



# Egyptian feminism and its interactions with the West

Honors research project....

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# Research Question

How does Egyptian feminism interact with the West through the lense of women's groups?



# Significance of my research

- Relationship continually changing
- Feminism differs across regions
- Increase funding for NGOs,  
apparatus for democracy?



# Overview

- Methods
  - Historical review of Egyptian feminism
- Contemporary review of Egyptian feminism
  - Women's organizations
  - Data analysis process
    - Discussion
    - Questions

# Methods

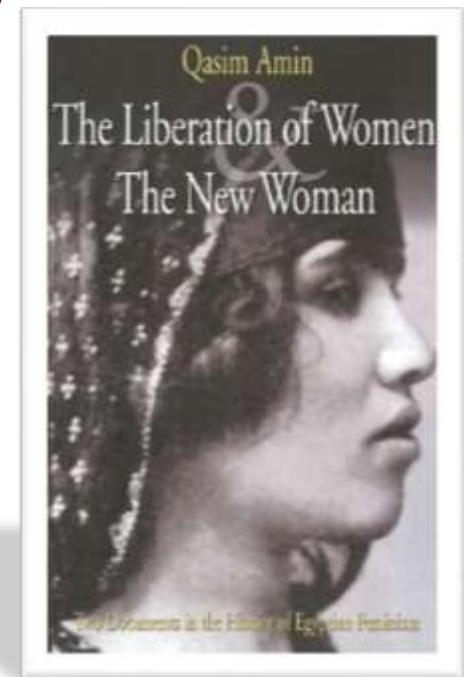


<http://integralthinkers.com/religion/go-wash-clothes/>

- Historical literature review
- Contemporary literature review
- Identified Egyptian women's organizations
- Rubric of questions used to assess them
- Compare findings to develop conclusions on trends

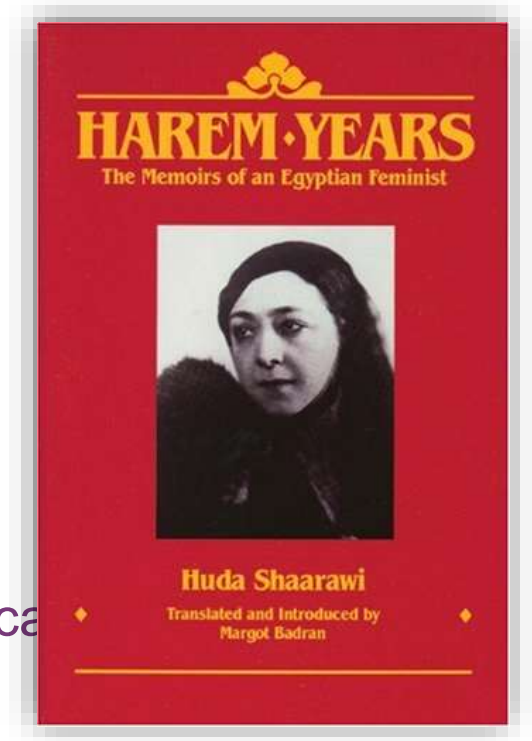
# Historical Literature Review (1860-1900s)

- Qasim Amin (1863-1908)
  - European educated
  - Published writings
  - Culture limiting women →
  - Better women=better society
    - sphere of domesticity
  - Direct comparison with Western women



# Historical Review (1920s-1940s)

- Huda Sha'rawi (1879-1947)
  - European educated
  - Publishes autobiography →
  - Upper-class
  - Pushes
    - women's education, philanthropy, and political reforms in personal status law
  - Organizational Phase of feminism
    - 1<sup>st</sup> president of Egyptian Feminist Union



<http://booko.com.au/books/isbn/9780935312706>

# Historical Review

## Divergence of Feminist Voice (1940s-on)

- Two voices
  - Secular feminism vs. Islamic feminism
- Zainab Al-Ghazali: Islamic approach
  - Fights for public space
  - Establishes Muslim Women's Association



Zainab Al-Ghazali (1917-2005)

<http://siswihaluan.blogspot.com/2009/12/who-is-zainab-al-ghazali.html>



# Contemporary Review

Iman  
Bihars



Secular  
Feminism

<http://www.ashoka-arab.org/about-ashoka/our-team.html>

*“Westerners attack Muslims by belittling the very notion that they could generate a feminism of their own, and in so doing denigrate Islam as inherently gender-unjust, while many Muslims (playing into their hands) attack the West for foisting feminism upon their hapless coreligionists, wantonly discrediting Muslim women’s feminisms.”—Badran, Margot. 2009. *Feminism in Islam: secular and religious convergences.**

Margot  
Badran



Islamic Feminism

[http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/muslimwomen/bio/margot\\_badran/](http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/muslimwomen/bio/margot_badran/)

# Women's organizations in Egypt

- Arab Women Solidarity Association
- al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya (the Sharia Society)
- The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights
- Egyptian Women's Business Association
  - The New Woman Research Center
    - Alliance For Arab Women
    - The National Council for Women
- The Association of the Development and Enhancement of Women
  - The Young Muslim Woman Association

# Questions used in data analysis

- Who's funding them?
- Are they secular or religious?
- What are their goals/objectives?
- What is the identity they want to establish?
- What issues are addressed?

# Arab Women Solidarity Association

- Founded in 1982
- Nawal el-Saadawi
- Secular
- Largely Western funding
- Objectives:
  - Women's economic development
  - Publish literature on women's issues
  - Produce films on Arab women's lives

**IDENTITY?:** *“It was established by a group of 120 women who agreed that the struggle for the liberation of Arab people and freedom from economic, cultural and media domination cannot be separated from the liberation of Arab women.”*  
–AWSA

# al-Jam'iyya al-Shar'iyya—the Sharia Society

- Small group
  - Religious
- Funded by the church of Islam
  - Objectives:
    - Teach women doctrine
    - Leadership opportunity
- Identity firmly Muslim

# Discussion

- More secular than Islamic...Why?
  - Government laws, monitoring, AWSA suspended
  - Radical? Gender not the real issue?
  - NGO/donor dilemma
- Revolution changing women's groups
  - Coalition against NCFW
- How will the revolution alter the dynamics of Western relations with women's groups in Egypt?
  - Prior to revolution, "Controlled" liberalization?
  - Strong resistance to Western authority
  - Secular trend continue or no?

# Acknowledgements



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# References

## Web Address of Org's

- [http://ecwronline.org/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=english](http://ecwronline.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=english)
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- <http://8.4.9.245:2021/>

## Main Publications Used

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