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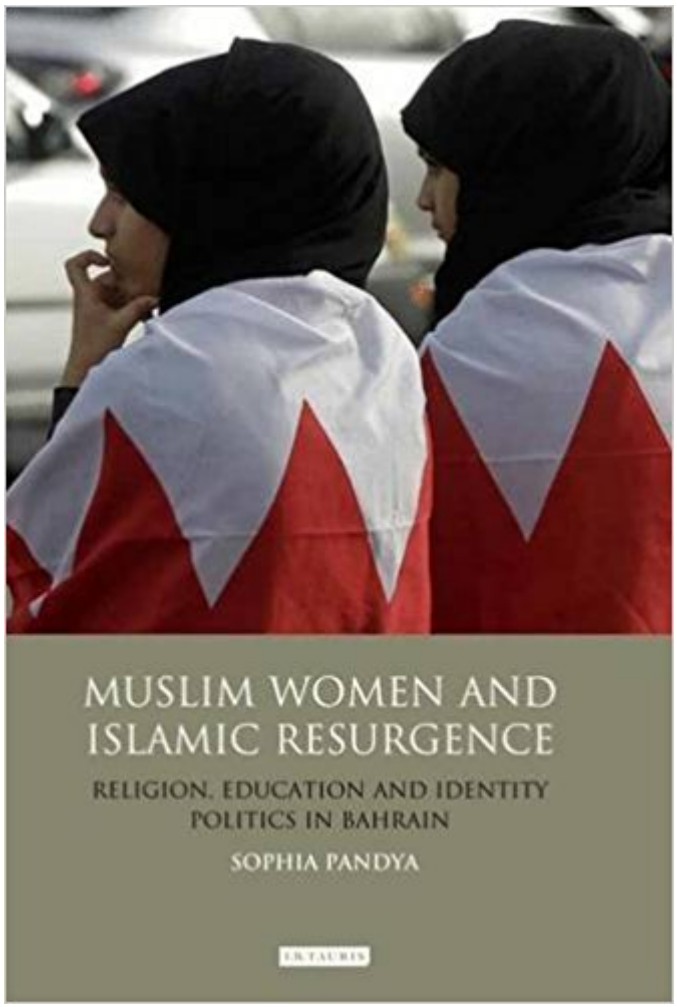

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Synopsis

Bahrain’s tumultuous political landscape often overshadows the societal upheavals that this tiny country is facing. Sophia Pandya cuts through this to examine how international Islamic revivalism coupled with increased secular education has impacted Muslim women’s religious practice and public position. She unsettles assumptions that education is a secularizing force for Muslim women, showing that modern education among Bahraini women has in fact deepened both their engagement with Islam and their political participation. Uncovering what transpires when newly educated women have the opportunity to reinterpret religion and gain access to the work place and the political arena, Pandya sheds light on the complex intersections between women and public life, education and Islam. This book provides great insights into religious women’s efforts towards self-determination within conservative Islamic movements as well as the impact of globalization and wider economic and political developments in Bahrain.

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Customer Reviews

’This delightful book offers fascinating insights into the lives of Bahraini women in all their diversity and complexity. In an accessible style, Sophia Pandya explains after a careful survey of the historical context, the intense social relations that have erupted in recent years and also the many efforts to deal with them. The reader gains a sense of the multi-faceted religious activism that is enriching and sometimes transforming the lives of Bahraini women. It is a timely and important book.’ - Nancy Gallagher, Professor of History, American University in Cairo and the University of

California at Santa Barbara 'Sophia Pandya provides us with an engaging depiction of the complex and varied lives of Muslim women in the Persian Gulf country of Bahrain in a time of profound transformation. Readers will be especially rewarded by her comparative examinations of the roles played by the Shi'i Ma'tam and the Sunni Qu'ran school in shaping the religious comportment and political consciousness of Bahraini women. They will also be moved by the personal narratives that reveal the different understandings these women have of themselves, their communities, and the wider world with which they have become increasingly engaged.' - Juan E. Campo, Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara 'In her lucid accounts and analyses of women's agency in Bahrain, Sophia Pandya makes a compelling case for understanding Bahraini women's religious subjectivity and political activity outside the tired dichotomisation of "oppressed" or "liberated" women. In the process, Pandya lifts Bahrain out of the margins of scholarship on gender in the Middle East and charts new territory in bringing Sunni and Shi'i women's self-understandings in conversation with one another. This groundbreaking work reminds us not to overlook Bahrain again in our discussions of gender in the Gulf - it is a much-needed nudge to pay due attention.' - Aysha Hidayatullah, Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Jesuit University of San Francisco.

Sophia Pandya has a PhD from the University of California at Santa Barbara and is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at California State University, Long Beach.

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