MOTHERHOOD AND MOTHERS IN ISLAMIC SOCIETIES: CONCEPT AND FUNCTIONS IN MEDIEVAL AND CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Maternidad y madres en las sociedades islámicas: concepto y funciones en la época medieval y contemporánea

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Abstract: This paper focuses on several aspects related to motherhood and the role of mothers in two historical periods of the history of Islam: pre-modern Arab societies, with a special focus on what is known in the West as the Middle Ages, and the *Nahḍa* or Arab Renaissance (end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th). The *Nahḍa* brought about new ideas about motherhood, and they represent a drastic change in the role of women as mothers, especially as women now begin to speak for themselves about motherhood. Mostly through a series of texts, the comparison focuses on what remains and what has changed in the role of women in Arab and Muslim families and societies throughout history.

Resumen: Nuestro objetivo en este trabajo es tratar diversos aspectos relativos a la maternidad y al papel de las madres en dos periodos históricos de la historia del islam: las sociedades árabes premodernas, con especial hincapié en lo que conocemos en occidente como la Edad Media, y la Naḥda o renacimiento árabe (finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX). La Naḥda trajo consigo nuevas ideas sobre la maternidad que constituyen un enorme cambio en relación al papel de las mujeres como madres y porque también las mujeres hablan por sí misma del papel de la maternidad. A través, sobre todo, de una serie de textos, comparamos y comentamos lo que perdura y lo que es totalmente distinto en el papel familiar y social de las mujeres como madres en las sociedades árabes y musulmanas a lo largo de la historia.

Key words: Motherhood. Naḥḍa. Family. Premodern Arab society.
Palabras clave: Maternidad. Naḥda. Familia. Sociedad árabe premoderna.

INTRODUCTION

"Paradise lies at the feet of mothers" *Al-janna taḥta aqdām al-ummahāt*

The *ḥadīth*, or prophetic saying, narrates how al-Sulamī went to the Prophet Muḥammad and said, "O messenger of Allāh, I want to fight and I have come to consult with you". The Prophet responded by asking, "Do you have a mother?"

He replied, "Yes". The Prophet told him, "Stay with her, because paradise lies beneath her feet"[1].

It seems almost necessary, when studying motherhood in Arab-Muslim societies, to begin with this *ḥadīth*, which reflects the respect and veneration granted to mothers in this context. "Notions of filial piety with a special emphasis on respect for mothers, which we find in early Arabic sources, have become an essential element of Muslim ethics on both the learned and the popular levels"[2]. A. Bouhdiba even states that "the cult of the mother [that] seems to me to constitute one of the keys to an understanding of the basic personality of the Arab-Muslim societies"[3].

Starting with these known topics about the image of mothers in Arab-Muslim societies, the purpose of this paper is to explore several aspects related to motherhood and the role of mothers in two historical periods of the history of Islam: pre-modern Arab societies, with a special focus on what is known in the West as the Middle Ages, and the *Nahḍa* or Arab Renaissance (end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th), because of the tremendous change it brought about in the role of women as mothers and also women speaking for themselves about motherhood. The first period will be divided in two topics: the value of the role of motherhood and the relationship between mothers and sons. As for the second period, the topics will be motherhood, reform and nationalism.

THE VALUE OF THE ROLE OF MOTHERHOOD

Despite this aforementioned veneration of mothers, reflected in the great value attributed to the role of motherhood and all that it is related to it, it is common in research on motherhood in the Pre-Modern period to note the scarcity of materials on the matter[4]. The different dimensions of motherhood are transmitted only by men, practically the only voice in that period, because the voice of women in any of their facets, was not heard at all until the 19th century[5] and is quite unusual to find materials where feminine feelings have been preserved in the first person. However, despite the invisibility of maternal love[6], some feelings were reflected, feelings with which we can identify with ourselves in the 21st century. As W. Saleh mentions in his article on examples of the image of the mother in Arabic-

1. Cheruvallil-Contractor. "Motherhood as Constructed by us", p. 15; Giladi. *Muslim Midwives*, pp. 43-44; Mhajne and Whetstone. "The Use of Political Motherhood", p. 61.
2. Giladi. *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses*, p. 46.
3. Bouhdiba. *Sexuality in Islam*, p. 214.
4. Toral-Niehoff. "Paradise is at the Feet of the Mothers", pp. 47, 49, 52; Cheruvallil-Contractor. "Motherhood as Constructed by Us", p. 14.
5. Badran. *Feminismo en el Islam*, pp. 155, 76.
6. Toral-Niehoff. "Paradise is at the Feet of the Mothers", p. 56.

Islamic heritage, "in classic poetry we might find vague references in loose verses"[7]. For example, in these two poems attributed to women, dated in the 7th and 8th centuries. Feelings are expressed on the one hand about the loss of a child and on the other about the unique experience of having the first child[8]:

> Umm Khaled Annumairiyya. Pre-Islamic period.
> *The southern morning wind blew from my son's land his musk, ambergris and lavender scented presence.*
> *I miss him, and the thought of him brings tears to my eyes like a prisoner recalling home under the shackles´ painful grip or the cries of a soul away from its love.*
>
> Anonymous. Umayyad period (661-750)
> *My little boy's smell is all lavender.*
> *Is every little boy like him, or hasn't anyone given birth before me?*

Conversely, according to tradition, motherhood is the "exclusive opportunity" of the Muslim woman "to obtain Allāh's blessings and rewards, as the difficulty of pregnancy and childbirth is a way which Allah has allotted only to the female sex."[9] According to the Arab scholar Ahmad Ghunaim, Abudi said that the terms used to describe pregnancy and childbirth are the same as those used to describe the person who goes to fight jihād, that considering the mother a martyr places her in the highest category with respect to Allāh's blessings, and that several traditions include the woman who dies in childbirth as one of the martyrs[10].

Marriage and motherhood are the two social statuses in pre-Modern societies that confirm womens' reason for being and their position in society and, therefore, who they are is practically determined by these two statuses. "The maternal function appears inevitably joined to the conjugal one, and the best of women is, therefore, the "affectionate prolific" one (*al-wadūd al-walūd*)[11], the one who gives birth to many children and loves her husband, because the fertility of a woman used to be an important asset for her status within the family, and an added value for those enslaved, as they will improve their category, the "*umm walad*" (the mother of her master's child)[12]. Giladi remarks on "the inherent

7. Saleh Alkhalifa. "Ejemplos de la imagen de la madre", p. 225.
8. Al-Udhari. *Classical Poems by Arab Women*, pp. 48-49, 92-93.
9. Abudi. *Mothers and daughters*, pp. 20, 30.
10. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters*, p. 53; Bouhdiba. *Sexuality in Islam*, p. 218; Badissy, "Motherhood in the Islamic Tradition, pp. 143-145.
11. Marín. *Mujeres en Al-Ándalus*, p. 86; Giladi. *Muslim Midwives*, p. 28.
12. Bouhdiba. *Sexuality in Islam*, p. 216; Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, pp. 133, 506-509; Puente. "Free Fathers, Slave Mothers", pp. 35, 41-42.

dichotomy it entails between femininity, particularly wifehood, on one hand, and motherhood on the other, and the complex relations between the two"[13].

Any approach to motherhood, therefore, implies considering the family as an institution and a pillar of society. In the context of classical Arab societies, we are referring to patriarchal families and societies. As Cristina de la Puente mentions: "Concubinage, and the paternity and maternity they give rise to, are not anecdotal circumstances in the pre-modern Islamic world, but constitute one of the pillars of the Muslim family, which cannot be conceived without taking their existence into account"[14]. Despite the important and significant changes that have been taking place over last two centuries, the weight of family relationships and the role played by women in such a structure continues to be relevant, as manifest by diverse voices throughout the Arab and Islamic world[15].

In relation to family, we must consider, as Abudi notes in his book, that "the intense privacy surrounding family life in Arab societies. The domain of family life is regarded as sacrosanct, and those who open it to public scrutiny are branded as traitors and are ostracised"[16]. It is not possible to explore here in detail the interesting topic of privacy in the Islamic tradition, but it is worth noting that the concept implies that the scarce personal data provided by Arab authors in general hardly mention their wives. Even when they do, their names are not disclosed[17]. And when women speak for themselves, this is considered a radical act[18]. This is a literary topos in Arab Medieval poetry. It is not considered acceptable to speak of one's family, especially when this is done by the female members. It is a question on honour and decency. The less it is known about her, the better. This does not apply to slave women but to free women whose protection in public places cannot be compared to that of slave women[19]. However several authors point out that in Berber sphere, both in chronicles but also in poetry, it is more common to mention mothers, sisters and wives, because of the matriarchy impact in medieval Berber societies[20]. Of special relevance is the motherly figure. Male writings provide some data on their mothers, among

13. Giladi. *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses,* p. 23.

14. Puente. "Free fathers, slave mothers", p. 43.

15. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters,* p. 47. "In our culture, marriage and motherhood are deified, raised up as the ultimate female experience", writes Eltahawy. *Headscarves and Hymens,* p. 162.

16. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters,* p. 19.

17. Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus,* p. 483. Lufti. "Al-Sakhāwī´s *Kitāb al-Nisā'*", p. 111. Nowadays exists in Qatar "the long standing but still-existent taboo on boys revealing the names of their mothers to strangers", Viruru and Nasser. "Wa´allah, the Woman she Should Go Direct to Paradise: p. 154.

18. Badran. *Feminismo en el Islam,* p. 155.

19. Boloix-Gallardo. "Virtue, Sanctity, and Charity", pp. 315-316; Lapiedra. "La «Buena esposa» en el discurso de grandes autores", p. 8.

20. Boloix-Gallardo. "Virtue, Sanctity, and Charity", pp. 316-317.

other reasons because their age and their relationship with the author grants them the possibility of transcending the barrier of the *ḥaram*, the sacred or the prohibited. Moreover, as Boloix states in relation to the Benimerin court, highlighting the religious virtues of the leader's mother is done with the purpose of highlighting the son, to whom his mother has transferred the *baraka* and the religious charisma, so that she becomes a mere transmitter of these virtues and merits[21].

When we consider the main role of women in pre-Modern society, it is clear that pregnancy, giving birth and raising children are the most valued activities in a woman, within the institution of marriage and within the home. As the *ḥadīth* goes: "Take care of the home. That is your *jihād*". Therefore, the effort and struggles of the woman towards the benefit of her society is not in the battlefield, but rather at her home, fulfilling the demanding tasks related to her female status. As M. Marín indicates, there is a clear role differentiation in relation to genre, which implies a social and religious model that allows for no deviations. The aspirations to religious merit of men and women are channelled according to different criteria[22]. As Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) put it, "the obligations of the wife towards her husband are the breastfeeding of his children and the work in the house" (*ḥuqūq al-zawj ʻalà al-zawja bi-l-riḍāʻ wa-khidmat al-bayt*)[23]. However, the philosopher from Cordoba also discussed, in a much-commented passage, the limitations of women's capabilities towards society beyond their role as mothers: "our society allows no scope for the development of women's talents. They seem to be destined exclusively to childbirth and the care of children, and this state of servility has destroyed their capacity for larger matters"[24].

Marín states that "it is evident that the philosopher of Cordoba does reflect in this passage about women of elevated rank, to whom, indeed, society grants no role beyond that intended for reproduction"; but he does not refer to many other women of the less favoured social classes, who had to work in order to survive[25]. She does state, however, how Ibn Rushd mentions the labours of spinning and weaving, and that women carry out these tasks whenever they need funds for their subsistence[26]. There are several studies dedicated to the works performed by some women who had to provide for their families; such is the case of of the

21. *Idem*, pp. 321-322, 333-334.
22. Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, pp. 83-86.
23. Fierro. "La mujer y el trabajo", p. 39.
24. *Idem*, p. 49; Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, p. 253; Fernández González. "Repercusiones para las mujeres", p. 170.
25. Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, pp. 310-311.
26. Fierro. "La mujer y el trabajo", p. 49; Fernández González. "Repercusiones para las mujeres", p. 171.

mother of the military leader and *ḥājib* for Caliph Hisham II in Cordoba, Muḥammad ibn Abī ʻĀmir, Al-Manṣūr (d. 392/1002), who spun to obtain an income, and the case of the mother of Ibn al-Labbāna, the milkwoman's son, (d. 507/ 1113), one of the great andalusian poets of his time, who managed to raise her two children by selling dairy products[27].

Among the socially acceptable works carried out by women, the most quoted one is that of a wet nurse. According to to the Qur'an, hiring a nurse is licit "[..] if you decide to have other women nurse your children there is no blame upon you, provided you hand over its compensation in a fair manner. […]" [Q 2:233][28] and the Prophet Muḥammad himself, as it is known, had wet nurses[29].

In Maliki *fiqh*, the married woman, or that repudiated by revocable divorce, must breastfeed the common child without retribution; were she not able to do so, due to legitimate causes such as illness or lack of milk, she must then pay the wet nurse. However, this obligation does not apply to high-born women (*al-sharīfa*), nor the one that has definitely repudiated"[30]. In fact, traditionally, both in Islamic and Christian societies, high-born women did not normally nurse their children, but it was customary to hand infants to wet nurses, and the common people could not afford such a service. Nevertheless, physicians were largely in favour of maternal nursing, a preference also shared by many jurisconsults following Galen. It is worth mentioning mothers giving up on their children´s upbringing, a constant in the Andalusian right[31]. Within the framework of mothers not willing to breastfeed their children, interesting questions on their motivation and perception of motherhood arise.

According to al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), the wet nurse must be a woman of propriety, deeply religious, and has to be fed only halal food, so that the milk she provides for the infants does not become impure; if such were the case, the child's character would be spoiled[32]. Giladi notes that the widespread view in Medieval writings is that there is a direct relationship between the milk suckled by the child and their mental and physical development. This explains why, according to al-Jāḥiẓ, the *ḥukamā'* ("wise, learned men" and also "medical men") made sure to choose healthy nurses for their infants"[33]. In Ibn Khallikan´s Biographical Dictionary it is said that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), one of the most prominent

27. Rubiera. "Oficios nobles, oficios viles", p. 75. Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, p. 268.
28. Fierro. "La mujer y el trabajo", p. 39.
29. Armstrong. *Muhammad. A Biography of the Prophet*, pp. 96-97.
30 Fierro. "La mujer y el trabajo", p. 40; Martínez Almira. "Lactación, crianza y filiación en al-Andalus.", pp. 63-64.
31. Martínez Almira. "Lactación, crianza y filiación en al-Andalus.", pp. 63-64.
32. Fierro. "La mujer y el trabajo", p. 47.
33. Giladi. *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses*, p. 44.

figures in the first century of Islam, "when he was a child his mother [a slave belonging to Umm Salama, one of the Prophet's wives] occasionally was kept away by some occupation, and Umm Salama would give him the breast to prevent him crying and quiet him till her return; to the blessed influence of that milk are attributed the wisdom and eloquence for which he was afterwards distinguished"[34]. One of the first Muslim doctors to adopt this idea was Muḥammad ibn Zakariyya' al-Rāzī (d. 311/923): "The moral character of a nursed child resembles that of its nurse and it becomes like her"[35]. Another example of this theory, about the influence of wet nurses upon the children is found in al-Andalus, a frontier land in classical Islam. Ibn Arqam of Guadix (d. 757/1356), who was secretary of Iqbāl al-Dawla of Denia and vizier of al-Muʿtaṣim Ibn Ṣumādiḥ of Almeria during the Taifas period[36], describes rhetorically in a letter how the people of al-Andalus, nursed by non-Arabs (*murtaḍiʿūn al-ʿujma*), do not command the exalted Arab language, but the common languages of their wet nurses, making them thus unable to be worthy servants of the Fatimid caliph[37].

In the case of the maternal-filial bond, obviously the interest and worry focus on the new born. It must be stressed that, since early times, extensive literature has been produced on the care of the infant in the first stages, including pre-natal, as a religious duty in order to raise moral people, educated in the *adab* (culture and manners). The ideas of renowned thinkers are well-known, such is the case of the aforementioned al-Ghazālī in his work *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* ("The revitalisation of religious sciences"), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) in his *Kitāb al-Kulliyyāt fī l-ṭibb* ("The book on the general principles of medicine"), or Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751-1350) in his treatise on the status and raising of children, *Tuḥfat al-mawdūd bi-aḥkām al-mawlūd* ("Newborn baby guide")[38]. Therefore, in Shakry's opinion, the nineteenth-century Islamist reformers were able to draw upon an indigenous body of thought and writing from within the tradition that specifically addressed proper pedagogy for children: this entailed the cultivation of the body, the disciplining of the self, the formation of moral character, the inculcation of the virtues, and correct conduct —all to be embodied in practice"[39].

34. *Idem*, p. 45.
35. *Idem*, p. 50.
36. Lirola. "Ibn Arqam, Abū l-Asbag", vol. 2, nº 307, pp. 351-353.
37. Ibn Bassām. *Al-Dhakhira*, vol. III/1, pp. 273-274.
38. Vidal-Castro. "El tratamiento de la infancia", pp. 213-216; Shakry. "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play", p. 168.
39. Shakry. "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play", p. 153.

On the other hand, fiqh or Islamic jurisprudence, as noted Vidal-Castro[40], places great importance on this bond. The *ḥaḍāna*, which may be translated as "childcare, keeping or stewardship" of children, is a mother and child's right, that reflects the intimate bond between them. Maliki school considers that motherly care and keeping extend in the case of male children until their puberty, and in the case of the female infants, until they become married[41] while the other juridical schools (*ḥanafi, shāfi'i and ḥanbali*) set the end of the *ḥaḍāna* and the beginning of the stewardship (wilāya) at a very early age for boys, seven years of age. The boy, who is called in this stage *ṣabiyy*, *ṣagīr*, is presupposed to possess judgement (t*amyīz*), and he becomes *rāshid*, *mumayyiz* (judicious) and *ṣabiyy ya'qil* (a boy that understands and responds reasonably, intelligently, therefore, ready to start education at school)[42]. When the mother is deceased, the keeping and stewardship becomes that of the mother's relatives, because the right of the mother over the child prevails over the father's, even if she were a Christian, a Jew or a slave[43].

SON-MOTHER RELATIONSHIPS

"On my life, these are indeed the mothers of men!" *wa-li-ʿumrī inna-hunna ummahāt rijāl!* Usama ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188)[44].

As we have stated, the ideological universe of Islam grants mothers veneration and an elevated status. The privileged position of a mother implies that any man must consider her before any other person (including his father) or social or personal interest. According to a famous *ḥadīth*, the mother deserves thrice the devotion and gratitude due to the father:

> A man came to the Messenger of Allāh and said: 'O Messenger of Allāh, who is most entitled to the best of my friendship?' The Prophet said, 'Your mother.' The man said, 'Then who?' The Prophet said, 'Your mother.' The man further said, 'Then who?' The Prophet said, 'Your mother.' The man said again, 'Then who?' The Prophet said, 'Then your father"[45].

40. Vidal-Castro. "El tratamiento de la infancia", p. 209.
41. *Idem*, pp. 210-212; Fierro. "La mujer y el trabajo", pp. 40-41.
42. Vidal-Castro. "El tratamiento de la infancia", 209-226.
43. Marín and El Hour. "Captives, Children and Conversion:", pp. 464-467; Bouhdiba. *Sexuality in Islam*, p. 215; Fierro. "The legal status of ḏimmī", p. 11; Simonsohn. "Early and Medieval Islamic Views on Maternal Authority", pp. 3, 10.
44 Ibn Munqidh. *The Book of Contemplation*, p. 139.
45. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters*, pp. 52-53; Toral-Niehoff. "Paradise is at the Feet of the Mothers", p. 46.

The traditional Arab culture, being patriarchal and patrilineal in nature, defines the value of women in terms of their capacity to bear children, especially sons. Although many parts of the Arab world are rapidly changing, this cultural norm still persists. As S. Joseph points out: "In most Arab societies it is by giving birth to a son that a woman makes her claim to status"[46]. Custom dictates that a daughter's allegiance will be to her husband's family when she marries, and the mother-son relationship is recognised as particularly close and strong. The interpersonal bond created between spouses through the mediation of children is so strong that the mother-child relationship has far greater importance than the direct mother-father relationship[47]. In this sense, F. Mernissi points out that in societies that institutionalise a weak marital bond, the mother-son relationship is accorded a particularly important place. In Muslim societies not only is the marital bond weakened and love for the wife discouraged, but one's mother is the only women a man is allowed to love at all, and this love is encouraged to take the form of lifelong gratitude[48].

Several factors enhance the strength of the mother-son bond in the Arab culture, as D. Abudi enumerates in the study mentioned. First, due to the extended and patrilocal nature of the traditional Arab family, a newlywed couple takes up residence in the home of the husband's family. Thus, only the son continues to live with his parents, whereas the daughter leaves the parental home upon marriage[49]. This matter is expressed in popular sayings with phrases such as "*Ibnu-ki ilay-ki wa-bintu-ki lā*" ("Your son belongs to you but your daughter does not") that find their parallel in the Spanish tradition in proverbs such as "Married daughter estranged daughter"[50].

Many scholars of Arab family life have observed that a husband's primary attachment is with his own mother, rather than his wife, whereas a wife's primary attachment is with her son. The wife's behaviour is attributed to the threats of polygamy and repudiation, which render the ties between the spouses weak and unstable. A mother always expects that her son will take care of her future, regarding him as her best insurance in sickness, old age, or divorce[51].

Some stories about the childhood of great figures of the classical Arab and Islamic world remark on the role of the mothers in the raising and education of

46. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters*, p. 10; Giladi. *Muslim Midwives*, p. 36.
47. Bouhdiba. *Sexuality in Islam*, p. 218.
48. Mernissi. *Beyond the Veil*, pp. 16, 78.
49. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters, pp.* 7-8; Lacoste-Dujardin. *Las madres contra las mujeres*, p. 53.
50. Fernández Poncela. "El refranero y los hijos", p. 45. However, most collections of sayings include opposed sayings for the same topics.
51. Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters*, p. 76: Lufti. "AL-Sakhāwī´s *Kitāb al-Nisā´*", p. 116.

their children, as will be mentioned later. Giladi indicates: "Mothers also appear in the biographies of great scholars and saintly men. Sūfīs, in particular, underscore in their writings the role of their pious mothers as model ascetics who share with them their spiritual experience, while poets express their gratitude and love for their mothers"[52]. As we have already seen, extolling the virtues of the mothers of great religious figures is a historiographical strategy to exalt, ultimately, the figure of their children[53]. These stories usually refer to mothers that have raised their children alone, devoting their lives to them, making great efforts towards their education and raising. According to tradition, Imam Mālik (d. 179/796), the founder of one of the four Law schools in Sunni Islam, wanted to be a singer when he was a boy but his mother said that he didn't have the looks to be a singer and instead dressed him in the attire of a scholar and set him off in that direction. Another founder of a law school, Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), celebrated theologian, jurist and traditionist, told this story: "My mother helped me memorise the Qur'an when I was 10 years old. She would wake me up before *ṣubḥ* prayer, wash me all over for the ablution in the cold nights of Baghdad. Then, she would dress me, and she would cover herself with a cloth, her *ḥijāb*, in order to take me to the mosque, because it was far from home and the road was dark"[54]. Another exceptional testimony of a mother-son relationship is to be found in a touching text by Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, the famous Ḥanbali jurist and theologian (d. 728/1328). In a letter he sent from Egypt to his mother in his hometown of Damascus, he apologises for his absence and explains it is caused due to his public religious duties[55].

This strong mother-son bond is equally reflected in some historical chronicles, with a certain degree of autobiographical rendering, especially in the courtly environment of power, in the different areas of the Arabo-Islamic world. Traditionally, as noted by M. Friedrich, it was the case particularly in the Turkish environment: The valide sultan (sultan's mother) was the most important and influential woman within the harem. Not only was she the lead figure in the household, but she also controlled all administrative duties and received the largest stipend"[56]. Below there are some examples from the 11th to the 14th centuries in Arab Islamic context:

1. 'Abd Allāh ibn Buluggīn, last Zirid Amir of Granada (r. 465-483/1073-1090):

52. Giladi, *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses*, pp. 50-51.
53. Boloix. "Virtue, Sanctity and Charity", p. 334.
54. Athārī. *Rasā'il ilà mu'mina*, p. 188.
55. Giladi, *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses*, p. 53; Simonsohn. "Early and Medieval Islamic Views of Maternal Authority", p. 5.
56. Friedrich. "Motherhood and the Construction of Gendered Identity", p. 13.

Marín considers this the most interesting case of mother-son relationship in the courtly environment[57]. The mother appears in the final moments of ʻAbd Allāh's reign, after his rendition to the Almoravids, when he has to abandon power, the city of Granada and all his properties. In those hard times, his only solace is his own mother, according to his testimony, both in the affective aspect as in her knowledge of the court finances:

> On leaving, I had been so apprehensive of being arrested that I was afraid of being parted from my mother and wasn't sure if I should leave her in the palace. I, therefore, left together with her and paid no attention to anything else… (*fa-kharajtu maʻ-hā, wa-lam altafit ilà mā siwā-hā*). All my female and boy servants were taken as booty with the exception of myself and my mother… Garūr [Almoravid general] then ordered my mother to go up to the palace to recover the possessions. I was distressed by this for several days and, every day that passed, I thought that she would not come back to me (*fa-takaddartu li-dhalika ayāman, mā min-hā yum illā wa-naẓunn anna-hā lā tarjaʻa ilaya*)[58].

Finally, he is able to leave with her and go into exile: Algeciras, Ceuta, Meknes.

2. Usama ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188). His clan, the Banu Munqidh, was an established aristocratic Muslim Arab family in northern Syria. Usama's last patron was the mighty sultan Saladin, for whom he wrote his famous autobiography work, *Kitāb al-iʿtibār* ("The Book of Contemplation").

This Syrian poet and warrior refers in his book to different women, decisive, with personality, and valuable. He specifically mentions the women in his family; his grandmother, his mother, his aunt and his sister.

> "Our women during the battle between us and the Ismaʾilis": (Usama´s aunt) wearing a mail hauberk and a helmet, with a sword and shield. When Shabib saw this figure, he felt certain of death. The figure threw off its helmet! And behold! It was his aunt, the mother of his cousin Layth al-Dawla Yahya (may God have mercy upon him).

> And, in that same battle:
> I asked, 'Mother, where are my weapons?' 'My son,' she replied, 'I gave the weapons to whoever would use them to fight for us. I didn't know if you were safe or not.' I replied, 'And my sister? What is she doing here?' 'My son,' my mother replied, 'I made her sit here on the balcony while I took my seat just outside. That way, if I should see that the Batinis had reached us, I could push her off, throwing her down to

57. Marín. *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, p. 517.
58. Ibn Buluggīn. *The Tibyān*, pp. 156, 157, 158.

> the valley. For I would rather see her dead than see her a prisoner of peasants and wool-carders. I thanked her for that, and so did my sister, who prayed that God would reward my mother on her behalf. Their courage for the sake of honour is more intense than such courage among men[59].

Compared to her mother, aunt and grandmother, the passive role of this sister, who lives in the family home under her mother's supervision, to protect her honour, reflects the advantage that motherhood and age conferred to women.
And, in another episode of "Wonders' of the Frankish Race", Osama uses his mother's strong willpower as the perfect excuse with his Christian friend:

> In the army of King Fulk, son of Fulk, there was a respected Frankish knight who had come from their country to go on a pilgrimage and then return home. He grew to like my company and he became my constant companion, calling me 'my brother'. Between us there were ties of amity and sociability. When he resolved to take to the sea and go back to his country, he said to me: 'My brother, I am leaving for my country. I want you to send your son (my son, who was with me, was fourteen years old) with me to my country, where he can observe the knights and learn reason and chivalry. When he returns, he will be like a truly rational man.' And so there fell upon my ears words that would never come from a truly rational mind! Even if my son was taken captive, his captivity would not be as long as any voyage he might make to the land of the Franks. So I said, 'By your life, I was hoping for this very thing. But the only thing that has prevented me from doing so is the fact that his grandmother adores him and almost did not allow him to come here with me until she had got an oath from me that I would return him to her.
> 'Your mother,' he asked, 'she is still alive?'
> 'Yes,' I replied.
> 'Then do not disobey her,' he said[60].

Usama's grandmother on his father's side "was a prodigiously old woman, nearly one hundred years of age" —in the words of her grandson. He refers to two anecdotes about her:

> This old woman (may God have mercy upon her) was one of the most upright Muslims in her immaculate approach to religion, with her piety, fasting and prayer. Once, I was present on the night of Nisf Sha'ban while she prayed in the home of my father. My father (may God have mercy upon him) was one of the finest chanters of the Book of God (may He be exalted), and he led his mother in prayer. My father was concerned for her and said, 'Mother, if you take a seat, you can still pray from a seated position.'

59. Ibn Munqidh. *The Book of Contemplation.* pp. 135, 137.
60. *Idem*, p. 144.

> ‘My son,’ she replied, ‘are there enough days left in my life for me to live to see another night like this one? No, by God, I will not sit.’ By then my father had reached seventy years of age while she had approached one hundred (may God have mercy upon her).

In the second story, his grandmother tells him off, quite angry, seeing the way he is acting in order to gain his uncle's favour, while he thought she was going to congratulate him. He tries to justify himself, but finally admits: “I learned then that she (may God have mercy upon her) was giving me wise counsel with these words and speaking the truth. On my life, these are indeed the mothers of men!”[61].

3. Merinid sultan Abū l-Ḥasan Alī, who ruled the north of current Morocco between the years 1331 to 1348, is portrayed through his court chronicler, Ibn Marzūq (d. 789/1379-80), in his work *Musnad*.

B. Boloix, in her article about the presence and importance of women in this chronicle, mentions that the woman obtaining more attention and praise from Ibn Marzūq is, beyond doubt, the Marinid sultan's mother (*wālida*) remarking on how, in the chapter titled “On his filial devotion” (*fī birri-hi bi-abaway-hi*) he grants, without hesitation, much more importance to the respect the sovereign had toward his mother than that showed towards his father[62]. The text only takes up a quarter of the chapter. Ibn Marzūq does not forget to mention Abū l-Ḥasan's grandmother on his father's side. Regarding his mother, the chronicler states: one day, her distinguished son, the mawlà [Abū l-Ḥasan], told me:

> I went to see her one day, and she told me of the people of Tlemcen, so that we would stop the siege. She insisted on this, and I wanted to contradict her, and I stated that they insulted her, wanting her to drop the subject. However, she replied: “My son, this is what makes me bring your attention to them, for my words in their favour will be pure before the face of God, solely in search for His reward”. I replied that the law compelled me to do it, I explained it from the legal perspective, and then she understood[63].

61. *Idem*, p. 139.

62. Boloix. “Presencia e importancia de la mujer en el Musnad, p. 15. In Boloix opinion, the greatest merit of this source, already noted by everyone who has used it in their research, is its author’s privileged position regarding the emir being studied, in whose service he was employed for twelve years, “in the bosom of whose upbringing” the author was raised, as he himself expresses with gratitude at the beginning of the work. This fact gives Musnad the best vantage point from which to witness the fortunes and misfortunes of Abū l-Ḥasan’s government, both in the public sphere and in the most intimate privacy of the home”, p. 8.

63. *Idem*, p. 16, y “Virtue, sanctity, and charity”, pp. 324-325.

Moreover, this emir, according to testimonies close to Ibn Marzūq and other characters in his circle, "never left in the morning without kissing her feet, and never retired for the night without doing the same". The influence of this woman, both on the political decisions of this emir as on his moral integrity was considerable[64]. Whereas in the case of his wives, Ibn Marzūq starts by revealing that the Marinid emir preferred the one appointed by his mother, as she would fulfil all his desires[65].

4. The Mamluk Sultan Shaʿbān ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Malik al-Ashraf (r. 754-778/1363-1377) is described as having been saddened when his mother passed away in 1373 (*asifa ʿalay-hā*), because during her lifetime he used to show much respect and love for her (*wa-kāna kathīr al-birr la-hā*)[66].

This section concludes with the elegy of the Andalusian poet Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344) dedicated to his wife. Both Marín as the translator of this elegy to Spanish, J. M. Forneas, stress the sincerity of the affection expressed towards the wife, as well as the exceptionality of an elegy dedicated to a wife[67]. Even in this case, in the last verses, marital affection is compared with the care of a mother for her youngest child. At the end of his life, he longs for the care of his wife/mother.

> She was my companion in loneliness and in exile – awake, asleep, while travelling.
> My interlocutor at home and outside – my comrade in pilgrimage.
> I had hoped that she would survive - when illness came to me.
> Because she was not only a wife, but a mother, and I was her youngest.

MOTHERHOOD, NATIONALISM AND MODERNITY

> An adult man is a product of his mother's influence during childhood. I wish that men would understand the importance of this complete tie between a man and his mother, Qāsim Amīn, *Taḥrīr al-marʾa* ("The liberation of women")[68].

Throughout the 19th century, a fundamental change took place in the Arab world. Through the work of some activists, women in Greater Syria and Egypt, and later in other areas, became aware of their subordinate situation and began to demand a series of rights, both political and social. The gradual access to education as a fundamental basis of the reformists´ agenda represented a turning point, as women began to have their own voice, initially through the press and

64. *Idem*, p. 17, e *Idem*, p. 325.
65. *Idem*, p. 20.
66. Giladi. *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses*, p. 53.
67. Marín *Mujeres en al-Ándalus*, p. 483; Forneas. "Acerca de la mujer musulmana", p. 101.
68. Amīn. *The liberation of women*, p. 71.

various publications. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that in the first steps of feminist demands, female education was not an end in itself. The relevant point was the influence that mothers exerted on their children and the social responsibility that this entailed. This opinion shared, broadly speaking, by women and men at the time.

In recent years, a lot has been written about the new concept of motherhood developed towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in the context of decolonisation, nationalism and feminism in Arab and Muslim nations, particularly Egypt. As noted by some authors, this complex period has witnessed a change in the concept of motherhood, that became perceived as a key factor of social advancement in muslim countries. In Shakry's opinion: "Egyptian discussion of motherhood needs to be placed in context of both colonial and anti-colonial nationalist discourse of modernity"[69]. And, in A. Mhajne and C. Whetstone opinion, Egyptian women activists in the anticolonial period encouraged the connection between motherhood and nationalism, strategically using it to their benefit. Rhetoric connecting motherhood and nationalism has historically allowed some groups previously excluded from public life to gain legitimacy and inclusion in the national struggle and exercise agency against the state[70]. We cannot discuss here the amount of Western influence on Egyptian feminism in particular and Arab feminism in general. It suffices to say that many of the ideas of new mothers and their development happen both in Europe and in the Arab-Islamic world. Motherhood became then a key argument to demand civil and political rights in both the Arab world and Europe[71].

The first reformism would highlight the importance of educating women, but not for its intrinsic value, but so that they will fulfil their role as wives successfully, and particularly, as mothers in the new concept of the family being developed in this period. The well-known and controversial Qāsim Amīn (d. 1908)[72], considered the father of Egyptian feminism, in his famous essay *Taḥrīr al-mar'a* ("The Liberation of Women"), published in 1900, stated that "A family is the foundation of a country, and within the family, woman as mother was the

69. Shakry. "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play", p. 127.

70. Mhajne and Whetstone. "The Use of Political Motherhood", pp. 60-61, 63.

71. Blasco Herranz. "The power of motherhood", p. 110. Blasco quotes the socialist Margarita Nelken (d. 1968) "who agreed with a colleague that feminists should focus on teaching women to be mothers. And she pinpointed the defense of the rights of mothers and children as the first feminist challenge", "The power of motherhood", p. 118.

72. As usually done in contemporary studies, I indicate in this part the year of passing away only in Christian date.

foundation"[73]. For him and other reformist men and women within the Arab and Islamic world, the role of mothers is a crucial question for their countries to overcome their underdevelopment and keep up with modernity. The new generations cannot be educated by those who have no education, and the good or bad education of such generations will affect the nation and its progress. It is interesting to note how this idea, in a different historical and social context, already appears in al-Ghazālī: "c´est à la femme qu´il incombe d´éduquer les enfants: comment pourrait-elle leur dispenser la politesse et l´éducation si elle-même en est dépourvue?"[74].

The liberation of women was translated only a year later by the Iranian Yusuf Ashtiani under a significantly different tittle, *Tarbiat-i nisvan* ("The education of women"), and therefore its ideas also circulated in Iran[75]. In 1902, the Persian author of the article "An essay devoted to Education of Girls" in the journal *Habl al-matin* (9, nº 12), upon the occasion of Qāsim Amīn translation, pondered: "How could any people hope for progress if their women who constitute the first teachers and educators of their children are captives of the realm of ignorance?"[76]

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) who wrote in the same spirit was considered to be the founding father of Islamic modernism. In a speech in May 1879 he stressed the importance of women's rights. He stated:

> It's impossible to emerge from stupidity, from the prison of humiliation and distress, and from the depths of darkness and ignominy as long as women are deprived of rights and ignorant of their duties, for they are the mothers from whom will come elementary education and primary morality… I think that when a woman's education is neglected, even if all the males of a nation are learned and high-minded, the nation is still able to survive in its current stage, for that generation only. When they disappear, their children, who have the character and educational deficiencies of their mothers, betray them, and their nation returns to the state of ignorance and distress[77].

This opinion is shared by one of the Egyptian pioneers of feminism, Malak Hifni Nassif, nick-named Bahithat al-Badiya (d. 1918) who was quite concerned

73. Najmabadi. "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran", pp. 102-103. Qāsim Amīn's role and works as a milestone in the liberation of Arab and Muslim women has been discussed and revisited in the past years: Ahmed. *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 159; Badran. *Feminismo en el islam*, pp. 91-104; De Miguel. "El feminismo de Quasim Amin", pp. 186-187; Ruiz-Callejón. "Qasim Amin y John Stuart Mill", pp. 77-78; McLarney. *Soft force*, pp. 79-81; Idris. "Colonial Hesitation, Appropriation, and Citation", p. 183.

74. Al-Ghazâlî *Des vertus du marriage*, p. 96.

75. Najmabadi. "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran", pp. 100-101.

76. *Idem*, p. 103.

77. Mishra. *From the Ruins of Empire*, p. 85.

with the reform of tarbiya and education[78]. "We know that the deficiencies of our primary *tarbiya* and that of our young peers is no doubt related to the ignorance of our mothers"[79]. For her, female education was a means for women to fulfill their main role: to be the pillar of the family as mother and wife.[80]. A Syrian editor and writer who emigrated to Egypt at the turn of the century, Labiba Hashim (d. 1952), a prominent member of the women's press and editor of the journal *Fatāt al-Sharq* (Young Women of the East) from 1906 to 1939, published in 1912 a book titled *Kitāb fī-l Tarbiya* ("A Book on Child Upbringing"). Hashim presented her philosophy and gave advice on how mothers should treat and educate their young children (*ṭufūla*), whom she called 'the future generation' (*jīl al-mustaqbal*)[81]. She explained the term *tarbiya*: "we [may] find ways to improve *tarbiya* by teaching girls in schools the rules of health, hygiene, and adab in preparation for the day that they will become mothers"[82]. The term *tarbiya* will be recurrently used by all reformists, when it comes to child-rearing. It is the task of "the new mothers" to learn both the physical aspects of child rearing - care, hygiene, cleanliness - as well as the psychological ones[83]. In fact, it was common to establish a relationship between high infant mortality rates and maternal ignorance[84]. Later on, in the mid-1970s a boom in Islamic publishing of this topic began. Heba Raouf Ezzat (n. 1965), an Egyptian academic, writer and activist, in *al-Mar'a wa-l-'Amal al-Siyāsī* ("The Woman a Political Work") considers that through the labor of *tarbiya* (discipline, childrearing, education, pedagogy), women train and educate new generations of Islamic citizens, "cultivating the human capital" of Islamic society and "reviving the social units of the Islamic *umma*." She calls these activities "women's *jihād*", like the influential islamist Ni'mat Sidqi, who interpret *tarbiya* as a form of *jihād*[85].

In the close relationship between motherhood and nationalism, an anonymous article, "The nation is the fabric of its mothers and thus we must educate girls",

78. Yousef. "Malak Hifni Nasif", pp. 77-78.
79. Shakry. "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play", p. 145.
80. Ruiz de Almodóvar. "Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif", p. 458. Although in her autobiography she is totally against marriage. Badran. *Feminismo en el Islam,* p. 166.
81. Zachs. "Labiba Hasim and Children´s Upbringing", pp. 371-372.
82. Shakry. "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play", p. 145.
83. Badran. *Feminismo en el Islam,* p. 132. De Miguel. "El feminismo de Quasim Amin", p. 183.
84. Zachs. "Labiba Hashim and Children´sUpbringing", p. 372. In Europe, because of the infant mortality rates, doctor intervened in the dissemination of a modernized gender discourse. Notions of health were recommended for mothers to improve their maternal skills. "I have heard several doctors remark that one of the most important causes of infant mortality is the igno-rance of women", write the Spanish feminist Concepción Gimeno in 1903. Blasco Herranz. "The power of moth-erhood", pp. 115-116.
85. McLarney. *Soft force,* pp. 222-223, 241.

printed in *al-Hilāl* shortly after the publication of Amīn's book, reads: "no society whose mothers are ignorant and know only their room, home, and family will ever succeed… How can we entrust to women in such a state [of backwardness] the upbringing of our children, the men of the future?" Regarding the close relationship between motherhood and nationalism, it is significant to note what the Egyptian neoclassical poet Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1872-1932) said in his famous poem "The Girls' School in Port Said," recited upon his visit to the school on May 29, 1910. In this poem he paid homage to the mother's crucial role in raising the nation's future generation:

> The mother is a school; if you prepare her, you prepare a nation with a strong foundation.
> The mother is a garden; if nurtured by the rain, it blossoms, and how splendid is its bloom!
> The mother is the teacher of all teachers; her outstanding work can be seen in the farthest corners of the world.

At the other end of the Arab world, we must highlight the figure of Tunisian al-Ṭāhar al-Ḥaddād (d. 1935), a continuator of 19th century reformism. In his work *Notre femme dans la loi et la société*, published in 1930, he argues that traditional Islam considers women to be equals to men. As for other reformists, he considers that the education of women is essential. If mothers cannot provide good education to their children it is because they did not have the opportunity to become properly educated themselves; therefore, educating women and girls must be a priority for Tunisians, a national goal to compensate the deficiencies of the education system implemented by the Protectorate[86]. Haddād's proposals are in the same line of the ideas mentioned so far: women must be educated, as a wife, mother and manager of the household, even as socialiser for her children. She must also learn pedagogy and natural and physical sciences, to overcome superstition.

As an example of the union of motherhood and nationalism, Haddad promulgates that:

> La femme doit connaître les origines de sa religion et de son histoire, la langue de sa nation, l´histoire de son pays et de sa race… Ainsi fera-t-elle naître chez ses enfants le sentiment national que devra les inciter à s´abreuver de vertus et ne sera plus une entrave a l´action comme elle l´est aujourd´hui…[87].

86. Sraieb. "Islam, réformisme et condition feminine", pp. 4, 5.
87. *Idem*, p. 5.

This responsibility falls on mothers in this period, as forgers of new generations, prepared and educated in their respective countries, starting with their pregnancy. A. Najmabdi states, referring to Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani (d. 1896), one of the most remarkable Iranian intellectuals in the 19th century, "National formation began with the womb"[88]. According to this thinker, the first school and the most important and influential "is the womb of the mother where the foetus gains the fundamentals of his ethics and acquires those character traits and attitudes that during the term of pregnancy were in the mother, innately or as acquired character"[89]. Later on, the question of maternal breastfeeding is raised. In late 19th Century Egypt, aristocratic mothers were criticised because they left breastfeeding to wet nurses. Obviously, men and women writing about the "mothers of the future" encourage mothers to care for their own children[90], as men used to do in pre-modern times. As M. Dhenin writes, female intellectuals also condemned the practice of wet nursing among middle classes women because they claimed it weakened the bond between mother and child[91].

In the classical period, the model of those mothers of great men was highlighted, while in this period, the main relationship will again be the role of the woman as mother and the man as son. "The Mother and the Men of the Future: Between Mother and Child" was the title of a column regularly published written by aforementioned Labiba Hashim[92]. In the case of daughters, it is interesting to note the role of mothers as an example for their daughters, and how the education of girls is mainly aimed at their future role as mothers. Almost 30 years before Amīn's work, another Egyptian reformist, Rifā'a al-Ṭahṭāwī (d. 1873), always active and interested in the educational reform of his country, had written a brief treatise titled *Kitāb al-murshid al-amīn fī tarbiya al-banāt wa-l-banīn* ("The honest guide for the education of girls and boys") published in 1873. He states that "Any woman who did not receive an education from her mother will not desire to educate her children when she becomes an adult"[93] or "The education and knowledge of a woman have a great influence on her children's morals — *akhlāq awlādi-hā*", and "A young girl, when she sees her mother reading books, performing her chores and looking after their children, makes her wishes to become like her mother — *Idh al-bint al-ṣaghīra ra'at umma-hā*

88. Najmabadi. "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran", p. 93.
89. *Idem*, pp. 92, 93; Vidal-Castro. "El tratamiento de la infancia", p. 203.
90. Shakry. "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play", pp. 141, 143, 147.
91. Dhenin. "The Construction of Motherhood", p. 19.
92. Zachs. "Labiba Hashim and Children´s Upbringing", p. 377.
93. Al-Ṭahṭāwī. *Taḥrīr al-mar'a al-muslima*, p. 34.

muqbila ʻalà muṭālaʻat al-kutub, wa-dabṭ umūr al-bayt, wa-ishtighāl bi-tarbiyat awlādi-hā, jadhabat-hā al-ghayra ilà an takūn mithla ummu-hā"[94].

In the last decade of the 19th century, and particularly in the press, we find an expression of this "modern domestic ideology" as a base for modernisation, dealing with topics, among others, such as "the management of the household" (*tadbīr al-manzil*)[95]. F. Zachs states that in many articles in the Beiruti newspaper *Lisān al-Ḥāl* (1877-1900), women were encouraged to have a basic education especially in *tadbīr al-manzil* and writers describe the ideal woman as *ḥākimat al-bayt* (ruler of the house), *rūḥ al-bayt* (soul of the house) or *qiwām al-ḥay´a al-ijtimāʻiya* (the cornerstone of society)[96]. This concept of household management is not new in the Islamic Tradition. Specifically, al-Ghazālī introduces *tadbīr al-manzil* as the fourth legitimate aim of marriage. He says that marriage frees the pious man from the burden of running the household[97].

In 1953, Aḥmad Amīn (d. 1954), whose thought and work are to be regarded as a continuation of the cultural renaissance of the *Nahḍa* and Islamic reformism, published his dictionary of Egyptian customs, traditions and phrases with the purpose of preserving popular culture. In the entry "The homes"[98] he presents a radical break with past times and modern times, with a radical vision in his ideas of the transformation of family structure and the woman's status[99]:

> In the home, man had the authority over his wife and children, commanded and prohibited, and he was to be consulted on any matter. He granted permission to enter or leave the house, he controlled the domestic economy and, ultimately, had a despotic power over the rest of the family. The house was, therefore, the small kingdom of the father. All this has past already, because matriarchy has taken over patriarchy, with all its merits and faults "*ḥallat sulṭat al-umūma, maḥall sulṭat al-ubūwa, wa-hiya ayḍan la-hā mazāyā-hā wa-ʻuyūbu-hā*"[100].

His optimistic appreciation in the dictionary on the profound transformation of the family structure and the relationships between the sexes caused by women

94. *Idem*, p. 39..
95. Hatem. "The Nineteenth Century Discursive Roots", p. 80.
96. Zachs. "Debates on Re-forming the Family", pp. 288, 295.
97. Swain. *Economy, Family, and Society from Roma to Islam*, p. 357. He argues that this view of marriage, beginning with Xenopon´s Oeconomicus, derived from Greco-Roman tradition. Lapiedra. "La «Buena esposa» en el discurso de grandes autores"; Simonsohn, "Early and Medieval Islamic View son Maternal Authority", p. 4.
98. Amīn. *Qāmūs al-ʻādāt wa-l-taqālī,* p. 99.
99. Perrin. "Un patrimoine ambivalent", p.164.
100. Amīn. *Qāmūs al-ʻādāt wa-l-taqālīd,* p. 101.

emancipation and education, mentioned by Perrin[101], contrasts with the date of his autobiography, where he stated that his wife wanted to control him through their offspring —she gave him ten children— and that she never understood his dedication to studying, for he was normally isolated in his office. However, she is attributed the burden of raising the children, while he was devoted to his academic and moral development. On the other hand, he confesses that the reason "was the most stupid means to reach an understanding with most of the women I met" [102].

In this period, the role of women becomes polarised between good managers of the household and their becoming educated and entering the labour market: training as good mothers and wives and, later, being able to work in some specific jobs, within the *bourgeois ideal* of motherhood. The aforementioned Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif vindicated both possibilities: "Motherhood —defends— does not demand that the woman has to be a prisoner in the home, and does not clash with the role she must play in society"[103]. Opposed to the claim that women are noble beings created to multiply the species or that they had been created for the home, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif and Nabawiyya Mūsà (d. 1951), another of the eminent pioneers of Egyptian feminism, replied that men participated together with women in procreation and that gender division was only a human construct[104]. Later on, Zaynab al-Ghazālī (d. 2005) a prominent writer and teacher of the Muslim Brotherhood, founder of the Muslim Women's Association (1936-1964)[105] insisted upon the importance of her gender in society. While al-Ghazālī assures the reader that Islam does not forbid the participation of women in public life, she remains explicit in pronouncing that their foremost role is to be that of the domestic caretaker. She glorifies motherhood, purporting it to be not only the natural role for women, but also crucial to the success of the Islamic Society. "On the day that Islam rules —she wrote—, Muslim women will find themselves in their natural kingdom, educating men." According to Zaynab al-Ghazālī's theory, the stereotypes that Muslim women are disempowered and marginalised in society seem erroneous. Quite the contrary: as the educators, builders, and mothers of society, al-Ghazālī envisions women to play a fundamental role in the community[106].

101. Perrin. "Un patrimoine ambivalent", p. 176.
102. Amīn. *Mi vida*, pp. 198, 199.
103. Badran. *Feminismo en el islam*, p. 130.
104. *Idem*, p. 129.
105. *Idem*, 233.
106. Lewis. "Zainab al-Ghazali:" pp. 22, 74,

During the 20th century, the rhetoric and discourses of the nations with regard to gender ideology vary depending on the political strategy; if there is a need that women enter the workforce, the discourse will follow a particular path; if there is a need for population growth, the arguments will focus on the woman's role as a mother of the homeland. To conclude, two examples prove this point.

Nadje Sadig Al-Ali, in her work on Iraqi women, mentions the historically ambivalent position towards women, as educated workers on the one hand and mothers of future citizens on the other[107]. "Social attitudes toward women's work had obviously changed in the 1990s. Unlike the modernist image of the 'good Iraqi woman' working side by side with men that was prevalent in the 1970s and up to the mid-1980s, the ideal and idealised woman became the housewife and mother, who should stay away from degrading work and mixing with the opposite sex. *Umm bait muḥtarama*, the respectable housewife, replaced the educated working woman as the proper Iraqi female"[108]. "The Ba'th regime itself radically changed both its rhetoric and it policies towards women in response to changing economic, social and political conditions and changed from stimulating the presence of women in the public sphere (State feminism) to accepting "tribal practices and customs, such as 'honour killings', in return for loyalty"[109]. In a speech delivered by Saddām Hussein in 1971, long before the war with Iran, he said: 'An enlightened mother, who is an educated and liberated Iraqi woman, can give the country a generation of conscious and committed fighters'. Words such as these above were quite common in speeches delivered by members of the Iraqi regime throughout the 1970s[110].

Djamila Sahraoui, in her appealing documentary on the role of Algerian women during the Independence War and, later, in the formation of the new state, gathers excerpts of Boumédiène's speeches in two different moments, 1973 and 1975: The Algerian family must be preserved, as it is the pillar of society. Boumédiène speaks of the role of women in the Independence war, their duty towards their country and the education of their children, so that they become better than their fathers. Algerian women have raised brave man and given them to the country, and therefore they must educate the next generation after Independence[111].

107. Al-Ali. *Iraqi Women,* p. 265.
108. *Idem*, p. 189.
109. *Idem*, pp. 264, 265, 266.
110. *Idem*, pp. 131, 132.
111. Sahrawi. *La Moitié du ciel d'Allah*, Émissions TV (1995): minutes 25:26-26; 26:42-28:10.

CONCLUSIONS

Some questions related to motherhood, such as pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding and nursing are relevant in all societies and cultures. The Classical Islamic world values the role of mothers, and her efforts are compared to those of the warrior in the battlefield due to the importance of procreation in the spirit of Islam, as recommended in Islamic sacred texts. There are scarce first-hand testimonies of mothers in a period where most women were illiterate, but there is some evidence of the admiration and endearing memory of philosophers, princes and noblemen for their mothers. This image probably responds both to a cultural stereotype of devotion to the mother figure as well as to sincere feelings of a solid mother-child relationship in patriarchal societies. Motherhood and age grant these women a safe and powerful position, opposed to that of younger women, where the burden of virginity makes them invisible.

At the same time, physicians, theologians and scholars of all kinds (as well as midwives) show with a great degree of precision and detail characteristic of Islamic medicine and science, their interest in all the stages of motherhood from the foetus and childbirth to the nursing and raising of children. Also, from the legal perspective, they emphasise the relationship of the mother, before that of the father, during the rearing of infants. The objective being the wellbeing of the newborn.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the Arab Renaissance movement (*al-Nahḍa*) introduces new ideas about family and society. The values of the "new mothers", according to science and progress, devaluate those mothers that raise their children according to the way they were, in turn, educated by their own mothers and grandmothers, influenced by tradition and superstitions. In the fruitful debates on the new model of the family, the modern woman prepares herself to assume a double burden: that of an educator and a carer of children; hence, she must educate herself first to meet the ideal of the perfect mother and wife. She must manage the household, have the necessary knowledge, become a good companion of amiable conversation, possess notions of modern hygiene and care, become an example for her daughters and a trainer of men of integrity, capable of leading a proud nation. The liberation of women proclaimed by reformists, both men and women, represented a big step -both in the Arab-Islamic world and in Europe- but still places women lower, as a necessary instrument for the functioning of the country, society and family. Step by step the inclusion of women in the educational systems may mean that they marry later and cease being the "affectionate prolific". Women will be gaining ground in the working and social environments, but always at odds with their role as wives and mothers.

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