# Negotiating Subjectivity Through the Civic Participation of Muslim Women in Spain

By

Zuleyha İzin

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies.

Supervisor: Professor Nadia Jones-Gailani

Budapest, Hungary

2017

CEU eTD Collection

# Abstract

Muslim women's involvement in the Islamic revival/*dawa* movements in Muslim as well as non-Muslim contexts has been a critical issue hotly debated within the feminist circles. In most cases, it is either claimed that women involved in Islamic movements are victims of 'false consciousness,' or, alternately, they are ''pawns in a great patriarchal plan.'' Inspired by Saba Mahmood's seminal work, *Politics of Piety*, which deconstructs the concept of agency, and thus subjectivity, by drifting away from a binary model of subordination and resistance, I conducted an ethnographic field research amongst Muslim women who engage in the activities of Muslim youth and women's organizations in Madrid Spain. Relying on the data gathered from the field and the Foucauldian concept of subject formation, the goal of this work is identifying the main actors and the processes through which active Muslim women negotiate their subjectivities and come into being as subjects. Therefore, I examine the main actors and the processes that are influential to the concepts and processes by which my interlocutors understand gender equality and performing *dawa* (Islamic missionary activity), such as family, civic engagement, secular structure of the Spanish state and the narratives of Muslim women dominant in Europe. Furthermore, I investigate to what extend the *dawa* practices among active Muslim women fit under the frame of European *dawa* movement, and the ways in which civic engagement becomes a tool of performing a religious duty, *dawa*. The ultimate goal of this work is filling the gap in the lack of literature on Muslim women's activism and subjectivities broadly, but especially in the case of Spain on which no other studies of this kind have been conducted to the date.


CEU eTD Collection

# DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH AND THE WORD COUNT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 21,647

Entire manuscript: 24,002

Zuleyha İzin

CEU eTD Collection

# Table of Contents



CEU eTD Collection

# I. Introduction and the Theoretical Frame

On a fine October day in 2014, I flew to Lisbon to participate in the European Women's Lobby's (EWL) Annual Meeting as one of the representatives of the Turkish women's organizations collaborating with EWL. After getting my welcome package and settled into my hotel room, I got down to join the first session of the program. When I got into the huge meeting hall, which was full of almost three hundred women from all around Europe, many of the eyes turned to me. I was the only visible Muslim woman in the whole room. That weird and uncomfortable feeling of not belonging there accompanied me throughout my time at the meeting; a very different experience to the feminist solidarity and sisterhood that I had expected. I felt somewhere in between being invisible and being unidentified, as if I were some disturbing creature coming from another planet. Unfortunately, this experience is repeated in other feminist circles, where despite the increasing amount of academic and activist work of Muslim women all around the world, feminism within Islam is still treated with paternalistic critique, and I often feel like I embody the expected 'oppressed victim' who lacks agency. This kind of feminist approach continues to monopolize women's emancipation, which tends to operate on behalf of women who are believed to be 'real' feminists.

The author of *Believing Women in Qur'an,* Asma Barlas, outlines this tension between religious and secular feminists:

> How can people call me a feminist when I'm calling myself a believing woman? Do feminists think that they discovered equality and patriarchy? I derive my understanding of equality and of patriarchy from the Qur'an, not from any feminist text![1]

As a vulnerable observer in my research, and as a believing feminist, I not only aim to contribute to filling the gap on literature that exposes the varied and multiple lives of Muslim women in Western Europe, and particularly Muslim women's activism, but I also aspire to

[1] Asma Barlas, *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives*, ed. Anitta Kynsilehto (Tampere: Mari Pakarinen/Juvenes Print, 2008), 16.



CEU eTD Collection

challenge the hegemonies that stem from feminist and patriarchal understandings of the practices of Islam, and of Muslim women's agency and subjectivity.

I conducted the field research of this thesis in Madrid, Spain during two separate data collection processes. The primary data collection process, which is made of twenty in-depth interviews and participant observation, took place between February-June 2015. The secondary part, which consists of participant observation during the classes of Islam and Arabic and other activities of Muslim youth and women's organizations, took place from June 2015 to September 2016. What makes my study original in terms of similar projects that are focused on uncovering Muslim women's subjectivities in Western Europe, is that I do not limit the focus of my work to the mosque circles or to the acquisition of Islamic knowledge. Rather, in addition to looking at the mosque circles and Islamic knowledge acquisition, I focus in my research on the civic engagement of Muslim women. That's why, entitling my unit of analysis simply as Muslim women or activist women becomes problematic. As even though all of them are publicly committed Muslim women not all of them can be defined as activist. Therefore, for the sake of analytical convenience I entitle them as active Muslim women.

Though some of my research questions formed themselves through the testimonies of my interlocutors during my field research, the main research questions, which directed me to the field, aim to uncover the understanding of gender equality among active Muslim women, and to find out the impacts of civic engagement on their understanding of gender equality. Beside these questions, I have also developed a new research question: how does civic engagement contribute to performing a religious duty, *dawa*, or Islamic missionary activity? By searching for the answers of these questions, the goal of this thesis is to outline the main characteristics of European *dawa* movement, and to uncover how civic engagement becomes a tool of performing *dawa* among active Muslim women in Spain. Furthermore, what the research also hopes to advance is a better understanding of the gender equality of active Muslim women

CEU eTD Collection

and to identify the main actors and processes through which they negotiate their subjectivities and 'become' political subjects.

Muslim women's involvement in the Islamic revival/*dawa* movements in Muslim as well as non-Muslim contexts has been a critical issue hotly debated in feminist circles. In most cases, it is either claimed that women involved in Islamic movements are victims of 'false consciousness,' or, alternately, they are ''pawns in a great patriarchal plan.''[2] Therefore, they are expected to denounce their disfavor of Islam when they are freed from its chains.[3] Saba Mahmood's seminal work, *The Politics of Piety*, is an ethnographic study of the agency and subjectivity of Muslim women within Islamic *dawa* movement in Cairo, Egypt. The importance of Mahmood's work stems from its ability to deconstruct the concept of agency, and thus subjectivity, which she argues have been assumed to be universal concepts. Mahmood's work is significant for drifting away from a binary model of subordination and resistance.

Inspired by Saba Mahmood, there are some, not many though, significant research conducted on Muslim women's involvement in Islamic movements in Europe. Schirin Amir-Moazami and Jeanette S. Jouili combine their separate field work done in Germany and France and try to uncover the relationship between the knowledge acquisition and the recasting of religious authority among Muslim women within the mosque circles of Islamic revival movement in Germany and France.[4] Christine M. Jacobsen's work, ''Troublesome Threesome: Feminism, Anthropology and Muslim Women's Piety'' investigates how religious subjectivities and practices of Muslim women in Norway poses challenges to feminist theory and anthropology.[5] Jeanette S. Jouili also analyzes the relationship between the dissemination

CEU eTD Collection

[2] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, (Princeton University Press: 2005), pp.2.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Schirin Amir-Moazami and Jeanette S. Jouili, ''Knowledge, Empowerment and Religious Authority Among Pious Muslim Women in France and Germany'', in Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives, edited by Anitta Kynsilehto, (2008).

[5] Christine M. Jacobsen, ''Troublesome Threesome: Feminism, Anthropology and Muslim Women's Piety'', feminist review no. 98, (2011).

of religious knowledge and formation of a certain type of religious subjectivity among *dawa* movements in Western Europe.[6]

Mahmood's work focuses on the investigation of religious subjectivity that relies on the implementation of certain disciplinary practices to build a pious self predominantly among mosque circles. Even though my work is also inspired by Saba Mahmood's study and the example of her research, it differs from Mahmood's and other similar studies in Western Europe in two key ways. Firstly, my research extends beyond the mosque circles and acquisition of religious knowledge, and investigates the civic engagement of young Muslim women through Muslim youth and women's organizations. I investigate how religious motives lead to the formation of a political subject, and how civic engagement contributes to the emergence of a distinct feminist consciousness among active Muslim women in Madrid. And secondly, I hope that my work will help to fill the gap in the lack of literature on Muslim women's activism and subjectivities broadly, but especially in the case of Spain since no other studies of this kind have been conducted to date.

The first chapter of my thesis maps out the main features of the European *dawa* movements. Rather than focusing on a single group, I rely on the ideas and approaches of some influential thinkers, such as Hasan Al-Banna (Egypt) and Abul A'la Mawdudi (India), who shape the definitions, discourses and the methods of European *dawa* movement. Moreover, I introduce the most influential contemporary Islamic scholars such as Khurram Murad, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and Tariq Ramadan, who intentionally work on generating a distinct 'Euro-Islam', thus a European *dawa* movement, in terms of approach, methodology and language, applicable to the specific context of Europe.

CEU eTD Collection

[6] Jeanette S. Jouili, ''Beyond Emancipation: Subjectivities and Ethics Among Women In Europe's Islamic Revival Communities'', Feminist Review No. 98, (2011).

The second chapter, which is the first analytical chapter of this work, on the one hand, examines to what extent the *dawa* performed by active Muslim women fits under the frame of the European *dawa* movement. On the other hand, I aim to illustrate the ways in which the civic engagement of active Muslim women, which is framed by a liberal discourse in the secular public sphere of Spain, turn out to be a way of performing *dawa*.

My analysis is established upon the basis of Michel Foucault's concept of the subject who is formed based on a structure of power relations that he/she is born into. Therefore, the concept of power appears to be a key element for the construction of the subject, and thus subjectivity. According to Foucault, power, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist as a ''mysterious entity''[7] but emerges only through interactions amongst and between different agents.[8] Therefore, power is diffused in a form that is exercised by all the actors in a society.[9] Scholar Larry Shiner, regarding Foucault's conception of diffused power, indicates that even the ones who look powerless have various means of ''deflection, partial submission, resistance, and localized action.''[10] He adds that power relations are not a set of oppositional conflicts, but rather ''a mobile network of struggle''.[11] Thus, power appears only through its application which makes a society without power relations merely an abstraction.[12] I analyze my data under this general theoretical framework to acknowledge and identify the different power relations my interlocutors are surrounded by, and are negotiating their subjectivities over.

CEU eTD Collection

[7] Larry Shiner, ''Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge'', History and Theory, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Oct. 1982), pp. 391.
[8] Michel Foucault, ''The Subject and Power'', Critical Inquiry, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1982, pp. 788.
[9] Larry Shiner, ''Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge'', (Oct. 1982), pp. 390.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Michel Foucault, ''The Subject and Power'', (1982), pp. 791.

Saba Mahmood in her analysis of Foucault argues that the subject doesn't precede power relations, but instead comes into being *through* them. In other words, power relations produce the necessary conditions for the formation of a subject.[13] Gilles Deleuze explains: "Every force is in a relationship with others, in order either to obey or to command. That which defines a body is this relationship between dominant and dominated forces".[14] Mahmood reinterprets this conception of subject formation, the paradox of *subjectivation*, as a central concept of Foucauldian notion of power, as: ''the very process and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent.''[15] In other words, ''the set of capacities a subject resides do not precede the operations of power but they are the very products of those operations.''[16] Such an understanding of power and subject formation, argues Mahmood, lead her to reconceptualize agency amongst Muslim women as ''a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable rather than as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination.''[17]

Drawing upon Mahmood's use of Foucauldian power dynamics, I assess the ways in which my interlocutors negotiate their subjectivities by means of the various layers of active participation they are involve in through Islamic organizations. In the second chapter, I analyze how Muslim women's civic engagement turns into a way of performing a religious duty, or *dawa* which can also be considered part of Islamic missionary activity, whilst at the same time these women *obey* the non-confessional, secular, structure of the Spanish public sphere. To do so, I rely on Talal Asad's analysis of secularism, which is also inspired by Foucault, and defines

CEU eTD Collection

[13] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, (Princeton University Press: 2005), pp. 17.
[14] Sebastian Harrer, ''The Theme of Subjectivity in Foucault's Lecture Series L'Herméneutique du Sujet'', Foucault Studies, No. 2, (May 2005), pp.82.
[15] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, (Princeton University Press: 2005), 17.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, 18.

the secularism as a modern disciplinary project.[18] According to Asad, this disciplinary project is enforced by sovereign power of secular state and it overshadows religious authority within these spaces.[19] Asad argues that the goal of this project is not primarily to separate the state from the church, but instead to produce normative religious subjects.[20] In defining a 'secular' state, José Mapril et al. argue that, ''secularism implies a normativity that (…) reorganizes subjectivities in accordance with a modality of political rule that is itself retrospectively called "a religiously neutral political ethic."''[21] And yet, according to Asad, this secular order is not neutral, but serves to discipline religious subjects, and particularly Muslims[22] through the framing of religion as ''chaotic, irrational, and dangerous,''[23] while positioning itself as ''neutral, rational and peaceful.''[24] The secular public sphere, which is framed as a tool of disciplinary power, constitutes the first layer against which active Muslim women challenge the secular order by combining their civic engagement and practices of *dawa*, which are framed by a discourse of universal human and civil rights. Thus, they negotiate over their subjectivities and come into being as political subjects.

The last chapter articulates the understanding of gender equality among active Muslim women through the testimonies of my interlocutors. Third chapter also examines the main actors and processes that are influential to the concepts and processes by which my interlocutors understand gender equality, such as family, civic engagement, and the narratives of Muslim women dominant in Europe. These main actors and processes also appear to be the major

CEU eTD Collection

[18] José Mapril, Ruy Blanes, Emerson Giumbelli, and Erin K. Wilson, ''Introduction: Secularities, Religiosities, and Subjectivities'' in *Secularism in a Postsecular Age?,* eds. José Mapril, Ruy Blanes, Emerson Giumbelli, and Erin K. Wilson, (Springer: Switzerland, 2017), pp. 2.

[19] José Mapril et. al. ''Introduction: Secularities, Religiosities, and Subjectivities'', (2017), pp. 3.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid, pp. 5.

[24] Ibid.

mechanisms against which active Muslim women negotiate their subjectivities and come into being as moral feminine subjects.

My analysis depends on these two distinct and complementary ways of defining subject formation, where as Foucault asserts, ‘‘we are formed as subjects and agents being subjected to dangerous strategic power relations (e.g. sexism, racism, class oppression, and heterosexism).’’[25] Since the subject does not possess an ‘‘immutable human nature’’[26] it has to be constructed. Sebastian Harrer, depending on his analysis of Foucault's earlier work on power/knowledge mechanisms and more recent work on subject's self-constitution, notes that the genesis of the subject includes the subjection and self-constitution.[27] In other words, a subject is formed through normalizing power mechanisms, which correspond to imposition of power on subjects externally, and practices of the self that point to self-constitution.

In following Saba Mahmood, I also draw upon Judith Butler's concept of reiteration, which is borrowed from Jacques Derrida. Butler argues that gender is performative by which she means that gender is the product of ‘‘a regulatory regime of gender differences.’’[28] She argues that gender is the product of perpetual reiteration of already established gender norms which are enforced by social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, and threats of punishment. Therefore, gender is not being but doing. Furthermore, she argues that since this repetition creates an effect of gender uniformity, the subject comes into intelligibility only through the matrix of gender.[29] Yet, Butler argues that the only way of subverting and undoing the norms is by doing – or reiterating - the norms as each reiteration holds the possibility of failure. In the same line of thought, Saba Mahmood uses the concept of docility, derived from Foucault, in

CEU eTD Collection

[25] Amy Allen, ‘‘Power, Subjectivity, and Agency: Between Arendt and Foucault’’, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol 10 (2), (December 2010), 145.
[26] Sebastian Harrer, ‘‘The Theme of Subjectivity in Foucault's Lecture Series L'Herméneutique du Sujet’’, (May 2005), pp.81.
[27] Ibid, pp.78.
[28] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1993), 21.
[29] Ibid.

arguing that to be able to acquire the ability or ‘‘requisite agency,’’[30] then one must subjugate herself to be instructed in particular skill or knowledge.[31] Therefore, being docile not necessarily mean being passive, however, it does carry some sense of ‘‘struggle, effort, exertion, and achievement.’’[32] I locate my analysis of active Muslim women's religious education and their involvement in Islamic classes within this theoretical framework, through which I show how Muslim women that I interviewed actively negotiate their subjectivity.

## II. Methodology, the Process of Data Collection and the Sample Profile

As a practicing Muslim woman, my feminist awareness primarily developed through growing up in a big conservative family, in which men enjoy all the rights they are endowed by birth while women are trapped in a loop of fighting-failing-fighting to get an education, to work or to choose their mates. Religion was the main reference to justify the weaknesses of the men and the supposed inferiority of women in the family. It was clear to me that something was missing between our conception of God and that which is articulated as the source of justice and mercy, and the religion that those men relied upon. Between my every day growing aggression - mainly against my parents - and the repressive policies of secular state of Turkey, which has continued to *otherize* me as a citizen for being a practicing Muslim woman, I started to deconstruct my religion. This also corresponds to the time that I met a group of likeminded women under the roof of Capital City Women's Platform, which is one of the first Islamic feminist women's organizations in Turkey. This organization re-introduced me to the just and the merciful God, and I was able to continue my personal and professional journey. I raise the

CEU eTD Collection

[30] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, (Princeton University Press: 2005), pp. 29.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

issue of the 'personal' here because I believe that the personal is political, and I make myself a part of the embodied research that I have conducted. In addition, my personal path was shaped immensely by the words of Ruth Behar, who argues: ''to understand the nature of the observed well subjectivity of an observer, which influences the course of the observed, must be recognized.''[33] My very personal motivations and my interaction with Muslim communities over the past four years as I have experienced life as a veiled woman in different European countries have all contributed to the research questions and problematics that I raise in this thesis.

Valeria Yow argues that although there are different ways of conducting research or analyzing data for different disciplines, the recorded in-depth interview can offer answers to questions that no other methodology can provide.[34] Significantly she adds that the interview method allows for interaction between the researcher and the interviewee that permits the source to reflect upon the content and offer interpretation as well as facts.[35] Besides the idea of collecting first hand unique data through the in-depth interview method, this method also promises a certain level of representation and analysis of the social unit where interviewees reside. As Yow puts it: ''individual testimony may indeed contain references to the larger group and articulate a shared reality.''[36] It was based on convincing analyses by ethnographers such as Ruth Behar, Valerie Yow and others that I developed my research method based primarily on in-depth interviews and on results from participant-observation studies.

When I started my research amongst active Muslim women my main goal was to find a feminist awareness grounded in Islamic principles. I brought my personal experiences into

CEU eTD Collection

[33] Ruth Behar, ''Chapter 1: The Vulnerable Observer'', *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), pp. 6.
[34] Valeria Yow, ''The In-Depth Interview as a Qualitative Research Method'', *Recording Oral History: A Guide fort he Humanities and Social Sciences*, Second Edition, (2005), pp.9.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid, 18.

conversation with Frank Peter's argument that Muslim youth organizations function as centers of transformation,[37] in order to argue that the engagement of Muslim women within the Muslim community and broader society affairs contributes to the formation of a distinct feminist awareness and leads them to become political and moral subjects/agents. Yow argues that while some scholars insist on approaching the research without hypothesis, some others support the idea of starting research that has articulated problems or questions that guide the interview process.[38] I followed the second process since I already had an argument in mind and my goal in conducting the research was to approve or disprove this hypothesis. Therefore, I set out to conduct fieldwork with a structured questionnaire. Yet, since the field has its own dynamics, which cannot be foreseen until one is involved in it, my questionnaire has changed quite a few times over the course of collecting the testimonies, and from the first interview, I have been exploring, interviewing and conducting observations of these communities in which Muslim women are active in participating in religious duty through *dawa* as part of their civic engagement in the Spanish state.

The process of collecting data occurred over a long period of time since I began the research in 2015 in Madrid. When I started, I did not have contact with any Muslims in Madrid and so I began to take classes at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Madrid every Saturday. By participating in these Islamic classes, I slowly befriended women at the Center and began to collect a group who were interested in being interviewed for the research. It was this kind of 'snowball effect' that I developed to strategize for including more participants over time. In total, I conducted twenty interviews with individual women who are active participants in the activities of the Muslim youth and women's organizations, and in the two Islamic cultural centers that I discuss in my chapters. I continued to live in Madrid for another year, and used

CEU eTD Collection

[37] Frank Peter, ''Individualization and Religious Authority in Western European Islam''. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2006, pp. 216.
[38] Valeria Yow, ''The In-Depth Interview as a Qualitative Research Method'', (2005), pp. 8.

that time to attend classes on Islam at the Mezquita de Estrecho and Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid, in addition to the other activities organized by Muslim women's organizations. The women became friends and colleagues, and I continued to socialize and spend time with them when I was in Madrid, and this very much helped me to understand their community and to integrate into their daily lives and rituals. Apart from interviews that I conducted, I participated in activities at various Muslim youth and women's organizations and two Islamic cultural centers, the Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid, Mezquita de Estrecho, and Association of Muslim Girls of Spain (ACHIME), Association of Young Muslims of Spain (AJME), Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), Federation of Islamic Groups for Cohabitation in Spain, and the Association of Young Muslims.

As a nervous first-time interviewer, I started conducting interviews with a structured questionnaire. I did also encourage my interlocutors to speak freely; I prefer to draw the boundaries of their testimonies via my pre-structured questionnaire to be able to contribute to my research objectives.[39] My questionnaire is divided into three main parts. Firstly, I tried to identify my sample's level of attachment to religion through the questions on their religious sources and the trajectory of the religious education they got. Then, I identified the most problematic issues, which lead hot debates inside and outside of the Muslim world, to assess their approach to these issues. Questions formulated around these controversial issues such as polygamy, unequal gender relations, which can be summarized as superiority of men over women and tying some basic rights of women to men's permission and entitling men as the guardians of women, helped me to assess my respondents' level of engagement with religious sources and their understanding of gender equality. I shaped these questions based on an Islamic feminist discourse, which has been shaped around controversial issues such as revising a

CEU eTD Collection

[39] Monica Ferreira, *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Ed. By Johann Mouton and HC Marais, (HSRC Publishers: South Africa, 1996), 213.

women's place in Islam as a challenge to men's authority on the religion. Therefore, formulating these questions was significant as they uncovered the attitudes of my respondents towards religion, either as active legible agents who negotiate with the authorities over their position in Islam or accept the positions they are given. The last part of my questionnaire is made of questions on the activities my interviewees participate in to uncover their goals and motivations and the impacts of these activities on them.

All interviews were conducted in Madrid and in different locations, such as parks, cafes, classrooms and prayer halls of one of the two Islamic cultural centers, and for the most part I allowed the interviewees to pick their own location. Nineteen of the interviews were conducted in Spanish while only one interview was recorded in English. Interviews lasted between 45-75 minutes and all were recorded on audiotape. With respect for the anonymity of these women and care for their security on an ongoing basis, I had my husband who is a native Spanish speaker transcribe the interviews, and have changed all of the names in favor of pseudonyms apart from in the case of Yasmin Salem who consented to being named and is a public figure of sorts amongst active Muslim women.

At the beginning of my research I did not determine my interviewees based on their socio-economic status and age variables. Yet, after finishing my interviews and participating in the activities of Muslim organizations and Islamic cultural centers, I realized that this group is made up of very young women who come from similar socio-economic backgrounds. The mean age of the women I interviewed was 24.15, and twelve of those women were below 22 years old when I first interviewed them in 2015. The youngest woman I spoke with was 15 years old while the oldest was 38 years old (in 2015). The majority of my interlocutors are descended from families of Moroccans who have settled in Spain, and in addition two were born Spanish-Syrian mixed families, and one was a Spanish convert to Islam. From the group, fifteen of the women were born in Spain, whilst two of them came to Spain as children, ad three of them

CEU eTD Collection

moved to Spain as adults (aged 22, 23 and 26 years respectively). The youngest interviewees were at the end of their high school education while many were preparing to start university or had just started. At the time I started my interviews, seventeen of my interlocutors wore the *hijab,* and all of the women were actively engaged in the activities of Muslim youth and women's organizations and in the Islamic cultural centers. Moreover, while some of them are volunteers at these organizations, others are presidents, board members and facilitators.

In defining my positionality and my sense of belonging as both inside and outside of these communities of Muslim women, I relied on Binaya Subedi's concept of the 'halfie' researcher.[40] Subedi defines the term 'halfie' as the identities and experiences of researchers whose national or cultural identity is mixed because of migration, overseas education or parentage.[41] Subedi notes: ''halfie aspect of identity is a useful space to foreground the positionalities of postcolonial researchers who negotiate transnational identities.''[42] Since my sample is made up of Muslim women, being a practicing Muslim and woman made me an insider in the sense that I can participate fully in their religious duty and rituals, and this puts me at an advantaged position in terms of the kind of research I can collect from these women. Being female helped me access these women in personal and sacred spaces, and it is inevitable that a male researcher would not have had the kind of access that I was party to in the groups I attended or in personal time I spent with the women. Although many of these young Muslim women give interviews to local or national newspapers and journals, even as a female researcher I encountered reservations on the part of women who were hesitant to speak on delicate topics, and particularly in the current climate where Muslims can be easily labeled as terrorists in Europe.

CEU eTD Collection

[40] Binaya Subedi, ''Theorizing a 'halfie' researcher's identity in transnational fieldwork'', International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Vol. 19, No. 5, (2006), pp. 573.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Binaya Subedi, ''Theorizing a 'halfie' researcher's identity in transnational fieldwork'', (2006), pp. 573.

One other aspect that gave me the unique kind of access that I needed to conduct this research was the fact that I am a practicing Muslim, which means I was automatically perceived as being a part of the same global Islamic community or *umma*. Despite national and ethnic differences, my interviewees and I share a sense of an Islamic culture with a common Islamic historical background with its certain narratives and cultural codes. Understanding the history and meaning of the *umma* helped me to access women through pathways established through religious organizations and groups. As a Muslim who was raised and socialized within a Turkish style *Sunni* Islamic family, the position of the Turks with regards to Europe made me an outsider. However, Turkey's position in the recent refugee crisis and the massive exportation of Turkish television series to Arab countries has made Turkey quite popular in the Arab world and even in some European countries.[43] Moreover, my Spanish language skills also helped me to reach and communicate with my interlocutors easily, which also saved me from encountering the potential difficulties and of using a translator. Therefore, eventually these elements worked out well to balance my outsider position. Living in Spain for three years never really made me an insider, but neither was I an outsider since I understood the local context from a particular perspective, and I believe that both of these positions shaped my ability to access these women and conduct this research.

CEU eTD Collection

[43] Turkish TV series are increasingly being screened in Arab countries. The cultural and social effects of Turkish TV series on Arab countries is an issue widely debated on newspapers. For instance see 'The Rise of Turkish Soap Power' on BBC http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22282563 or 'The Turkish Drama on the Arab World' on Research Turkey http://researchturkey.org/turkish-drama-in-the-arab-world-social-impacts-religious-reaction-and-dramatic-void-in-the-arab-world/ .

# Chapter I. Crafting a European *Dawa*: The Historical Roots of *Dawa* and Migration of Ideas

*Dawa*, as a core theological concept of spreading the faith within Islam, has long been practiced by women as well as men in Europe. Its spread in Europe corresponds to the 1960s, when increasing Muslim population in Europe became an issue widely discussed among Islamic scholars and theologians regarding the Muslims' juridical status in a non-Muslim context. Europe has been entitled by Islamic scholars as *dar al-dawa* or the land of preaching because many Islamic scholars argue that for a Muslim the only legitimate way of long term stay in a non-Muslim land would be performing *dawa*. Moreover, as *dawa* movements influential in Muslim countries, such as Egypt and Pakistan, encountered political opposition and repression many among the leaders of these movements took refuge to Europe and North America. This led to emergence of a *dawa* movement distinct to the western countries. Even though, Muslims in the western countries, in Europe and North America, are divided between different racial, ethnic and national origins, which foster the distinct organizational and philosophical approaches of practicing *dawa*, there are certain commonalities between the *dawa* performed in Europe and North America. These commonalities of practicing *dawa* in these two distinct contexts stem from the common ideological and methodological roots they share, which I will trace back in the next section. Thus, though my focus is on a European *dawa* to locate the findings of my research under and to establish an analytical frame, I use the general western expressions of *dawa* as well, which is also informed by the North American *dawa*. Since there are very few studies generated on contemporary *dawa* movement in Spain, most of which focus on the *dawa* movements originated from Asia, such as Tablighi Jama'at, crafting a European *dawa* is necessary to position the Spanish case within. In this context, the purpose of this chapter is to map out the *dawa* movement in both global and local context. I begin with a brief introduction of *dawa* as a concept and practice that is foundational to Islam. Furthermore, this



CEU eTD Collection

chapter traces the intellectual roots of the *dawa* movement through an examination of how the it has influenced contemporary *dawa* movements within the context of Europe. As it is not possible to talk about a homogenous Muslim community in the western countries there are commonalities that bind these groups and individuals who are dispersed across different borders, and it is these similarities that foster distinct organizational and philosophical approaches. Therefore, while defining the western and European *dawa* rather than relying on a certain group or groups I prefer to focus on the employed methods commonly used among *dawa* movements to identify a pattern. Consequently, that pattern will be my frame while analyzing the data I collected from my field research which constitutes the second chapter of this work.

The literal meaning of *dawa* is an ''invitation'' or a ''call to Islam'' where the call invites the believer to embark upon an ''Islamic Mission''.[44] As scholar Nina Wiedl points out, *Surat an-Nahl* verse 125 takes as its mission the call to, ''Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them (non-Muslims) in ways that are best,'' and indicates that *dawa* is prescribed as an obligation of all Muslims by the Qur'an.[45] Isma'il Al-Faruqi, a renowned scholar of Islamic theology at the Temple University, positions *dawa* as a mission that defines the purpose of man's existence by referring to the verses from Qur'an (Surat al-Baqarah, verse 30 and Surat al-Ahzab, verse 72) which indicate the exclusive role of mankind as a *khalif* (vice-regent) on earth incumbent with moral responsibility.[46] Faruqi argues that no Muslim can ever claim to have reached the uppermost limits of faith because it is never a ''*fait accompli*'', rather it is a process which sometimes grows, whilst at other times it shrinks.[47] *Dawa* is therefore almost never limited to the calling of non-Muslims exclusively;

CEU eTD Collection

[44] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 3. Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', Current Treds in Islamist Ideology, Vol. 9, 2010, pp. 120.
[45] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Vol. 9, 2010, pp. 120.
[46] Isma'il Al-Faruqi, ''On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah'', International Review of Mission, Vol. LXV, No. 260 (October 1976), pp. 392.
[47] Ibid, pp. 393.

rather it targets both Muslims as well as non-Muslims. *Dawa* is addressed to fellow Muslims in order to encourage them in their struggle to lead more devout and pious lives. To non-Muslims, it asks them to ‘‘join the ranks of those who make the pursuit of God’s pattern supreme’’.[48] And yet, the *dawa* mission as it is addressed to non-Muslims does not coerce them into accepting Islam, and as Faruqi argues, there is ‘‘no coercion in religion (Qur’an: 2:256), that as it is an invitation objective of it can be fulfilled only with the free consent of the called.’’.[49] Therefore, even in the case of Muslims who are compelled to actively ‘‘call’’ and ‘‘invite’’ others to the faith, this form of proselytizing remains within the boundaries of peaceful preaching and prohibits a form of forced conversion.[50]

Larry Poston’s work focuses on *dawa* in western countries, and he outlines two main ways of performing *dawa*, based on the history of Islamic revival through a broader movement known as Salafism. The first practice of *dawa* in the west constitutes the ‘‘external-institutional level,’’ which initiates an Islamization of society through a top-down approach.[51] Since military conquest alone cannot force people to abandon their beliefs, according to this method, Muslim authorities can set up Islamic institutions to create centers for Islamic education to encourage individuals to enter the Islamic faith. This kind of top-down model was employed during the conquests from the early years of Islam on through the constitution of mosques, *madrasas*, as educational institutions, legislative systems based on *Shari’a* law, and Islamic systems of banking and finance, as we see today in the Arab Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates).[52] The second method is at the ‘‘internal-personal’’[53] level, which entails a bottom up approach that works by creating a subject oriented means of

CEU eTD Collection

[48] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da’wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 6.
[49] Isma‘il Al-Faruqi, ‘‘On the Nature of Islamic Da’wah’’, (1976), pp. 391.
[50] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da’wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 4-5.
[51] Ibid, pp. 49.
[52] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da’wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 14-15.
[53] Ibid, pp. 49.

conversion and practice. *Dawa* in this form is a service that an individual provides as part of their practice, and so spreading *dawa* through public centers like schools and mosque complexes is also a key part of this individually-focused education. This second method suggests an Islamization process based on spreading the *word* –by means of the Qur'an- amongst the masses, individually and/or as part of grassroots organizations and local or community-based Muslim institutions.

As I indicate at the beginning of above section, my definition of the *dawa* movement in Europe does not depend on the practices or actions of any one specific group. One of the main reasons to take such a position is that there are countless groups and communities -big and small- that influence *dawa* in both local and transnational spaces in Europe. Even though some of these groups depend on the similar intellectual sources they tend to differ immensely in terms of ideology and practice while conducting *dawa*. For instance, Salafism is commonly used to identify both the nineteenth century revivalists and various contemporary Islamist trends.[54] However, as Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke argue in their article, ''The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood'', the terminology of '*Salafism*' is borrowed and utilized by different groups which follow entirely different ideologies and employ distinctive methods:

> When we asked Muslim Brothers in the Middle East and Europe whether they considered themselves Salafists (as they are frequently identified), they usually met our question with a Clintonian response: ''That depends on what your definition of Salafist is.'' If by Salafism we meant the modernist, renaissance Islam of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh (turn-of-the-twentieth-century reformers who influenced Banna), then yes, they were Salafists. Yet the ubiquitous Web site www.salafipublications.com, which is run by Salafists who believe that religion should never mix with politics and that existing rulers should be supported almost unconditionally, attacks Afghani and Abduh for being ''far away from the Salafi *aqida*.''[55]

CEU eTD Collection

[54] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, (Columbia University Press, New York: 2010), pp. 63.

[55] Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke in ''The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood'', Foreign Affairs, Vol. 86, No. 2, (2007), pp. 112. To get more information on the latter understanding of Salafism quoted above, particularly the role of women within this movement, see Anabel Inge, *The Making of a Muslim Salafi Woman: Paths to Conversion*, Oxford Scholarship Online: 2016.

In order to attempt to define one particular process within this reform of *Salafism –dawa-* I focus and frame my study on the understanding of *dawa* practice employed by Larry Posten in *Islamic Da'wah in the West.* This seminal work traces two movements that flourished within the Muslim world and spread world-wide: *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* (The Muslim Brothers), founded and led by Hasan Al-Banna in Egypt, and *Jama'at-i Islami*, founded by Abul A'la Mawdudi in India.[56] I examine these two movements mainly because the Islamic thinkers who currently have been influential on shaping a distinct European *dawa*, not only have direct links with these two movements, but also they follow the main teachings of these two movements. Both movements display notable similarities in matters of ideology and praxis, and despite the fact that they originated and evolved in vastly different countries and contexts.[57] Poston positions these two thinkers as the pioneers of modern Islamic pietism and he argues that the majority of activist Muslims have adopted an internal-personal methodology that relies on the teachings and methods of Al-Banna and Mawdudi.[58] Although Poston's work is focused primarily on North America, he argues that the framework developed in his book is applicable to the European *dawa* movements in addition to *dawa* sustained and nurtured in Spain.

The ideological roots of what is today commonly referred to as political Islam or Islamic revivalism go back to late nineteenth century and the fall of the Ottoman Empire when Islamic thinkers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (Persia), Mohammed Abduh (Egypt) and Rashid Rida (Syria) struggled to understand why the Muslim world was in such a state of crisis.[59] The main ideas put forward by these leading thinkers favored the attempt to revive the Islamic faith through a combination of reviewing traditional practices of worship, and also in deciding which

CEU eTD Collection

[56] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 64.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 64.
[59] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, 2010, pp. 62.

elements of western life worked within the guidelines established in the Qur'an.[60] Relying on the ideological heritage of these revivalist thinkers, Hasan Al-Banna embraced an internal-personal method of activism that sought a ''spiritual awakening'' among individual as ''a people cannot be saved until individuals are.''[61] The main goal of the movement was the Islamization of every aspect of life through individual 'correct' practice in order to establish a clear Islamic order in the secularized/westernized Egyptian society. The Islamic order Al-Banna intended to establish was not only targeted towards the Islamization of the state, but also through a complementary bottom-up approach to comprehends every facet of human life.[62] According to the Al-Banna an Islamic order pointed to a society where Islam permeates all aspects of a given society and acts as a ''leavening agent''.[63] Larry Poston identifies four main objectives of Muslim Brotherhood towards establishing an Islamic order: making every individual a true Muslim, developing the Muslim family on Islamic lines, establishing a Muslim community (*umma*), and establishing an Islamic state in Egypt.[64] What differs Al-Banna's approach of Islamization of society from the early Muslim conquerors' Islamic order was that Muslim conquerors aimed at establishing influential economic, social and educative institutions to attract the non-Muslims to the faith, while Al-Banna started his mission from masses to work upward toward gaining control over the social and cultural institutions.[65]

*Jama'at-I Islami* was founded and led by Abul A'la Mawdudi is the second most significant movement currently shaping contemporary *dawa* practices in western contexts. Just like Al-Banna Mawdudi believed that the best way to transform a society and establish an Islamic order was by the creation of a small, informed, dedicated and disciplined group that

CEU eTD Collection

[60] Brigitte Marachel, *The Muslim Brothers in Europe Roots and Discourse*, (Brill, Leiden and Boston: 2008), pp. 21-22.
[61] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 66.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (1992), pp. 67.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

centered around individual Muslims who were required to dedicate their time to taking over the reins of social and political leadership.[66] Even though, Mawdudi's preaching indicates that it is part of an active and political form of Islamic practice that also focuses its efforts on the economic and social implications of Islamic *dawa*, his main focus was the inner life of individual Muslims. In other words, for Mawdudi, achieving complete submission to God's commands precedes any other mundane aspirations such as taking over the political and social leadership.[67] Mawdudi implemented ''a purely pietistic'' methodology that targeted masses as well as educated classes.[68] He sent preachers to spread the faith in the villages of West Pakistan and to replace the leadership that has been rebel against God with a God-conscious one, though he never envisioned a military junta.[69] Poston argues that even though taking over the leadership was an eventual target, the political and the mundane aspects of Mawdudi's movement had never been more important than transforming the world through spreading the faith by transforming the individual Muslim spiritually.[70]

In summary, the main approach of Al-Banna and Mawdudi was built on a bottom-up methodology which primarily targeted pious Muslim individuals through the efforts of whom they hoped an Islamic order would be established in their respective countries. Similarly, the work of theologian Khurram Murad, whose efforts became influential to spread the European *dawa* movement, focused on connecting the interpersonal with the political by reinforcing exactly what can be considered part of this political activism: ''Any act performed in power perspectives –to influence others- is considered a political act … thus *da'wah, tabligh, jihad* and all interpersonal relations are, to some extent, political; so are all relations within social

CEU eTD Collection

[66] Ibid, pp. 70.
[67] Ibid, pp. 73.
[68] Ibid, pp. 74.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid, pp. 77.

institutions and structures.''[71] Therefore, even though it is claimed that the political aspirations never precluded the ambition of Muslim individuals within these movements, at least for the leading thinkers, it is evident that political consequences were of importance to these movements. Thus, since these movements have connected social and political revival to a personal and spiritual idea of reform, they have become influential in shaping contemporary *dawa* practices- and the movement broadly- that exist entirely separately to radical 'terror' groups who exist on the fringes of these debates. Moreover, the strong focus of these two movements on transforming the individual Muslim constitutes the basis of a European *dawa* movement and reflects the primary characteristics of the *dawa* practiced among active Muslim women in Spain.

### I.I. European Dawa: Main Thinkers and the Methods

Throughout the post-colonial period, the Muslim presence in western countries –in particular North America and Europe- has increased immensely, as have the emergence of Muslim scholars who are publicly redefining centuries-old religious practices and interpretations through open seminars.[72] One of the main subjects that these scholars tend to focus on is the re-evaluation of *dar al-Islam*, which refers to the land of Islam and the true believers (sometimes categorized today as the 'Muslim world'), and *dar al-harb*, which indicates non-Muslims lands against which holy war must be fought.[73] Taking into consideration the current minority situation of Muslims in the West, Islamic scholars argue that *dar al-harb* becomes a concept that has lost its validity sine there is no opportunity to usurp the political and social system. Despite ongoing panic across western countries regarding the

CEU eTD Collection

[71] Ibid, pp. 82.
[72] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, 2010, pp. 108.
[73] Ibid.

potential imposition of *Sharia* law, there is an understanding amongst most revivalists that it is impossible to practice *sharia* outside of *dar al-Islam*. Furthermore, since Muslims by law have the right to freely practice their religion, Lorenzo Vidino argues that there is not the impetus for political overthrow in order to establish a *sharia* state. Thus, scholars have created a new legal category, *dar al-dawa,* which means the land of preaching, or a territory on which religion can be spread peacefully.[74] While some contemporary Islamic scholars argue that Muslim presence in non-Muslim countries is only justified in qualified cases, such as for the purposes of tourism, diplomatic missions, trade and study purposes, Isma'il Al-Faruqi argues that for a Muslim to assume permanent residence outside the *dar al-Islam* implies the responsibility for being a *dai,* or one who performs *dawa*.[75] Therefore, performing *dawa* is considered by certain contemporary theologians as a compulsory duty for Muslims, and can also become a way of justifying his/her presence in a non-Muslim context.

In this section, I outline the main beliefs and practices of Islamic scholars and theologians who see Europe as *dar al-dawa,* or a land where *dawa* must be practiced so that the Islamic faith can be spread, and thus specific ways of performing *dawa* should be practiced. The scholars I indicate in this section are significant because their methods and ideas become influential to the European *dawa* movements, and they mostly fall within the genealogy of Islamic thought outlined briefly above. The prominent and influential thinkers that I will focus the next section on are as follows: Khurram Murad, an Indo-Pakistani thinker, Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, the prominent spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Tariq Ramadan, grandson of Hasan Al-Banna, Swiss intellectual and activist. It is significant to identify the *dawa* formed by these thinkers in a European context as the *dawa* performed by active Muslim

CEU eTD Collection

[74] Ibid.

[75] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', 2010, pp. 123.

women in a Spanish context, I examine the details of which in the following chapter, fits well under this frame.

One of the main thinkers who contributed significantly to the construction of a European *dawa* movement is Khurram Murad who is a disciple of Mawdudi. In 1978, he was appointed as head of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, Great Britain and in this role he published his most important works on European *dawa*, *Islamic Movement: Reflection on Some Issues* (1981), *Dawah Among Non-Muslims in the West* (1986), *Muslim Youth in the West: Towards a New Education Strategy* (1986), during his stay in Leicester.[76] According to Murad, *dawa* in a western context must be performed for two reasons: spreading the Islamic faith to non-Muslims is a religious obligation of all Muslims, and –more importantly for the purposes of this study- he believes that Muslims must practice *dawa* to fight their assimilations into a non-Islamic and secular culture, thus maintaining their Islamic identity.[77] In order to target *dawa* towards both Muslims and non-Muslims, Murad identifies a two-pronged approach, in which the first approach is articulated as the creation of ''Muslim islands'' where Muslims can control their neighborhood and community institutions through a religious education and concerted efforts at *dawa* while remaining open to non-Muslims. The second approach, according to Murad, is to expand the boundaries of *dawa,* and to engage in ''extra-*ummaic*'' *dawa*.[78] Murad aspires to create a European Islam by transforming it from a culturally exotic and alien religion to a religion that could become part of European society. With the full awareness of the European context and its histories of Empire, Murad suggests that Muslims engaged in *dawa* in western countries should use a new language that is not based on purely religious terms, and particularly in the case of *dawa* targeted to non-Muslims. Furthermore, he advises fellow Muslims to avoid

CEU eTD Collection

[76] Ibid, pp. 124.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid, pp. 124-125.

terminology that might evoke negative associations with Islam.[79] Additionally, he calls for rejection of violence while creating a 'European Islam' which would be spread through *dawa*.[80]

Murad clearly rejects the idea of military *jihad* to spread the Islam as he believes that rejecting the idea of *jihad* in a European context is the only way for maintaining a successful *dawa* movement in Europe.[81] Thus, even though Murad believes that each European country requires development of different strategies depending on the distinct conditions of each to perform an effective *dawa*, he suggests establishing ''home movements'' through which locals of each country can identify their own problems and build their own local strategies.[82] Moreover, Murad points to the importance of including converts within *dawa* movements as they can be more effective on communicating their people.[83] Lastly, acknowledging the secular order of European society, Murad suggests offering Islamic perspectives on non-religious matters such as unemployment, imperialism and nuclear weapons while practicing *dawa* rather than focusing on religious issues.[84] The methods and approaches Murad offers clearly separates him from Al-Banna and Mawdudi, who eventually targeted taking over the political and social leadership, and instead lay the foundations of a distinct European Islam.

The second contemporary Islamic scholar who is influencing the spread of European *dawa* is Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi who has been very active at implementing a bold new vision for Islamic *dawa* and the establishment of a basis for the international Muslim Brotherhood in the west.[85] Qaradawi founded the European Center for Fatwa and Research in 1997 in Dublin, Ireland. It is a council, mainly made of non-European Sunni scholars, that seeks

CEU eTD Collection

[79] Ibid, pp. 127.
[80] Ibid, pp. 125.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', 2010, pp. 126.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, (2010), pp. 24.

to develop a European interpretation of Islamic law.[86] He is also one of the founders of the transnational Islamic website IslamOnline. Qaradawi believes that through *dawa* Islam will become a dominant religious and political power in Europe. That is why he views *dawa*, a peaceful preaching method that is required for Muslims as a permanent tool. Qaradawi follows an ideological stream called *wasatiyya* (the middle way) that requires the application of *sharia* in all spheres of human life. Yet, taking into consideration the current circumstances of Muslim and non-Muslim societies, the *wasatiyya* ideology is based upon the discovery of religiously legitimate ways of adapting to the contemporary realities of life.[87]

In comparison to Murad, Qaradawi's approach is a more practical reading of the text, and how he defines *ijtihad,* or critical reasoning of Islamic sources. In doing so, he indicates how changing historical conditions require a different approach since earlier understandings of this critical reasoning were employed when far less Muslims had the capabilities of interpreting the text. On the basis of a modern understanding of this critical reasoning, Qaradawi advocates employing far less restrictive rules for Muslims practice in Europe. Furthermore, Qaradawi also encourages Muslims to study and acquire important positions in media, the arts, and the human and social sciences in order to influence European society, since he believes that diverse intellectual and media-based activities will ultimately create a pro-Islamic environment. His realistic approach to contemporary issues is evident in his arguments for improving the image of Islam in the west: ''We should seek … to improve our image in the eyes of the West ….an image of violence, fanaticism, bloody collision with others and neglect of freedoms and human rights, particularly the rights of minorities and women.''[88] Thus, Qaradawi is in favor of reviewing Islamic rules to permit Muslims to participate in European society to a greater degree

CEU eTD Collection

[86] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', 2010, pp. 128.
[87] Ibid, pp. 130.
[88] Dr. Yousef al Qaradawi, Priorities of Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase: (http://shibircloud.com/pdf/priorities_of_Islamic_movement_in_the_coming_phase.pdf)

than classical interpretations of Islamic law commonly used until recently had permitted, and therefore easing the practicalities of practicing *dawa*.[89]

Qaradawi is such an interesting figure in the contemporary movement because he also attempts to Islamicize widely-used western political concepts like feminism, democracy and civil and human rights. Through his *fatwas* and religious decrees, he argues that women are not inferior to Muslim men since a reading of the Quran clearly indicates that all are equal before Allah, whereas in the case of gender equality –for example- he feels compelled to note that he derives his understanding of equality from Quran but not from western comprehension of gender equality.[90] Yet Lorenzo Vidino argues that some *fatwas* given by Qaradawi clearly pay no heed to the concept of equality between men and women. For instance, Qaradawi argues that ''the man is the lord of the house and the head of the family''.[91] Moreover, he makes his bias clear in his discussion of women cutting their hair where he judges them harshly should they not ask permission of their husbands first.[92] Thus, it is not easy to reach clear-cut conclusions on Qaradawi's ideas on gender equality and the role of women in the contemporary Islamic thought.

Tariq Ramadan, the last intellectual I examine the ideas and approaches of in this section, is among the leading thinkers and activists who are contributing to shaping a European *dawa* movement. Ramadan describes himself as an adherent of reformist Salafist ideology that relies on the pedagogy of the founders of Islamic modernism, Said al-Din-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. Ramadan rejects literalist interpretations of the Qur'an and suggests adopting a holistic approach, which takes into consideration the historical and critical hermeneutic approach. This approach is utilized by contemporary liberal reformers and it

CEU eTD Collection

[89] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', 2010, pp. 132.
[90] Ibid, pp. 131.
[91] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, 2010, pp. 236.
[92] Ibid, 38-39.

constitutes the basis of current interpretations of an 'Islamic feminism'. Ramadan tries to reconcile Islam and modernity, by arguing that a culturally and politically unique "Euro-Islam," which draws upon Qaradawi's "European Islam," can be constructed by European Muslims.[93]

Ramadan's conception of Euro-Islam implies the integration with European society, and self-conscious understanding of 'being European' since he doesn't see Muslim identity and European identity as mutually exclusive. He claims that today Muslims are already European and it is possible and desirable to be ''at the same time … totally Muslim and totally European.''[94] Ramadan develops a new Europeanized version of Islamic concepts such as social justice to demonstrate the reconciliation of Islamic and European values. These efforts of Ramadan reveal his aspirations of mitigating western fears of Islam, and attracting new converts in order to improve the image of Islam in Europe through *dawa*.[95] Moreover, he calls Muslims and non-Muslims ''brothers in humanity''.[96] According to Nina Wiedl this term suggests ''a universal expansion of the Islamic motif of brotherhood to include non-Muslims.'' [97] In line with his aspirations of improving the image of Islam, he indicates the necessity of utilization of a gentler language that is more amenable to European sensibilities. Ramadan aims at improving the image of Islam also by reaching out to new target groups such as activist in feminism, civil rights, freedoms of religious practice and democratic principles. Ramadan promotes his ideas of Euro-Islam through his civil activities which are organized under the umbrella of the European Network of Muslims, of which he is founder and president, and whose aim is stated as follows:

> The EMN calls upon Muslims to realize their responsibility and participate in the construction of an Islam in Europe that is modern, defiant, reflective and self-conscious,

CEU eTD Collection

[93] Tariq Ramadan, ''Europeanization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?'' in *Islam: Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*, edited by Shireen T. Hunter (Westport and Connecticut and London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), pp. 123.

[94] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', 2010, pp. 136.

[95] Ibid, pp. 136.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

> for the benefit of the European society at large and in the interest of the Muslim communities in Europe in particular. It is our goal to demonstrate that Islamic teachings and values are in harmony with the rights and responsibilities of a European Muslim citizen.[98]

Ramadan also directs Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, which tackles issues from economics, medicine & bioethics, education, media, to gender studies, migration & human rights, and spirituality & general ethics.[99] Nina Wiedl indicates that Ramadan interprets the Islamic feminism as equality in the eyes of Allah as opposed to gender equality, and he finds repression of women to be un-Islamic. Wiedl claims that even though Ramadan states: ''you cannot establish an Islamic society only with half of the population,'' for him the primary role of woman remains that of wife and mother, and the hijab is a religious -though not enforceable- obligation.[100] And yet, Ramadan's close cooperation with prominent Islamic feminist scholar activists, such as Malika Hamidi, who is director general of European Network of Muslims, may indicate that he is changing his opinions on these issues.

By tracing the main philosophical and methodological approaches that currently shape and impact *dawa* movements in a European context, this chapter has mapped the topography and epistemology of religious practices of spreading the Islamic faith. Differing ideas on performing *dawa* at an organizational level and amongst the masses reveals a significant pattern that indicates some distinctive features of a European practice of *dawa*. This distinct European practice of *dawa* is designed for a non-Muslim context, and despite being conducted by different groups and led and shaped by different leaders and thinkers, it shows a set of commonalities between these approaches in terms of how they approach the practical application of Islamic duty in everyday life outside of the 'Muslim world'.

CEU eTD Collection

[98] Official website of EMN: http://eumuslim.net/about-emn/. Accessed: 18.05.2017.

[99] CILE: https://www.cilecenter.org/en/activities/052017-cile-granada-summer-school-2017/. Accessed 18.05.2017.

[100] Nina Wiedl, ''Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West'', 2010, pp. 137.

Notwithstanding the slight differences among the articulations of *dawa* and the ways it is performed between different groups, European *dawa* reveals some significant defining features that help us locate Spanish Muslim organizations within the framework of European *dawa*. This understanding of *dawa* in a European context is defined by the idea of peaceful preaching in *dar al-dawa*, and thus rejects the kind of violence practiced by Islamist radical groups. By practicing a non-violence *dawa*, active Muslim women in Spain, as my interlocutors, participate in a practice that rejects the idea of forced conversion of non-Muslims as part of the *dawa* mission. European *dawa* is designed to target Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and for whom different objectives and methods are identified. There is also an understanding that the practice as advocated by the *salafs* – the first generation who practiced the religion in its 'pure' form with the present example of the prophet – cannot be interpreted literally because the realities of life today in Europe are entirely different to those in early Islam. *Dawa* targeted towards non-Muslims is developed on the idea of restoring the negative image of Islam through a new language that adopts the tone of European secular arguments and the rationality of liberal thought.

### I.II. Locating Women within the Dawa Movement

Women's participation in Islamic revival that includes the duty of *dawa* has received new attention amongst many interesting parties over the past decade – including feminists. In this sense, Saba Mahmood's work on women as active agents of the *dawa* movement was an early cornerstone to positioning women as central to reform within Islam. Even though Mahmood's work focuses on the core theoretical conceptions rather than being solely a work of anthropology, it also provides significant information regarding the techniques and methods Muslim women employed to build pious selves primarily through a mosque movement.

CEU eTD Collection

Anabel Inge's book has the potential to impact the field of European Muslim studies in a similar fashion, since her book is one of the first models of its kind to observe and interview women who are active in the Salafist reform movement. Inge's work is focused on Salafi women in the UK, and in terms of how we analyze the place of the women with relation to dawa, Inge does not represent the European *dawa* movement in the same way, since her work offers significant insights on women's place in Islamic revival movements and helps me to identify the gap in the literature.

*Salafism,* as a vast and convoluted movement that struggles to claim any one means of 'reforming' Islam, doesn't form a homogenous movement and even has become a movement with mixed and even opposing tendencies.[101] That is why, it causes confusion among the public, as Roel Meijer argues ''what makes *Salafisim* so difficult to define is its ambiguity and fragmentation.''[102] Moreover, different than other groups practicing *dawa* in Europe which engage in community work and political activism, *Salafis* adopt an organizational form of transmitting knowledge based on informal teaching relations.[103] Inge's extensive field research reveals that Brixton Mosque became known for its uncompromising adherence to socially conservative version of Islam –*Salafism*- which is also considered 'purist', definition of Islamic daily practice and ritual, as well as its equally uncompromising opposition to *Jihadi* groups in most cases, although as Meijer also notes, there is a complicated Salafi-jihadi movement arising that depends on violent overthrow of foreign states, and threatens the reform movement from the inside.[104] Inge argues that Salafi

CEU eTD Collection

[101] Roel Meijer, *Golbal Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, Colombia University Press: 2011, pp.3.
[102] Roel Meijer, Golbal Salafism, 2011, pp. 3.
[103] Ibid, 102.
[104] Anabel Inge, *The Making of a Muslim Salafi Woman: Paths to Conversion*, Oxford Scholarship Online: 2016. 35.

community offers an oasis of tranquility particularly for the dislocated refugees and immigrants thus becomes a safe center attracts many who eventually convert to Islam.[105]

Inge shows that there are strict gender based divisions within the community which tends to exclude women from the official leadership roles. Therefore, women organize their own study circles maintained at private homes.[106] Moreover, women are expected to attend the community's events regularly, make financial contributions, perform *dawa,* and marry someone from the community –and potentially accept a polygamous marriage.[107] Moreover, strict gender segregation takes place on all occasions and women are encouraged to avoid free mixing when they are out of community circles as well.[108]

The work of Schirin Amir-Moazami and Jeanette S. Jouili conducted among mosque going women in France and Germany reveals some commonalities with the *dawa* movement I examined throughout the above section. According to the findings of their field research, the *dawa* performed by mosque-going women appear to be undertaken as a less missionary spirit with the goal to convert, but rather with the idea of rectification of negative representation of Islam within European public spheres.[109] Yet, rather than combining the *dawa* with civic engagement the women Moazami and Jouili worked with practice a *dawa* concentrated on the acquisition and dissemination of religious knowledge.

Different than other studies done on Muslim women's participation to Islamic movements, my thesis offers a combination of several aspects on Muslim women's *dawa* practices in the Spanish context. As a different approach to the women's involvement in *dawa* movements, besides the mosque circles, I intend to reveal the relationship between the

CEU eTD Collection

[105] Ibid, 42.
[106] Ibid, 45.
[107] Ibid, 100.
[108] Ibid, 143.
[109] Shirin Amir Moazami & Jeanette S. Jouili, ''Knowledge, Empowerment and Religious Authority Among Pious Muslim Women in France and Germany'', 2008, pp. 69.

civic engagement and *dawa* practices, which pose significant challenges to the secular public sphere of Spanish state.

CEU eTD Collection

## Chapter II. *Dawa* as a Duty of Civic Participation: The Case of Muslim Women in Spain

As I examine in the first chapter, *dawa* as an Islamic mission and an obligation of Muslims is practiced in a number of different ways across Europe, and it can be a powerful tool to negotiate the negative views of Europeans regarding 'new' Muslim refugees and migrants. Muslim organizations at an institutional level and individual Muslims at a personal level, are working to challenge the violent and extremist images of Islam across Europe, and they contend daily with growing anxieties over resources and employment which position them as outsiders who are taking away from the 'real' citizens. One of the ways in which Muslim women contest the distorted image of Islam that is portrayed publicly in mass media, is through civic engagement at an organizational level and at an individual level that challenge the secular character of European 'publics'.

In this chapter, I draw upon Talal Asad's positioning of the secular order as a disciplinary power to create normative religiosities, and Charles Hirschkind's concept of *counterpublic* in order to examine the negotiations between active Muslim women and the secular order through a liberal frame of civic engagement. Within this general theoretical frame my analysis is undertaken through the following two sections: the first determines how *dawa* is understood and performed at the organizational level, and the second explores the practice of *dawa* at the individual level. The goal of this chapter is to determine to what extent the objectives, activities, discourses and methods of Spanish Muslim organizations fit within the framework of European *dawa*, which is discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter. Moreover, I examine how the civic engagement of Muslim women in Madrid, and as Spanish citizens, becomes a way of conducting a moral duty – *dawa* – and how this is interpreted and performed by individual women at the interpersonal level. My analysis on the understanding and performance of *dawa* at an individual level constitutes the basis of the political subject

CEU eTD Collection

formation of Muslim women, who participate into the public sphere through the liberal frame of civic engagement.

Larry Posten identifies two main approaches to performing *dawa* in non-Muslim contexts: direct and indirect *dawa*. Direct *dawa* is explained as a form of ''*activistic preaching*''[110] of Islam, whilst indirect *dawa* is defined as ''lifestyle evangelism''.[111] Following these two main approaches of performing *dawa*, and keeping in mind the deterministic features of a European *dawa*, I analyze my data at two different interrelated levels. Firstly, as *activistic preaching* institutions, I examine the two main Islamic cultural centers that are functioning in Madrid. Then, as a representation of an indirect *dawa*, I examine Muslim youth and women's organizations through the testimonies of Muslim women who actively participate and generate the activities of these organizations.

*Observatorio Andalucí* is a demographic study on the population numbers of Muslims who currently live or reside in Spain, and is conducted by UCIDE, or Union of Islamic Communities of Spain. The report of *Observatorio Andalucí* suggests that the estimated population of Muslims in Spain by 2016 was almost two million (1.919.141), which corresponds to 4 % of the overall population of Spain.[112] Despite a long history of Muslims in the country, immigration from Muslim-majority countries since the 1980s to Spain has been fairly low in comparison with the rest of Europe. According to the Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, the Spanish state is defined as a secular state that protects and guarantees the freedom for all to practice their religion within its borders. Therefore, despite the fact that the Catholic Church continues to enjoy more rights in practice in Spain, the rights of all to

CEU eTD Collection

[110] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 1992, pp. 130.
[111] Ibid, pp. 117.
[112] Observatorio Andalucí, Estudio Demográfico de la Población Musulmana, UCIDE 2017, (http://ucide.org/sites/default/files/revistas/estademograf16.pdf (accessed: 21.05.217).

practice their faith is recognized by the state.[113] Moreover, the state has to develop cooperative relationships with all minority religions, such as Islam and Judaism, present in Spanish society.[114] In 1992, the Agreement of Cooperation with the Islamic Commission of Spain was created with the union of two major Muslim federations: the Spanish Federation of Religious Entities (FFERI) and the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE).[115] The Cooperation Agreement established the framework for the recognition of Islam as a religion rooted in Spanish society, and granted certain rights to Muslims and their organizations such as access to *halal* meat and the legal recognition of religious marriages.[116] Even though, Spanish state does not have an official state multicultural agenda, it continues to promote cultural activities amongst Muslim communities to encourage cultural activities amongst Muslim communities through the annual grants program of the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence (Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia).[117] The Foundation is part of the public sector, and was created by agreement of the Council of Ministers on 15 October 2004. The foundation aims to contribute to the implementation of programs and projects of cultural, educational and social integration of minority faiths by promoting the full rights to exercise religious freedoms.[118]

Jordi Moreras, a scholar who works on Muslims in Spain, argues that Spanish society is having trouble with acknowledging the cultural contribution of certain groups such as Muslims. Moreras indicates that this is a reflection of the ‘‘difficulties of its transformation into

CEU eTD Collection

[113] Jordi Moreras, ‘‘Muslims in Spain: Between the Historical Heritage and the Minority Construction’’, The Muslim World, Volume 92, Spring 2002, 133.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Elena Arigita, “Representing Islam in Spain: Muslim Identities and the Contestation of Leadership,” in *The Muslim Worlds*, Vol. 96 (2006) http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2006.00148.x/abstract (accessed: 12.05.2017).
[116] Jordi Moreras., *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe Vol. 1*, edited by Jørgen S. Nielsen et al. (Boston: Leiden, 2009), 321.
[117] Jordi Moreras, *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe Vol. 2*, edited by Jørgen S. Nielsen et al. *(*Boston: Leiden, 2010), 482.
[118] Jordi Moreras, edited, *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe Vol. 2*, 482. For more information on the Foundation see: http://www.pluralismoyconvivencia.es/ .

multicultural society,''[119] and problematically disconnect to the long history of Muslim presence within Spain. Muslims, according to Moreras, continue to be negatively associated with migration and due to their stereotyping as 'Moroccans', which are also referred to as the derogatory term ''Moro''.[120] Moreras argues that Muslims are conceptualized as ''others'', and that it is this 'otherness' status is fueled by the rhetoric of European civilization where Islam is situated as the antithesis of rationality and progress.[121] On the one hand, Moreras also criticizes the Spanish state for not implementing multicultural policies, which would protect the rights and religious freedoms of Muslims, since the general expectation is that individual migrants will ''acculturate'' within Spanish society, thus conforming with the majority culture. On the other hand, Moreras states that discussing the status of Muslims in Spain through migration leads to an emphasis on their possible 'non-belonging' status as a group that is already coded as being non-Spanish.[122] Thus, even though Islam is officially recognized in Spain, and Muslim individuals and organizations are granted certain civil rights and liberties, the Spanish state prefers to include Islam as part of its cultural history rather than as an active and participatory group within its contemporary and multicultural civic population.

### II.I. *Dawa* at an Institutional Level

The Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid (Centro Cultural Islamico de Madrid), which is also popularly known as M30, and the Central Mosque of Madrid (*Mezquita Central de Madrid*), which is commonly known as Mezquita de Estrecho, are two central and functioning Muslim institutions that are an active part of Madrid's Spanish-Muslim community. These two

CEU eTD Collection

[119] Jordi Moreras, ''Limits and Contradictions in the Legal Recognition of Muslims in Spain'' in *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union*, eds. W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. Van Koningsveld, Peeters, Leuven, Paris, Sterling, 2002, pp. 61.
[120] Ibid, 55.
[121] Ibid, 61.
[122] Ibid, 62.

centers perform vital functions for Muslims in Madrid, and that it is these two centers that constitute the core of my field research. Since these centers bring together Muslims from all ages and sexes, different than other Muslim youth and women's organizations, around wide range of services, they form the bases of the Muslim community in Madrid.

At the beginning of February 2015, I moved to Madrid to start my field research with much uncertainty about how to approach a study of these women, but it was a personal and academic passion that brought me from Turkey to M30. I was fortunate to start my research in such a supportive environment, since the Center was instrumental in connecting me within different communities and organizations that were at that time active in Madrid. The majority of my interviewees received their Islamic education from a young age at M30 (some others attended Mezquita de Estrecho,) and they continued to participate in classes as adults, which makes it something of a symbolic center for Muslims in Madrid. M30 is a full-service mosque that also operates an Arabic school for children, and offers regular classes on Islam and in Arabic for adults. All of the classes and other cultural and religious activities such as conferences are open to all whether they are Muslims and non-Muslims. Moreover, no form of membership is required to join the classes on Islam, which are given by two professors: a middle aged Spanish female convert and a young imam from Saudi Arabia, on every Saturday. I was a regular participant in the Saturday classes on Islam from February to June 2015, which were designed to inform non-Muslims or newly converted Muslims about the faith rather than as a proselytizing mission to convert non-Muslims. Yet Muslims by birth constitute the majority of class as beside their educative functions, the classes became a good chance to meet rest of the Muslim community on a weekly basis.

In 1992, Saudi Arabia provided the funds to build M30, and the Center continues to be supported economically by the Saudis. This has raised the fears of some, and not without some cause, that the Center is used to spread Saudi-based Wahhabisim, whose aims are: "purifying

CEU eTD Collection

faith from innovation and applying Islamic law."[123] And yet, by examining the facilities of M30, I would suggest that it seeks to conform to a European expression of the kind of Islam that Muslims in Spain practice. The official website of M30 states that its main goal is ''to bridge a gap for better co-habitation/coexistence between the all components of our society, getting involved in the Muslim community affairs.''[124] By referring to the idea of cohabitation, and utilizing a welcoming language that addresses all components of Spanish civic society, the Center positions itself as a center for the practice of a European *dawa*. This language is also reflected in its policy of welcoming everyone to the classes on Islamic education, and stating clearly that they have 'no compulsion' to actively convert others to the faith. Moreover, on the official website it is stated that the Center intends to participate in diverse cultural events and debates to present ''the real face of Islam,'' which is a phrase cited commonly among European *dawa* circles, and mostly refers to Islam's compatibility with non-violent, western values.[125]

An *activistic* and direct approach to *dawa* is defined by Larry Posten as the idea of "confrontation of non-Muslims with specific principles of the Islamic faith."[126] Even though classes at M30 do not indicate an explicit invitation to be "confronted" by Islamic principles, it does uphold its mission, which is to explain the 'real face of Islam'. As a significant part of its *activistic* preaching, M30 circulates the Friday sermons by email to all subscribers of its circular, and it also advertises upcoming activities and sermons to those who wish to be informed. The last sermon I received on 12th May 2017 gives a definition of a Muslim, relying on the Qur'an and *hadiths* (sayings and doings of the Prophet): "The Muslim, in reality, is the one who commits to his Islam and invites others to Islam; is the one that gives benefit to the

CEU eTD Collection

[123] Anabel Inge, *The Making of a Muslim Salafi Woman: Paths to Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 26.
[124] Official website of Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid, http://ccislamicomadrid.blogspot.hu/p/el-centro.html. Under the title of 'Los Objetivos del Centro''.
[125] Official website of Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid, http://ccislamicomadrid.blogspot.hu/p/el-centro.html. Under the title of 'Los Objetivos ded Centro''.
[126] Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, pp. 122.

people and is a useful member of the society, full of virtues and justice."[127] This quote from a recent Friday sermon which was also live streamed for those who could not attend, on the one hand intends to educate Muslims by reminding them of the essential qualities of a Muslim and their duty of dawa. Whereas, the sermon intends to build a positive image of Muslims who are actively advised to be useful members of Spanish society.

Fulfilling educational functions, for Muslims, through the Islamic education starts at early ages for children, and at the same time attracting the non-Muslims with active preaching. Moreover, being open to all and maintaining its services in a transparent way, aiming to contribute to the coexistence and encouraging fellow Muslims to be part of Spanish society position M30 as a main center of *dawa*, which echoes the discourse and methods of European *dawa*. Since one of the main features of European *dawa* is suggesting to build 'Muslim islands', which should be open to non-Muslims as well, M30 appears to embody this characteristic in its full form. Moreover, M30 fosters cohabitation among Muslims by birth and converts as an *activistic* center of preaching. Furthermore, appointing a female convert as a professor also demonstrates the Center's positive approach towards the converts, and reinforces the compatibility of Spanishness and Muslimness. Even though, there is no clearly agreed upon pattern on women's status in the European *dawa*, assigning a female professor who lectures to a mixed group every Saturday and discusses the main issues of Islam, on the one hand challenges the patriarchal labels entitled to Islam and all Muslims, on the other hand, it reflects M30's more positive approach towards gender equality in Islam.

CEU eTD Collection

[127] My translation.

## II.II. *Dawa* as Individual Civic Participation

Jürgen Habermas argues that the appropriate political answer to the challenges of religious pluralism is the constitutional freedom of religion. Yet, even though the potential conflicts at the level of citizens' social interaction can be restrained through the freedom of religion the ''deep reaching conflicts'' at the cognitive level may continue to exist between the followers of different confessions and non-believers.[128] Thus, even though the secular character of a state is a necessary condition for guaranteeing religious freedom it is not sufficient.[129] That is why, Habermas brings up two significant concepts, to cure that problem: 'duty of civility' and 'the public use of reason', borrowed from John Rawl's. Duty of civility is defined as a moral, not a legal, duty by which citizens can be able to ''explain to one another how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the values of public reason.''[130] Hence public reason requires ''citizens to justify their political statements and attitudes before one another in light of a (reasonable interpretation) of valid constitutional principles.''[131] Habermas indicates that in a secular state only those political decisions are taken to be legitimate that can be impartially justified in the light of generally accessible reasons. In other words, to be able to raise arguments and demands in the public sphere and get a political response, citizens holding different religious beliefs must fit their arguments under the frame of public reasons. Positioning the public reason as a necessary step to exist in the public sphere requires the rephrasing of religious arguments in a way that would be equally accessible to everyone such as the followers of other nominations and non-believers.

Contrary to Habermas, who views the secular order as the guarantee of religious freedom, Talal Asad argues that the secular order is a way of employing disciplinary power

[128] Jürgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', European Journal of Philosophy, 14, (2007), 4.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid, 5.
[131] Ibid.



CEU eTD Collection

upon the religious subjects to create a certain kind of normative religiosity.[132] Asad maintains that the secular order serves to discipline the religious subjects, particularly Muslims in a European context, rather than being neutral. To do so, it defines the religion as chaotic, irrational and dangerous while locating itself at the opposite side of religion.[133] Yet, as Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal documents through her extensive ethnographic research, Habermas' concept of public reason, as an apparatus which measures the compatibility of arguments raised by religious groups within the secular public sphere, finds its common usage among the migrant populations of Europe. Soysal uncovers the changing parameters of practicing citizenship and the 'claims making' among Muslim communities in various European countries. Soysal argues that post World War II era witnessed an increasing recasting of national citizenship rights as human rights, which has led to the valorization of personhood and individual rights. On the one hand, universalistic prescriptions of identity and particularism contest the assumed dichotomy of 'public' and 'private', whereas the human rights discourse helps to naturalize collective identities boundaries that transgress the 'national'.[134] Within this context, Soysal states that Muslims in Europe participate in the host society's public space and draw upon the host country and world-level repertoires for making religious claims on issues like prayer complexes, accession to *halal* food and an Islamic dress code. Moreover, she adds that the claims of Muslims are not simply grounded in the particularities of religious narratives; on the contrary, they appeal to justifications that transcend the boundaries of particular group identity.[135] For instance, when the Muslim community and Muslim women reacted against the headscarf ban enforced in France since the late 1990s, they did not rely on religious narratives but they

CEU eTD Collection

[132] José Mapril, Ruy Blanes, Emerson Giumbelli, and Erin K. Wilson, ''Introduction: Secularities, Religiosities, and Subjectivities'' in *Secularism in a Postsecular Age?* eds. José Mapril, Ruy Blanes, Emerson Giumbelli, and Erin K. Wilson, (Springer: Switzerland, 2017), pp. 3.

[133] José Mapril et. al. ''Introduction: Secularities, Religiosities, and Subjectivities'', (2017), pp. 3-5.

[134] Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, ''Changing Parameters of Citizenship and Claims-Making: Organized Islam in European Public Spheres'', Theory and Society, Vol. 26, No. 4, Special Issue on Recasting Citizenship (Aug.,1997), 513.

[135] Ibid.

rephrased their demands under the frame of universalistic principles and dominant discourses of equality, emancipation, and individual rights that pervade discussions of 'freedoms' within a European context.[136]

Having been a strict follower of Islam classes that take place at M30 on Saturdays, I quickly started to mingle with the other women after the classes were over. Abir, a 19 years old Palestinian young girl, was one of the first women I talked with regarding my research. Even though her face remained calm and she seemed largely indifferent to my project, she was instrumental in connecting some of these activities for Muslim women who attend M30, and in particular in her activities in ACHIME. She was one of the active members and facilitators of ACHIME, the Association of Muslim Girls of Spain. She told me that her friends were upstairs in the women's section of the praying hall of the mosque, and were conducting their own religion class. I practically ran upstairs, and navigated my way through a group of very young girls who were conducting a class. I had found an opportunity to connect to a broad network of young passionate Muslim women who had founded their own organization for the education and activism of Muslim girls.

One week after that day, I was conducting my first interview at the same place with Leila, a 19 years old young woman, who defines herself as Spanish, and later indicated her Moroccan origins. As mentioned in the methodology part, to keep the anonymity of my interviewees I use pseudonyms. Leila is one of the 12 young women who constitute the executive committee of ACHIME, activities of which are maintained mainly through their decisions and monthly subscriptions. Leila indicates the main motivation of constituting this organization as: ''Spanish youth have their way of having fun, throwing parties, drinking, going out at night. We as Muslim girls do not enjoy in this way. That is why we came together to

CEU eTD Collection

[136] Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, ''Changing Parameters of Citizenship and Claims-Making: Organized Islam in European Public Spheres'', (Aug.,1997), 518.

constitute a space around which we can come together and have fun and learn new things.'' As Leila indicates in the cited passage formation of a space exclusive to Muslim women appears to be a necessity for them. This necessity also points that they choose to found their own spaces within the Spanish community rather than conforming with the life style and youth culture they are offered.

As Leila mentioned in her narrative, trying to build their own Muslim space appeared to be a significant motivating factor that drove the activities of these women. Based on the testimonies of the women as well as my time spent observing at two Centers and various organizations, I call this place as the *halal zone* in which they can spend time with their Muslim peers. Be it a picnic before starting to Ramadan, or a religion class during which they discuss the lives of famous women figures in Islam, or brainstorming for an excursion they had planned, the articulation of *halal zone* as a safe space evokes Qaradawi's call for creation of ''Muslim ghettos''[137] to perform an effective *dawa* movement in Europe. Even though, I do not claim that creation of *halal zone,* by active Muslim women, consciously targets to perform a more effective *dawa*, I argue that the articulation of *halal zone* is a consequence of struggling against conforming with Spanish youth culture. Moreover, I claim that *halal zone* itself contributes to the empowerment of young Muslim women in many ways.

In addition to the classes that the women took at one of the Islamic cultural centers, almost all Muslim youth and women's organizations also organized regular classes on Islam. Leila from ACHIME referred to the classes they organize every week as *charlas* (talks) and *khalaka*. AJME, Association of Young Muslims of Spain, is a significant part of this *halal zone,* in which young Muslim women move in between the activities of different organizations. And in addition to the many social and cultural events that it organizes, AJME also has an unofficial women's section that organizes classes on Islam and in Arabic instruction for young women on

[137] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, 2010, pp. 23.



CEU eTD Collection

weekends. Aisha, a young woman in her early thirties who was born and raised in Madrid, as the president of women's section of AJME stated the goal of the classes as follow:

> We want to motivate Muslim women to keep on going, being something and having their voice and studies. We don't want to leave them at home with kids alone. This is what we were taught but we want them to have a future, now I am not from Morocco, now I am Spanish with Spanish kids.

Aisha's statement on urging women to have ''studies'' does not only point to studying Islam but also indicates the importance of having a formal education. Thus, in addition to the classes of Islam, which has a significant place for these Muslim organizations, there is a clear emphasis on being educated. During the random talks among these women they tend to complain about some Muslim women who are ''so much into the idea of getting married'' at an early age but not studying. Yet, clearly it was not the case for active Muslim women, as most of them just started their university education or were getting ready to start.

When I met Mariam, she was a 19 years old student getting prepared to start University at the beginning of May 2015. By coincidence, she not only expedited my research but also helped me to get involved in the *halal zone* during my leisure time in Madrid as well. Despite her young age, Mariam was a bright young woman who actively engaged in community affairs, and as we worked together she became a very good friend of mine in this short time. During my interview with her, she told me that she was originally planning to found her own women's organization but then she was asked to mentor the five months program of WISE (Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment), which is a New York based women's organization founded by an American-Egyptian young woman, launched in Madrid. The program was designed to engage Muslim women in their communities by creating programs that addressed security and safety for Muslim women, which included teaching them physical self-defense techniques. Mariam indicated her goal as a mentor in the WISE's program:

> …lots of people think that Muslim woman is submissive, she is oppressed, she doesn't know speaking Spanish, doesn't have studies, what is intended is to teach the community

CEU eTD Collection

> that Islam is peace, Muslim woman studies not just Qur'an, not all are customs and traditions and break with the prejudices they have against Muslim woman.

Mariam's emphasis on study once again reiterates the importance of education to these women since their "otherness" as uneducated women is also dependent on these kinds of stereotyped and racialized notions of Muslim women in Spain. Having a formal education becomes a significant starting point not only to change this image of uneducated and subservient Muslim women, but it also opens doors through which Muslims can connect with other members of society through their activities and programs. Being educated also means being a potentially useful and cultured member of civil society, and therefore being educated also becomes a way of performing *dawa* as it contributes to building an educated and cultured image of Muslims as a community that can coexist with other communities.

Yasemin Soysal argues that networks of civic engagement and associations - such as those established by the women I interviewed - foster collective trust and solidarity by cutting across social cleavages.[138] In the case of Muslim women who participate in the activities of Muslim organizations, Soysal believes that being involved in these activities becomes a significant way of practicing citizenship and becoming part of a given society. Informing Muslims about their civic rights and encouraging them to be part of Spanish society, and to live together in peace is a significant aspect of the educative sessions that take place at Muslim organizations. For instance, AJME, a Muslim youth organization, defines its goal as: ''It is a youthful voice that expresses the concerns of young people and demand their legitimate rights to participate in creating their reality and play their vital role to find a window that is consistent with its intellectual and political aspirations.''[139] In line with AJME's defined goal, they organize roundtable discussions at which they discuss the specific problems of Muslim youth

[138] Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, ''Changing Parameters of Citizenship and Claims-Making: Organized Islam in European Public Spheres'', (Aug.,1997), 515.
[139] http://www.achabab.es/Quiensomos.html .



CEU eTD Collection

in Spanish society, such as success in academia, coexistence, and engaging with the Spanish society at a greater extent.

As a young professor in the Arabic school that serves Muslim children and youth at the complex of Mezquita de Fuenlabrada, Farah is also an active facilitator of AJME's women's section, which organized activities that targeted young Muslim women:

> By these activities girls started to open socially, they want to know more people and participate more actively, help more, teach others –Spanish and other friends- about real religion, what Qur'an really says. They want people to see the example of a real Muslim. Before they were living more closed and they were not participating to society in such a way. Now they have relation with society.

Farah's statement indicates that the *halal zone* eventually expands to the rest of the society as it helps to empower those women by equipping them with necessary skills, thus they can involve into the broader society at an individual and through an organizational level, as equal citizens of Spain. Another example which clearly demonstrates that activities of Muslim organizations encourage the engagement of these young Muslim women into Spanish society, is the projects generated during the WISE's program. Participants of WISE's program were expected to develop projects targeting to identify the problems they have within their communities as Muslims and help to solve them. Mariam, as the facilitator and the mentor of the program, did not bring any restrictions to the topic choices for the projects. The project topic did not necessarily have to be related with Muslim women. Each week participants discussed the different aspects of their projects and how the projects could be developed, organized or theorized. At the end of the five months program a final meeting took place at a location rented by Mariam, and in that meeting four of the participants of the program presented the final versions of their projects via power point presentations in front of the jury. Mariam had asked me to sit on the jury, and so I had the chance to listen and adjudicate this competition, and interact with the other twenty-five women who were in the audience and whom were actively engaged in the activities of various other connected organizations. The winning project

CEU eTD Collection

proposed a Muslim festival on the *Eid al Fitr* (the celebration comes at the end of Ramadan) to introduce Islamic cuisine, music, ornaments and many other cultural elements to the Spanish society, and to encourage them to get a chance of know another face of Islam. This project was elected as the winner mainly because it targeted the broader Spanish society rather than restricting the area of impact to a small community or neighborhood. Of the projects that were not selected, their topic of choice also speaks to these trends that I have discussed. One proposed project was built on the idea of giving gendered religious education to Muslim women, while the other two projects were designed to combat Islamophobia through various participatory methods. These examples clearly demonstrate that the activities Muslim women engage in help them get involved in the broader society rather than confining themselves to their own communities. The strong emphasis on showing the real face of Islam and Muslims, and of engaging a strong image of educated Muslim women, reveals the moral motivations of these young Muslim women. Thus, the expansion of the *halal zone* through organized and educational activities becomes a way of collectively performing *dawa* and practicing citizenship or civic participation.

In the *dawa* literature performing *dawa* through simple daily acts is defined as indirect *dawa*, lifestyle evangelism.[140] Yet in a Western context these simple daily acts of performing indirect *dawa* blur the boundaries not only between the public and private spheres, but also the civic and the moral as Muslims saturate the public with the private through the utilization of a liberal discourse of citizenship rights. Charles Hirschkind, as a scholar who examines a counter *dawa* movement constituted through cassette sermons in Egypt, notes:

> *dawa* provides conceptual resources grounded in a long tradition of Islamic practice and scholarly inquiry, these recourses put to novel uses within a contemporary situation shaped by modern political institutions, pedagogical techniques, and media forms, as well

CEU eTD Collection

[140] Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, (1992), 116.

> as by notions of civic responsibility grounded in the idea and experience of national citizenship.[141]

Hirschkind, following Hasan Al Banna, introduces *dawa* as a civic duty, conceptually and historically, that had long been defined as a condition for the vitality of the Muslim collective.[142] Yet, in the Spanish context, particularly keeping in mind the testimonies of my interviewees, *dawa* is not introduced as a civic duty but as a Muslim's moral and religious duty. However, the activities which fit under the definition of civic engagement of Muslims, through the liberal frame of organizations and the discourses utilized, serve to perform a moral religious duty. Besides, Hirschkind notes that ''this practice does not map onto the constitutionally demarcated separation of public and private but, rather, traverses this distinction in a way that is often uncomfortable to those with secular-liberal sensibilities.''[143]

Throughout my research almost all of the women I interviewed or had the chance to speak and spend leisure time with defined themselves as Spanish. And then, in almost the same breath, they are likely to add "but I am also Muslim!" For a moment, it is possible to catch the tension that reveals their effort of contesting the perception of Muslims as non-Spanish and non-European. Jordi Moreras argues that unlike other minorities, Muslims in Spanish society are "othered," which directly stems from the place Islam is situated that is at the opposite side of all the things that symbolize western values and civic society.[144] That is why claiming Spanishness, which is combined with their Muslimness becomes a way of contesting all the aspects that constitute their "otherness". Therefore, besides being educated, speaking Spanish well, being engaged members of society, and displaying images of Muslim women who are

CEU eTD Collection

[141] Charles Hirschkind, ''Civic Virtue and Religious Reason: An Islamic Counterpublic'', Cultural Anthropology 16 (1):3-34. (2001), 11.
[142] Ibid, 13.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Jordi Moreras, ''Limits and Contradictions in the Legal Recognition of Muslims in Spain'', 2002, 61.

strong, successful and positively contributes to the coexistence, become a significant part of their daily lives.

Zainab is a 21 years old Muslim woman who was the victim of Islamophobic abuse when she was at high school. Being blamed as a terrorist and treated that way for a long time by her professor in front of her peers when she was just 16 years old did not, however, ruin her spirit. Zainab's testimony provides a good summary on how my interviewees utilize simple daily acts to combat anti-Muslim sentiments, and thus perform *dawa*:

> Just going out, to the street wearing hijab is *dawa*. I think that as Muslim girls we are more like standards of Islam, boys go more unnoticed but we just by wearing hijab makes us Muslims for all. I think that when the Spanish society see you with hijab they see you as a representative of Islam and whatever you are going to do or how you are going to behave is dawa, just with crossing the street with the light in green you are presenting an example or getting good grades at the school is dawa as well because our image, the image of a Muslim woman, is a cultured and educated one. We teach people that under the hijab we not only have hair but also brain.

As a Muslim woman living in Europe, for more than four years now, it is not difficult for me to anticipate with Zainab and others, as the political atmosphere and daily encounters with Europeans cause a sense of guilt, and an effort to disassociate myself from the claimed 'Islamic violence and terrorism' and images of Muslim women as 'oppressed and submissive' circulated everywhere, lead to self-policing. Yet, in the case of Spanish Muslim women there is a constant effort to show that being Muslim and being Spanish/European are not contradicting each other but can coexist. Therefore, even the simple daily acts become a way of contesting the assumption that Islam and Western values are not competitive which contributes to better the negative image of Islam thus automatically becomes a way of performing *dawa*.

Claiming Spanishness as Muslim citizens of Spain is also promoted at an organizational level among Muslim youth and women's organizations. For instance, ACHIME indicates three main objectives to promote and realize on their official website. Firstly, they state that they want to foster the Hispano-Muslim identity depending on their rights, as full Spanish citizens,

CEU eTD Collection

to involve in political, economic, social and cultural areas of the society and demonstrate that being Muslim and Spanish is not a contradiction. Secondly, they note that they aim to encourage the interreligious dialogue through the mutual respect and social participation to challenge the prejudices against Muslim woman and change her image. Lastly, they argue that they want to help young Muslims to cope with the problems they face in their daily lives and increase their self-confidence through the positive impetus to improve their living conditions. [145] What Halima, a 25 years old university student and highly active member of many Muslim organizations, indicates reveals the relationship between civic engagement and conducting *dawa* as a moral and religious duty at an organizational level:

> Simply by being Muslim women we are realizing a very important and complete dawa. Wearing hijab and leaving someone a seat on metro gives very good image of us (Muslim women), studying, interacting with others, etc. and above all participating to the associations and organizations.

Therefore, the *dawa* performed by Muslim women through the simple daily acts introduces the moral and religious elements of Muslims into the Spanish public. Eventually, civic engagement of Muslim women and their simple daily choices turn into political acts thus 're-politicizes' the Spanish public sphere and constitute its *counterpublic* which also includes the *halal zone*. In summary, active Muslim women negotiate their subjectivities against the secular order through their civic engagement and *repoliticization* of simple daily acts. Yet, since they rephrase their activities in a frame of liberal civic engagement and saturate the public with the elements of the private through their simple daily acts they do not simply conform with the secular order. Hence, they do not contest it according to Habermas' public reason as they employ a liberal frame of civic engagements and overload their daily acts with the elements of private, which lead to formation of a *counterpublic*. Moreover, active Muslim women's contestation of the secular order as a disciplinary power also reveals the process through which they become

[145] Official Website of ACHIME: http://www.asociacionachime.com/. Translation is mine.



CEU eTD Collection

political subjects. Yet, though active Muslim women's *dawa* practices reshape the topography of Spanish public sphere, it is not possible to claim that there is an organic link between these women and the European *dawa* movements. Their civic engagement and *dawa* practices can be considered as an end in themselves rather than projecting future political aspirations. Italian sociologist Alberto Melluci defines the main characteristics of these kind of social movements as:

> Participation within movements is considered a goal in itself because, paradoxically, actors self-consciously practise in the present the future social changes they seek . . . They are no longer driven by an all-encompassing vision of some future order. They focus on the present, and consequently their goals are temporary and replaceable, and their organisational means are valued as ends in themselves.[146]

Yet, since in a western context, Muslims who practice *dawa* are commonly associated with terrorist groups, they are under the scrutiny of European states. Therefore, it was not surprising for me to find out that a Spanish convert woman, who was a very regular participant of Islam classes took place in Mezquita de Estrecho, was a police officer that I met by coincidence at a state office. I did not see any reason to inform the community not only because she asked me not to mention about it to them, but also, because I see this group as a transparent and peaceful community without any political aspirations.

CEU eTD Collection

[146] In Peter Mandaville, "Transnational Muslim solidarities and everyday life." *Nations & Nationalism* 17, no. 1 (January 2011), pp. 13.

# Chapter III. Negotiating Subjectivity

Muslim women who come into being as subjects and active agents within a European context do so by negotiating a two-fold process. The secular order's disciplinary power that marginalizes religious subjects, and stereotypical images of Muslims, which feed the anti-Muslim sentiments, constitute the one side of this struggle. Patriarchal understandings and practices of Islam and the religion, which is contaminated with tradition, of families, form the other side of the battle active Muslim women maintain while coming into being as active agents.

This chapter aims to unfold the distinct layers that active Muslim women negotiate in terms of developing subjectivity and examine the impacts of civic and religious engagement on the formation of moral feminine subjects. The main question I try to answer is how these active Muslim women see themselves as legible agents to engage into the interpretation of Islamic texts and object to patriarchal understandings concerning women's practices of Islam. To answer this question and uncover the process of subject formation, I rely on the Foucauldian notion of power and the paradox of *subjectivation* as my main theoretical framework. In so doing, I unfold the layers within which active Muslim women negotiate their subjectivities. Firstly, I discuss the secular European/Spanish environment, in which Muslims tend to be seen as 'others' and Muslim women become the markers of this 'otherness' because of their visibility through *hijab*. Then, I analyze the extent to which European *dawa* movements impact the understanding of gender equality amongst active Muslim women. And thirdly, I seek to analyze the active negotiations of Muslim women between the reclaimed 'real Islam,' and the Islam of their families which is 'contaminated' with customs and traditions. Lastly, I discuss how active Muslim women contest the patriarchal understandings and practices of Islam within the circles of Muslim organizations and institutions.

## III.I. A Distinct Feminist Awareness?



CEU eTD Collection

When I started my research, I was mainly driven by a single idea, which also informs my main hypothesis Muslim women engaging into the activities of Muslim organizations and institutions in a secular European environment at some point develop a consciousness of gender equality which stems from Islam. Since I didn't want to misattribute them any title they all might not accept, such as feminist, and didn't want to manipulate their answers through the idea of feminism, I avoided to ask them direct questions about feminism till the end of my questionnaire. Rather, I posed them questions through which I wanted to uncover their ideas on the controversial issues raised within the Muslim communities world-wide as well as inform the debates maintained around Islam's incompatibility with Western values in Europe and North America. To be more concrete, I asked them what they think about polygamy, men's superiority over women and women's complementary role beside men depending on some verses interpreted in these ways. Moreover, I asked them some more practical issues such as if women can travel or live alone or why there aren't many women *ulama* (Islamic scholars).

The questions I posed to my interviewees constitute the basis of the scholarly work generated under the title of Islamic feminism. Also, the answers I got from my interviewees show significant similarities with the Islamic feminist discourse, despite the fact that they are not familiar with it as many of those sources are commonly available only in English. That is why, I want to briefly outline the Islamic feminist discourse and its main arguments. Then I try to lay bare how active Muslim women view the gender equality in Islam.

Most of the scholars of Islamic feminism define themselves as ''believing women''[147] and reject to be labeled as feminists mainly because of the mainstream feminism's ''long and

CEU eTD Collection

[147] Asma Barlas, ''Engaging Islamic Feminism'', 2008, 16.

painful legacy of exclusions''[148] maintained against the ''third world women''[149] under which Muslim woman finds her place as well. Zainah Anwar, as one of the main founders and leaders of well-known Islamic feminist group Sisters in Islam, in Malaysia, puts well, why Muslim women should engage in religion as follow: ''The fact that Islam is increasingly shaping and redefining our lives means all of us have to engage with the religion if we do not want it to be hijacked.''[150] Nazira Zain al-Din from Lebanon, who is noted as one of the most remarkable Qur'an interpreters of the last century, argues ''all Muslims, included women, are free to engage in interpretation of religious texts''[151] thus encourages women to engage into the interpretation of main texts of Islam.

The work generated under the title of Islamic feminism adopts a holistic approach, by applying a historical and textual contextualization, and it seeks to reinterpret the main texts of Islam, (mainly Quran and *hadith* -sayings and deeds of the Prophet-) from a feminine point of view. Scholars of Islamic feminism claim that the message of Islam, conveyed through the Quran and *hadith*, has been distorted by men throughout Islamic history in order to serve the interests of patriarchy. Yet, the original message is built on the principle of *tawhid*, the doctrine of God's unity, which categorically positions God above all humanity while equalizing all human beings without dividing them into sexes ''across the public-private continuum''.[152] That's why, positioning men below God and above women in the hierarchy clearly violates the principle of *tawhid*. Therefore, Islamic feminism stands as a project to ''recover the stubbornly

CEU eTD Collection

[148]Sara Salem, "Feminist critique and Islamic Feminism: The Question of Intersectionality," *The Postcolonialist*, Vol. 1, Number 1 (November 2013), pp. 4.
[149] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses," Feminist review 30 (1988): 61-88: 53 discourses.
[150]Miriam Cooke, ''The Muslimwoman'', *Springer Science Business Media B.V*, (12.06.2007).
[151] Margot Badran, ''Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond'', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol.1, No. 1. (2005).
[152]Asma Barlas, ''Engaging Islamic Feminism'', 2008, 18.

egalitarian voice of Islam''[153] as ''no one has a monopoly over the meaning of what God says''.[154]

As I mention above, there are significant similarities between Islamic feminist discourse and the ways in which active Muslim women define gender equality in Islam. All of the women I interviewed are 'believing' women who do not question the authenticity of the message of Islam. Furthermore, they do not seek or advocate gender equality in another other arena outside of Islam. While doing so, on the one hand, they are rejecting the patriarchal interpretations and practices of Islam, and on the other hand they contest the ways in which Muslim women are constructed and represented in the west, particularly in Europe. Active Muslim women, just like the scholars of Islamic feminism, tend to contextualize the verses from Qur'an. For instance, on the question of polygamy, almost all my interlocutors, after indicating their disfavor, expressed the necessity of taking into consideration the historical context. The majority of them suggested that the verses on polygamy were revealed because Islam tried to protect the extensive numbers of widows and orphans after the common wars of the time. Yet, they all added the fact that these conditions do not exist in the contemporary period. The testimony of Dina, a university student at her early thirties, summarizes how most of the women felt about polygamy:

> I think in our society polygamy is not well understood. At its time polygamy was for a good reason, for its different motivations, wars which left women as widows or orphan girls who couldn't maintain themselves economically, but today it turned into a caricature as they marry to marry. I don't like it; they make a bad use of religion. They abuse the good things our religion offers. I think polygamy came to make something new, not to marry with many you like and then misunderstand all (wives)[155] and stay with just one (wife)[156] as the other is old and this one is younger and more beautiful than other.

CEU eTD Collection

[153] Ibid, xi.
[154] Ibid, xii.
[155] My explanation.
[156] My explanation.

As Dina notes, these controversial practices and understandings that claim to originate in the Qur'an, actually stem from the different approaches and interpretations of these texts.

Most of my interlocutors indicate that the process of translating the texts always results in part of the meaning being lost or modified in some way, and in the case of the Arabic language where word positioning indicates its positive or negative meaning, much is lost in the process of bringing those words into another language. For example, I asked them about hotly debated Surah Nisa, verse 223, which is commonly interpreted as an indication that women are made to serve men, and particularly in a sexual way. Khadija, who is a half Spanish half Syrian young woman working at Canal Cordoba and producing programs concerning Muslim youth and women, said that in the case of this Surah and others, ''The interpretations are dilemma. I wouldn't interpret in the way they do. God always wants the best for all, equality for all, comfort for all as we are human, I do not understand this ayah in the way they take.'' Besides pointing to arbitrary interpretations, all my interlocutors emphasized the role of men in producing these kinds of interpretations. Interestingly, almost half of my interlocutors used the exact word *twisted* when they articulated the role of men in this process. For instance, Khadija, as one among the others who used the word twisted, noted that ''I love Islam but sometimes people, men above all, they take Islam as they want. When they criticize Arab countries, I answer that this is not Islam it is twisted for men, men changed the Islam and made the law accordingly.'' After identifying the main problems, which result in patriarchal understandings and practices of Islam and are circulated as the "correct versions" of the text, most of my interlocutors see themselves as eligible to interpret the text on their own. Since they are equipped with the necessary tools to interpret the texts such as a religious education and knowledge of Arabic language, they see themselves as eligible to reason and to make decisions on how they should view their duty through religious practice. Yasmin Salem, an entrepreneur in her late thirties,

CEU eTD Collection

who owns the first *halal* beauty salon and hairdresser exclusive for Muslim women in Madrid and a significant role model for younger activists, explains:

> At the end, you have to interpret it (Qur'an)[157] in your way, because God gave it to me to interpret in my way… For me what is valuable is what God says not those *ulama* who display their own ideas. They cannot take my rights which are gifted from God to me. In this sense Islam is very feminist, it lets us choose what to want, taking care of home and dedicate to kids or work outside of the house. And the clearest example of it is the first wife of the Prophet who was an important trader, important head of house, big wife and one of the best Muslims ever.

Even though some women get back from engaging in interpreting directly, the common attitude towards those practices tends to be showing the distaste openly, if not objecting them directly, or clearly noting that they personally wouldn't accept to be in situations such as polygamy or taken away their rights of education or work. As articulated briefly the approach of active Muslim women to gender equality in Islam, even at a personal level, appears to be in line with the Islamic feminist discourse's claims and approaches. This similarity between the understanding of gender equality amongst my interlocutors and Islamic feminist discourse suggests that being part of contemporary *dawa* movement, which is so much related with the idea of 'reform' in Islam, might be influential on the formation of such approaches to the interpretation of the Islamic texts.

CEU eTD Collection

### III.III. Becoming a Subject

According to Foucault, power is not merely something possessed and deployed by individuals or sovereign agents to dominate others ''with a singular intentionality, structure, or location that presides over its rationality and execution.''[158] Rather, power appears to be ''a

[157] My explanation.

[158] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, (Princeton University Press: 2005), 17.

strategic relation of force that permeates life and paves the way for the new forms of desires, objects, relations and discourses.''[159] Therefore, the subject does not precede the power relations, but is instead formed through them. In other words, power relations provide the necessary conditions for the formation of a subject, which is also considered to be the paradox of *subjectivication*.[160] Such an understanding of power and subject formation, argues Saba Mahmood, leads to reconceptualize agency as a capacity for action that ''specific relations of subordination create and enable rather than as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination.''[161] Within this theoretical frame, the following sections unfold the ways in which active Muslim women contest or confirm distinct power relations at different layers.

In my regular attendance of classes at M30 or Mezquita de Estrecho or activities organized by Muslim women's organizations, one of the clearest ideas that I formed based on all these formal and informal conversations with active Muslim women was that even though they define themselves as Spanish they acknowledge their difference which stems from their religion, and this is what constitutes the basis of their 'otherness'.

The 'otherness' of Muslim women in European society is constructed and emphasized through the western conceptions of Muslim women. These western conceptions of Muslim women shape the understanding of gender equality amongst my interlocutors, and they contest these conceptions by employing the same terminology they are exposed to in European public spheres. For instance, Fatima, a social worker at her early thirties, brings one of the most commonly cited phrases among my interlocutors, 'submissive' as follow: ''Islam came to give rights to women, Prophet never shouted or hit to a woman, being Muslim doesn't mean to be submissive''. Another commonly cited phrase appears to be about the seclusion of women.

CEU eTD Collection

[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid, 18.

Nisrin, a young student who is volunteering at Mezquita de Estrecho to give classes of Islam and Arabic to children, phrases it as:

> A girl can be a good housewife, wife and mother having her own work, having her own life. A woman was not created to be locked up in house. This is what I think. I think I can be good with my husband, my children, in my house and not to be locked up in it all day but have my life, my work, etc. The ones who think like that (the opposite way)[162] look very ugly because Allah hasn't made the women to be slave of anyone and if you look at the Prophet he was the first one who was helping to women at home. He was not coming home and sitting on the sofa. He was the first one who was helping the women.

Commonly cited phrase that my interlocutors addressed on the basis of European interpretations of Muslim women as 'oppressed,' 'submissive' and 'secluded', stem from the discourses and narratives they are framed within. Nilüfer Göle, a scholar working on Muslim women in Europe, argues that there is always a loss of meaning of the message exchanged between different actors who interact in the public sphere.[163] Yet, the ways in which active Muslim women perceive their misrepresentation of the European public – or many publics - reveals the fact that the western imaginaries of Muslims are still commonly asserted in the context of Europe.

The introduction of the Muslim woman into the western imaginary can be traced back to the Middle Ages, and as Jasmin Zine argues even though the genesis of constructing the Islamic *Other* does not begin with the subjugated female, ''the discursive current of European representational politics became fashioned through a more complex intermingling between the desire and disavowal of difference which came to be embodied within the Muslim woman.''[164] Leila Ahmed, in her comprehensive work, *Women and Gender in Islam,* notes that most of the early literature prior to the seventeenth century that reflects on Islam and Muslims as originated from the experiences and observations of travelers and the crusaders, and the deductions of

[162] My explanation.

[163] Nilüfer Göle (ed.), *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe,* Ashgate, Burlington: 2013, pp. 4.

[164] Jasmin Zine, ''Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation'', The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, 19:4, pp. 5.



CEU eTD Collection

clerics from their readings of poorly understood Arabic texts.[165] Although through the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the understanding of language was slightly improved, the observations of travelers remained limited to the meanings male members of visited societies adjusted to the observed customs and practices, as male travelers from the West had very limited access to women in Muslim societies.[166]

Renowned scholar Mohja Kahf traces the long trajectory through which the representative of the Muslim woman has evolved in accordance with the changing power relations between the West and Muslims. Kahf argues that in the Middle Ages, Europe held a longstanding envy for the Islamic empires' material power and resources which were headed at that time by the Ottoman Turks and the Moors in the North Africa.[167] Islam's hegemonic position of the period clearly shapes the ways in which Muslim women were used in the texts as signifiers of difference. In the literary texts of Middle Ages and Renaissance the Muslim woman is portrayed as a noble queen and princess who tends to be in romantic relationship with the Western warriors and hero for whom she betrays her father, the king, and denounces her *Otherness* and gains respectability by converting to Christianity.[168] Zine argues that the major shift in this relationship between the West and the Muslims comes with the Spanish Reconquista which reveals the desire of ethnic purity and perpetuating religious conflict through expelling the Moors from Spain.[169] This also appears to be the moment that Muslim women enters the textual discourse with her dress, for example in Don Quixote (Cervantes, 1605), as ''an unknown veiled foreign figure who symbolizes an object that embodies fear of

CEU eTD Collection

[165] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 149.
[166] Ibid, 149-150.
[167] Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman*, University of Texas Press: Austin, 1999, pp.13-14.
[168] Yasmin Zine, ''Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation'', pp.5.
[169] Ibid, 7.

the recuperation of Spain by alien forces.''[170] From that moment on in the western imageries Muslim woman reinvented as the ''rescued Muslim maiden,'' that marks another major shift from an active to a passive mode due to her loss of agency because of her need to be rescued.[171]

When we shift to colonialist discourses and narratives, we encounter the centrality of the enclosure theme with the popular harem scenes where foreign Muslim women were portrayed openly and in the nude to the foreign gaze. Timothy Mitchell in *Colonizing Egypt* brings up the foreign gaze as the ''ontology of representation,'' and refers to the exhibiting of foreign lands to a European audience through an ordered representation of the Orient, which was open to the penetration of their gaze, and through which they derived knowledge.[172] Edward Said in *Orientalism* argues that the West Orientalized the East simply because it could. Therefore, ''the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'' which have direct impacts on its subjects' articulation of *we* vs. *them*.[173] Thus, the representation of the Orient as the land of *Otherness* and the lack becomes the main way for the west not only to construct itself as the superior and civilized but the *others* as inferior, backward and uncivilized. Since the act of seeing was a symbolic act of possession, the veil's enclosure interrupted the order expected by European colonizers. Thus, the motif of enclosure became more threatening as how could one establish authority or be superior over the subjects that could not be known since they could not be seen or grasped. This ungraspable nature of the veil positioned Muslim woman at the center of colonial narratives of Islam's inferiority and *otherness*.[174] Furthermore, the veil

CEU eTD Collection

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid, pp. 8.

[172] Timothy Mitchel, Colonising Egypt, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

[173] Edward Said, excerpt from Orientalism, reproduced in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 133.

[174] Yasmin Zine, ''Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation'', pp.10.

became a symbol of the irreducible difference and accordingly the inassimilability of Islam for the colonizer.[175]

During colonial occupations feminism appears to be a significant element put in service of the colonial male. Leila Ahmed argues that the colonizer recaptured the language of feminism, which was focusing on the men's oppression of women, and utilized it in the service of colonization towards the *other*, colonized men, to justify its colonial legacy.[176] Gayatri Spivak describes this as ''white man saving brown women from brown men.''[177] Furthermore, Ahmed argues that ''colonial feminism or feminism was shaped into variety of similar constructs each tailored to fit the particular culture that was immediate target of domination.''[178]

The events that unfolded in the wake of 9/11 caused the rise of right-wing politics and an increase in xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments, not only in the US but also in Europe. The report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, which was published in May 2002, documents a clear increase on the Islamophobic verbal and physical attacks both on persons and properties of Muslims in direct relation with 9/11.[179] As that report reveals, the target of the attacks is primarily those ''who look Muslim,'' which sets apart women who are veiled – or wearing *hijabi* - as open targets.[180]

The 11 March 2004 Madrid bombings is considered to be the 9/11 of Spain. Scholar Virtudes Téllez Delgado who works on Muslims in Spain, argues that after the Madrid bombings, long beards and *hijabs* were considered to be ''diacritical marks of radicalization''

CEU eTD Collection

[175] Joan W. Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 2007, pp. 45.

[176] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 1993, pp.151.

[177] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1988, ''Can the Subaltern Speak?'' in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg.

[178] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 1993, *pp.*151.

[179] European Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, (2002), pp. 26-27.

[180] Ibid.

and indicators of a tendency towards terrorism and violence or potential radicalization.[181] In this context, active Muslim women as the visible markers of Muslims' *otherness*, are forced to perpetually contest these circulated images. Through their civic engagement, my interlocutors intend to disprove the association between terrorism, violence and Muslims, and fix the distorted images of Islam. On the other hand, through their positive contributions to society, they demand a stake in Spanish society.

At the beginning of my questionnaire, I avoided asking my interlocutors about feminism directly, and by the end of the interview, I was generally able to ask them if they defined themselves as a feminist. Four out of twenty women answered my question with a yes while rest of them either criticized feminism for being violent and the other extreme side of machismo, and demanding more than equality. For instance, Dina after asking me back what I mean by feminism she told me: ''I am not feminist because I like equality. Being feminist is like being macho and I don't like this. Defending women's rights is not like that. We have to defend the rights of all. I am just, I like justice.'' Defining feminism as an extreme ideology partially stems from the misrepresentation of feminism globally. Yet, another point which can explain the anti-feminist attitudes of my interlocutors is that in the western countries, western women is constructed as the opposite of the third world women, as ''constrained, victimized, poor, ignorant as opposed to western women who are educated, modern, and free to make their own choices.''[182] Mainstream feminism serves to the promotion of this 'ideal' women type. Moreover, marginalization of Muslim woman in the public discourses, either as the marker of extremism, or the victim of religious patriarchy, not only provoke the reaction of my interlocutors but also influence their approach to feminism. When I asked my interlocutors if

CEU eTD Collection

[181] Virtudes Téllez Delgado, ''Embodying Religiosities and Subjectivities: The Responses of Young Spanish Muslims to Violence and Terrorism in the Name of Islam'', in *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe,* ed. Nilüfer Göle, Ashgate, Burlington: 2013, pp. 87.

[182] Sara Salem, "Feminist critique and Islamic Feminism: The Question of Intersectionality," *The Postcolonialist,* Vol. 1, Number 1 (November 2013), pp. 3.

feminism and Islam can be combined thirteen out of twenty answered this question: ‘‘yes, obviously, totally, Islam is feminism.’’ Most of them supported their answers with examples from the Prophet’s life and the lives of important women figures in Islam to show the egalitarian aspects of Islam. Malak, a young Spanish convert, argues:

> If you look at the wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), his first wife, Khadija was an entrepreneur before she was married to him and she remained to be an entrepreneur after marriage. For example, Aisha, led the battle of Camel, after the death of the Prophet she could stay at her house, which was a study center more than a jail, to where people were coming from all around the world, led the battle of Camel. 1400 years ago, who would say that a woman led a battle. There are thousands of such examples in Islam. The queen of Saba has named in the Qur’an, Mariam as well.

Like many others, Samira positioned the Islam as egalitarian, in between the two extreme cases: machismo and feminism: ‘‘Islam is neither macho nor feminist, it is egalitarian.’’ Positioning themselves against western feminism, which they define as violent, and supporting the equal gender relations grounded in Islam point to a distinct feminist awareness that poses significant similarities with Islamic feminist discourse.

The Islamic practices that the families of my interlocutors live and intend to convey to their children since their early ages, with an overwhelming fuss which stems from living in a non-Muslim environment and its potential temptations, has significant impacts on the formation of *real Islam* and an understanding of equal gender relations of my interviewees. From their early childhood onwards, all women I interviewed started their informal education amongst the family, including cultural and traditional elements their families brought from their home countries. All of my interlocutors – including those born in Spain - started to get a formal Islamic education at one of the Islamic centers or at local mosques when they were at 5-6 years old. The most significant step in building their own understanding of Islam corresponded to their teenager years, as they started to get questions about their religion from their Spanish peers at school. This became the main motivation that forced them to search and learn the things from the sources of Islam rather than blindly imitating their families. What Aisha, president of

CEU eTD Collection

AJME's women's section, told me laughingly summarizes the attitude of many families which was revealed through the testimonies of other interlocutors: ''My parents are typical Arabs for whom everything is *haram*!'' (Haram: forbidden, inappropriate according to Islam). Furthermore, Samira, a 19 years old university student and a very active member of many Muslim organizations, summarizes well the ideas of majority on families' Islam:

> We have to take into consideration that many times what family takes are customs. Above all if they come from an Arab country what they learnt is not religion, it is custom. Custom of wearing hijab, custom of praying. We are raised, I am glad, in a Western environment in which we don't have these customs as when they see you wearing hijab they look at you like something rare. That's why we have to know why I have to wear hijab; why I have to pray; why I have to fast. What we have to do is learning the why as they (Spanish people)[183] always ask you and that makes you look for an explanation. So that you learn it too and you do that from your heart not like it had been taught to you and that might be the difference like sometimes they (parents)[184] do something that they think is the right way but if you read the source you find out they are wrong.

Since 19 out of 20 of my interlocutors have an immigrant family -or one of the parents- they regularly visit their parents' countries of origin. This also helped them to detach the Islam contaminated with customs and blind imitation from their *real Islam*. Jasmin, a 15 years old high school student with whom I met at a talk organized by a leftist Spanish group debating the idea of Islamic feminism, articulates well how they build their real Islam through questioning the parents' understanding of religion while acknowledging the advantages of living in a non-Muslim environment:

> I think in general religion in the Muslim countries is something like automatic, something like tradition… If I am given five times praying a day firstly I would ask why as my mother or father didn't directly tell me that 'you have to pray!' or 'you have to fast!' I think advantage of living in a non-Muslim country opened my eyes and helped me to search for why of the things.

Jasmin's testimony, on the one hand, illustrates well how they negotiate between a traditional understanding of Islam they gain from their families, and the *real* Islam they search and learn

[183] My explanation.
[184] My explanation.



CEU eTD Collection

from the main sources. On the other hand, the points Jasmin made indicates how a non-Muslim environment, with which they negotiate through other means, can positively contribute to their understanding of Islam. Moreover, these negotiations exceed to shape their understanding of gender equality in Islam as well. Nour, a twenty years old student, defines it through her experience which reveals the unequal sexual morality among male and female children within the family:

> Culture influences religion a lot. For example, my brother goes out and can come back to home till 2 a.m. and it's OK, I go out and I have to be back at 10 p.m. the latest. One thing is religion and another is culture. This is culture and for boys they are less worried than for girls but at home I do more house work than my brother and religion doesn't say so. They are things that make culture rule over religion.

When I asked Nour, who restarted her life as a student after getting her divorce lately, what she thought about defining housework and nursing children as a major occupation for women, as part of *ulama* and Islamic thinkers claim, she laughed and said:

> This is what my ex-husband was saying! I left my husband mainly because of this. I think if husband has a good salary, can maintain the house economically, I think it is division of labor, why should women be inferior for taking care of children…. But if I have aspirations, I want to work, there is no reason to stay at home.

Through these personal experiences many develop an understanding of equal gender relations by distinguishing the tradition and culture from their *real Islam*.

The last step, which contributes to the development of equal gender relations of active Muslim women, is in participation in Muslim organizations, which contributes to the formation of the *halal zone*. As examined in chapter two, the *halal zone* has significant impacts on my interlocutors as they are coming into moral and political feminine subjects. This is the place that introduces these young Muslim women to each other and contributes to enlarging their circles since all activities take place in the same building as Muslim youth and women's organizations and Islamic cultural center activities, and thus enhances not only the interaction between Muslim women but also their engagement in Spanish society. Moreover, this zone

CEU eTD Collection

becomes the center of circulation of religious and civic knowledge. This is the zone in which they are encouraged to be good practicing Muslims and good Spanish citizens through their positive contributions to the society. Jasmin, a 15 years old student, expresses the impacts of involving into the activities of Muslim organizations as:

> Being involved to these associations have changed many things in my life. It gave me the opportunity to interact more with other people, not just Muslims. And this opens your mind and gives you the opportunity to learn a lot of things you wouldn't know by yourself. It has opened new doors of knowledge as I have known my religion and myself too.

The *Halal zone* also introduces these young women to significant role models who actively work for the Muslim community and Spanish society. For instance, Yasmin Salem, as the owner of the first and only *halal* beauty salon, stands as an important figure among my interlocutors. Yasmin has her own business, and she actively works for the wellbeing of Muslim women and positive representation of them in Spanish society. She pays for psychologic counseling every month for a Muslim woman who is in need. Moreover, Yasmin organized the first Muslim fashion show in Madrid which created tremendous impression and caught wide attention from the media.[185] Beside Yasmin, the founding president of ACHIME as a successful medical doctor and activist, vice president of ACHIME as a journalist, and Khadija as a TV programmer stand as important role models for these young women.

Even though, as the researcher of this project I cannot claim that neither the women I worked with nor the organizations and Islamic cultural centers have organic links with European *dawa* movements, there are clear signs that Muslim youth and women's organizations and Islamic cultural centers are under the influence of them in terms of their discourses, methods, main approaches to non-Muslims and conceptualization of *dawa* in a European

[185] See the links for news on Muslim fashion show: From *20 Minutos* http://www.20minutos.es/fotos/artes/primer-desfile-de-moda-islamica-en-espana-11288/ ; from *El Mundo*: http://www.elmundo.es/album/tendencias/2015/03/27/5515bf58268e3eaf608b4576.html ; http://www.atalayar.com/portfolio/en-casa-%C3%A1rabe-primer-desfile-de-moda-dise%C3%B1ada-por-musulmanas-emprendedoras-de-espa%C3%B1a .



CEU eTD Collection

context. Yet, when it comes to gender equality in Islam there is no clearly articulated agreed upon approach either at a European level or within the Spanish *dawa* movements. Perhaps that is why it was not unusual to witness, particularly during the class of Islam, women raising their objections to issues of gender equality.

In regularly attending the classes of Islam and Arabic at Mezquita de Estrecho under the assistance of a Syrian professor, Omar, who has been living in Spain more than 40 years. At one of those classes Omar recited a *hadith*. The *hadith* was equalizing the testimony of two women witnesses to the testimony of one man witness. Omar tried to explain the *hadith* by reminding the social conditions of the first decades of Islam, as men were more engaged into business and trade than women, and claimed that this *hadith* is concerning financial issues. Yet, many women in the class raised objections to his explanations. One woman gave the example of Prophet's first wife, Khadija, who was a business woman, and another woman, a young Palestinian who holds an MBA degree from London, argued that it is not possible to apply this *hadith* to the present day as in the Muslim community many women are more educated than men. I could hear the various other opinions challenging this *hadith* and professor's approach, among each other from the back seats. Therefore, active Muslim women partake in these activities and classes to master their Islamic knowledge through which they can contest the controversial interpretations of Islamic sources. Consequently, the theoretical frame that Butler offers is the only way of subverting and undoing the norms is doing the norms, and this is useful to my analysis of the multiply reasons of Muslim women's participation in classes on Islamic theology.

In summary, the process through which active Muslim women come into being as active agents and subjects take place through their distinct negotiations at different layers. As indicated through the examples different power relations operating at distinct milieus foster the formation of different actions. For instance, while they try to neutralize the impacts of secular

CEU eTD Collection

environment through the formation of a *halal zone,* and performing *dawa* through daily acts, to contest the Islam of their families, which is contaminated with customs, they search, read and, build their *real* Islam. Moreover, while the western conceptions of Muslim women lead active Muslim women to move away from western feminism, they develop a distinct feminist awareness through contesting the patriarchal understandings and practices of Islam. Thus, they show the capacity for action at different moments against different pivots.

CEU eTD Collection

# Conclusion

After my extensive analysis of the data I gathered from the field, under the frame of certain theoretical concepts I reached some significant results. Firstly, my analysis shows that the main motivation, which drives the civic as well as moral practices of active Muslim women, is combatting the 'otherness' of Islam in a European context. Although, the acts like claiming Spanishness as Muslim citizens, active civic engagement to contribute the coexistence, and trying to be cultured members of society look like civic actions, the main motive behind them is combatting the status of 'the other' they are attributed as Muslims. Therefore, every act which serves to the contestation of the negative images, Islam and Muslims are attributed, which stem from their 'otherness,' becomes a way of performing a moral/religious duty. This aspect of *dawa* that is practiced among active Muslim women locates the Spanish *dawa* movement under the frame of European *dawa* movements.

As broadly examined in chapter two, while the secular public sphere appears to be a disciplinary power to produce a normative religiosity, the simple daily acts of active Muslim women, which imply to performing *dawa*, in a legitimate way challenge and violate the secular nature of public sphere. In other words, employment of a liberal discourse combined with equal citizenship rights active Muslim women 'obey' the norms of secular public sphere. Yet, their simple daily acts, which are overloaded with religious meanings, lead to the recasting of a secular public sphere as the boundaries between the public and private become blurred. In a theoretical framework, these daily acts of active Muslim women result in the formation of a *counterpublic* which constantly challenges the secular public sphere.

Another significant point my study reveals is that Muslim youth and women's organizations function like the centers of empowerment for my interlocutors. These organizations, as a significant part of their socialization process, contribute to them come into being as political and moral subjects, and inform their understanding of gender equality. As



CEU eTD Collection

there is a distinct understanding of gender equality grounded on Islamic mores among active Muslim women. The main actors, which contribute to the formation of this understanding of gender equality, are also the mechanisms against which active Muslim women negotiate their subjectivities in the process of coming into being as subjects. Contesting the binary between Spanishness/Europeanness and Muslimness, thus the western imageries of Muslim women, detaching the patriarchal understandings and practices of Islam from the *real Islam* within the family and Muslim organizations, and not getting back from challenging the unequal interpretations of Islamic sources during classes of Islam appear to be the main ways active Muslim women negotiate their subjectivity and become full agents.

Findings of this work stand significant in terms of filling a gap in the literature in on the specific Spanish context. Firstly, it examines the Spanish *dawa* movement and locates it within the Europe-wide *dawa* movements. Then, it uncovers the relationship between the civic engagement and *dawa* in a European context which is an issue not very much covered in the literature. Moreover, it finds out the impacts of civic engagement on the formation of a distinct understanding of gender equality grounded on Islam. Very importantly, it also contributes to the literature for uncovering the various ways in which Muslim women negotiate their subjectivity in a Spanish context through developing different strategies and acts, depending on the nature of power relations at operation. By exposing Muslim women's active negotiations over their subjectivities, this work not only disproves the ones who attribute the false consciousness to the Muslim women participating in the Islamic movements, but also exposes that there is no one single way to reach the gender equality as every feminism grows on its own soil.

CEU eTD Collection

# Glossary

**Ayah**— (pl Ayāt) sign; used for verse of the Qur'ān.

**Dar al-Harb** — (Domain of War) refers to the territory under the hegemony of unbelievers, which is on terms of active or potential belligerency with the Domain of Islam, and presumably hostile to the Muslims living in its domain.

**Dar al-Islam** — The land of Islam.

**Dawa** — Propagation of Islam through word and action, calling the people to follow the commandments of Allah and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

**Fatwa** — A legal verdict given on a religious basis. The sources on which a fatwa is based are the Holy Qur'an, and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

**Hadith**— (pl Ahādith); tale/narrative; generally a record of the Prophet's life.

**Halal**— is something that is lawful and permissible to use/consume in Islam.

**Haram**— is that which is unlawful in Islam. It is necessary to abstain from the acts which are haram.

**Hijab**—head veil.

**Ijtihad**—process of critical reasoning.

**Shari'ah**—Islamic law.

**Surah**—Qur'ānic 'chapter'.

**Ulama** — Islamic scholars.

**Umma**— Ummah, community, or nation, is a special name given to Muslim brotherhood and unity.

**Khalif** — Vice regent.

**Wasatiyya** — Middle way.

CEU eTD Collection

# References


Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Al-Faruqi, Isma'il. ''On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah.'' International Review of Mission. Vol. LXV, No. 260 (October 1976).

Allen, Christopher and Nielsen, Jorgen S. Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001. European Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, (2002).

Al-Qaradawi, Yousef. ''Priorities of Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase'': (http://shibircloud.com/pdf/priorities_of_Islamic_movement_in_the_coming_phase.pdf)

Allen, Amy. ''Power, Subjectivity, and Agency: Between Arendt and Foucault''. International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol 10 (2), (December 2010).

Amir-Moazami, Schirin and Jouili, Jeanette S. ''Knowledge, Empowerment and Religious Authority Among Pious Muslim Women in France and Germany'' in Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives, edited by Anitta Kynsilehto. (Tampere: Mari Pakarinen/Juvenes Print, 2008).

Arigita, Elena. "Representing Islam in Spain: Muslim Identities and the Contestation of Leadership" in *The Muslim Worlds*, Vol. 96 (2006).

Badran, Margot. ''Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond.'' *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol.1, No. 1. (2005).

Barlas, Asma. ''Engaging Islamic Feminism: Provincializing Feminism as a Master Narrative'' in *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives*, ed. Anitta Kynsilehto (Tampere: Mari Pakarinen/Juvenes Print, 2008).

Behar, Ruth. ''Chapter 1: The Vulnerable Observer''. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer," *GLQ* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1993).


CEU eTD Collection

Cooke, Miriam. ‘‘Zaynab Al-Ghazali: Saint or Subversive?’’ Die Welt des Islams, New Series, Vol. 34. Issue 1. (1994).

Cooke, Miriam. ‘‘The Muslimwoman.’’ *Springer Science Business Media B.V*, (12.06.2007).

Ferreira, Monica. *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Ed. By Johann Mouton and HC Marais, (HSRC Publishers: South Africa, 1996).

Foucault, Michel. ‘‘The Subject and Power’’. Critical Inquiry, Vol. 8, No. 4. 1982.

Göle, Nilüfer. (ed.) *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe.* Ashgate, Burlington: 2013.

Habermas, Jürgen. ‘‘Religion in the Public Sphere.’’European Journal of Philosophy, 14, (2007).

Harrer, Sebastian. ‘‘The Theme of Subjectivity in Foucault’s Lecture Series L’Herméneutique du Sujet’’. Foucault Studies, No. 2. (May 2005).

Hirschkind, Charles. ‘‘Civic Virtue and Religious Reason: An Islamic Counterpublic.’’ Cultural Anthropology 16 (1):3-34. (2001).

Inge, Anabel. *The Making of a Muslim Salafi Woman: Paths to Conversion*. Oxford Scholarship Online: 2016.

Jacobsen, Christine M. ‘‘Troublesome Threesome: Feminism, Anthropology and Muslim Women’s Piety’’. Feminist Review no. 98. (2011).

Jouili, Jeanette S. ‘‘Beyond Emancipation: Subjectivities and Ethics Among Women in Europe’s Islamic Revival Communities’’. Feminist Review No. 98. (2011).

Kahf, Mohja. *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman*. University of Texas Press: Austin, 1999.

Leiken, Robert S. and Brooke, Steven. ‘‘The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.’’ Foreign Affairs. Vol. 86, No. 2, (2007).

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety*. (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2005).

Mandaville, Peter. "Transnational Muslim solidarities and everyday life." *Nations & Nationalism* 17, no. 1 (January 2011).

CEU eTD Collection

Mapril, José, Blanes, Ruy, Giumbelli, Emerson and Wilson, Erin K. ‘‘Introduction: Secularities, Religiosities, and Subjectivities’’ in *Secularism in a Postsecular Age?* eds. José Mapril, Ruy Blanes, Emerson Giumbelli, and Erin K. Wilson, (Springer: Switzerland, 2017).

Marachel, Brigitte. *The Muslim Brothers in Europe Roots and Discourse*. (Brill, Leiden and Boston: 2008).

Meijer, Roel. *Golbal Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. Colombia University Press: 2011.

Mitchel, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses." Feminist review 30 (1988): 61-88: 53 discourses." Feminist review 30 (1988): 61-88: 53.

Moreras, Jordi. ‘‘Limits and Contradictions in the Legal Recognition of Muslims in Spain’’ in *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union*. eds. W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. Van Koningsveld, Peeters. (Leuven, Paris, Sterling, 2002).

Moreras, Jordi. ‘‘Muslims in Spain: Between the Historical Heritage and the Minority Construction.’’ The Muslim World, Volume 92, Spring 2002.

Moreras, Jordi. *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe Vol. 1*, edited by Jørgen S. Nielsen et al. (Boston: Leiden, 2009).

Moreras, Jordi. *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe Vol. 2,* edited by Jørgen S. Nielsen et al. (Boston: Leiden, 2010).

Nuhoğlu Soysal, Yasemin. ‘‘Changing Parameters of Citizenship and Claims-Making: Organized Islam in European Public Spheres.’’ Theory and Society, Vol. 26, No. 4, Special Issue on Recasting Citizenship. (Aug.,1997).

Peter, Frank. ‘‘Individualization and Religious Authority in Western European Islam’’. *Islam and Christian- Muslim Relations,* Vol. 17, No. 1. 2006.

Poston, Larry. *Islamic Da'wah in the West*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

CEU eTD Collection

Ramadan, Tariq. ‘‘Europeanization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?’’ in *Islam: Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural and Political Landscape*. edited by Shireen T. Hunter (Westport and Connecticut and London: Praeger Publishers, 2002).

Salem, Sara. “Feminist critique and Islamic Feminism: The Question of Intersectionality.” *The Postcolonialist*, Vol. 1, Number 1 (November 2013).

Said, Edward. In Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory, Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Scott, Joan W. *The Politics of the Veil.* Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2007.

Shiner, Larry. ‘‘Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge’’. History and Theory, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Oct. 1982).

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. ‘‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’’ in Marxism

Subedi, Binaya. ‘‘Theorizing a ‘halfie’ researcher’s identity in transnational fieldwork’’. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Vol. 19, No. 5. (2006).

Téllez Delgado, Virtudes. ‘‘Embodying Religiosities and Subjectivities: The Responses of Young Spanish Muslims to Violence and Terrorism in the Name of Islam.’’ in *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe,* ed. Nilüfer Göle, Ashgate, Burlington: 2013.

Vidino, Lorenzo. *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*. (Columbia University Press, New York: 2010).

Wiedl, Nina. ‘‘Dawa and the Islamist Revival in the West’’. Current Treds in Islamist Ideology, Vol. 9, 2010.

Yow, Valeria. ‘‘The In-Depth Interview as a Qualitative Research Method’’ in *Recording Oral History: A Guide fort he Humanities and Social Sciences*. Second Edition, (2005).

Zine, Jasmin. ‘‘Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation.’’ The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences. 19:4, 2002.

CEU eTD Collection

Observatorio Andalucí, Estudio Demográfico de la Población Musulmana, UCIDE 2017, (http://ucide.org/sites/default/files/revistas/estademograf16.pdf.

Official website of Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid, http://ccislamicomadrid.blogspot.hu/p/el-centro.html.

Official website of AJME: http://www.achabab.es/Quiensomos.html .

Official Website of ACHIME: http://www.asociacionachime.com/

Official website of EMN: http://eumuslim.net/about-emn/.

CILE: https://www.cilecenter.org/en/activities/052017-cile-granada-summer-school-2017/.

CEU eTD Collection