



Of Virgins and Martyrs: Women and Sexuality in Global Conflict

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Women's bodies have become a battleground. Around the world, people argue about veiling, schooling for Afghan girls, and slutwalk protests, all of which involve issues of women's sexuality and freedom. Globalization, with its emphasis on human rights and individuality, heats up these arguments. In "Of Virgins and Martyrs," David Jacobson takes the reader on a fascinating tour of how self-identity developed throughout history and what individualism means for Muslim societies struggling to maintain a sense of honor in a globalized twenty-first century.

Some patriarchal societies have come to see women's control of their own sexuality as a threat to a way of life that goes back thousands of years. Many trace their lineage to tribal origins that were organized around the principle that women's sexuality represents the honor of male relatives and the good of the community at large. Anyone or anything that influences women to the contrary is considered a corrupting and potentially calamitous force.

Jacobson analyzes the connection between tribal patriarchy and Muslim radicalism through an innovative tool--the tribal patriarchy index. This index helps to illuminate why women's sexuality, dress, and image so compel militant Muslim outrage and sometimes violent action, revealing a deeper human story of how women's status defines competing moral visions of society and why this present clash is erupting with such ferocity.

Of Virgins and Martyrs: Women and Sexuality in Global Conflict Details

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From Reader Review Of Virgins and Martyrs: Women and Sexuality in Global Conflict for online ebook

Carol says

First of all, let me say that this is the coolest cover EVER for any book I have ever read. The woman's eyes are amazing against the purple head covering. Perfect.

I finished this book two weeks ago, and I cannot tell you how many times I have referred back to it whenever I hear a news report or have a discussion with others about what is happening around the Muslim world. This book will inform your perspective in very profound ways. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

In his introduction, the author states, "I have endeavored to make the text as accessible as possible to the interested general reader, while (I trust) not sacrificing the rigor of argument and supporting evidence" (p. 18)

I believe he strikes the perfect balance between good scholarship and readability for the common man! I could not put this book down.

Jacobson explains global terrorism in its cultural context rather than generalizing and blaming it all on the religion of Islam. He does this by using the Tribalism Index:

The Tribalism Index is able, on its own, to explain a remarkable 68 percent of rates of religiously motivated violence (based on data drawn from tabulations of the National Counterterrorism Center [NCTC] for 2005 to 2010.) This influence is dramatic— the likelihood of a national from a country with a tribalism score of 1.0 causing a terrorist incident is 6.5 million times higher than a national from a hypothetical state scoring 0. If we add additional variables of social globalization, Muslim percent of population, and per capita GDP, we can account for 93 percent of the religiously motivated violence. . . we are able to isolate tribal patriarchy as a major factor in driving religiously motivated violence when we seek to predict the patterns shown in NCTC data. We are able to state, with assurance, that a state's movement from one end of the tribal patriarchy spectrum to the other predicts an extraordinary increase in the production of religious violence on the part of nationals. (p. 118)

Simply put, Muslim societies are somewhat less violent than their non-Muslim counterparts if we factor out the presence of tribalism. However, when increasing Muslim population is combined with high levels of tribal patriarchy, religiously motivated violence is more likely to be exported across national borders. (p. 118)

On top of this, he is able to predict how tribal patriarchy affects groups of people who migrate to other countries, specifically Britain and France. He comes to the fascinating conclusion "the French republican model, with its stress on assimilation, works better than British multiculturalism, with respect to Muslim women's progress and to national integration in the respective countries" (p.18). So fascinating!

This review cannot possibly convey the brilliance of this book. It is revolutionary and should be a part of college global studies courses and read by anyone dealing with the Muslim world.

The only drawback of the Kindle version is that the author's charts are difficult to read and cannot be enlarged, but I was able to find similar charts online here:

<http://citizenshipinitiative.org/trib...>

The difficulty reading the charts has nothing to do with the content. Therefore, I still give this a full five star rating.

I was sent a complimentary Kindle copy of this book in exchange for an unbiased review.

Lsilberman says

The author did a nice job of pointing out the connection between the freedom to choose to enter the job market and choose one's job, on the one hand, and women's freedom in general, on the other--for a woman to be free to leave the home unescorted is a big deal in some cultures. According to the author, some cultures are so dead-set on keeping women in "traditional" roles that they'd rather sacrifice half of (what might be) their gross national product, even though this would not be in their own interest, than allow women the freedom to enter the workforce. This can be what happens in an "honor"-based, as opposed to an interest-based, culture. In an "honor-based" culture, simply being employed gives women not only more freedom in general, but also more freedom to associate with men who are not relatives, which puts employed women at serious risk of being considered, and treated, as engaged in what's considered improper sexual behavior for a woman.

Mr. Jacobson also helped me understand the thinking behind suicide bombings. In my own culture, we are taught that G-d loves life and peace. If I understand Mr. Jacobson correctly, the emphasis, in some tribal and/or patriarchal cultures, on honor, and its corresponding restrictions on roles for both women (daughter, sister, wife, mother) and men (warrior), means that the individual's right to consider his/her body her/his own, to do with as s/he pleases, is also restricted. Since the body is considered "tribal/community property," as it were, sacrificing it for (what's considered) the greater good is held in high regard. Not my cup of tea, obviously, but at least I understand the attitude better.
