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Islam and Equality Through Symbolism

By: Nellie Bowers

Independent Study Project

SIT Fall 2021: Multiculturalism and Human Rights

“We are all the same, I mean we are different, but I respect you, I love you. We think different, we look different, but that’s nice. People try to make this bad, but it doesn’t have to be.”

- Abdourahman

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Abstract

As a Muslim Majority Country governed by laws born out of religious doctrine, Morocco deals with issues of equality and justice that are forcefully related to and intertwined with religion. This paper looks at the intersection of religion and equality, especially in the interpretive context of society and governance. It also considers the difference in religious interpretation affecting religious use and image. Additionally, the religious notion of Tawhid is analyzed in a symbolic context to further understand how God's nature influences the actions of humans, especially with actions pertaining to social justice and equality. Through ethnographic interview, the perspective on these topics from Moroccan Muslims are discovered.

Introduction

Growing up in a western country in the post-9/11 era, I've been exposed to Islamophobic perspectives through my relatives, the news, and in school nearly my entire life. Just like with many social issues, one must grapple with the prejudiced exposure they have endured to certain concepts like religion, race, social behaviors, etc. I think that prejudice can be targeted and overcome by exposure to difference and through efforts to understand those of varying beliefs or cultural practices than your own. I hope that this research can discuss topics of Islam that are often explored at the surface level in Western Society.

Morocco is a Muslim majority country (MMC) which often bears the reception of prescribed states of being from western society when it comes to issues of human rights. For example, issues of gender equality receive a lot of attention and are stamped with the narrative that women are helpless and unaware of their own oppression. The presence of justice and equality are assumed to be absent in not only MMCs but also in other developing nations.

I chose the topic of Islam and its intersectionality with equality through symbols like tawhid for my independent study project because I want to bring to light the beliefs of Moroccans when it comes to the importance of equality in their religion, society, and opinion. I also want to highlight aspects of Islam that are often blurred or lost by hearsay or assumption in the West. Concepts of equality and inclusion are important and explicitly valued by the Qur'an and by the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). Hopefully this research can expose the conceptualization of how equality plays out in the Moroccan context comparatively to other MMCs and the intersection of religion and equality in society from the point of view of locals.

Syed and Ali state that "Islam has a dominant role in everyday life in many MMC's and is likely to have significant influence on approaches to and practices of equal opportunity in

those countries.” (2017, pp. 1622). Morocco is increasingly becoming a hotbed for diversity, of language, race, ability, size, gender, etc. As with any society, diversity brings issues of human rights, equality, and social justice to the forefront. Especially in Morocco, as an MMC where Sharia is the major law system, accompanied by the family law which are both intrinsically tied to religion, it is important to understand notions of what equality means in the context of the religion that precursors many norms of society. Additionally, with the presence of many minority populations in Morocco, one must explore opinions on the concept of the ‘other’ from the dominant religion and its effects on equality in the country.

I think that the intersection of Islam and inequality is one that is misunderstood by many other cultures and that “Islam contains a greater plurality of theology than is often realized” (Calderini 2008, pp. 324). To explore this relationship, it is important to not only look at what Islam promotes about difference but also the interpretations of Islam that have structured dealings with equality in society. I hypothesize that symbolism of equality through symbols like the circle properly reflect notions of equality in Islam and permeate society in ways that promote attitudes of peace in Muslim Majority Countries.

Literature Review

When encountering the intersection of Islam and equality through symbolism I initially did some research on the important symbols of Islam and while in Morocco I noticed the frequency of symbols like the hand of Fatima, the horseshoe, and the evil eye. Thomas Arnold says that “the religion of Islam has never encouraged the use of any kind of religious symbol” (1928, pp. 158) which shifted my focus onto other forms of symbolism. I was encouraged to explore what I would assert as subtle symbolism, especially for symbols that embody the concept of *tawhid*.

Tawhid is the Islamic concept of one God, and as noted by Hassan, Amin, and Tohid (2017), “the unity and oneness of Allah” (p. 29). *Tawhid* further argues that because God is the creator of everything, He/She is the “owner” of everything, therefore everything that humans see, occupy, and create, is touched by God. Spahic Omar emphasizes that men must consider that “everything around him has been loaned to him so that he in a responsible and unhindered manner can carry out his duties of vicegerency” (2011). This shows that God infiltrates every aspect of society through *tawhid* and can therefore create a personal relationship and responsibility with each person or thing He/She touches.

Since *tawhid* emphasizes that God is at the center of everything, geometrics patterns resembling a circle and the shape of the circle itself can represent the essence of *Tawhid*. In this model, God is the center of the circle and everything in existence lies on a point from that center, illustrated as a series of lines radiating from a central point to show the vast and overwhelming reach of God. According to Hassan, Amin, and Tohid, the circle emphasizes “the unity of God and [that] everything else revolves round this centre and derives from it.” Additionally, the circle shows that everything “begins with God and ends in Him” due to the infinite nature of its shape (2017, pp. 29).

Previously I used the term ‘subtle symbolism’ which I believe begins to emerge through *Tawhid* with the circle in Islamic architecture. Spahic Omar writes that “Muslims developed in the field of architecture a culture of covering all surfaces with certain designs aimed at drawing the attention from the upshots of human endeavors to a higher order of expression and meaning” (2011). Especially with the circle, which Shumaila Islam adds “advocates for the spiritual realm” (2021, pp. 82). Therefore, it is frequently observed in Islamic architecture that building surfaces

are covered with intricate, often circular, geometric designs with an “emphasis on ingenious symmetry in design” (Spahhic Omar, 2011). Hassan, Amin, and Tohid (2017) note that geometry, as an integral part of Islamic architecture, “represents the principles of harmony, order and beauty” (pp.29), which can be tied to the importance of acting beautifully in Islam that I will discuss shortly. Through religious incorporation in design, architectural spaces become inherently tied to religion and create a space for religious consideration and action. Omar (2011) also offers the analysis that architecture, as an action of humans, “reflects and exudes the *tawhidic* spirit.”

Geometric patterns can be seen all around Muslim Majority Countries and Morocco. Islamic artists have historically used geometric patterns to emphasize religion and the oneness of God. For example, Sulaiman Esa, and Islamic artist from Malaysia created pieces like the one below, that although not circular, have geometric patterns directed towards a focal center that is meant to resemble God and Tawhid (Hassan, Amin, and Tohid 2017, pp. 30).



Fig. 1: Sulaiman Esa Art

Additionally, throughout my time in Morocco, I observed instances of circular patterns frequently. For example, bread that was served often three times a day, baked in the shape of a circle. Traditional Moroccan dishes like tajine or cous cous are served in circular dishes, forcing

those sharing the dish to be focused around and equidistant from a central point. It was also common to see geometric or circular patterns created by a mosaic or tiles in houses, on sidewalks, or in public buildings.

It is also important to note the “tawhdic spirit,” as said by Omar, through human action and the representation of the oneness of God through circular pattern in Islamic rituals and religious practices. One example of this is the ritual of circumbulation or tawaf in Arabic around the Ka’ba as part of the pilgrimage in Mecca. The tradition “takes place three times during the hagg” and was “enacted by the Prophet himself” (Fenton 1992, pp. 351). The Ka’ba is also the center to which all prayer are directed five times a day by Muslims. This center can be compared to the center of God in the circular representation of Tawhid. Like in the image, the prayer center where God is said to exist reaches each individual in prayer that surrounds it through the metaphorical rays.

Amina Wadud, a female imam and gender rights activist believes that the concept of tawhid means “active inclusiveness, specifically, but not only, gender inclusiveness” (Calderini 2008, pp. 331). As described earlier, due to the vast reach of God and the idea that everything is unified under and through him, tawhid means acting in a Godly way. The connection of Tawhid to human action emphasizes that “Islam is a total submission to the Will of God and a way of life for Muslims and finding peace in oneself, one’s neighbors, and the Creator” (Yushau Sodiq 2012, page 137). A good example of the unity between divine qualities and those of humans takes place during the circumbulation around the Ka’ba. Fenton says that the seven circles made around the Ka’ba represent the “seven diving attributes with which the pilgrim is successfully

invested” (1992, pp. 365). This emphasizes that true followers of the religion, specifically pilgrims, aspire to embody divine qualities and therefore acting inclusively.

There is another concept in Islamic culture called *tashbih* that similarly represents the overwhelming presence of God through all his creatures and the natural world. However, *tashbih* highlights the *similarity* between God and his creatures and therefore further emphasizes an innate quality in humans to act in ways that reflect Godly attributes as I have previously discussed in the context of *tawhid*. Stiles (2012) writes that many followers of Islam believe that “it is the duty of all Muslims to be active in this world, not simply focused on the next, and to care for and respond to the needs of the most unfortunate members of society” (154), promoting equality.

Now that I’ve discussed the concept of how *tawhid* can be associated with the circle and its relationship with acting God-like, it is important to discuss Islam and equality as a basis for understanding what behaviors are valued. Islam’s relationship with the idea of equality can be broken into three categories: historical, doctrinal, and social justice movements. Historically, Islam has been a commonality among nations and connected them culturally. The religion has also created a sense of “brotherhood and sisterhood beyond blood relationships” and has enabled “diplomatic relationships” between Muslim countries (Sodiq 2012, pp.329). As a result, Islam has been a natural source of community among people and created feelings of mutual obligation. Especially after colonial occupation in countries like Morocco, the mission to “address the plight of the disadvantaged in Muslim communities” (Stiles 2012, pp. 153) became a goal associated with Islam.

Doctrinally, Islam promotes the notion of equality and justice. One of the five pillars of Islam is almsgiving, which inherently promotes the idea of equality and looking out for one another through giving to those that are less fortunate. Stiles notes that *zakat* is a term reflecting the pillar of almsgiving, arguing for “equality of all men and mutual responsibility of society.” She also notes that “the primary recipients of *zakat* are the poor, and that *zakat* is regulated by the state in some countries today” (2012). This shows not only a personal sense of obligation to others, but a shared importance to the state in many MMCs to encourage equal distribution of wealth.

The Prophet Muhammed is another source for understanding the religion’s affinity for social equality and justice doctrinally. Sodiq writes that the Prophet “removed most of the injustices that women experienced in Arabia” and “condemned female infanticide, gave women the right to choose their husbands, and insisted that they could also inherit property as male descendants do” (2012 pp. 332). He additionally limited polygamy and advocated for the idea that God created men and women equally. Muhammed also gave the overall message of “duty to humility, equality of men and women, and the oneness of God” (Sheikh 2006, pp. 89).

Islamic rituals like the feast of Sacrifice show instances of religious behaviors demonstrating equality. During the feast of Sacrifice at the end of the Islamic calendar year, it is “required from any adult Muslim who is financially capable” to sacrifice an animal and divide the meat “into three portions: one portion for the poor, one portion for the relatives, and the last portion for the one who sacrifices” (Sodiq 2012, pp. 137). This ritual indicates once again an importance in sharing what one has equally with others.

Islam's interest in equality can also be easily followed through the advancements of MMCs in modern efforts on the social justice/human rights front. Specifically, with issues surrounding gender inequality. Many Feminists have used direct translations from the Qur'an to support efforts to gain equal rights for women. Sodiq writes about Islam in the African context and claims that it serves as a unifying factor for many African Muslim countries still today. He notes that "Islam has contributed tremendously to literacy in Africa" (2012 pp. 335) exemplifying an importance in leveling the educational playing field for Muslims, and thus promoting equality. Sodiq says that "Islam continues to meet the needs of people" an opinion I would support due to the favorability of being generous and the emphasis on performing 'good' acts to receive positive judgement from God.

Efforts for equality and justice are not new among Muslims. Erin Stiles writes that "Muslim Intellectuals and activists from many parts of the world have emphasized justice, social justice, and the maintenance of social welfare as core values of the Islamic tradition" since the 19th century tackling various social justice issues (2012 pp. 153). In the late 19th century, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani criticized western imperialism and pushed for the unity of Muslim nations, quoted arguing that Islam teaches "equality among different peoples and nations" (pp. 154). As early as the beginning of the 20th century, Qasim Amin advocated for better education for male AND female youth, arguing that "the decline of Muslim societies could be traced to a decline in social virtue" (pp. 156).

Women like Sa'diyya Shaikh and Fatima Mernissi pushed for women's rights in the Muslim context through citing passages of the Qur'an and rejecting "colonial-era feminist views of Muslim women as a victimized and helpless other and [embraced] a multiplicity of feminisms

and feminist activism” (pp. 160). The Malaysian Sisters in Islam a feminism group founded in 1988 to empower Malaysian Muslim women, stating that their “efforts to promote the rights of Muslim women are based on the principles of equality, justice and freedom enjoined by the *Qur’an* as made evident during [their] study of the holy text.” Other Muslim Organizations like the Aga Khan Development Network have demonstrated “supporting projects to improve health, education, and economic development” (pp. 165) for poor people all over the world, Muslim, and non-Muslim. Representing efforts of equality and social welfare with a religious affiliation.

For greater than a century, “Muslim thinkers have emphasized social justice and the safeguarding of social welfare as foundational values of the Islamic tradition” (Stiles 2012, pp. 167) and with the *Qur’an* as the direct word from God, many Islamic states agreed that it was “the appropriate system for establishing social justice” (pp. 156). However, throughout my research, I frequently encountered varying perspectives on the problems that result from interpreting religious text in different societal contexts. Interpretations have the ability to create vast inequality, one example being the enslavement of Africans historically in Arab countries. Sodiq notes that “Muslim Arabs oftentimes raided non-Muslims, especially the pagans” (2012 pp. 330). He then later writes that after the abolition of slavery in many countries, “the slave social class gradually disappeared because Islamic teachings offered a reason for the emancipation,” highlighting that the Prophet had dismissed the maltreatment of slave people yet there are a few Arab countries that still endorse slaveholding today. This shows discrepancy among not only interpretations of Islam, but also a difference in acceptable practice between Muslims.

Many modern Islamic scholars target the ulama, for their “political corruption and moral deviation from the correct path of Islam” (Dieste 2009, pp. 141). The Ulama have defended the Mudawwana as unchangeable which works against political activism in favor of more rights for women. The 2004 reform of the Mudawwana, or the Moroccan Family Code, led to changes for “women’s rights and gender equality in the legal framework” (Syed and Ali 2012, pp. 1622). This shows a flexibility in laws that assumes a change in the interpretation of what is acceptable in the religious context.

Another important issue of equality that I have previously highlighted is access to education. In every country education access is an issue of human rights due to its ability to cause disparity in societal mobility. In Morocco I learned about the frequency of an inaccessible education for primarily women in rural areas. In MMCs like Morocco this inequality can cause assumptions like Islam condoning the unavailability of education for women. However, as Sodiq points out “Islam does not prevent them from learning and working, the restrictions imposed upon them by Muslim scholars do not accord them enough freedom to educate themselves and work in the public domain” (2012 pp. 333). In other words, interpretations of the Qur’an or the prophet’s teachings can cause educational disadvantage when the *interpretations* are used in the creation of Islamic law.

Especially in the West, Islam is associated with terrorism. The notion of jihad has been popularized by terrorist groups who use religious text to create context for violence. Sodiq says that “Islam as a religion does not teach or endorse terrorism in any form” (2012 pp. 334). This topic emphasizes the potential that manipulative interpretation has to create prejudice about large groups of people. Even though the majority of Muslims believe their religion is peaceful, “a few

Muslims around the world do not practice Islam but cause problems and create fear in the hearts of millions of innocent people” (Sodiq 2012 pp. 334). It is important to focus on the fact that Islam itself does not condone certain behaviors, but instead human action and interpretation has the power to create social injustice, especially in countries where religion creates law. Human action demonstrates imperfection exemplified by the manipulation of God’s word to provide societal advantage or harm. Aziz Sheikh adds that movements with a militant interpretation of Islam are “deliberately devoid of contemplative thought and strong spiritual link with God” (2006, pp. 92), an opinion that highlights that biased interpretation distances human action from God.

Methodology

For my research, I conducted six ethnographic interviews with Moroccans. Three were with women and three were with men. The interview subjects were contacted through an online messaging app where I set up individual phone calls with each person. The subjects were informed of the topic of research before the phone call took place. Each interview lasted less than an hour with a timeframe ranging from ten to fifty minutes. At the beginning of the call, the subjects were asked for verbal consent to be interviewed and I also asked for permission to record the phone call for note-taking and remembrance purposes later on. The subjects were asked a series of personal questions to gauge the demographic of my sample and were then asked a mix of broad and opinionated questions about Islam, equality, and the symbol of the circle. In some cases, follow-up questions were asked if I felt they should be. At the end of the interviews, I thanked the person for their time and for letting me interview them.

Data

All the identities of my interviewees will be anonymous to retain their privacy. The ages of my subjects ranged from 22 to 62. Everyone I interviewed was from Morocco and resides in the Rabat/Sale area, except one living near Agadir and another in Marrakech. All the Subjects stated that they are Muslim, and their family is Muslim as well.

When asked about what practices everyone does that they feel embody their affiliation with their religion, I received a resounding “praying.” Although one woman said, “I don’t do that always, but my family, especially my brother, they do the prayer every day.” Others noted that they read the Qur’an and two of my subjects brought up phrases like الحمد لله or انشاء الله and greeting one another in a religious way, with “peace be upon you”. When asked about physical signs of religion, two of the women I interviewed said their hijab, while others focused on the Qur’an itself or prayer beads that Muslims use to count the number of times they pray to Allah. One woman also brought up calligraphy verses from the Qur’an that she said can be seen in the public space or in homes on the walls.

None of my interview subjects said that they have experienced Islamophobia or hatred because of their religion. Every person said that Islam promotes equality between people with phrases like:

“If people respect and do what the Quran said, it brings justice for all people. It may seem hard, but it brings justice, it is the balance and the life of a person, it’s not just about praying about god and those things, it’s about self-discipline, it’s about meditation, about self-control, and how to behave, how to act with people. How to interact with society, so I say yeah, it promotes equality.”

“Islam promotes equality in public rights as official justice therefore Islam fights all forms of discrimination between human with color gender or religion.”

“Islam promotes equality by urging people to be more tolerant with each other and other people from different religions”

However, one man said that he would rather use the term equity to describe the issue because he feels that equality does not solve social issues in the correct way. Many also seemed to agree that there is no difference between humans other than good and bad deeds.

Most of my subjects seemed to find it important to include that despite their belief that the Qur’an and the religion of Islam promote equality, there is variation in how the text is used and that human interpretation can create different goals. One man noted that “there is a difference between what [the Qur’an] says and what it does because people make mistakes.” Similarly, one woman says that “[the Qur’an] has a lot of stories” and “every government, they choose what works for them.” She continues by saying, “they control through the Qur’an, but the Qur’an never says that. Religion and politics, it’s not a good match.”

Only one of my interviewees seemed to respond to the symbol of the circle in the way that I had imagined they would. She says, “in Islam, the circle represents the unity of the monotheistic God. Its center represents God, as well as the city of Mecca, considered the spiritual and geographical centers of Islam.” Every other person dismissed the symbol of the circle as irrelevant besides the ritual of walking in a circle around the Qaba in Mecca. One woman says, “for us the Muslims, it’s not the circle that’s the important thing” and that the ritual and that shape are only due to the presence of the Qaba as the “center of all things that Muslims attach to.” Another woman said that “here in Morocco, in Islam we don’t have symbols” and that “wearing symbols is just rumors, you need to pray to prevent the evil eye etc.”

My final question for each person was asking their opinion on whether equality, as they stated to be present in Islam’s doctrine was present in Morocco. I received mixed responses, with

a few saying yes, one saying sometimes, one mostly no, and another just said no. For one woman, equality is absent because of the interpretation done by the leaders of the country and the manipulation done by them, “the problem is not the verses, it’s the people.” She says, “in Morocco, we are doing our best.” One man says that he believes equality to have increased in Morocco, “especially between the man and the woman.” One man says that he does not see equality most of the time in Morocco and finds it important to include that “a lot of women complain about equality and stuff,” but attributes their sentiments to never having read the Qur’an but basing their opinions off of society.

Conclusion

Not only did my background research hint this, but my ethnographic research exposed a small example of the variation in practice and interpretation for every Muslim. This variation has been framed in my literature review as a bad thing, however, I think that my interviews highlighted the beauty in the subjectivity of religion. I valued that everyone felt that they could see their religion with a positive lens and were able to easily separate the ‘mistakes’ of humans from the actuality of what Islam stands for.

Although I didn’t receive much of a response regarding the symbol of the circle, I still want to emphasize the perspectives from my interviewees that highlighted the value they place on the direct relationship an individual has with God. One woman I interviewed brought up her opinion that in Islam “you don’t need someone to be between you and God, if you do a sin, you go and pray and ask for forgiveness, no one knows what happened except you and God.” Despite not directly leading to a support of my hypothesis that the circle as a symbol creates unity, I think that this perspective offers the point of view that because the individual’s relationship with God is direct, there is an emphasis in being good versus bad over physical, or

worldly characteristics of others. One woman agreed, stating that “being closer to Allah is about the heart of the person.”

I also was happy with the emphasis on equality despite difference between humans that my subjects seemed to portray. One person said that “humans are equal because they are born by the same way, they are from one God,” while another stated that “[Moroccans] love other people, there is no difference between color or religion.” Both ideas target an overarching equality that I tried to prompt answers for through discussions of the circular symbol.

The acknowledgement of wrongful interpretations by many Muslims, or people in power seemed to be a common theme in my interviews that aligned with my research. As mentioned in my literature review section, Islam has been used to unite people in ways that are favorable. One woman sums up the use of religion by rulers in countries by saying, “every government, they only choose what works for them, if they want to convince citizens, they say ‘this is from the Qur’an.” This implies that people are easily manipulated and convinced that religious motive and truth are inherent in political action. Supporting this, one of my research subjects spoke about female classmates constantly complaining that Islam has created unequal rights for women and when he contradicts their sentiments by citing verses of the Qur’an that promote equality for women, “they claim that they have never heard the verses of the Qur’an that promotes equality.” Sheikh says that “life in this world is designed to test one’s faith in God,” (2006, pp. 90) but I think that the sentiments reflected by my subjects’ emphasis on questioning misinterpretation and manipulation of Islam reflect the survival of such a test.

I wish that I had thought to ask subjects on their opinions of Tawhid and its influence on social justice and equality instead of focusing on the symbol of the circle so heavily. However, I think this research is important because if nothing else, it exposes the opinions about equality

and its intersection with the religion of Islam through the eyes of everyday people. These opinions are important to contradict prejudice people may have about the relationship that Islam has with equality and acceptance of others. As stated by one of my subjects, “we are all the same, I mean we are different, but I respect you, I love you. We think different, we look different, but that’s nice. People try to make this bad, but it doesn’t have to be.”

Limitations

My research was limited. The research subjects were mostly around my age and were mainly from one area in Morocco: Rabat or Sale. Convenience bias was present because all my interviewees were with individuals I had encountered or become friends with well enough to obtain a contact during my time in the country. I was even put in contact with a few people for an interview through friends I had already interviewed. Most of the subjects were university students trying to become, or already English teachers which enabled for better communication during the interviews. I did not consider interview with subjects who did not speak English due to the lack of translation ability. Despite these efforts, I encountered a language barrier with a few of my interviewees. About half of my interviewees struggled with understanding some of my phrasing during the interview which resulted in a rephrase of the question/sentence and sometimes a complete skip of the question after a few times to get the gist across. All my interviews were conducted over the phone as well. This took away the personal feeling of doing ethnographic interview and inhibited my recognition of emotional responses from my interviewees other than listening to inflection in their voices. Finally, I felt that my research lacks a lot of historical depth that I just felt was out of reach for the timeframe of the project. I wish that I could understand the entire social/political past of Morocco and the religion of Islam more to ground my findings in more concrete facts.

I would also like to note that due scheduling with the subjects and the timeframe that worked with them, I conducted many interviews before the finalization of my background research. This left me with questions after the interviews had been completed and a desire that I had asked different questions.

Recommendations for further study

I would recommend that to expand upon the current research I have done, one should try adding the perspective of non-Muslim Moroccans on the status of equality in the country and whether they feel that the religion of Islam values equality. My data pool was very limited and primarily represented a young group of Moroccan Muslims living near the capital of Morocco.

I would also like to see research done on the specific ties between Tawhid and social justice work and movements in the Islamic context. I felt that research on the philosophy of Tawhid in that context was extremely limited. I think it could also be beneficial to further connect the concepts of tawhid and Tashbih to relate God's influence on the world to human action in a better way.

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Interview Questions:

Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. If you are unsure of an answer or do not want to answer any of the following questions you may leave them blank. The information you share will be shared only with classmates and my professor in a written format and your identity will remain anonymous. Thank you!

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Where are you from? Where do you live now?
- 3) What do you do for work?
- 4) Are you a Muslim?
 - (1) Is your family also Muslim?
 - b) If yes, can you describe any daily practices you have that you feel reflect your association with the religion of Islam?
 - i) What are some of the physical things you own or see in your daily life that you feel represent your association with Islam.
 - c) If you are not Muslim what are some daily practices or symbols you see that represent the presence of Islam in Morocco?
- 5) Have you ever witnessed or experienced Islamophobia?
 - a) If yes, can you describe one or more instances?
- 6) Do you feel that Islam promotes equality between people?
 - a) How so?
- 7) Are symbols important to you or to your religion?
 - i) Why or why not?
 - b) If yes, which are important?
- 8) Does the shape of the circle have importance to you or to your religion?
 - i) Why?
 - b) If the circle is important to you, where do you see it in your daily life?
- 9) Do you believe that what Islam stands for is present in Morocco?
 - a) To what extent?

School for International Training
Multiculturalism and Human Rights - Rabat

Consent Form

Project Title: Islam and Equality through Symbolism

Researcher: Nellie Bowers

Purpose: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Nellie Bowers from the University of the South, Sewanee. The purpose of this study is to understand the intersection between religion and equality in society. This study will contribute to my completion of my Independent Study Project.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a interview that will be administered to individual participants in the area of your choosing. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to Sub-Saharan Migration. With your permission you will be videotaped.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require about 30 minutes of your time. Multiple interviews may be needed if you are willing.

Risks

I do not perceive any risks or more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study. Unless you would like for me to use your real name, I will be using a pseudonym and will refrain from including any personal details in my final paper.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to participation in this study.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be documented as an ISP paper and presented orally to the SIT MOR students and staff. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon

completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers including audio tapes and field notes will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact me at :

Researcher’s Name: Nellie Bowers

Email address:

Whatsapp:

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent to be (*video/audio*) taped during my interview. _____ (initials)
(If applicable, please include this consent box and statement.)

Name of Participant

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date