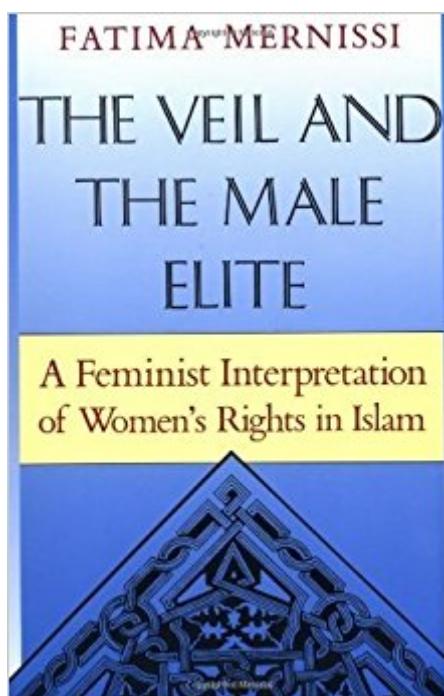


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# The Veil And The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation Of Women's Rights In Islam



## **Synopsis**

Convinced that the veil is a symbol of unjust male authority over women, in *The Veil and the Male Elite*, Moroccan feminist Fatima Mernissi aims to investigate the origins of the practice in the first Islamic community.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Muhammad was a chief of state who publicly acknowledged the importance of affection and sexuality. He was a polygynous husband whose wives were not just background figures but often shared decision-making with him. According to Moroccan sociologist Mernissi ( *Beyond the Veil* ), the founder of Islam asserted the equality of women, rejected slavery and envisioned an egalitarian society. Mernissi further claims that successive Muslim priests manipulated and distorted sacred texts, from the seventh century onward, in an effort to maintain male privileges. Her close textual analyses of the Hadith , or stories of words and deeds attributed to the Prophet, support her far-reaching reinterpretation of the historic roots of Islam and its modern tendency to reduce woman to a "submissive, marginal creature." Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mernissi, an internationally known Moroccan sociologist, endeavors to show that discrimination against women, so common in the Muslim world today, is not a fundamental tenet of Islam as many contemporary male Muslims would like us to believe. Her basic premise is that Islam is inherently egalitarian and, using extensive documentation from the Koran, the Hadith, and other Islamic

historical commentary, Mernissi successfully proves her hypothesis. While doing so, she teaches the reader a great deal about Mohammed (the man as well as the prophet), his wives, his companions, and early Islamic society. Like Mernissi's other books ( *Beyond the Veil* , Indiana Univ. Pr., 1987; *Doing Daily Battle* , Rutgers Univ. Pr., 1989; *Women in Emergent Morocco* , Flame Internat., 1982), this fascinating, well-written, and well-documented work is an excellent addition to scholarship on Muslim women. Recommended for academic libraries and others with women's studies or Middle East collections.- Ruth K. Baacke, Bellingham P.L., Wash .Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A provocative book in the Muslim book. As a major feminist Muslim, Fatima Mernissi gained international attention (and perhaps notoriety in some conservative places) after writing this classic. Some details may be challenging for non-Muslims but generally worth reading.

Strong case for reading Muslim texts with an open mind towards equal rights for women.

One of the great feminists of all time, Mernissi exposes the hidden mysogyny of many beloved Islamic customs. Would not have considered converting to Islam without her point of view. She goes back to a pure, feminist, progressive, inspired Islam and is Islam's great spokesperson, even if she doesn't mean it.

Excellent. H.Sh.

Fatima Mernissi's book is well-written and thoroughly researched. It also draws on great works of the Islamic past. She does not throw out ahadith at all - she accepts their authenticity completely but delves more deeply into the context in which they were related. The book extols the Prophet (saw) but I don't recommend the book for non-Muslims or those who are not firm in their belief in Islam.

The author attempts to tackle fundamental issues that face Muslim thought like the need to review of the authenticity of some Hadiths. She raises valid questions and out cries against some false convictions about women in Muslim societies and unjust social practices. However, she shows superficial understanding of historic events religious text. For example, she failed to read the political and international seen during the selection of Umar as leader after Abu Bakr. The muslim state was in the state of war with the two super powers at that time. Umar was the deputy of Abu

Bakr or in today's terms the vice president and his selection was natural at war time. He was the most respected after Abu Bakr. The author is unable to connect with the Muslim reader. She is unable to use quran scripture even in one occasion to strengthen her argument. This in itself questions her understanding of Islam. It also affected her ability to win the hearts let alone the minds. I wish more muslim men and woman come to tackle the issues she raised with more objective and scholarly work.

Awesome book. Dr. Mernissi, who is Moroccan, must have invested thousands of hours in her research for this book. It was a book recommended to me by my imam. It's a book for Muslim and non-Muslim women. Read it and understand what Muslim women have endured for 1400 years.

The central thesis of this book is relatively straightforward. That is that the original intent and context of many parts of the Qur'an and teachings of the Prophet have been manipulated by those who have an interest in making women unequal in Islam. Mernissi contents that Islam was never meant to be anything other than a religion of equality, and that one must pay attention to the context of questionable verses and hadiths that have been invoked to subjugate women. Methodologically, this work is quite rigorous. She makes very strong arguments and appears to back them up very well. However, the very nature of any religion is that it can be manipulated to justify two completely opposing ideas. No one can definitively make the case that their way is THE right way. Mernissi herself admits as much herself on page 128 when she says "When it is a controversial verse that is at stake, everyone is going to choose and support the opinion that suits him best among the multiplicity of those that the fiqh accumulates. In a way, it helps her case that she can admit what is such a fundamental point. Rather than insisting that hers is the only correct interpretation, she does what she can to make her argument and she makes it well. In the end, she's arguing for equality and that women are not to be second-class citizens. This is a commendable task. While I myself do not adhere to any religion, work such as this that is positive in nature is something that everyone should embrace.

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