

Gender Roles of Muslim Women in Modern Society

Referee: Dr. Benedict Kwok

Author: Karen S. K. Lee

1. Introduction

^[1] The encounter between Islam and “the West” seems to have affected both Muslims and non-Muslims since the Islamic community was established in the 7th century. The “diaspora” in a non-Muslim world has been an overarching concern in recent decades. Islam is increasingly viewed as an immense threat to many countries especially in the West. Hostile reactions by non-Muslims to the growing Islamic presence in Europe have fostered antagonistic relations.

However, there tends to be dissonance between the ways in which they perceive each other in different contexts. Said in his book “Orientalism” draws attention to the close link between knowledge and power in the relationship between “the West” and “the Orient”. ^[2] The knowledge which “the West” came to acquire about “the Orient” over the years might not be the same as “the Orient” had about itself. Missionaries could have viewed Muslim history, culture and ethics merely through Western lenses.

In the eyes of the Western world, it is Islam that defines Muslim women’s subordinate status, socio-economic inequalities and lack of progress. ^[3] On the contrary, in the Islamic discourse, it is the virtue of Islam that guarantees gender equality and secures religious identity. In the early 19th century the societies of the Middle East began to undergo a fundamental social transformation. It may be stunning to hear that many calls have been made for women’s freedom, liberation and equality in Islamic societies.

^[1] As globalization has been a subject of great significance, new chances as well as challenges for the shaping of a shared future inevitably arise. When almost one-tenth of the world population are Muslim women, it is of utmost importance to unravel the controversial gender issues in order to carve new pathways for Christian ministry and missionary.

Karen S. K. Lee: Gender Roles of Muslim Women in Modern Society

Written by Publisher

Friday, 18 October 2013 11:02 -

The aim of this paper is to explore the identities, roles and status of Muslim women in a state of change, from a perspective of socio-historical development. It begins by briefly reviewing the Qur'anic interpretation of women in creation, marriage, family and society. It will then go on to analyse the changes triggered by colonization and globalization, with specific reference to the dynamics of western feminism grounded in Islamic world. In light of Islam on the way to modernity, the

reflection may shed light on minority to Muslim women, in the hope of facilitating mutual understanding and fulfilling God's mission for the world.

2. Women in the Qur'an

2.1 Self and spiritual identities

In the Qur'an and Hadith literature, there are various statements concerning human beings in general and women in particular. [Further examples have been provided that Islam believes in the equality of men and women, based on the following strong evidence that the Qur'an creation account states no distinction between men and women.](#)

