

objections. For instance, even if Muhammad had no sons, he certainly had biological grandsons. Other spoilers here are the *fada'il* traditions concerning Umar ibn al-Khattab, which assert that of all the companions, Umar alone was a *muhaddath* (i.e., able to hear angels' voices) and list Umar's many *muwāfaqāt* (i.e., incidents wherein he intuited God's revelation before it was revealed). For such reasons, the Prophet allegedly declared that were there to be a prophet after him, it would have been Umar.

In summary, although *Zayd* offers some of the most adroit and penetrating readings of the interrelation between the *sira* literature and the literary heritage of late antiquity, I hazard to say that few in the scholarly community will follow Powers's theses in the concluding chapter. ✂

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.47](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.47)

Sean W. Anthony
University of Oregon

BEHNAM SADEGHI. *The Logic of Law Making in Islam: Women and Prayer in the Legal Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. vii + 234 pages, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$99.99 ISBN 978-1-1070-0909-7.

The Logic of Law Making in Islam is a book of great scholarly value that rests on deceptively modest claims. The stated purpose of Sadeghi's study is to provide readers with a "general model of juristic decision making" that might be applied to any legal tradition, but that takes post-formative Hanafi jurisprudence on women and prayer as its case study (xi). Drawing on the opinions of Hanafi jurists writing between the eighth and eighteenth centuries, Sadeghi proves that an enduring relationship between stable laws and flexible legal reasoning was responsible for the dynamic, if conservative, quality of Hanafi jurisprudence throughout the pre-modern period.

Sadeghi's focused approach and use of a single legal problem as a case study bolster, rather than detract from, the book's potential to reshape a number of well-established scholarly conventions and conversations. The first argument Sadeghi makes, for example, is that the standard academic model of legal decision making must be inverted. Jurists, Sadeghi demonstrates, have not historically drawn on textual sources (here, the Qur'an and hadith) in order to derive law, but rather they have started with a given law and then interpreted "sources" in order to reconcile these texts with the law (xii). Moreover, Sadeghi continues, this method of interpretation is by no means a cynical manipulation of the texts on the part of jurists. On

the contrary, it demonstrates more effectively than conventional accounts of legal reasoning both the intelligence and the good faith of jurists who recognize that interpretation is always a complex and far from linear process (122, 135, 148–149). Pushing the related work of Sherman Jackson to a logical conclusion, Sadeghi shows that this inverted model of legal reasoning can also apply to legal practice (35–36).

Much of the book is devoted to demonstrating—empirically as well as theoretically—that Hanafi (and other) jurists have worked in this way. A corollary to this point, though, provides Sadeghi an intriguing entry into a second debate in the field of Islamic legal studies: the question of whether Islamic jurisprudence is dynamic or static. A major theme of Sadeghi’s book is that the key force driving jurisprudence in general is “legal inertia.” The primary rationale for any law’s existence, in any tradition, Sadeghi claims, is nothing more than its prior existence. Barring some extreme contradiction between a pre-existing law and a given social or ethical consideration, this pre-existing law will persist, even when the values or historical circumstances that gave rise to it have long since disappeared (55).

The book’s fascinating discussion of Hanafi jurisprudence on women and prayer (which includes chapter 3 on the legality of women praying alongside men, chapter 4 on women leading prayers, and chapter 5 on women participating in communal prayers) provides Sadeghi with a series of excellent case studies to test this claim. “While the adjacency law [on women praying next to men] endured” in Hanafi jurisprudence, for example, Sadeghi shows that “the reasons given for it were variable and fluid, and they postdated the law. Moreover, when a reason was disqualified . . . this did not bring about the collapse of the law that ostensibly rested on it; rather, new reasons were devised” (74). Indeed, as Sadeghi comments, the fact that what are ordinarily described as legal outcomes remained stable, even in the face of radical changes to the textual canon over the centuries, was “a tribute to the hermeneutic flexibility of [jurists’] methodology” (137). Rather than insisting on either the dynamism (via *ijtihad*) of Islamic jurisprudence or its lack thereof—rather than accepting a dichotomy between change as vitality, on the one hand, and inertia as repetition, on the other—Sadeghi shows that inertia, or the lack of change, is itself evidence of vitality. Post-formative Hanafi jurisprudence was vibrant because the laws remained stable.

This sort of compelling and radical break from conventional scholarly analysis, embedded in rigorous textual analysis, characterizes Sadeghi’s reconfiguration of a number of conversations in history and gender studies

as well. Indeed, the book poses, via quiet and focused argumentation, a series of undeniable challenges to a collection of assumptions underlying Islamic studies writ large (challenges that continue into the appendix's virtuoso defense of the authenticity of the *Kitāb al-Āthār*). The book is a pleasure to read—a study with the elegance, rigor, and (deceptive) simplicity of the best sort of mathematical proof. ✂

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.19](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.19)

Ruth Miller
University of Massachusetts, Boston

AMIRA EL-AZHARY SONBOL, ED. *Gulf Women*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012. 454 pages, forward, bibliography, glossary, index. Paper US\$39.95 ISBN 978-0-8156-3309-9.

This pioneering collection of essays, edited by Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, fills a gaping void in the literature on women and gender in the Gulf, and will be much appreciated by scholars in that field and those covering women and Islam more broadly. The book's contributors shed light on the lived reality of Gulf women from antiquity to present times and dispell stereotypes and inaccuracies rife in the scant historical sources. Gulf women, Sonbol argues, were hardly absent from public life; they worked as midwives, vendors, priestesses, shepherds, healers, teachers, and political leaders. The theme of women's political, socioeconomic, and religious centrality is woven throughout the essays. The topics covered include Gulf women in pre-Islamic times, their education, religious practices, status within the tribe, forms of work, and roles within the family.

Hatoon Ajwad al-Fassi analyzes vestiges of women's pre-Islamic presence in eastern Arabia, using coins, inscriptions, and figurines. The mother goddess Ninhursag figures prominently in the fourth millennium BCE paradise myth of this region. Al-Fassi argues that "the representation of females in the myths is very strong and telling" (28). Ancient female figurines suggest the worship of female deities during this era.

Hoda El Saadi and Hibba Abugideiri both discuss the history of Gulf women's vocations. El Saadi notes that the West has projected an erroneous image of Gulf women as rendered "helpless and secluded at all times and in all places" (148). Women, however, worked as pearl divers, fish sellers, carpet weavers, and hairdressers. Abugideiri focuses on midwifery, arguing that Gulf women midwives were not simply working in the "private" realm: They preserved tribal identity through their labor and contributed to the