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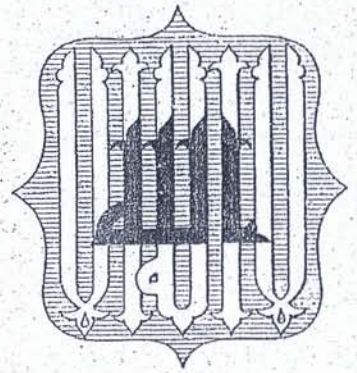

There is no deity but Allah

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Rereading Zaynab Al-Ghazālī's Representations of Muslim Women and Islamic Feminism in the 21st Century*

Dr. Ibrahim Olatunde Uthman*

Abstract

This paper focuses on the activism and feminism of the Egyptian Zaynab al-Ghazālī al-Jubaylī (1918–2009) in order to examine what she thought about Muslim women's roles in both the political and Islamic struggles of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Existing literature. whilst attesting to Zaynab al-Ghazālī's eminent position in both contemporary Islamic circles and feminist discourses, fails to show how her feminist activities connected with the Muslim Brotherhood. By contrast with the secular feminist postulations of Muslim women like Ahmed Leila, Assia Djebar and Nawal Sa'dāwi, this paper examines how Zaynab's feminist activism and the organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood connect in their da'wah approaches and contributions to the revivalism of 'authentic" Islamic feminism in contemporary society. This paper is based upon Zaynab's autobiographical work, *Ayyām min Hayātī* to show how Zaynab and her associates, using the Muslim Brotherhood's struggles, were able to employ the Islamic female agency even under the unfavourable brutal regime of the then Egyptian President, Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir (1956–1970).

Introduction

The significance of this study is that it considers the way a contemporary female Muslim political and feminist activist, Zaynab al-Ghazālī al-Jubaylī (1918–2009) and her colleagues used the Muslim Brotherhood of Hasan al-Bannā (1906–1949) for the empowerment of Muslim women as documented in Zaynab's autobiography, where she recorded the struggle of both sexes in the Muslim Brotherhood, whilst reclaiming what this author defines elsewhere as 'authentic Islamic feminism'. [1]

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The focus here, therefore, is a textual/contextual analysis of Zaynab's text to show how she used Islam to reclaim this authentic Islamic feminism in Muslim women's resilience and resistance carried out through the Muslim Brotherhood.

Her autobiography, written after the execution of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), merits this study because her use of Islam in reclaiming the roles played by Muslim women at the time of the Prophet Muhammad was not a subversive strategy of self-empowerment undermining Islamic teachings or subverting the power structures of Islamist movements as done by such contemporary Muslim feminists as Fatima Mernissi, Assia Djebar and Nawal Sadawi. The period in which Zaynab wrote her *Ayyām min Ḥayātī*, is particularly relevant because it was after Egypt underwent a popular nationalist struggle in 1952 that involved all strands of Egyptian society; the Muslim Brotherhood, the secular feminist union, Marxism and the military. The military overthrew the king and established a people's republic, albeit through a coup in which Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir became the major beneficiary.

When Zaynab wrote her autobiography in 21st century Egypt, the secular feminist movement was already flourishing and Egypt was coming to terms with the idea that a Muslim woman could throw away the veil and enter the public arena. Using Zaynab and her followers' roles in the contemporary Egyptian Islamic movement to exemplify the typology of Islamic feminism and her categorisation as a feminist woman as employed by Showalter,[2] this paper focuses on Zaynab's autobiography, which Muhammad Bennīs called a language that is "loaded with Qur'anic verses, traditions of the Prophet, laden with slogans and national canticles"[3] in order to examine how Zaynab and other Muslim women affirmed the Qur'anic quotations and Islamic idioms to demonstrate the struggles of secular Muslim women with regard to their religious, educational and political rights.

Zaynab's text is important because, unlike those of the afore-mentioned Muslim women, (whom Mariam Cooke has described as Islamic feminists), it emerged within the ambit of popular Islamic, rather than Muslim secular and liberal, discourse. Although she and her companions emerged at a time when the secular feminist school as championed by Hudā Sha'rāwī (1879–1947) was very strong in Egypt, rather than seeing Islam as barring women's freedom and advancement, they became dissatisfied with the school because of its western and secular biases and

their conviction that Islam has, in itself, granted women full political, religious and socio-cultural autonomy. They continued to work with western and secular feminist organisations as noted in 1952, when Zaynab's Muslim Ladies' Association joined the Women's Committee for Popular Resistance in their nationalist struggles.[4]

I have stressed the term 'Islamic feminism' in this paper because it refers to Muslim women activists who held on to what the paper will describe later as 'triadic' commitment of their faith, nationalism and the feminist struggle, rather than the term 'Islamic feminism' as used by such scholars as Miriam Cooke.[5] Based on this definition, this study elucidates how the Muslim woman like Zaynab, "who thinks, believes and acts subjectively on her own conviction and in a way that contradicts societal norms," relates to Islamic life and tradition. Contrary to what is symptomatic of such a woman, Zaynab, whilst defying the established social order and resisting oppression and suppression in the society, did not reject Islamic principles, nor did she circumvent Islamic traditions. Such women do not suffer from the Narcissistic injury, which George Ṭarābīshī defines as "a wound essentially caused by the anxiety about the superiority of Western civilisation"[6] and which is afflicting most so-called contemporary Islamic feminists".

Instead of viewing the popular Islamic sexual heritage as a screen on which secular feminist vituperations against Islam are predicated, the women of the Muslim Brotherhood subjected Islamic heritage to what Ṭarābīshī called "scientific/scholarly analysis" and reclaimed an Islam that supported women in resisting and questioning socio-cultural backgrounds that sought to dominate and oppress them. We will see how the selected Zaynabian text for study represents those Muslim women activists who were prototypically active and non-passive in the Islamic, nationalist and feminist struggles. Whilst they worked in the Muslim Brotherhood for the struggles against neo-colonialism and patriarchal subjugation of women, they conformed to the dictates of Islamic tenets and thereby upheld a triple or 'triadic' commitment. In invoking Elaine Showalter's 'triadic' to categorise Zaynab and her colleagues, I refer to her nationalist, feminist and Islamic phases in the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and not the three phases of the female literary tradition meant by Showalter. In this respect, I have argued that Zaynab falls within the last two phases of her category of the 'feminine' narrative discourse. Showalter labels these phases as the 'feminine,' 'feminist' and 'female.'[7] That Zaynab

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the Egyptian doctor and women's rights activist, interprets the veil as a symbol of sexuality that calls attention to the bodies of women in the same manner as an uncovered body may do. She criticises those men who uphold this concept of sexuality as oppressing women with the veil, which according to her, is the only way to protect men from her fitnah (seduction, mischief, obscenity, etc.).[14]

Similarly, Assia Djebar invokes the ancestral figure of Scheherazade (Arabic, Shahrazād) as an inspirational figure whose subverting and circumventing strategies can be employed by Arab women to achieve 'female empowerment', survival tactics and self-expression. She invokes Scheherazade's inspirational figure to forge an imaginary discourse that perpetuates the East as exotic and the Oriental woman as an object of desire. She focuses on the female body of Scheherazade to demonstrate an explosive sexual relationship and speak of how male violence is met with her volatile sexuality that circumvents traditional Islamic and patriarchal restrictions, censorship and prohibition of discussions on politics, sex and even religion. She uses a mixture of poetry and prose to analyse issues of segregation, polygamy and the poetic 'other'. She makes herself the spokeswoman for the secular feminist agenda and demonstrates how women, through circumventing and subverting the structure of polygamy in the Arab family are, "liberating themselves at the expense of a pseudo-rival".[15]

Djebar, like Mernissi, who has been the focus of my analysis elsewhere, attacks the harem, which she sees as a prison for Arab women from which they seek refuge that is found in the hammam (public bath), where women meet and commune.[16] In depicting the prison of the harem, Djebar uses the word 'derra', which means hurt or wound to a co-wife, thus indicating a rival wife who hurts or injures the first wife.[17] Communing in a public space outside the harem is spearheaded by an emancipated Arab wife, Isma, who escaped the prison of the harem and the wounds of her co-wife, became educated in the West and returned home to 'awaken' her unlucky sisters by playing the role of a modern Scheherazade. It is therefore in this public space that women find temporary reprieve from the confines of their private space in the harem.[18]

In this respect, it is the western/secular brand of feminism that is shaping Arab sexual identities according to western stereotypes. Mernissi, in her secular and western aspirations for Muslim women, is regarded as a

prominent Muslim feminist who has "extricated herself from the culture of 'Islamic loyalty.' It is this cultural or Islamic loyalty that is believed to plague many Muslim feminists today in that they are torn between their double identities."[19] That Mernissi and other so-called Islamic feminists are not torn between their double identities can be seen in the way they are ambivalent in their relationship with the West. They alternate between rejecting Islamic teachings and practices based on western secularism and considering the enriching and empowering traditions in Islam as susceptible to western devaluation. Notwithstanding their rejection of western colonialism, especially in modern times, they look to it as a "space of freedom... a place of refuge from repression at home, a space of freedom with the promise of prosperity..." In the fashion of Malti-Douglas, they consider this juxtaposition between undoing or reducing Islamic teachings and practices and their selective blending with the west as a form of female empowerment.[20]

All these feminists who have experienced or are still experiencing living in the west inhabit a third space that cannot be represented. According to Homi Bhabha this, "makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process" and "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised (sic) and made anew".[21] Whilst alternating between their perceived exposure and deconstruction of patriarchal Islamic teachings and the ambivalence of Western traditions, these feminists blur the lines between fiction and reality. As representatives of patriarchy "warned of the tricks of women," they are challenging "them with tricks of their own."[22] We therefore see this new female empowerment opening up new vistas that used to be closed to women. According to Cooke, they emulate the West, which they conceive as a model more than as a nemesis.[23]

This escape to the West is not always the desire of ambivalent feminists. That adventure is sometimes forced on them because they dare to challenge the male privilege and patriarchal division of space. In the words of Fadia Faqir, "To cross the defined border and encroach on traditionally male space was to risk being accused of being a loose woman, a whore, a belly-dancer". The worst fate in her view is that those women who write autobiographies suffer "slander, prohibition, and imprisonment". This is what, according to her, drives Shahrazād (and women like her) to seek

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asylum in the West in order to gain empowerment, integrity, freedom, purity, peace, etc.[24] Joseph Masaad says:

> "What is emerging in the Arab (and the rest of the third) world is not some universal schema of the march of history but rather the imposition of these western modes by different forceful means, thus foreclosing and repressing myriad ways of movement and change and ensuring that only one for (sic) transformation is made possible."[25]

In living their Islamic feminism, Zaynab and her colleagues eschewed this ambivalent condition of feminists in the 'third space'. In the words of Edward Said, they "wanted liberation within the same universe of discourse inhabited by Western culture"[26]

Zaynab al-Ghazālī's representations of Muslim women's resistance and resilience in the Muslim Brotherhood

In this section, this paper focuses on the autobiographical text of Zaynab to highlight and discuss the major issues therein. This text contains Zaynab's accounts of her experiences and those of her fellow female activists. Four issues dominate the Zaynabian text under study herein; nationalism, politics, Islamic feminism and Islam. The Muslim women's perception of these issues presumably derives from their Islamic understanding, a perspective formed by involvement with the Muslim Brotherhood. For instance Zaynab and Hamidah Qutb's Islamic attitude, as shown in the text, started in their childhood environment, having been born to pious and religious parents. They were brought up in "Egyptian families where they became loaded with Islamic teachings and learning." Very early in life, they became exposed to and immersed in 'authentic' Islamic understanding. By the time they were faced with the general un-Islamic Egyptian life-style, they had developed the yearning to engage with the society and embark on an Islamic struggle that would define and delimit the life of Muslims of both sexes in all situations, including the political, the socio-cultural and the sexual. Their political, feminist and Islamic stance is based on the absolute sources of Islam as quoted from the Qur'an and Sunnah to invoke Islamic justification for their views. Unlike their predecessors, they did not take these quotations out of context. For example, Zaynab quotes references on political participation, social engineering, sexual equality and the religious obligations of Muslim men

and women. She does not subvert the injunctions and commandments of these religious texts. On the contrary, she grounds her autobiographical narrative in line with the Islamic teachings and traditions contained in the absolute sources.[27]

The 'masculine' bravery of the women in the Muslim Brotherhood was demonstrated during attempts at the reorganisation of the brotherhood after it was banned in 1954. They confronted legendary brutality in torture chambers as reflected in "whips cutting into their bodies and dogs tearing their bodies to pieces."[28] This shows how Muslim women were at the centre of Islamic revivalism even in the face or repression and torture. It all started when Zaynab assumed a leading role alongside Sayyid Qutb in the reorganisation of the Muslim Brotherhood after its proscription. She was the one who sought permission from the then General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Hudaybi to work together with her own brother, Muhammad, and such others as 'Abd ul-Fattah Isma'il to reorganise and revive the organisation.[29]

In the course of carrying out the above assignment Zaynab and 'Abd ul-Fattah Isma'il later saw the need to seek permission from al-Hudaybi to appoint Sayyid Qutb as spiritual guide of the reorganisation. Thus, Zaynab, Qutb, and others conceived, planned and executed the reorganisation of the Muslim Brotherhood with the full permission the General Guide of the Brotherhood. Whenever Zaynab received any instruction or direction from Qutb via his sister Hamidah, she would clear it first with the General Guide. When Qutb gave her his work *Ma'ālim fī aṭ-Ṭarīq* for publication, she went to the General Guide to seek his views and obtain his permission. The General Guide, after reading some sections of the book, officially permitted its publication and declared that the book fulfilled all his hopes in the ability of Qutb to lead the da'wah of the Muslim Brotherhood. Their insistence on initiating the revival and reorganisation of the Brotherhood soon provided an excuse for the government to arrest Sayyid Qutb and accuse him of planning a coup to assassinate the president and overthrow his government, for which he was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment with hard labour. Throughout his incarceration, Qutb continued to lead the reorganisation of the Brotherhood inside the prison while Zaynab, working with him, led the movement outside. Together, they conducted meetings and training sessions, providing intellectual, moral and spiritual guidance for those both inside and outside the prison.[30]

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She and Sayyid Qutb continued to coordinate the reorganisation and revival of the Muslim Brotherhood and she got reports from him through his sister, Hamidah Qutb, such as when he gave Zaynab his popular "milestone" or *Ma'ālim fī aṭ-Ṭarīq,* which he wrote while in prison.[31] When they refused to stop the reorganisation activities, the government haunted the leaders through infiltration by 'Ali 'Ashmāwi, a member of the Youth Council of Five responsible for the reorganisation and a retired Egyptian Public Service accountant. He became an agent, spy and protégé of the Investigation Bureau and involved the Brotherhood in the procurement and use of arms for it to defend itself from the brutal attacks of the government. His statement was used to convict Qutb and many other leaders and members of the Brotherhood of treason and felony against the state. Thousands of them were thrown into prison. The government confiscated their property, tortured and persecuted them and, against all international and human right norms, sentenced many of them to death, including Qutb in 1966.[32]

This allegation, for which Zaynab, Qutb and other members of the Brotherhood were arrested, convicted and sentenced was not fully investigated, nor was their trial guided by universal democratic and human rights norms. They were tried by special military courts headed by judges who were army officers and characterised by legal and technical anomalies, irregularities and discrepancies. For instance, they were tried under a retroactive law in 1966 and the government banned members of the public and the press from attending. Even the lawyer sent by the Amnesty International as an observer in the court proceedings was kept out. The unfortunate results of these legal irregularities were the death sentences passed on Farid 'Abd al-Khāliq, Munir Dallah and Qutb in 1966. Although the former two were amongst the leaders of the brotherhood, they were not involved in its reorganisation and, in fact, rejected the idea when they were invited to lead it before Qutb was appointed. They vehemently opposed the reorganisation because they considered it hazardous and dangerous. They went further to complain to the General Guide and called for the abolition of the idea.[33] Their conviction was substantiated solely by the evidence provided by 'Ali 'Ashmāwi, who was a government agent provocateur commissioned to implicate the Muslim Brotherhood in the allegation of armed revolt to assassinate the president and overthrow his government.[34] This proves that the government itself orchestrated the conspiracy that entrapped Zaynab, Qutb and others. For this reason, the government

prohibited members of the public, the press and lawyers who came forward to volunteer their defence services from attending the court proceedings.

A prominent feature of the da'wah approaches of the 'masculine' Muslim women was reflection upon the conditions of women in Egyptian society, where they were oppressed, maltreated and dominated. They generally lacked education, training and marital security and could be disposed off at the whims of their husbands. It was against this background that the Muslim Brotherhood addressed the feminist questions in Islam and demonstrated that Islam granted Muslim women total freedom from oppression and domination.[35] In his commentary, Qutb explained the Islamic concept of marriage as well as the philosophy behind its principles of family formation, maintenance, sexuality, polygamy, inheritance etc. He discussed how these principles address the rights and welfare of Muslim women. He argued that Islamic law on forming the family through the conduct of a public marriage between a man and a woman leads to a high degree of security for women and children, as well as an increased sense of responsibility for men. Polygamy was also discussed by Qutb while commenting on the verse of multiple marriages in Islam (Q3:4). The verse, according to him, not only limits the number of wives a man can marry to four, it also emphasises the obligatory fulfilment of justice by a man in respect of the provision of his wives' economic, medical and sexual needs.[36]

He also opposed all legal rulings denying the rights of a widow to both inheritance and continued use of her marital residence for one year. By opposing the general concept of *an-Naskh wa-l-mansūkh* (theory of abrogation and the abrogated), he restored to Muslim women their divine rights of inheritance. Rather than rejecting absolutely the use of philosophy in the interpretation of the Qur'an, he merely advocated making revelation the basis of Islamic outlook, exegesis and the application of reason and rationality.[37] This represents the position of the Muslim Brotherhood, which opposes the confinement of women to the four walls of their homes and upholds their right to go out as long as they observe the Islamic dress code of covering their body, leaving only the face and hands revealed. The Brotherhood also stresses the right of women to earn a living and have free access to the highest levels of education. Similarly, it affirms their right to family planning as long as it is medically sound, as well as their right to participate in politics if it will not affect their primary responsibilities in the home.[38]

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Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood was a platform for the jihād of women. Jihād can be defined as striving in the cause of Allah in the most inclusive and widest sense, e.g. striving in relation to the worldly or material by helping others, teaching and ameliorating human conditions, striving in relation to the spiritual or moral by restraining ones passions, soul purification, striving in the physical sense and militarily in defence of Islam and Muslims or freedom from tyranny, freedom of belief, worship and practice. Military jihād does not include war of aggression, imperialism, exploitation or religious bigotry.[39] It does include female casualties and martyrs while fighting for enthroning Islam in Egypt or the resistance movement against Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir's neo-imperialist government[40] in defence of the rights of Muslim women in the language of the Islamic movement and under the banner of Islam. Nationalism or patriotism has been shown by many feminists to be one of the driving forces behind women's resistance activities and nowhere is this studied as thoroughly as in respect of Muslim women's struggles in Egypt.

Zaynab's narratives of the slavery, oppression and inhumanity that Egyptian women in general and women of the Muslim Brotherhood in particular suffered at the hands of Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir follow this tradition of feminism and nationalism. As noted by Margot Badran, it is the need for 'dual liberation' from the imperialist occupation and patriarchal oppression that sparked off women's struggles in Egypt.[41] Lisa Majaj, Paula Sunderman and Therese Saliba have also identified how nationalist struggles have made women lay aside traditional feminine roles and become feminist protagonists in the struggles for political and social transformation in Lebanon, Palestine and Algeria. Their book affirms ways in which these women have used nationalist struggles to create public space for themselves and their sex that defy popular sexual construction.[42]

Whilst general Muslim women's resistance and resilience is a dominant theme in the above accounts of nationalist struggles against Western imperialism, Zaynab's narratives are full of the Muslim Brotherhood women's resistance and resilience against internal imperialism, imperialism by Muslim women with their fellow Muslims against Egyptian imperialism, patriarchy and enslavement of women in Egypt. She recorded how Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir turned Egypt into a battleground and took away the freedom and independence that the Brotherhood had given Muslim women. Political power in the hands of Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir's military

junta portrayed the junta as nursing the belief that they alone had agency, knowledge and patriotism. It visualised them in the mould of the African godfather, who sees himself as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. For this reason, Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir refused to tolerate any form of opposition. He claimed to know what was good for Egypt and Egyptians. The ignorance of the junta can be seen in its foot soldiers and their supporters' belief that every woman wants to be dominated both economically and carnally.[43]

It is ignorance because it is based on the objectification of women as structured in nudity to gratify men's sexual desires and following the fashion of the colonialists, who considered women's nudity as a sign of their being open-minded and civilised.[44] Whilst most of the fictional and factual poetry and prose about Muslim women present them as the stereotypical passive, weak and helpless wives, mothers, sisters and concubines who accept the domestic chores of looking after the children, the harem or private space, Zaynab's text was a far cry from this category in that it questioned the domestic, sexual and economic enslavement of Egyptian women in the mould of Egyptian colonialism because imperialists were not in Egypt to profit the Egyptians but to profit themselves sexually and economically as alluded to by Balfour.[45]

The renaissance of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and Muslim women in *Ayyām min Hayātī*, is not an indication that the 'resistant text' of Zaynab is limited in space and time. Her text is representative of the feminist questions both in different parts of the Muslim world today and in Islam itself, as demonstrated by the commitments of Muslim women right from the time of the Prophet Muhammad in Arabia. Her text therefore mediates and portrays how, between the time of the Prophet and today, the conditions of Muslim women were determined by socio-cultural practices apart from the Islamic absolute sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Her text traces the persona of the Muslim woman in Islam and reclaims the rights of Muslim women from the golden prophetic era to the Muslim Brotherhood. It is written in a way that allows the Islamic feminist as defined in this paper to engage not only the self and the other in Islam but, in the culturist fashion of Homi Bhabha, "the otherness of the self"[46] of the feminist movement all over the world. This otherness, as reflected upon and represented by Zaynab, is not limited in scope to Muslim female/male, domestic/public and Egypt/Muslim Brotherhood divides. She included and

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admitted into the scope of this 'otherness' the whole of Islamic history and the entire world.

The Muslim Brotherhood reminds us of the humanity of Muslim women as underscored by the positive and utilitarian brand of Islamic feminism amongst the prophetic generation. We are reminded of the hypocrisy and un-Islamic nature of cultural practices in the Muslim world that demand from women life according to stereotyped misogyny, economic dependence, acceptance of brutality, proof of virginity, restrictions on mobility, censorship, the feminine virtue of silence, unconditional obedience to male relations (especially husbands and fathers), the abuse of polygamy that dangles over every woman, association of women with madness, evil, sorcery and *fitnah*. To counter these restrictions, Zaynab and her fellows emerged to challenge the political, sexual and economic rape of Egypt as well as of their feminine honour and bodies. They not only spoke and fought against these violations; they also refused to be beleaguered, submissive and resigned before their oppressors. They would rather have been killed fighting to protect their bodies and honour, but they also refused the path of suicide or killing. They withstood the humiliation of the torture chambers without giving up the secrets of the Brotherhood or the names of their fellows. Their sacrifice thus constituted the peak of resilience in resisting patriarchal brutality at the hands of the state whose foot soldiers raped men and women to coerce them to admit planning and executing acts of felony and treason.[47]

Zaynab narrated the story of her ordeals and those of other Muslim women in Egyptian prisons in the1960s and the methods of terrorism and control used by the state. To quote Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark, Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir and his junta were "men…the perpetrators [of violence] in defence of the nation… while (sic) [Zaynab and her sisters] women [are] victims…" who are involved in these "violent conflicts" whilst not themselves "passive, peaceful stereotypes".[48] Thus Zaynab's narratives are the product of first-hand involvement in the experiences of these non-passive Muslim women during their imprisonment, first for a year in the men's War Prison with famous leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood such as Sayyid Qutb, Isma'il Faraghil and 'Abd ul-Qadir 'Awdah, before she was later transferred to the women's prison, Qanatir. In these prisons, Zaynab chronicled the inhuman experiences to which the government of Jamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir subjected its people. They consisted of 'hell', a crucible

weeklong immersion in water, suspension, fire-cells and other forms of torture, for which some paid the supreme price. All this suffering was meted out to members of the Muslim Brotherhood on the basis of fabricated charges. She described 'Abd an-Nāṣir's legendary brutality and torture of the Muslim Brothers as follows: "The brotherhood is facing harsh repression and torture with whips cutting into their bodies and dogs tearing their bodies to pieces."[49] Zaynab has thus documented the experiences that Egyptian Muslims suffered at the hands of the Egyptian president.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has shown how Zaynab regarded Islam in her autobiographical text and her own concept of nationalist, feminist and Islamic attitudes in 20th/21st century Egypt and the global Muslim society. The text gives us refreshing images of the public and religious roles of Muslim women and their Islamic feminist resistance to sexual discrimination and oppression premised on engagement with the authentic absolute Islamic sources. Through the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, Zaynab and her fellow Muslim women succeeded in establishing a connection between Islam and the advancement of women's rights, promoting their identities as proactive subjects. Her attitude to Islam is not intended to subvert or circumvent Islamic teachings and traditions, but to demonstrate how they are empowering and can be used to empower Muslim women. The text portrays these Muslim women as symbols of the nationalist, feminist and Islamic struggles of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and as active resilient participants, martyrs and soldiers who stood tall in resisting the rape of their motherland.

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