

Abstract_Haeri

Project Title: Muslim Women Rulers: From Bilqis to Benazir

This book project brings to life stories of the legendary and historical women who have reached the apex of authority and power in patriarchal Muslim societies. Taking an ethno-historical view of Muslim women's path to power and a cross-cultural anthropological perspective, I intend to make visible the circumstance surrounding women's ascent to power from medieval to modern times. The theoretical line that runs through women's narratives is threaded through a focus on the paradox of patriarchy, i.e., the animating dynamics of father-daughter relationship. Juxtaposing the Quranic story of the Queen of Sheba, and the purported Prophetic hadith: "Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity," I situate women's sovereignty in the intersections of these two supreme sources of authority, and on the ground patriarchal political institutions in Muslim societies. With the growing Muslim women's mobilization in the public domain and their demand for political representation and leadership, a book on the historical and contemporary Muslim women sovereign who have become a queen, a sultan and a prime minister is exemplary as well as timely.