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978-1-107-04152-3 - Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'ān: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses

Karen Bauer

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## Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'ān

*Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses*

This book explores how medieval and modern Muslim religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) interpret gender roles in Qur'ānic verses on legal testimony, marriage, and human creation. Citing these verses, medieval scholars developed increasingly complex laws and interpretations upholding a male-dominated gender hierarchy; aspects of their interpretations influence religious norms and state laws in Muslim-majority countries today, yet other aspects have been discarded entirely. Karen Bauer traces the evolution of these interpretations, showing how they have been adopted, adapted, rejected, or replaced over time, by comparing the Qur'ān with a wide range of Qur'ānic commentaries and interviews with prominent religious scholars from Iran and Syria. At times, tradition is modified in unexpected ways: learned women argue against gender equality, or Grand Ayatollahs reject sayings of the Prophet, citing science instead. This innovative and engaging study highlights the effects of social and intellectual contexts on the formation of tradition, and on modern responses to it.

**Karen Bauer** is a research associate in Qur'ānic Studies at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. Her publications include articles on the Qur'ān, the genre of *tafsīr*, and gender, as well as an edited volume entitled *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis (2nd/8th – 9th/15th Centuries)*.

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For My Parents

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Although I have sought to present the views of my sources accurately in quotes and text, the analysis of these views is mine alone, and as such may not represent the opinions of my interview subjects. Nor does this work represent the views of the institutions that have supported me financially or through their sponsorship. I have had much helpful advice and feedback on this work, but neither interview subjects nor colleagues bear any responsibility for its mistakes.

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## A Note on Names and Transliterations

I have used the common, shortened version of medieval authors' names in text. These short names are used for alphabetisation in the bibliography. A fuller version of the name is also provided in the first footnote and the bibliography.

I have maintained transliteration for modern names in Arabic. Many of my Iranian interview subjects have a preferred spelling of their name in English, which I have followed. In some cases I provide the fully transliterated name on the first mention, and in the bibliography.

Transliteration is alphabetic, rather than phonetic, with some common exceptions.