



# `Alimah to Imamah: Muslim Women's Approaches to Religious Leadership and Authority in the American Context [

2010-05

Masters Thesis

Monografía

My thesis investigates how traditional notions of religious authority in Muslim societies are complicated and challenged by religious leadership roles and prescriptive stances that two female American Muslim figures, namely Ingrid Mattson and Amina Wadud, take on gender debates in institutional and academic settings. Wadud and Mattson apply their agency in interpreting the religious tradition and scriptural sources, creating or contributing to alternative approaches to religious discourse in a fashion that is decidedly in favor of women assuming leadership roles in Muslim communities. In this thesis I present a three-fold argument. First, a shift in paradigms of Muslim religious authority in the United States is beginning to include gender consciousness as part of community conversations and in some notable, exceptional cases, women such as Mattson and Wadud have taken on roles of religious authority. Secondly, American Muslim women's claims to religious authority do not represent a uniform vision of women and leadership in Islam, as evidenced by the divergent views of Mattson and Wadud on the kinds of public religious roles they feel Muslim women can Qur'anically or legally assume. Finally, scholars of contemporary Islam and gender debates must theoretically wrestle with the role of the United States as a context of these debates, which means looking at Islam in the context of American religious history

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