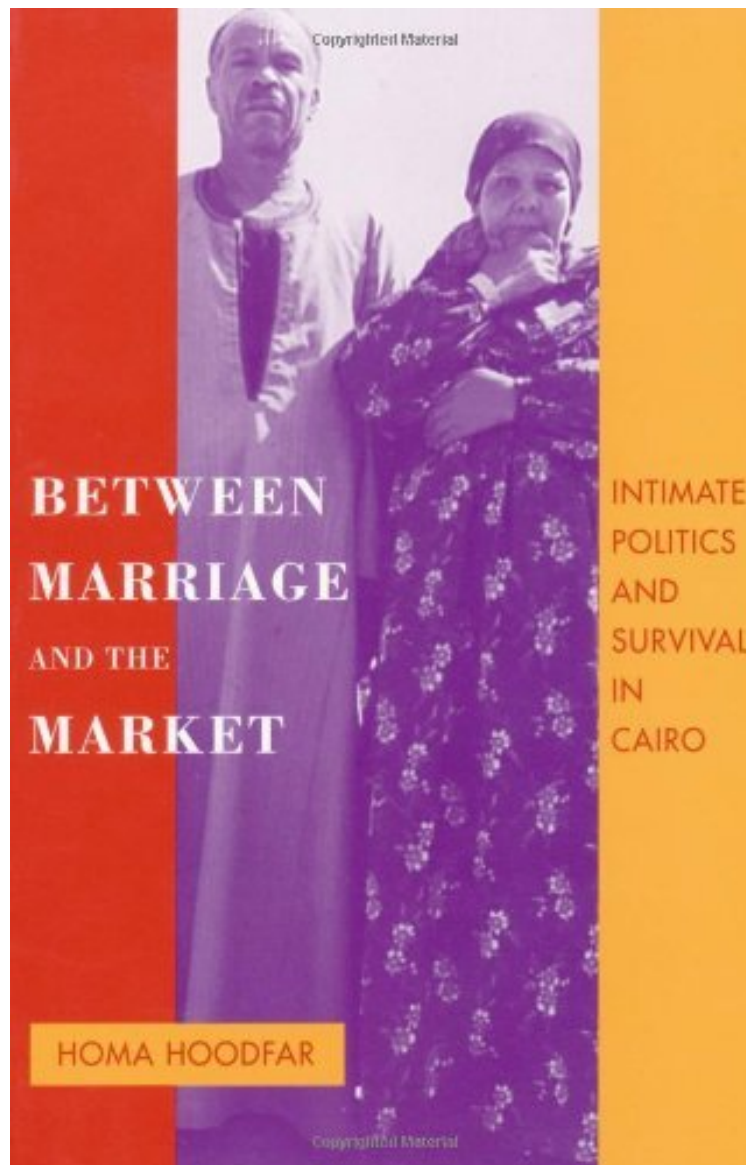


(Download ebook) *Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo* (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies)

Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies)

Homa Hoodfar

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Homa Hoodfar : *Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo* (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo* (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. REALLY Excellent Book But Different From What I Had Expected
By Imperial Topaz
I ordered this book expecting it to talk about marriage practices in Egypt. While it touched on this, in less (or different depth) than I had expected, I really did get a lot more than I bargained for. This book is exceptional, in that it is written by an Islamic (Iranian) woman sociologist, who had lived in, and gotten her degree in England. While she had to study Egyptian Arabic to converse with the people, she lived with them, and was able to understand many more facets of their culture in a different way than a westerner would have, and she was also more accepted and trusted by them because she was a Muslim (and her knowledge of Islam was extensively tested by her subjects in her early months of research). Yet, she is unlike most Arab sociologists in that she is able to write this book for a WESTERN audience, although the book is aimed more toward professional anthropologist/sociologists than the general public, as evidenced by her extensive citations and discussions of research methods. But in spite of that, I as a general reader, never found the book boring. It was difficult to put down. I was particularly interested in this subject, as I had spend several months living in Egypt during the time the author was doing her research, and compared my experiences to the author's. Her experiences and information are so much more extensive and rich. The book basically covers every facet of how poor men and women are able to "make it" and "get by," especially when the majority of them are forced to work outside of the formal sector. I am an American who has lived and worked in Morocco for 12 years; I found that her book more fully explained much of the behavior I see here in Morocco among the poorer classes, even though the economic conditions (especially level of government subsidies) are not the same. The book shows the behavior of the poor to be very LOGICAL and WORKABLE solutions to their problems, within the frameworks they have to work in. The book covered pre-marriage negotiations extensively, REALLY explaining the THINKING behind these negotiations. Again, even having lived in Morocco for 12 years, and even having married into the society, these things were never clear to me before, as they really are now. I would recommend this book to anyone who is seriously trying to understand the THINKING of both men and women in Arabic cultures, and how that thinking, and the subsequent actions which follow from that thinking, is different from western cultures. Lastly, this book presents a more POSITIVE view of Egyptians than I have EVER seen. Unfortunately, so many of the Egyptians that tourists, especially, come in contact with, tend to be such deceitful liars, leaving foreigners with a distasteful impression of all Egyptians. This book was really uplifting, positive, and refreshing, presenting so many honest, hard-working, caring people who constantly help each other out! I would have liked to meet many of these people myself. It really shows the Egyptians in a positive way.
8 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Between Marriage and the Market
By Daniel Pipes, Middle East Forum, Philadelphia
Continuing the excellent dissection of Cairene family life undertaken by several American-based scholars, Hoodfar focuses on poor women and how they cope with the tribulations of daily life. An anthropologist of Iranian origins teaching at Concordia University, the author spent a decade in Cairo doing research. She has much to show for her efforts. At base, she shows how much of a contract marriage is, and how this explains such patterns as the preference for husbands to be older than wives, the advantages of marrying within the family, a woman's need for parental approval of her husband, and the ridicule men face when they do housework ("men in the kitchen look like women"). Most striking, Hoodfar shows the way in which patterns are changing: how the Western ideal of a love marriage has an unsteady impact ("I married for love, but want my three daughters . . . to marry in the traditional arranged way"); the effect of waiting until later in life to marry; and the huge consequences of women being gainfully employed. Hoodfar's perceptive study points to family life in Cairo becoming with time less Western, not more. For example, she finds that the immensely detailed marriage contracts now prevailing (which regulate everything from the wife's use of contraception to the number of meals with meat per week a husband can expect) "emerged only in the last few decades." This in turn suggests that, superficial signs of convergence to the contrary, the Middle East in its essence is not Westernizing.
Middle East Quarterly, December 1997

Homa Hoodfar's richly detailed ethnography provides a rare glimpse into the daily life of Arab Muslim families. Focusing on the impact of economic liberalization policies from 1983 to 1993, she shows the crucial role of the household in survival strategies among low-income Egyptians. Hoodfar, an Iranian Muslim by birth, presents research that undermines many of the stereotypes associated with traditional Muslim women. Their apparent conservatism, she says, is based on rational calculation of the costs and benefits of working within formal and informal labor markets to secure household power. She posits that increasing adherence to Islam and taking up the veil on the part of women has been partially motivated by women's desire to protect and promote their interests both within and beyond households.

From the Inside Flap
"There is a great need for material on the Middle East that . . . makes sense of how ordinary men and women weigh their choices, bargain, and decide what is best for themselves and their families. Hoodfar presents fascinating and original material that suggests new boundaries for what research can be considered 'economic.'"
—Christine Eickelman, author of *Women and Community in Oman*