

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

GUNTHER DIETZ and NADIA EL-SHOHOUMI, *Muslim Women in Southern Spain: Stepdaughters of Al-Andalus*. LaJolla, CA: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UCSD, 2005, 169p.

Muslim Women in Southern Spain: Stepdaughters of Al-Andalus is an ethnographic study of the migration experiences and everyday life of Muslim women living in Spain. Gunther Dietz and Nadia El-Shohoumi contextualized immigrant women's experiences by examining the various local and national factors that shape both immigrants' and Spaniards' impressions of immigration, gender, and Islam. The main objectives of this study were: 1) to describe the "life-worlds" of Muslim women living in Spain, and 2) to historically contextualize current Islamophobia and describe Muslim women's experiences of discrimination. Spain has only recently become a country of immigration, and although immigrants are a small percentage of the total Spanish population, the issues they face are mirrored in the social profiles reported elsewhere in the world (e.g. primarily participating in informal sector and in seasonal labour markets, plus foreign credentials often not recognized so there is a shift down in socio-economic status). The foremost contribution of this book is the detailed examination of the heterogeneity among Muslim women and how various forms of discrimination interact in shaping these women's experiences.

The study was undertaken in the city of Granada. Located in Andalusia, this is the third most concentrated population of Muslims in Spain, following Madrid and Catalonia. This location provides a unique view on Muslim women's experiences in that, contrary to the situation of immigrants residing in Madrid and Catalonia, migrants in Granada live in the city-centre and so are not confined to marginal, low-income neighbourhoods. Granada is known as a "university town" consequently there is a mixed migrant population of low-income workers and highly skilled employees of the university. Furthermore, the historical legacy of Muslims in Andalusia, and in Granada in particular, has made Granada an "exotic" locale within Spain. Tourists come to visit the Muslim quarters, and many Muslim converts choose to reside here. So, this study site is well chosen for an ethnographic investigation into the diversity of immigrants' and Muslim women's experiences.

Muslim women continue to represent "otherness" through stereotypical representations of silenced femininity. This book goes a long way in challenging such simplistic depictions through analyzing the diversity

within the Muslim community, and amongst Muslim women's life-worlds. Chapter 3 is especially important in this regard, where women's relation to, and understanding of, Islam before and after migration are described. In this chapter, women's conceptions of Islam's relation to cultural context are also defined. For the majority of female migrants, culture and religion are intertwined, so religious rituals and practices were an integral part of family life and ethnic and cultural identity. Women who migrated from northeastern Morocco or northern Algeria separated religious, cultural and ethnic identity, identifying themselves as Muslims, but ethnically Amazigh. These women rejected some practices, such as wearing a headscarf, which are conflated with Islam, as a cultural practice of Arabs and not religiously prescribed. Converts to Islam also separated religious identity from cultural, ethnic, or national identity.

One of the enduring stereotypes of Islam is the supposed sexual discrimination inherent to this religion. The words of female converts dramatically defy this assumption, as they contend that Islam promotes "mutual respect between the sexes" and view conversion as a stand against the sexist machismo culture seen to dominate Spain. However many women, both converts and immigrants, did address sexual discrimination that occurred within their community, but separated this from religion. In other words, Muslim men, not Islam, perpetuate sexual discrimination. Once more, it becomes evident that experiences of gender discrimination within the community are varied, dependent on other aspects of women's identities, such as educational and marital status.

The institutional discrimination immigrant women face is described in chapter 6, while chapter 7 focuses on Muslim women's experiences of discrimination. The authors make a coherent argument that Islamophobia and Arabophobia are widespread in Spanish society, and that ignorance of Islam, of the ethnic and cultural diversity among Muslims, and of the everyday lives of immigrants is prevalent. Ethnographic interviews were conducted with representatives from non-governmental organizations and immigrant associations working on behalf of Muslim women, and from public institutions serving immigrant women. It is especially powerful to read quotes from these representatives for they are evocative in describing the challenges they face in serving these women, but also underlying assumptions and prejudices that affect the ability of these programs to support these women. This is contrasted with the voices of the women themselves, who talk about the inefficiencies of the institutions, and so pursue a "strategy of avoidance." The authors also state that there is a historical legacy for these discriminatory attitudes. This is one section that could be expanded upon, especially for readers who may have limited knowledge of Spanish history. It is also worthy to note that the research was conducted prior to the violence of September 11, 2001 and the Madrid bombings of March 11, 2004, thus it is highly probable that Islamophobia in Spain has increased. A short epilogue describing the current situation, if and how the situation has changed for immigrants and/or Muslim women would have been useful.

In sum, this book is well written and coherent in presenting the heterogeneity of immigrants and Muslim communities in Spain. The issues discussed are not restricted to the Spanish context, and so provide fodder for discussion on the status of immigrant Muslim women throughout the Western world. This book would be very useful in upper division/graduate level classes in anthropology, sociology or gender studies, where in-depth discussions on these topics can be developed.

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