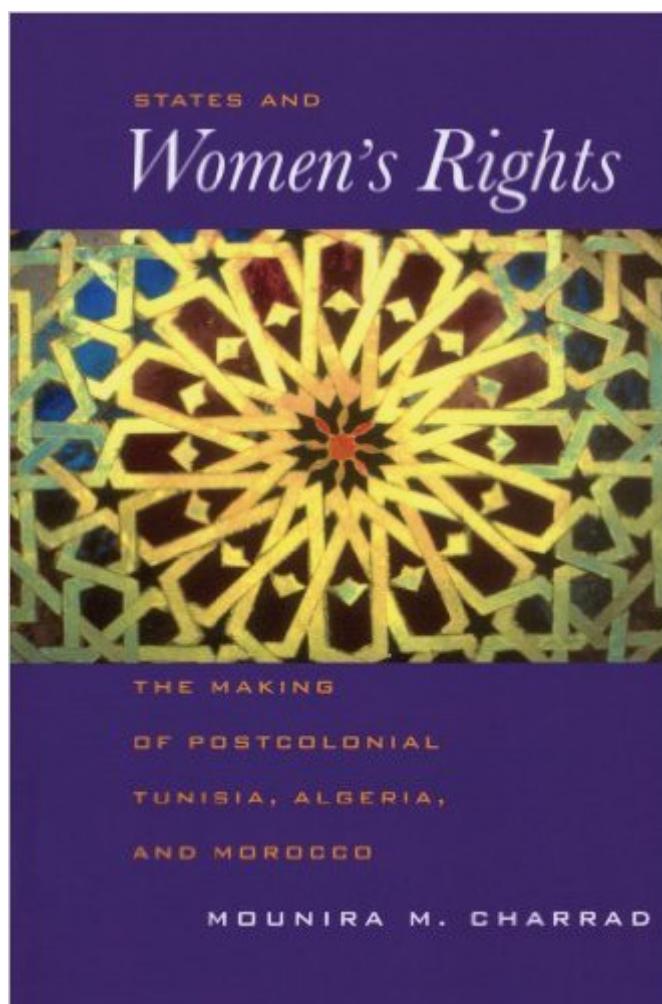


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# States And Women's Rights: The Making Of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, And Morocco



## Synopsis

At a time when the situation of women in the Islamic world is of global interest, here is a study that unlocks the mystery of why women's fates vary so greatly from one country to another. Mounira M. Charrad analyzes the distinctive nature of Islamic legal codes by placing them in the larger context of state power in various societies. Charrad argues that many analysts miss what is going on in Islamic societies because they fail to recognize the logic of the kin-based model of social and political life, which she contrasts with the Western class-centered model. In a skillful synthesis, she shows how the logic of Islamic legal codes and kin-based political power affect the position of women. These provide the key to Charrad's empirical puzzle: why, after colonial rule, women in Tunisia gained broad legal rights (even in the absence of a feminist protest movement) while, despite similarities in culture and religion, women remained subordinated in post-independence Morocco and Algeria. Charrad's elegant theory, crisp writing, and solid scholarship make a unique contribution in developing a state-building paradigm to discuss women's rights. This book will interest readers in the fields of sociology, politics, law, women's studies, postcolonial studies, Middle Eastern studies, Middle Eastern history, French history, and Maghrib studies.

## Book Information

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Advancing a political perspective of issues of law and gender, *States and Women's Rights* is not only a survey into gender history and feminine rights in Maghreb areas, but also a brilliant account of the historical paths of state formation processes. Treating issue of family law and women's rights as an inherent part of the larger struggle to build a modern state in the

Maghr[er]bâ •(p.239), Charrad argues that and that Islamic family law as a political instrument plays a critical role in maintaining tribal integrity and power (pp.80-83). They did so by regulating internal power relations inside the tribe via emphasizing masculine ties and inheritance, emphasizing inter-familial rather than conjugal relations in marriage (Ch.2) and subordinating female rights and privileges to male domination (Ch.3). Charrad then summarizes the problem of state-formation in kin-based areas as stateâ™s relation with kinship and stateâ™s penetration into social realm (pp.4-7). From a structuralist perspective, Charrad lays down the historical and colonial factors that laid the foundation of state-society relations. A tradition of hierarchical, centralized state during Turkish rule (pp.89-98) coupled by French efforts to reinforce the colonial rule meant that Tunisian tribes were much less influential in mobilization for national independence and contest of state power (pp.116-125). In Morocco, with a long history of central-local conflict (pp.103-109) and a prolonged process of gradual French domination, kin-based tribes retained much of its power (pp.139-144). In Algeria the situation was more complicated; with some tribal unions successfully undermined by the central authority while others attempting to encroach upon the âœrepublic of cousinsâ • (pp.

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