

The House of Obedience

Women in Arab Society

Juliette Minces

Translated by Michael Pallis



Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN

The House of Obedience was first published in French by Editions Mazarine, 8 rue de Nesle, Paris, France in 1980, and in English by Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN in 1982.

Copyright © Juliette Minces, 1980
Translation Copyright © Zed Press, 1982

Typeset by Lyn Caldwell
Proofread by Penelope Fryxell
Cover design by Jan Brown Designs
Cover photo by Christine Osborne
Printed by Redwood Burn Ltd.,
Trowbridge

All rights reserved

**British Library Cataloguing in
Publication Data**

Minces, Juliette

The house of obedience

1. Family-Arab countries

I. Title II. La femme dans le
monde arabe.

English

306.8'5 HQ633.3

ISBN Hb 0 86232 012 7

Pb 0 86232 063 1

U.S. Distributor

Lawrence Hill and Co., 520 Riverside
Avenue, Westport, Conn. 06880,
U.S.A.

Contents

Foreword	vii
1. Introduction: A Confessional Universe	13
The Koranic Law	15
The Arab World	22
2. <u>Everyday Forms of Oppression</u>	29
A Man's Society	30
The Arab Man	34
The Incarceration of Women	40
Immigrant Women	45
Two Symbols of Women's Oppression	49
<i>The Veil</i> (49)	
<i>Circumcision of Women</i> (51)	
3. <u>The Legal Status of Women: Reforms and Social Inertia</u>	57
Reproduction and Birth Control	59
Marriage	60
Polygamy	62
Divorce	64
Custody of Children	68
Inheritance	69
Education and Employment	71
4. <u>Two Examples of Women in Arab Societies</u>	79
The Maghreb: Algeria	79
The Near East: Egypt	95
5. <u>The Future of Arab Women: Some Basic Ambiguities</u>	107
Bibliography	113