. And this is my idea of living a worthy life. My awe and love for God showed me how to love other people and they, in turn respect me.

A young Muslim woman summarized the sense of responsibility, which results from being religious, in the term of “commitment”—iltizaam. “The really unique thing about religiosity is the idea of commitment—you are committed to God, to yourself, to your neighbors, and to the whole creation.”

There is a sense of empowerment and of increased self-confidence shining through these answers. Being convinced that one is doing “the right thing”, showing responsibility, that one has a place in the world, and that there is a meaning in life can obviously be very rewarding. The individual aspects of spirituality...
are further enhanced by the sense of belonging to a far wider religious community that shares the same attitudes and modes of behavior. It is these supportive aspects that can make religiosity a source of security, dignity, respect, and esteem for oneself.

This, however, is not the whole story. There are also numerous negative aspects about being religious, although women who consider themselves religious tend to regard them as insignificant. For them, the rewards of being religious are much higher than the costs of it. Disadvantages of a religious orientation in life are more often mentioned by women who do not regard themselves as religious and do not practice their religion. Yet, there are also women who take considerable pride in having decided to lead a religious life “against all odds,” especially with regard to the behavior of others towards them.

When the women I interviewed were aware of negative sides of being religious, these were often downplayed. Other women, however, point to what they perceive as serious drawbacks of being religious. These are usually connected to the ways in which other people treat them as a result of their evident religious behavior, rather than to negative points in religious dogma.

The answers recorded here offer some insight into part of the motivation why leading a religious life is perceived as compelling by some women and not by others. Obviously, if a woman thinks the positive sides of being religious outweigh the drawbacks, if being religious helps her to feel better about herself and cope better with different problems, to be calmer and more self-confident, she will most likely turn towards religion. And if religiosity is viewed as highly restricting and negative, it is more likely that a person would choose a non-religious outlook on life. I would argue that a look into the positive and negative sides of being religious, *muʿmina* and/or *mutadayyina*, can enhance our understanding of why some women turn to religion while others do not.

Another point that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that retrospective reports about certain decisions in one’s life are often manufactured and sometimes slightly twist the “truth,” so that positive aspects might be over-glorified or negative aspects over-emphasised. By doing so, one’s decision appears in a more “logic” light to oneself and others. Despite all these reservations, I would argue that the young women I interviewed regarded a religious lifestyle for themselves and others as more rewarding than a life that does not heed religious norms and values.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Various assumptions and clichés about the religious beliefs and practices of women in Middle Eastern societies exist among members of those societies themselves as well as among various Western and non-Western scholars. There has been an increasing number of critical studies on the issues of women’s roles and positions in Middle Eastern societies, especially by feminist scholars (Kandiyoti, 1996; Macleod, 1991, Zuhur, 1992, among others). This article is a contribution to this growing body of literature that tries to point to the specificities of socio-cultural, economic, political, and individual circumstances, in which different groups of women live their lives and construct their religiosities. I was hoping to show how a very specific group of Jordanian women—young, highly educated, middle class, Muslim and Christian Orthodox—creates particular kinds of religious or non-religious life-styles, depending on the circumstances. The common political, historical, economic, and socio-cultural background of Jordanian society, in which they grew up and live helped to shape their religious outlook as did their individual upbringing, the situation of their families, and their personalities.

It should have become clearer how these young women perceive and live their religiosity or non-religiosity against the backdrop of the increased significance of Islamist discourses in their society, how they react and adapt their own religious behavior to an increasingly Islamised environment. This trend towards a growing emphasis on Islamic norms and values in the wider social environment is not specific to Jordan, but can be observed in many other Middle Eastern societies as well. For historical reasons there might be slight differences between, for example, Jordan and Egypt with regard to the exact extents of this tendency, yet the overall picture seems very similar. However, the ways in which people of various socio-economic backgrounds react to these developments varies greatly.

This article illustrates some of the strategies a very specific group of women in Jordan employs in order to engage with religion. I have questioned the often-quoted assumption that women in general have become more religious recently, and found that the women I interviewed have not radically altered their religious outlook, but rather built on the fundamentals laid out mainly by their families during their childhood. I have found hardly any evidence for radical and sudden conversions. Thus, the assertion that women have “all of a sudden” become more religious needs to be qualified and
considered against the background of their individual life-stories and certain developments in society as a whole.

Furthermore, I intended to demonstrate that despite the fact that much Islamic as well as Christian Orthodox dogma and ceremonial life is discriminatory against women, many of the women I interviewed interpret their religion as a way to actually empower them and help them to cope with some of the intricacies of life, especially in times of rapid social, political, and economic changes. This holds true for both the Christian and the Muslim women I interviewed, and, consequently, in the last part of this article I stressed that the widely-held assumption that Christian women in Jordan differ enormously in their religious behavior and worldviews from Muslim young women can not be supported by the results of my research. In their views about individual religiosity and in the construction of their life-styles (religious or non-religious) there are far more commonalities than differences, possibly the most notable (and most noticeable, but also most superficial) exception being dress codes.

In order to get a fuller picture of the various kinds of religiosity of women (and men) not only in Jordan, but also in the Middle East as a whole, and also other regions of the world, it is crucial that specificities of different groups of people are taken into account and compared. Further research on the religious beliefs and practices of women in rural areas, of older women, or of lower class women, to name but a few possibilities, would help to complete the mosaic, of which this study is only one piece.

ENDNOTES

1. Julia Droeber is a lecturer of Social Anthropologist and Sociology at the American University-Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; her research is based on a 2-year stay in Jordan (1997–1999).

2. The thesis deals with “Religion and Coping Strategies in the Lives of Young Women in Jordan,” the present article is part of this larger project on young, middle class, highly educated Muslim and Christian women’s religious and non-religious coping strategies in their everyday lives.

3. Cloak or overcoat, usually part of what is referred to as “Islamic dress” (az-zayy al-islaami), a fairly recent phenomenon.

4. Headscarf of various shapes worn by many Muslim women for a plethora of reasons; popular opinion usually holds that the “veil” expresses belonging to a religious community and that this has its basis in religious texts such as the Qur’an and the tradition of the prophet Muhammad (sunna), although this is factually not the case, as there are no direct references to scarves in the scriptures.

5. Frequently, the young women I talked with were eager to practice foreign languages and to demonstrate how well educated they were. Conversations would then for some time take place in the following manner: I would ask/answer in Arabic, they replied in English, German, or French, respectively, until we agreed on one language.

6. Unfortunately, there is no statistical data available so far on the frequency of conversions or radical turns towards or away from religion in Jordan. I personally learned of some cases, but they do not constitute a majority in religious development of individuals.


8. I am aware of the fact that there is no institutionalized “clergy” in Muslim communities as is the case in Christian Churches. However, there are certain official functions related to the transmission of religious knowledge and the leading role in religious ceremonies that are usually exercised by distinguished members of the community. For lack of a better term, I include the persons who exercise these functions in the notion of “clergy”.

9. The link between church attendance, prayer, and overall religiosity of individuals is generally and sweepingly established in studies of Western psychology of religion (for an overview see Muuss, 1996). That this is grossly misleading in the case of Jordanian women shall be shown here.

10. In my questions I did not specify the number of prayers that made up “regular” or “occasional” prayer, it was open to interpretation. I wanted to differentiate between a certain regular pattern of praying, on the one hand, and a prayer only in certain situations, on the other. This means that the answers indicate that nearly all of the women pray at certain points and that prayer is considered a significant part of their religiosity. Muslim women seem to follow a more regular pattern though.

11. Although there is a differentiation between du’a (personal appeal, invocation addressed to God) and salaat (ritual and liturgical prayer that is to be “performed”) in Muslim prayer, the latter occurs more frequently and is more highly valued theologically with efficiency depending on perfect performance. Cf. sîra 41:49ff.; 14:39f.; 19:48; 3:38; 13:14; 25:77; 19:40, among others; also Ibn Taymiyya, Fatâwa, Cairo 1326, I, 197.

12. See, for instance, abu’nauen, the “Lord’s Prayer”, or invocations of the Virgin Mary; although such prayers lack the element of physical performance typical for the Muslim salaat, Arab Christians use the same terms as Muslims—salaat, byisalliy—to denote their prayers.

13. This excludes foreigners, who are nevertheless advised not to eat, drink, or smoke in public during Ramadan.

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