Eine Neubewertung der islamischen feministischen Bewegung und des Prinzips der Toleranz: Eine Fallstudie zur ägyptischen Gesellschaft

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Zusammenfassung:

Der islamische Feminismus ist eine progressive Bewegung, die darauf abzielt, die Rechte von Frauen in islamischen Gesellschaften zu sichern, indem religiöse Lehren neu interpretiert werden, um traditionelle Werte mit zeitgenössischen Idealen von Gerechtigkeit und Gleichheit in Einklang zu bringen. Im Mittelpunkt dieser Bewegung steht das Prinzip der Toleranz, ein zentraler Aspekt des Pluralismus, der ein friedliches Zusammenleben unterschiedlicher intellektueller Strömungen ermöglicht, insbesondere im soziopolitischen Kontext Ägyptens. Diese Studie untersucht die Beziehung zwischen islamischem Feminismus und Toleranz, mit Schwerpunkt auf deren sozialen und politischen Dimensionen. Mit der Methode der „Kettenanalyse und Theorie" identifiziert die Forschung konzeptionelle Verbindungen und diskursive Verschiebungen, die die Entwicklung der Gedankenwelt des islamischen Feminismus prägen. Diese Methode beleuchtet das Zusammenspiel und die Auseinandersetzung von Ideen zwischen islamischem Feminismus und anderen ideologischen Bewegungen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Betonung der Toleranz im islamischen Feminismus den interkulturellen und intersubjektiven Dialog gefördert und ideologische Verbindungen zwischen säkularen und religiösen Strömungen geschaffen hat. Diese Interaktion hat die intellektuelle Landschaft bereichert und die Fähigkeit zu reformistischen Initiativen innerhalb islamischer Kontexte gestärkt. Durch die Förderung neuer Wege für Dialog und kritischen Diskurs hat der islamische Feminismus den Vorstoß für Geschlechtergerechtigkeit intensiviert und umfassendere strukturelle Reformen innerhalb pluralistischer Gesellschaften ermöglicht. Die Integration von Toleranz als Kernprinzip hat Chancen für ein breiteres Engagement zwischen unterschiedlichen diskursiven Traditionen geschaffen und das reformistische Potenzial des islamischen Feminismus gestärkt. Letztendlich positioniert dieser Ansatz den islamischen Feminismus als transformative Kraft, die zur umfassenderen Agenda des sozialen und intellektuellen Wandels in multikulturellen Umfeldern beiträgt.

Schlagwörter: Feminismus, Islamischer Feminismus, Geschlechtergerechtigkeit, Pluralismus, Toleranz

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A Reappraisal of the Islamic Feminist Movement and the Principle of Tolerance: A Case Study of Egyptian Society

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Abstract

Islamic feminism is a progressive movement aimed at securing women's rights in Islamic societies through the reinterpretation of religious teachings to align traditional values with contemporary ideals of justice and equality. Central to this movement is the principle of tolerance, a key aspect of pluralism, which enables peaceful coexistence among diverse intellectual currents, particularly within Egypt's socio-political context. This study investigates the relationship between Islamic feminism and tolerance, focusing on their social and political dimensions. Using the "chain method and Theory" the research identifies conceptual connections and discursive shifts that shape the evolution of Islamic feminism's thought. This method highlights the interplay and contestation of ideas between Islamic feminism and other ideological movements. The findings reveal that Islamic feminism's emphasis on tolerance has facilitated cross-cultural and intersubjective dialogues, creating ideological linkages between secular and religious currents. This interaction has enriched the intellectual landscape and enhanced the capacity for reformist initiatives within Islamic contexts. By fostering new pathways for dialogue and critical discourse, Islamic feminism has strengthened the push for gender justice, enabling broader structural reform within pluralistic societies. The integration of tolerance as a core principle has generated opportunities for greater engagement between diverse discursive traditions, boosting the reformist potential of Islamic feminism. Ultimately, this approach positions Islamic feminism as a transformative force, contributing to the larger agenda of social and intellectual change within multicultural environments.

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Introduction

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed profound transformations across social, political, and cultural spheres. During this period, Egypt emerged as a pivotal center of change within the Arab world, serving as fertile ground for large-scale and influential movements. The 1919 Egyptian Revolution represents a critical juncture in the history of anti-colonial struggles. This revolution not only established the foundation for national resistance against British colonial rule but also contributed to the development of new paradigms of resistance, wherein the roles of both the general populace and social elites became distinctly prominent. Egyptian women, who had long been constrained by restrictive traditions and colonial power structures, gradually assumed a more active role in social and political struggles. The women's movement emerged as a pivotal social force during this period, manifesting in two distinct trajectories: The first trajectory was embedded within the nationalist movement, which sought to resist colonial domination. Colonial rule not only exerted control over the political and military spheres of society but also reinforced gender-based discrimination by influencing social structures. In response, women stood alongside men in the struggle for political and social independence, playing a pivotal role in advancing nationalist objectives through active participation in demonstrations, protests, and social activism. The second trajectory of this movement focused on combating patriarchy and gender discrimination, which were deeply ingrained in social, political, and even nationalist frameworks. This was especially evident within the Wafd Party, a prominent anti-colonial movement that, despite its central role in the struggle for independence, remained influenced by patriarchal structures in its decision-making and policy formulation. Although the party utilized women's participation in the anti-colonial struggle, it resisted incorporating women into its political structures after gaining power, effectively marginalizing them from key positions. These contradictory actions prompted Egyptian women activists to connect nationalism with broader concepts such as gender justice, tolerance and solidarity. In their pursuit of a deeper impact on social change, they gradually expanded their focus, progressing beyond initial demands for fundamental rights like the right to vote and the right to education. As their intellectual and academic development advanced, they increasingly addressed more comprehensive issues, including the promotion

of peace both regionally and globally, as well as the reinforcement of a culture of tolerance and social justice. This article explores the intellectual evolution of the Islamic feminism movement in Egypt over the course of a century. The primary objective of this research is to address the question of how the Islamic feminism movement in Egypt conceptualizes tolerance as a key principle of pluralism within society and the strategies it employs to advance this goal.

Method and Theoretical Framework

This article adopts the chain theory and method on current reasearch to conduct a historical analysis and reassess key events and critical turning points that have shaped the formation and evolution of the feminist movement in Egypt. It further identifies the major initiatives and strategies employed by feminist activists to promote their objectives in the realms of peace and social equality. By examining these struggles and analyzing the role of the Islamic feminist movement in fostering a discourse centered on justice and peace, the study underscores the movement's significant influence on transforming cultural and political perspectives within Egyptian society. (Alikhani, 2024, pp. 93-101)

The chain theory on current research is utilized as the analytical framework for this study. This theory facilitates the study, analysis, and understanding of human and social movements, tracking their evolution from their inception to the point of investigation. This theory provides an analytical framework for examining fundamental concepts, including current spaces, origins, intrinsic and extrinsic elements, actors, sub-currents, identity, and current indicators, without imposing value judgments. Movements are conceptualized as dynamic and fluid systems characterized by their causes of emergence, impacts, consequences, and patterns of interaction or conflict. These movements can be categorized as local, national, regional, or global in scope. Movements are categorized into intellectual, field-based, and theoretical-practical types, according to their identity, approach, and objectives. Their analysis is conducted through various patterns, including continuity, transformation, and metamorphosis. Employing this theory within the framework of current studies, and in adherence to established research standards, facilitates a comprehensive description and analysis of movements, as well as their interactions and relationships with other

movements. (Alikhani, 2024, pp. 25-27) The Islamic feminism movement comprises a collective of scholars, writers, and activists who operate within academic, political, social, and cultural spheres to advocate for the rights of Muslim women. The movement seeks to promote gender equality, social justice, and the realization of women's rights, grounded in Islamic principles and frameworks. Islamic feminists draw on the Quran, Hadith, and the lives of prominent women in Islamic history to substantiate egalitarian ideals and to critique patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. This discourse developed as a response to two distinct paradigms: first, the orientalist discourse of certain Western feminists who critique Islam based on the status of women in Muslim-majority countries, and second, the discourse of political Islamic fundamentalism, which reinforces patriarchal structures under the guise of religious authority. (Sirri, 2021, p. 3)

The Islamic Feminism Movement: Foundations and History

1. The Foundations of the Islamic Feminism Movement

Margot Badran contends that Islamic feminism, by transcending the traditional dichotomy between religion and secularism, as well as between East and West, aims to bridge the divides between these two discourses while emphasizing principles of gender equality and social justice. Islamic feminist discourse draws on classical Islamic methodologies and social science tools to advance and expand egalitarian ideals. As a broad and diverse ideological framework, Islamic feminism shares discursive similarities with other forms of feminism, yet it maintains its own distinct worldview, intellectual foundations, religious principles, and perspectives, which shape its core beliefs and, in turn, define and give identity to the movement. (Alikhani, 2024, p. 125)

Ontological Basis: Islamic feminism emphasizes individual agency and upholds women's right to establish a direct relationship with God, free from the mediation of human or spiritual intermediaries. It draws on the principles of monotheism (tawhid), equality, and justice to frame its ontological foundations. Rawani characterizes Islamic feminism as a neo-Mu'tazilite movement, positioning religion as a source of reason and knowledge. Through a monotheistic lens, Islamic feminism advances a reinterpretation of the Quran that is both innovative and liberatory. This perspective portrays the divine essence as a representation of gender justice and firmly rejects the

attribution of gender to the divine being. (Sirri, 2021, p. 18) Barlas identifies monotheism (tawhid), justice, and the oneness of God as the foundational principles for liberatory interpretations of the Quran. She conceptualizes God as transcending gender constructs and wholly devoid of misogynistic attributes. (Barlas, 2002, pp. 13-15) Islamic feminism regards justice, equality, and human dignity as fundamental concepts derived from the Quran. It posits that gender hierarchies are inherently incompatible with the principle of divine oneness (tawhid) and the notion of equality within the order of creation. (Wadud, 1999, pp. 25-30)

Epistemological Basis: Islamic feminism constructs an epistemological framework for gender justice, integrating reason, faith, and justice in the process of knowledge production. Proponents of this movement advocate for independent reasoning (ijtihad) and critical analysis of Islamic texts, moving beyond the interpretations and rulings (fatwas) of male jurists. They emphasize a return to primary sources and the application of rational analysis to address gender-related issues. By challenging patriarchal interpretations of the Quran (Barlas, 2002, p. 19), Islamic feminists argue that the comprehension of sacred texts is not inherently tied to gender. (Sirri, 2021, p. 21) They identify intellectual competence as the foundational basis for gender equality and argue that the exclusion of women from religious scholarship has led to the misinterpretation of Islamic teachings on gender.

Methodological Basis: The methodology of Islamic feminism in reinterpreting religious texts and challenging patriarchy within an Islamic framework is grounded in hermeneutic and ijtihad approaches. Islamic feminists, through ijtihad, reexamine Islamic laws and ethics to address contemporary issues, with a particular focus on gender justice. They argue that the interpretation of Islamic texts must be situated within the historical, linguistic, and cultural contexts of a given society. (Sirri, 2021, pp. 43-44) They are also influenced by intersectional feminist approaches, which view gender, race, class, ethnicity, and religion as interconnected categories in the analysis of multiple identities. (Dalaman, 2021, p. 83) Additionally, postcolonial frameworks and critiques of Western cultural colonialism are integrated into feminist analyses grounded in Islam. By employing these methodologies, they offer a comprehensive framework for reinterpreting religious texts and challenging patriarchy, ultimately aiming to construct a

more inclusive and nuanced narrative of women's rights. (Ahmed, 1992, pp. 301-303)

Sociological Basis: Kumari Jayawardena conceptualizes the interaction between European and non-European cultures as a dialectical result of imperialist expansion. She asserts that this process was reciprocal, wherein Asian and African societies not only embraced Western values such as liberalism and parliamentary democracy but also engaged in reforms of their internal social and political structures. Within this context, nationalists sought to reinforce national identity by reinterpreting cultural and religious traditions. In colonized societies such as Egypt, feminism emerged in a distinctly nationalist form. (Jayawardena, 2016, p. 26) Feminist figures such as Huda Sha'arawi engaged with both Western feminists and domestic political elites. Since the late 1980s, Muslim feminists have redirected the discourse to prioritize justice, expanding their focus beyond gender-specific issues. They have actively participated in social movements and employed legal frameworks to advocate for the reform of laws to advance women's rights, securing significant concessions from the government. (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p. 3) The power dynamics between feminists, the state, and Islamist movements are characterized by an imbalance. The state employs legal instruments to assert its authority, whereas Islamist groups leverage social norm-setting to restrict women's roles. Despite these challenges, Egyptian feminists do not adopt passive roles; rather, they actively participate in negotiation processes. By employing strategies akin to those of secular feminists, they aim to redefine power relations and remain engaged in the social and political spheres. (Karam, 1998, p. 25)

Theological Foundations: Islamic feminism generally embraces an intersectional approach to various issues, including religion. In the Egyptian context, feminism is neither anti-religious nor a mere imitation of Western models; instead, it represents an indigenous and independent movement dedicated to the emancipation of women. Even early feminist movements, despite their liberal orientation, were not in direct opposition to Islam, often leveraging Islamic modernism to legitimize their objectives. Secular feminist movements, although not subscribing to religious discourse, maintain a respectful acknowledgment of the religious identity of society. (Arenfeldt & Al-Hassan Golley, 2012, p. 45) The Islamic feminist movement upholds religious diversity and ensures that religion does not become a source of

division. (Badran, 1995, pp. 95-96) Islamic traditionalists, such as Zainab Al-Ghazali and Safinaz Kazem, have emphasized the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers, valuing these positions as essential to social stability. In contrast, the modernist feminist movement aspires to goals that extend beyond the confines of family roles, advocating for an Islamic state and gender equality grounded in a progressive interpretation of Islamic teachings. Within this framework, the Islamic feminist movement seeks to develop a discourse on women and gender that upholds gender equality and social justice, drawing on an egalitarian reading of Islam within an Islamic paradigm. This movement conceptualizes its feminist commitments as an organic process aimed at fostering a dynamic understanding and practical application of Islamic justice rooted in virtue ethics, thereby offering a reimagined interpretation of religion. (Sirri, 2021, pp. 36-37)

Axiological Basis: Islamic feminism aims to harmonize feminist principles with Islamic teachings, grounding its approach in core values such as justice, equality, human dignity, women's agency, and interpretive pluralism. This framework draws upon the Quran and the Prophetic tradition (Sunnah) as foundational sources. Central to Islamic feminism is the emphasis on Quranic justice as a universal right, rejecting any interpretation that perpetuates injustice as fundamentally misaligned with Islamic principles. (Wadud, 1999, p. 63) The discourse of islamic feminist movement frames gender equality within the concept of equality before God. It critiques patriarchal interpretations of Islam as detrimental to human dignity and, by rejecting such interpretations, affirms women's agency. The movement asserts that Islamic principles do not hinder this agency but instead support it. By advocating for interpretive pluralism, it promotes the legitimacy of diverse readings of the Quran. This recognition of plurality sustains the dynamism of Islamic teachings, broadens the discursive framework for women's rights, and reflects a commitment to tolerance and democratic principles. (Barlas, 2002, p. 56)

Political Basis: The Islamic feminist movement takes a critical and reformist stance toward political systems, particularly within Islamic countries. While one of the consequences of Islamist movements and repressive policies in the Middle East has been the politicization of gender, women's activism holds the potential to challenge and dismantle this established order. (Moghadam, 1993, pp. 169-170) Islamic feminism, with the goal of establishing a just

Islamic society and state, underscores the importance of women's active participation in political processes. The movement views equal involvement of women in decision-making as crucial for the implementation of equitable policies. Additionally, Islamic feminism serves as a response to Western colonial dominance, actively resisting colonial cultural forces. It aims to redefine indigenous identities and challenge the influence of Western ideologies within Islamic societies. Saadia Sheikh examines the tension between Muslim feminist commitments and gendered interpretations of Islam, offering a critique of neocolonial discourses concerning Muslim women. (Sirri, 2021, p. 24) From the perspective of Islamic feminists, patriarchy is not rooted in religion but is also intricately tied to political power structures. They conceptualize patriarchy as a product of power-driven interventions and, akin to secular feminists, argue that the struggle for gender justice transcends cultural, religious, or individual concerns, positioning it as a resistance against the political dominance of men. (Sirri, 2021, p. 3)

Proponents of the Islamic feminist movement challenge Western misconceptions that depict Islam as an inherently repressive religion. They aim to contextualize gender identity within a broader framework that includes religion, culture, ethnicity, and class. In doing so, the movement expands its focus beyond women as the sole target group, promoting engagement with both traditional and modernist factions within society. Amina Wadud, in her scholarly work, seeks to harmonize Islamic feminist legal discourse with the dynamics of globalizing movements. (Wadud, 1999, p. 13) Islamic feminism, rooted in faith and the belief in the Quran's universal ethic of egalitarianism, seeks to challenge the power dynamics that have historically enabled men to hold and sustain absolute power within Muslim societies. Asma Barlas conceptualizes the interpretation of religious texts as a process aimed at "totalizing" meaning. By rejecting traditional Islamic perspectives and offering a feminist reading of the Quran, she advocates for the recognition of moral agency and completeness, irrespective of gender, and works to promote the principle of equality. (Sirri, 2021, p. 5)

2. History of Islamic Feminism in Egypt

The emergence of the feminist movement in 20th-century Egypt can be traced to the growing gender awareness among upper-class women in the 19th

century, alongside the gradual transformation of traditional cultural norms. This culture was characterized by the isolation of women, patriarchal control over families, and the unrestricted agency of men. It was increasingly challenged by the rise of reformist thought and exposure to Western civilization. Key figures in this reform movement included Muslim intellectuals such as Rifa'a at-Tahtawi, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Qasim Amin, who played pivotal roles in advocating for social and cultural change. At-Tahtawi emphasized the critical importance of women's education and their role in societal advancement, viewing the oppression of women as indicative of societal ignorance. Muhammad Abduh, with a bold and progressive stance, addressed issues of gender equality, particularly in marriage and divorce. Qasim Amin, through his seminal works "The Liberation of Women" and "The New Woman", advocated for the empowerment of women and the dismantling of their social isolation. He attributed the restrictions placed on women to the legacy of Ottoman rule and an authoritarian cultural framework. These reformist perspectives faced significant opposition from conservatives and even some nationalist liberals. The liberal movement in Egypt argued that emphasizing women's rights would detract from political and national priorities. Leila Ahmed concurs with this critique, accusing Qasim Amin of aligning with colonial discourse and deeming his rhetoric as lacking authenticity. In contrast, Ahmed defends the feminist approach of Malak Hifni Nassef, who viewed the reform of family law and women's active participation in society as essential for social progress. (Ahmed, 1992, p. 179) Leila Ahmed and many Islamic feminists argue that Islamic identity is essential, and they work to present Islam as non-gendered and modern, countering the depiction of Islam in Qasim Amin's writings. Huda Sha'arawi was a prominent figure and advocate of the feminist movement in Egypt. She is recognized as the founder of intellectual, organizational, and political feminism in Egypt, serving as the movement's official representative. Often in opposition to nationalism, which had lost its priority, Sha'arawi navigated the complex intersection of politics and gender that marginalized the women's issue. Consequently, after the formation of the Egyptian Parliament in 1923 and the exclusion of women, Sha'arawi focused on advancing women's rights and social reforms by emphasizing indigenous culture, critiquing patriarchal interpretations, and engaging with the global feminist movement. Margot Badran describes feminism in colonized or semi-colonized countries like Egypt as "nationalist feminism,"

which, though often unconsciously, positions itself in opposition to the imperialist feminism of colonizing powers. (Badran, 1995, p. 21) Mohammad Yunus categorizes feminism in Egypt into three distinct phases: colonial, post-colonial, and modern. In the colonial phase, first-generation feminists primarily concentrated on issues such as girls' education, women's right to work, and the reduction of political and social restrictions on women. They subtly challenged patriarchal structures in ways that did not provoke significant societal backlash. Concurrently, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a transnational movement, which, while encouraging women's social participation, continued to emphasize traditional gender roles. In the post-colonial phase, following the 1952 revolution, Egyptian secular feminism adopted a more confrontational approach, addressing critical issues such as sexual violence, women's subjugation in marriage, and societal taboos like prostitution and female genital mutilation. Nawal El Saadawi, a prominent leader within this movement, boldly critiqued both tradition and patriarchy. In the modern phase, Egyptian feminism distanced itself from its previous confrontational approach and endeavored to reconcile women's rights concepts with Islamic values and Egyptian culture. This shift, coinciding with the global expansion of intersectional feminist discourse, sought to integrate human rights frameworks with Islamic principles. The movement aimed to uphold religious legitimacy, minimize conflicts with secular feminists, and, by focusing on national issues, foster broader societal acceptance of gender equality. (Younis, 2007)

Hala Kamal analyzes the development of feminism in Egypt within the broader context of global feminist movements, identifying its evolution through three distinct waves. The first wave coincided with the rise of nationalism and the struggle for independence, during which the Egyptian feminist movement advocated for the elimination of discrimination, equal educational opportunities, reforms to personal status laws, and the right to political representation in parliament. Although women's political rights were not fully realized during this period, significant progress was made with the securing of girls' access to public education. The second wave emerged with state-sponsored feminism under Nasser's regime, which, despite its support for women's rights, involved the suppression of independent feminist groups. During this era, Nawal El-Saadawi introduced a new feminist trajectory that sought social, economic, and cultural

revolution beyond the confines of Islamic frameworks. The third wave followed the assassination of Anwar Sadat, with Mubarak's administration attempting to implement protective laws for women's legal institutions, further shaping the feminist landscape in Egypt. During this period, three distinct feminist frameworks emerged, and women's committees were formed within political parties. Human rights initiatives, in collaboration with international organizations, expanded, and independent feminist research organizations were established. Despite facing political and legal constraints, these organizations persisted in their activities. The fourth wave of feminism emerged following the 2011 revolution, with a particular emphasis on addressing sexual harassment and assault. (Kamal, 2016, pp. 13-19) Feminist activists dismantled the culture of shame surrounding these issues, utilizing social media as a platform for women to share their experiences and promote awareness. (Cooke, 2016, p. 39) The aforementioned studies have not sufficiently examined the Islamization of Egyptian society following the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the 1970s, with the implementation of Anwar Sadat's Infitah policy, efforts were made to undermine Nasserist discourse. As part of this strategy, the government bolstered Islamist groups, which subsequently exerted significant influence on Egypt's social and cultural landscape in the following decades. Azza M. Karam identifies three primary feminist movements in Egypt: secular feminism, Muslim feminism, and Islamist feminism. In alignment with Margot Badran's perspective, these movements, despite their ideological differences, share the common goal of emphasizing the status of Egyptian women. Notably, they often refrain from using the term "feminism" due to its Western associations. According to Karam, secular feminism advocates for equality grounded in universal human rights principles and typically operates through human rights organizations. Muslim feminists, drawing on Islamic sources such as the Quran and Hadith, emphasize the equality of men and women while striving to reconcile religious teachings with human rights principles. They advocate for ijtihad (independent legal reasoning) and the reinterpretation of religious texts. In contrast, Islamist feminists prioritize Islam as the central framework of their ideology, asserting that women should not compete with men but instead seek to align gender roles. They support structural jihad aimed at Islamizing society. According to Karam, the principal differences among these three feminist strands lie in their approaches to politics, veiling, and strategies for combating oppression.

Despite these ideological variations, all three groups agree on the importance of women's participation in social and political responsibility. (Karam, 1998, pp. 12-13) Despite this categorization, Mulki Al-Sharmani rejects the classification of Islamic feminism, considering it a unified movement characterized by diverse research approaches and political, social, and cultural activities, all directed toward a common, specific objective. According to Al-Sharmani, Islamic feminism in Egypt is a scholarly-driven initiative pursued by a small group of intellectuals across different generations. The production of feminist knowledge, whether secular or Islamic, is an independent process that transcends intellectual and organizational categories. The differences among these feminist strands, she argues, stem from their varying interpretations of Islam and distinct methods of activism. (Al-Sharmani, 2016)

In Egypt, secular feminism has, with a few exceptions, remained closely connected to Islamic concepts. Secular feminists have strategically employed Islamic ideas to engage their audiences. The rise of Islamic influence in the 1970s, alongside the emergence of the Women's Mosque Movement, which sought to transform women's religious practices into public and social activities, provided a foundation for the development of Islamic feminism. The origins of Islamic feminism in Egypt can be traced to the efforts of Zaynab al-Ghazali, whose activism began in the 1940s and persisted until her death in 2005. As Saba Mahmood notes, the feminist movement initiated by Zaynab al-Ghazali had a profound impact, though it remained relatively obscure, even among activists within the Women's Mosque Movement. (Mahmood, 2005, p. 67) Zaynab al-Ghazali is considered a representative figure of traditional Islamic feminism. In this approach, the concept of serving God is central. While upholding traditional interpretations of Islamic texts, traditional Islamic feminism encourages women's social participation, yet confines it within the boundaries of their familial roles as wives, mothers, and daughters. For adherents of this perspective, da'wah (inviting others to Islam) is regarded as a personal responsibility, subordinated to the primary role of women within the family structure. (Mahmood, 2005, p. 179) This movement aims to establish a balance between women's private responsibilities and public roles without challenging religious norms or surpassing legal frameworks. In addition to the traditionalist faction, a more contemporary strand of Islamic feminism gained traction among the younger

generation of feminists. This approach utilizes interpretations of the Quran and Islamic history to promote women's rights, expand their social roles, and enhance their opportunities. Modern Islamic feminism, referred to by Zaynab Mir-Hosseini as "neo-traditionalist," seeks to reconcile modern values with Islamic principles. This movement, grounded in reason and ijtihad, advocates for the interpretation of Islamic texts with an emphasis on moderation and rationality. Mir-Hosseini contends that the social changes driven by secular education, which gained prominence in the 19th century, weakened the traditional framework of Islamic jurisprudence and created space for the emergence of new gender discourses. (Sirri, 2021, p. 21) This strand focuses on overcoming the constraints imposed on women and is influenced by Mu'tazilite thought in its approach to the interpretation of religious texts.

Feminism and Pluralism

Pluralism refers to the coexistence of diverse groups, beliefs, and practices within a society, underscoring the importance of accepting and respecting different identities, cultures, religions, and perspectives. It emphasizes the value of diversity and the necessity of fostering an environment where varied social groups can coexist in a peaceful and constructive manner. Rooted in a range of cultural and philosophical traditions, pluralism is recognized as a foundational principle for the development and sustenance of multicultural societies. Philosophical pluralism posits that there is no single, universal method for attaining truth. Instead, each form of knowledge operates within a specific conceptual, contextual, or cultural framework. This perspective encourages scientific paradigms to coexist with alternative paradigms, fostering a more inclusive and diverse understanding of knowledge. (Beall & Restall, 2000) Political pluralism, as a political philosophy, refers to the recognition and acceptance of diversity within society, allowing for the peaceful coexistence of various interests, beliefs, lifestyles, and identities. While pluralism is rooted in liberal thought and philosophically distinct from Islamic feminism, the two concepts converge at certain junctures. Both frameworks are grounded in the principle of respecting diversity and acknowledging difference as a fundamental aspect of social coexistence. Islamic feminism aims to advance women's rights within the framework of Islamic principles, while pluralism advocates for the peaceful coexistence of diverse social groups. Kimberlé Crenshaw, in her development of

intersectionality theory, emphasizes the significance of social identities, particularly those of marginalized communities. Although religion is not explicitly identified as a factor of intersectionality in Crenshaw's framework, Islamic feminists conceptualize feminism through the lens of the indigenous cultural context of Muslim women. They regard this approach as a critical dimension of feminist intersectionality, highlighting the interconnectedness of religion, gender, and cultural identity. (Dalaman, 2021, p. 83) Islamic feminism conceptualizes pluralism as the inclusive participation of Muslim women and men from all social strata. In his Tafsir al-Mizan, Tabatabai references the verse of Mubahala as a pertinent example of pluralism, highlighting that the Prophet Muhammad, in this context, selected a woman (Fatima, peace be upon her), two sons, and one man, each representing distinct social groups. This selection serves as a symbol of pluralism within the Islamic community, underscoring the significance of diverse participation in both religious and social spheres. (Dhala, 2024, pp. 42-43)

Tolerance is a core principle of pluralism and holds significant importance within Islamic feminism as well. Islamic feminism is grounded in the values of tolerance and respect for others, in alignment with Islamic principles. However, this approach has been subject to criticism, particularly from traditional and conservative Islamic scholars. They argue that Islamic feminism's incorporation of modern philosophies compromises the integrity of sacred texts, as it introduces secular and modern ideologies, which they believe undermines traditional Islamic practices. Consequently, they view this blending of modernity with religious teachings as a form of religious innovation (bid'ah). (Hijab, 1998, p. 49) Gender equality can be a common objective for both ideologies. In societies that acknowledge diversity, achieving gender equality is a fundamental principle; however, pluralism envisions equality on a broader scale than Islamic feminism. Within this context, Amina Wadud emphasizes Islam's intellectual heritage, which spans over fourteen centuries, aiming to reformulate Islamic discourse by shifting it away from its male-centric framework and interpreting it through a pluralistic lens. The Islamic feminist movement in Egypt began to articulate its discourse in the late 1980s, redirecting its focus from solely gender issues to broader social justice concerns, while also engaging in discussions around concepts of cultural authenticity and integrity. (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p. 3) The alignment between pluralism and Islamic feminism necessitates an

understanding of the shared principles of inclusion, justice, and respect for diversity within both ideologies. Pluralism denotes the recognition and acceptance of diversity across races, languages, ideas, and religions, while Islamic feminism is a movement dedicated to achieving justice for women in various domains, ensuring their public participation, and adhering to Islamic principles. The concept of tolerance within feminism intersects with pluralist discourse, particularly through its commitment to equity and the acceptance of diverse perspectives.

The existence of multiple jurisprudential schools within Islam, the adaptability of feminist thought, and its application of modern ijtihad principles, which integrate Sharia with contemporary social changes, underscore the pluralistic character of Islamic feminism. Additionally, the movement's advocacy for women's active participation in political decision-making further exemplifies its alignment with pluralism. To understand the concept of tolerance within Islamic feminism, it is crucial to examine both the internal and external networks that shape it. The internal networks of the Islamic feminist movement encompass thinkers, intellectual traditions, and movements in Egypt that are closely associated with Islamic feminism. These networks are connected through shared meanings, structural affiliations, or mutual support, or they influence and are influenced by the movement in various ways. (Alikhani, 2024, p. 143) In this context, Islamic feminism is interlinked with secular feminism, nationalist movements, and Islamist groups. Secular feminism emphasizes gender equality and women's rights, with the goal of dismantling patriarchy, religious extremism, and neoliberal exploitation—objectives shared by both feminist movements in Egypt. However, these two movements diverge in their approach to Islam. Secular feminism treats religion as a private matter, while Islamic feminism regards it as a public concern. (Karam, 1998, p. 9) Islamic feminism is also interconnected with the nationalist movement, where nationalist feminism has historically played a role in anti-colonial and independence struggles. Within this context, nationalist women often adopted more radical positions than their male counterparts. While the masculine nationalist discourse predominantly emphasized political competition, nationalist feminism sought to promote and reinforce its own distinct feminine ideals. (Badran, 1995, p. 13) The shared approach of various feminist movements to social issues became particularly evident in 1952, following the violence at the Suez

Canal. During this period, Islamist Zaynab al-Ghazali and leftist Angie Aflaṭoun jointly organized the Women's Committee for Popular Resistance. Despite their divergent political ideologies, both women participated together in public demonstrations, setting aside their political differences in pursuit of a common cause. (Badran, 1995, p. 248) The external network of connections encompasses ideas and thinkers that have originated outside of Egypt's cultural sphere. Islamic feminism has drawn upon these ideas, utilizing their theoretical frameworks to advance its discourse. Similar to the internal networks, these external theories have played a significant role in reinforcing the foundational principles of Islamic feminism and broadening its intellectual scope. (Alikhani, 2024, p. 143) The external networks of Islamic feminism encompass international feminist movements, as well as regional and global organizations. Islamic feminism has notably drawn inspiration from global feminist concepts. However, this inspiration does not imply full acceptance. Zaynab al-Ghazali, a prominent member of the Egyptian Feminist Union, acknowledged the influences of secular and global feminism but considered them incompatible with her Islamic identity. Along with other modernist leaders within Islamic feminism, she analyzes women's rights within the parameters of Islamic principles. (Karam, 1998, pp. 217-230) In this respect, Islamic feminism diverges from secular feminism, while still drawing upon its core concepts. Islamic feminism also engages with global organizations, such as the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, capitalizing on international platforms to advocate for its perspectives and challenge Western feminist narratives that depict Islam as repressive. This approach is notably reflected in international frameworks, such as the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," where Islamic feminists seek to offer alternative viewpoints that are congruent with Islamic principles.

Feminism and Tolerance

Departing from traditional feminism, two prominent figures in modern Islamic feminism, Omaima Abou-Bakr and Heba Raouf Ezzat, emphasize the importance of discursive plurality. Abou-Bakr's scholarship is founded on the notion that secular feminism can function as a potent counter-narrative to patriarchal interpretations of Islam. She identifies the root of societal challenges concerning women's rights in the patriarchal exegesis of the Quran and Hadith, shaped by Egypt's historical and cultural context. Abou-

Bakr contends that Islamic texts and sources are inherently grounded in egalitarian principles, offering a framework for gender justice within an Islamic paradigm. (Abou-Bakr, 2013, p. 4) She argues that patriarchal structures have historically exerted dominance over Islamic knowledge and practice, resulting in the marginalization of women and the distortion of Islamic teachings to legitimize inequality. Her scholarly endeavors aim to critically challenge these patriarchal interpretations and to reclaim the authentic, egalitarian essence of Islamic teachings. (Al-Sharmani, 2016) In this regard, Heba Raouf aligns with a similar perspective, advocating for a liberal approach to women's broad participation in political affairs, rather than limiting them to traditional roles. While she considers radical feminism to be divisive and rooted in Western ideology, she supports an Islamic liberation movement that seeks social change for both genders and addresses gender-based oppression. Heba Raouf Ezzat defends the active participation of women in political and public spheres, contending that Islamic principles affirm women's status as full citizens with the right to engage in political discourse. (Ezzat, 2007) In this context, her perspective aligns with secular feminism. Consistent with this stance, she resigned from the advisory council of President Morsi in Egypt to protest against the authoritarian policies of certain members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus, despite the absence of a unified language or coherence among various discourses in Egypt, Islamic feminism—particularly this conciliatory approach—can be situated within a semiotic framework alongside human rights and secular feminist discourses. Based on a rhizomatic philosophy, it can generate diverse meanings centered around a key sign (tolerance), overlapping at certain junctures, while concurrently evolving along distinct trajectories. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 7) Simultaneously, secular feminism strives to engage with Islamists through a framework of tolerance, acknowledging Islamic interpretations as a closely related group. The divergence between these two perspectives can be traced, in part, to their differing approaches to religion. Despite the complex and often contentious relationship between feminist discourse— including its Islamic variant—and religion within the broader Islamic discourse of Egyptian society, Islamic feminism embraces the religious framework as a means of alleviating social tensions. It seeks to employ Islamic methodologies and traditional indigenous reasoning to foster mutual understanding with Islamists and non-Islamist traditionalists alike. (Mahmood, 2005, p. 25) They strive to avoid conflict with opposing

discourses by locating the roots of their liberatory and egalitarian ideals within their own cultural context, while simultaneously rejecting foreign ideologies.

However, the concept of tolerance within Islamic feminism may diverge significantly from the approaches observed in both Islamic and non-Islamic states. In non-Muslim countries, tolerance often retains gendered dimensions, particularly favoring masculine perspectives. In many instances, Western governments engage in a form of tolerance toward fundamentalist Muslim men, primarily to maintain diplomatic relations with Muslim communities. This form of tolerance is frequently framed as a strategy to prevent the escalation of social tensions and preserve stability. In such contexts, governmental policies tend to prioritize the demands of fundamentalist Muslim men, often at the expense of addressing the rights and needs of women. (Rahnama, 2023, pp. 141-142) As we transition from the level of power to lower societal strata, the concept of tolerance undergoes a transformation. It has been argued that selfishness, indifference, and the acceptance of the degradation of Islamic customs contribute to the regression of Muslim communities. In this context, Muslim feminist women endeavor to highlight the importance of education, in contrast to traditionalist male perspectives, and seek to expand the scope of tolerance from the familial sphere to broader societal levels. (Rahnama, 2023, p. 97) They endeavor to apply the concept of tolerance with groups that, while sharing cultural and social similarities, exhibit notable intellectual and philosophical differences. This approach seeks to foster tolerance and mutual understanding across various social strata, particularly in the face of perspectives that may challenge traditional or patriarchal ideologies. Consequently, Islamic feminism underscores that Sharia serves as a guiding framework for navigating the path of peace, while Islam is conceived as a comprehensive way of life. (Haqqani, 2024, p. 64)

Conclusion

The analysis of Islamic feminism through the lens of chain theory offers a robust and comprehensive framework for examining the complexities, historical development, and pivotal turning points of this movement. Islamic feminism, as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, draws on its religious and cultural foundations to harmonize the principles of Islamic

justice and equality with global human rights norms. Grounded in the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, as well as in the critical analysis of the social and historical contexts of Islamic societies, this movement seeks to provide reinterpretations of religious texts that are attuned to the demands of contemporary life. Chain theory, with its emphasis on internal and external dynamics, origins, subcurrents, and the identity of movements, serves as a precise analytical tool for understanding the evolution and influence of Islamic feminism. Within this theoretical framework, the movement can be categorized into three interconnected dimensions: intellectual, field-based, and theoretical-practical, which collectively trace its progression through patterns of continuity, transformation, and metamorphosis.

A defining feature of Islamic feminism is its capacity to preserve a strong connection to religious traditions while simultaneously engaging in the critical reinterpretation of traditional exegeses. This movement underscores the enduring relevance of concepts such as justice and equality, utilizing innovative interpretive methodologies to enhance the status of women within Islamic contexts. By advancing gender equality in a manner that respects and incorporates the cultural and religious values of Islamic communities, Islamic feminism demonstrates a unique adaptability. Its ability to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity positions it as a transformative movement with the potential to effectively address the challenges of contemporary society. The interactions of Islamic feminism with other discourses and social movements exemplify its pluralistic and rhizomatic approach. Islamic feminism, by embracing religious and cultural diversity, fosters a conducive environment for interdisciplinary and intercultural engagement. Unlike certain feminist movements that adopt an oppositional stance toward religion, Islamic feminism emphasizes principles of dialogue, tolerance, and convergence. This orientation enables meaningful collaboration with diverse groups, including traditionalist Islamists and secular feminists, while establishing a platform for intellectual exchange and the formation of strategic alliances.

The evolution of Islamic feminism, as reflected in its interaction patterns, is a testament to its dynamic adaptability. Initially focused on the reinterpretation of religious texts, the movement gradually expanded to serve as a catalyst for social and legal reforms within Islamic societies. This transformation underscores the movement's inherent flexibility and its

ability to respond effectively to evolving social and political challenges. In the context of Egypt, the historical trajectory of Islamic feminism vividly demonstrates its significant role in reshaping public perceptions and influencing policy frameworks related to women's rights, highlighting its transformative impact on societal structures. Islamic feminism, as represents a movement that adeptly negotiates the dynamics of modernity while maintaining its cultural and religious foundations. By incorporating diverse interpretations and employing multifaceted approaches, it emerges as a robust model for advancing gender equity and social justice. A critical analysis of this movement underscores its inherent complexities, dynamism, and adaptability to shifting social and political landscapes. Islamic feminism further provides a distinctive framework for fostering interaction between secular and religious discourses. Serving as a bridge between diverse intellectual and cultural traditions, it assumes a vital role in the promotion of human rights, the advancement of social justice, and the reinforcement of universal human values within a global context. Through its emphasis on dialogue, tolerance, and interdisciplinary collaboration, Islamic feminism has pioneered innovative pathways for social and political reform, solidifying its position as a transformative and inspiring paradigm for other social and intellectual movements.

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چکیده:

فمینیسم اسلامی به‌عنوان یک جریان فکری پویا، می‌کوشد با بازخوانی آموزه‌های دینی، بستری برای احقاق حقوق زنان در جوامع اسلامی فراهم کند. این جریان، با پذیرش اصل رواداری که یکی از ارکان بنیادین پلورالیسم است، نقش مهمی در ایجاد همزیستی مسالمت‌آمیز میان گفتمان‌های مختلف در جامعه مصر ایفا می‌کند. مقاله حاضر با هدف بررسی رابطه میان فمینیسم اسلامی و اصل رواداری اجتماعی و سیاسی، به این پرسش پاسخ می‌دهد که چگونه فمینیسم اسلامی توانسته است از طریق پذیرش این اصل، گفتمان خود را در جامعه گسترش داده و نقشی مؤثر در میان سایر جریان‌های فکری ایفا کند. برای نگارش این مقاله، از روش زنجیره‌ای در جریان‌پژوهی استفاده شده است؛ روشی که امکان شناسایی پیوستگی‌ها و گسست‌های مفهومی میان دو جریان فکری مذکور را از منظر تاریخی و نظری فراهم می‌آورد. این روش، با تأکید بر روندهای تاریخی، گفتمانی و تحول‌محور، زمینه بررسی تعاملات و تقابل‌های فکری میان جریان‌های مختلف را فراهم می‌سازد. نتایج این پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که فمینیسم اسلامی با پذیرش اصل رواداری، توانسته است در گفت‌وگوی میان‌فرهنگی و بین‌الاذهانی در جامعه مصر مشارکت فعالی داشته باشد. تعامل این جریان با سایر گفتمان‌های سکولار و مذهبی، زمینه‌ساز تسهیل ارتباطات فکری و ایدئولوژیک در جامعه شده و ظرفیت‌های اصلاح‌طلبانه را در جوامع اسلامی افزایش داده است. این روند، علاوه بر تقویت عدالت جنسیتی، دستیابی به اهداف فمینیسم اسلامی را در بستر جوامع چندفرهنگی تسهیل کرده است. در نهایت، این مقاله نشان می‌دهد که پذیرش رواداری به‌عنوان یک اصل اساسی در فمینیسم اسلامی، نه‌تنها به ارتقای تعاملات میان گفتمان‌های متنوع کمک کرده، بلکه فرصت‌های تازه‌ای برای گفت‌وگو، اصلاح و دستیابی به عدالت جنسیتی در جوامع اسلامی فراهم آورده است.

واژگان کلیدی: فمینیسم، فمینیسم اسلامی، برابری جنسیتی، تکثرگرایی، مدارا.