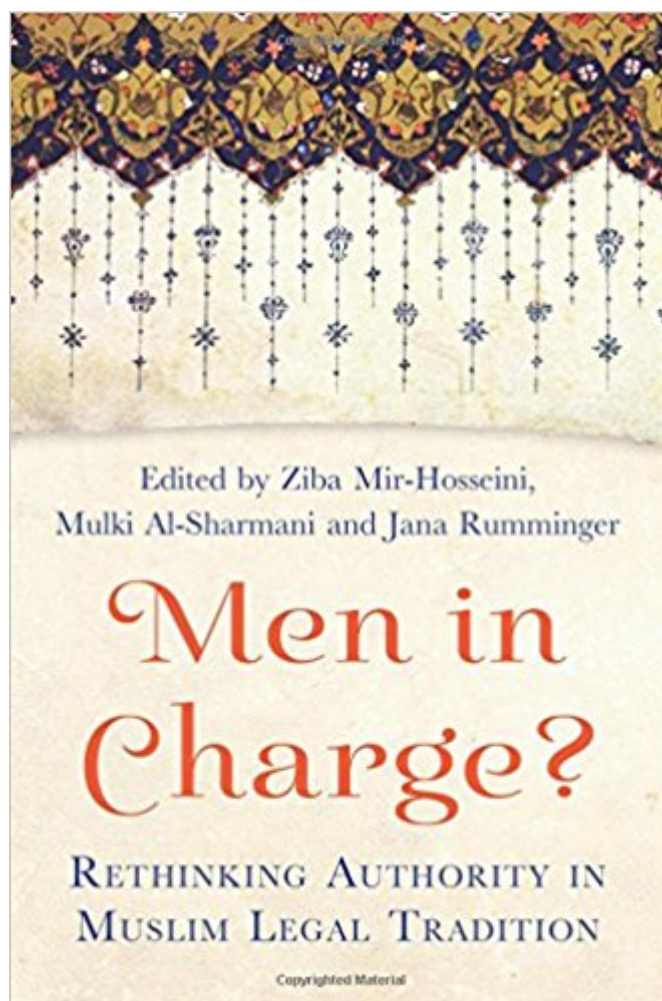


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# Men In Charge?: Rethinking Authority In Muslim Legal Tradition



## Synopsis

Both Muslims and non-Muslims see women in most Muslim countries as suffering from social, economic, and political discrimination, treated by law and society as second-class citizens subject to male authority. This discrimination is attributed to Islam and Islamic law, and since the late 19th century there has been a mass of literature tackling this issue. Recently, exciting new feminist research has been challenging gender discrimination and male authority from within Islamic legal tradition: this book presents some important results from that research. The contributors all engage critically with two central juristic concepts; rooted in the Qur'ân, they lie at the basis of this discrimination. One refers to a husband's authority over his wife, his financial responsibility toward her, and his superior status and rights. The other is male family members' right and duty of guardianship over female members (e.g., fathers over daughters when entering into marriage contracts) and the privileging of fathers over mothers in guardianship rights over their children. The contributors are scholars from different disciplines and backgrounds, brought together by Musawah (Arabic for "equality"), a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Men in Charge? is bound to be a key scholarly text for anyone researching or studying law or Islam in general. It is a necessary book, one which is carefully designed to combat misconceptions and prejudice, and one which, most importantly, has a practical focus: all of the book's contributors are writing for change.... These authors pave the way for a brighter and fairer future for Muslim women."- The London School of Economics and Political Science Book Review"Bar none, this is the

best treatment of women and Islamic law that I have read in the past twenty years...profound, eye-opening and even exhilarating. It is difficult for me to take seriously any student or scholar dealing with the subject of guardianship of men over women in Islam unless, or until, they have read and digested this book."- Dr. Kaled Abou El Fadl - Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Professor of Law, UCLA School of Law"Brimming with facts and insights, these critical and constructive essays by a global array of scholars and reformers focus our attention on how patriarchy functions in Muslim texts and contexts, and how it can be challenged. Their distinctive analyses converge and diverge, leading the reader to a new awareness of the range and power of Muslim feminist thought in the twenty-first century."- Kecia Ali - Associate Professor of Religion, Boston University"A highly stimulating collection of pieces by notable scholars and activists...Men in Charge? provides a complex and clearly articulated analysis of the problems with the dominant exegetical and juristic understandings of gender relations...an extremely valuable contribution to the discourse on gender relations, equality, justice and women's rights in Islam and among Muslims."- Farid Esack, Professor in the Study of Islam and Head of Department of Religion Studies, University of Johannesburg

Ziba Mir-Hosseini is a legal anthropologist. A professorial research associate at the Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, SOAS, University of London, she is founding member of Musawah: Global Movement for Equality in Muslim Family Laws. She lives in London. Mulki Al-Sharmani is a research fellow at the Academy of Finland, a lecturer at the University of Helsinki, and a research coordinator of the Musawah knowledge-building initiative to rethink the notion of male authority in Muslim family laws. She lives in Helsinki. Jana Rumminger lives in Singapore and works with Musawah, the global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family. Her focus is on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

This book is for anyone who takes their faith seriously and wants to honour the eternal principles in the Quran whilst looking honestly at the patriarchy which the Quran has seemingly fostered.

"Men in Charge" is an excellent and stimulating read that confronts learned patriarchy in Islam. Drawing on key religious texts and principles, "Men in Charge" pieces together the legal story of women in Islam across the ages while providing the understanding that patriarchy can be confronted. In fact by the very existence of this book, it is being confronted. These authors and

researchers and NGOs involved represent a critical and increasingly growing movement of Muslims who believe in the rights and roles of women as equal citizens and who are fighting for and making change that does not go against key religious texts, but aligns society more closely with the modern expectations and values of Islam.

A great book that presents information based on evidences for most part. In Muslim societies actually women are in charge so I am not sure what prompted the authors to write this book. At times the book appears to be a hodgepodge logic and selective readings from sacred texts to support authors' point of view. While it is absolutely true, the dignity given by Islam to men, women, children, the elderly, the animals, and others is unmatched even today. It is also true that often cultural elements take over the religious rulings; however, to become obsessive to show that "women are equal in all manners to men" is a political motivation not religious one. In Islam some matters men get preference but in other matters women get preference. The book does not explain: \* Why earlier Islamic women did not question the male leadership and service to the household? Islam has a rich assortment of amazing women who transmitted tradition and interpretations in Islam. \* If everyone is equal in say and authority, how do you break a tie? \* It is men in Islam who have given rights, respect and dignity to women not only in Islam but the whole world. These rights, respect and dignity were previously denied to women. Why would these men then interpret the Quran to subjugate women? \* What about the verse that says that men have one degree over women which is then offset by more responsibility that men must carry as well? Good book overall.

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