Triply Detached

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This issue of *Al-Raida* deals with the "Other" from a triply detached perspective. Writing about ethnic and linguistic minorities, immigrants and "guest workers" in the Middle East and North Africa challenges the researcher and author to see the Arab world as more than merely the object of Western expropriation and Orientalist misinterpretation. The peoples of our region have well demonstrated their ability to be both the victim and the victimizer, oft times simultaneously.

To date, the masculine gaze predominates when considering foreign cultures. Seeing non-Arabs from a gendered perspective undermines the common-sensical assumption that foreignness and alienation are first and foremost a male prerogative. The intercultural implications of issues as varied as income, mobility, nationality, family, cultural heritage and access to information can not be understood if gender mainstreaming is not placed at the very heart of our study of them.

Finally, scholarly reflection on the position of non-Arab women means writing about power and prejudice. And here, the well worn adage that racism (and sexism as well) can be defined as "prejudice plus power" can serve us well when grappling with the thorny issues of personal involvement and subjectivity. Can and should a writer - or guest editor for that matter - attempt objectivity, or is subjectivity a unique and valuable scientific method desperately needed in both the study of gender and cultural difference? "Betroffenheit", a term commonly used in my native Austria[1], puts a name to this phenomenon; i.e. the desire to deal with topics that directly affect our daily lives, that are woven into our privileged position as academics, compiling knowledge in the service of a system that is still so obviously based on our ability to secure a definition monopoly, to (pre-)judge and define others, and thereby perpetuate our power and their subjugation.

When I suggested compiling a file on non-Arab women *to* the *Al-Raida* board, I based my suggestion on several decades of personal experience, both as an academic and political activist, working with indigenous and immigrant minorities in Central Europe. As one of the few male researchers and trainers in the field of gender studies in Austria, I was acutely aware of the need to highlight the divergent ways in which women and men experience not belonging to the dominant group in society. I was also intrigued by the opportunity of editing an issue of this journal as a non-Arab and non-woman living in the Arab world now for almost half a decade.

As a Western, white, male academic, my position in Lebanon is privileged indeed. Having married into a well situated Beiruti family, I enjoy the fruits of a network of close ties on both sides of my wife's family. As anyone even faintly acquainted with the region is aware, without these connections nothing moves in Lebanon. Nevertheless, I found myself being drawn, like so many other Westerners in the Middle East, to the plight of the immigrants and "guest workers" at the bottom of the socio-economic pile; the Asian and African domestics, unskilled manual laborers and street vendors who enjoy few basic human rights and often live on the margins of society. My experience in the field of migration and minority studies in Austria has made me aware that life on the cultural sidelines of mainstream society almost automatically leads to an affinity with others who find themselves in the same boat. Thus, I don't find it surprising that many of my friends here in Lebanon are non-Arabs; along with a variety of Western immigrants, mainly Armenians from the Middle East. These contacts proved helpful during the often daunting process of finding contributors able to cover all the topics necessary for this issue. Finally, being a non-Arab male has proven to be an unexpected disadvantage when starting a household and family in Lebanon. Not only did my wife's Lebanese nationality in no way facilitate my immigration procedures, but more significantly, the predominant patrilineal legal system robs her of her birthright to pass her citizenship on to our future children. I have learned to appreciate the wisdom of the internationally sanctioned concept of reciprocity.

The most interesting challenge encountered while preparing the call for papers for this issue was the need to define the term Arab. There was some contention with respect to whether multiethnic countries like Morocco and Iraq should even be considered Arab. Initially, I felt that the term "predominantly Arab" would have been more accurate, as would be the case when carrying out a parallel study in a European setting. This question, along with determining the usefulness of religion when defining "Arabness," was avoided by choosing a political and linguistic definition for this category. The Arab world is seen here as being made up of all those countries that are currently members of the Arab League. Non-Arab women are defined as those who either do not speak Arabic as their mother tongue or who do not use it as their language of day-to-day discourse. This category includes women who have lost their ability to speak their (non-Arabic) mother tongue as the result of cultural genocide. Thus, the issues of power and dominance, with respect to the definition monopoly, have remained largely neglected in the interest of expediency and because of the need to adapt to the current, politically unstable situation in the region. One exception was made to the above mentioned, relatively restrictive and uncritical definition, namely the daughters of Arab women and non-Arab men who have been denied their Arab nationality because of the patrilineal family laws predominant in the Arab world.

In order to delve more closely into the issue of "Betroffenheit", i.e. the manner in which we all, as scholarly writers working in a Western context, deal with the way we are affected by both gender and cultural difference, a comparatively large number of articles were dedicated to the Western vantage point vis-à-vis the Arab world. My goal was to discover – through the eyes of non-Arab female scholars and travelers – whether the "kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture," so aptly described by Edward Said [2], is affecting not only Western women, but also Arab women working in Western academia. Here, an attempt was made to pay equal attention to both the issue of gender and the way in which cultural difference is experienced on both sides of the cultural divide between "Orient" and "Occident." The intended result of this sub-collection of articles is to determine whether an "encounter" between equals is actually possible or whether the Saidian "authority" enjoyed by women from the West will always tilt the playing field in their favor.

This file is a modest first step in the direction of a better understanding of Otherness in the Arab world. It is by its very nature highly eclectic and lacking in comprehension and balance. To be considered a success, it should, however, have illustrated that the Arab world is a major cultural and socio-economic center in its own right. This status brings with it not only international recognition, but also the responsibility to deal equitably with those members of society who, for whatever reason, have been marginalized, underrepresented or outright excluded from mainstream society.

End Notes

1. Born in 1956 in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA into a Swiss-Austrian family, I immigrated to Salzburg, Austria as a teenager and have been living in West Beirut with my Lebanese wife and her daughter, under a varying set of circumstances, since the spring of 1999.
2. Edward Said, Orientalism. New York: Random House, 1978, 19.

On Being a Single White Arab Woman in Sudan

Anonymous

For many persons, these words would mean nothing. The reality is that each of these words carried for me serious implications and challenges in the years that I spent working in Sudan. Each of them brought with it feelings of sadness, a sort of "tristesse" that is hard to define, yet overwhelming at certain moments. In many instances, it left me helpless because there was so little I could change except continuing to be there.

Being white, I was always referred to as "khawagga" (used originally in Sudan to refer to the British during colonization). It was difficult for the majority of people to think that a white person could speak Arabic; it was even more difficult to believe that a white person could be an Arab themselves. It was very embarrassing for me to accept that people would refer to me as a "khawagga". I was embarrassed because people were referring to me by using a term that was associated with colonialism, something which gave me no pride at all.

But what shocked me most was that my identity was based on the color of my skin; it was maybe only then that I could understand what black people have felt throughout human history. I had never experienced this before, probably because I was living in countries where the majority is white skinned and I was one of this majority. Classifying people based on the color of their skin was something I could never put up with; yet, this is what I was being judged on.

Being referred to as khawagga created for me a lot of confusion particularly when I was around Sudanese colleagues. If I was with other white colleagues, that feeling was less acute because this term was used to refer to all of us indiscriminately. But when I was with Sudanese colleagues, I saw that the word was used by other Sudanese as a clear sign of discrimination, against these local colleagues. I found this disdainful to both me and them. Often, they could not do anything about this and would just turn around to whoever was speaking and tell them 'she is not a khawagga; she speaks Arabic; she is Lebanese'.

Being an Arab was even more of a serious challenge in a country whose identity was torn between Africa and the Arab world. I had to carry the burden of being an Arab throughout my stay in Sudan.

For the Sudanese Arabs, being an Arab meant that I had to have the same opinion as theirs, that I had to take their position on all issues. In that particular moment in the history of Sudan, this meant being pro-government, and believe me, no one should be proud of that.

For the Sudanese Africans, especially the Dinka tribe, my Arab nationality carried with it certain prejudices. Hence, I was never perceived by them as a neutral person; I could never be impartial. All my positions and attitudes were biased by the fact that I was an Arab. It is difficult to describe the feelings that I had when one of my colleagues said "you are an Arab, the security people will never follow you or be interested in what you are doing or saying." It hurt me so badly because it looked as if I was a silent accomplice with the security people.

This was even more saddening for me because the project on which I was working dealt with the abduction of Dinka children by two Arab tribes in West Sudan. Arguments that I would make based on considerations aimed at the best interests of the child or on the rights of women were often interpreted as being sheer bias in favor of the Arabs. No matter how strong my arguments were, the Dinkas did not, or rather could not, get themselves to believe me. This was a very serious blow to me as a human rights practitioner and activist. It was even more of a serious blow because of my work on that specific project. It took a lot of patience and self-restraint from me to deal with these accusations.

Classifying people based on the color of their skin was something I could never put up with; yet, this is what I was being judged on

For my non-Sudanese, non-Arab colleagues I was a mystery, an odd case especially given the overall atmosphere in the world at that time. People were judged on the basis of their nationality, and not on the basis of what they said or did. This made me worried about how I would be classified; human beings like to classify; we all do; it is a simpler way of understanding the world and it is what we have been taught in school and even at home ever since we are born. Where would I fall in their eyes? What would they consider me to be? How would they look at me? What picture would they draw? No matter how brave you are by saying I do not care about what the others think of you, deep inside we are very much concerned about our image.

With respect to being a single woman, many people had a lot to say. For many African Sudanese, especially the Dinka, women could not be in positions of power and they were not to be influential in public life. Their place was elsewhere, and this is why it was difficult for me to establish myself in a position of authority towards them. It seemed as if they would never take me seriously no matter what I said, or how the others evaluated and judged me. For them, you were simply a woman, and consequently an inferior creature. The fact that I was an Arab woman was even more infuriating for them, because women in Arab society and culture were already considered lower class citizens. If I had been a European or an American, my nationality would have overshadowed my being a woman.

Being single made me the object of pity for the Sudanese Arabs. For them, I had to marry; it was not right to continue to be unmarried. Many even argued with me, asking how come I was not married, recognizing that I did not have any disabilities. They could see no reason for me remaining single; for them there had to be someone somewhere. I was also a source of concern for them because I was without a companion, without anyone to turn to in my old age.

Being a single woman out there alone in that difficult part of the world was bizarre for them. Why would I come all the way to Sudan to be alone on my own there?

For others, being single meant simply that you are easy prey, a target that they could engage with.

Recent Publications

- Amireh, Amal and Lisa Suhair Majaj, eds. *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000.
- Bhavnani, Kum-Kum, ed. *Feminism and Race*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Chowdhry, Geeta and Sheila Nair, eds. *Power, Post-colonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class*. New York: Routledge, 2002
- Dekoven, Marianne, ed. *Feminist Locations Global and Local, Theory and Practice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- Dhruvarajan, Vanaja et al., eds. *Gender, Raceand Nation: A Global Perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Wing, Adrien Katherine, ed. Foreword by Angela Y. Davis. *Global Critical Race Feminism: An International Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Call for Papers

Violence in the Middle East
Lebanese American University - Beirut
26-28 May 2004
Violence has plagued the countries bordering on the Eastern Mediterranean for most of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This interdisciplinary conference aims to study the manifold phenomena of violence in the region from several scholarly perspectives. The aim is to trace the interconnected strands of social life that end in violence. Our hope is that by studying this topic across disciplinary boundaries a more nuanced vision of the conditions and causes of violence will emerge.

Abstracts are invited from scholars working in area and gender studies, social science, communications, and literary-cultural studies. Papers addressing topics such as the following are particularly welcome: Intimate violence: family, sexual, social; Social and religious constituents of sectarian violence; Occupation and Resistance; Human ecologies of violence; Culture and geopolitical violence; Terrorism and perceptions of it; Representations and violence; Semantics of violence: "the forbidden," "shame," "justice," "rights," "terrorism,"etc. Deadline for 250-500 word abstracts: February 28, 2004. Send by email attachment to comparative.literature@lau.edu.lb

Grants

Global Fund for Women Offers Grants to Women's Groups Outside the United States
Deadline: Open
The Global Fund for Women works to strengthen women's organizations outside the United States by providing small, flexible, and timely general-support grants ranging from $500 to $15,000.

The Fund supports organizations that demonstrate a commitment to women's equality and female human rights; show concern about the way women are viewed and view themselves in society; are governed and directed by women; consist of a group of women working together (the fund does not accept requests from individuals); and are based outside the U.S. Applications, in any language, may be handwritten or typed and submitted via mail, fax, or e-mail.

GFW also administers the Preston Education Fund for Girls, which supports schools, teacher training and curriculum programs, locally based community organizations, non-governmental organizations, and local women's associations and women's rights organizations and coalitions focused on the issue of girls education.

See the Fund's Web site for detailed guidelines and application procedures. Contact:
Global Fund for Women
1375 Sutter Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94109
Tel: (415) 202-7640, Fax: (415) 202-8604
E-mail: grants@globalfundforwomen.org
Link:http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/3grant/index.html

Films

Les Passionnées du Cinema (2002)
Directed by Marianne Khoury – Egypt/France
Only passion could make us understand the grand adventure that a group of women undertook at the beginning of last century to take the first steps in building a new industry for a new art: cinema. Only passion can explain the enormous energy these women spent to oversome traditions and be actively involved in laying its foundations.

The Legend of Rose Al-Youssef (2002)
Directed by Mohamad Kamel Al-Kalioubi - Egypt
This film is a biography of Rose al-Youssef, traced through testimonies of persons who were close to her as well as personal archives, which have been released by her family only recently. The availability of such archives made it possible to achieve a better understanding of an era, both at the social and political levels.

"When asked where I come from, I tend to hesitate in responding. I do not know where I am from nor do I think I am alone in this situation. I was born in Lebanon, grew up in Switzerland, and pursued my college education in the United States. … Like many of you, each day I find myself enticed by a mosaic of opinions, cultures, religions and people. I am at home everywhere and nowhere. I am never a stranger, yet I never quite belong. Today, I am still rummaging for answers on how to create a stronger base for my precarious situation perched in between two radically different cultures. I belong to a culture that has no name. I do not belong in Lebanon, nor do I belong in the United Sates, and the need to belong is of no urgent importance for me. However, what is important is the knowledge that I will not be ostracized in Lebanon for the person I have come to be: an individual, a feminist, someone with an opinion rather than what I am supposed to be thinking and believing." (Lina Alameddine, *Al-Raida* No. 79, Fall 1997 p. 5-6)

"When I was a child, I lived in Nablus for a couple of years. There, people always regarded me as a foreigner. I tried my best to be accepted as an Arab girl, but very often. I was spoken to in English, even if I talked to people in Arabic. My friends frequently accused me of not being able to understand their culture and what the Palestinians have been through because I was not a "real" Arab. It seemed to me they had created an intimate circle in which they could talk freely. A silent wall was built between themselves, the Arabs, and me, the "outsider". There was a general kind of mistrust toward my mother, my siblings, and me. Once, my parents wanted to choose a new school for my sister and me and when we went to look at the new school, many kids started insulting us, calling us Jews and apostates, and saying we would burn in hell." (Mona Katawi, *Al-Raida* No. 101-102 Spring/Summer, 2003, p. 77)

"As someone who grew up in Lebanon, I have always felt that Beirut was my home. When I came to the US, I felt very much like an outsider. And yet as a researcher, returning to the region as an adult, I have come to realize that I am still very much an outsider in the Middle East. Because of my childhood experience, I am neither a total outsider nor a total insider in either part of the world." (Jennifer Olmsted, *Al-Raida* No. 90-91, p.41.

"There are two forms of human rights violations in Lebanon, which have become part of the normative practices in the employment of foreign domestic workers. These are, first the withholding of passports and other identity papers by the employer; and second, the restriction of movement. Justification for both types of restrictions are based upon the following arguments: Practices such as the withholding of passports are seen as justified because both the recruitment agencies and the sponsors/employers have an up-front financial stake in the employment process. Therefore, the agency requires some assurances, because within the first three months the agency is liable for her replacement. It is partly for this reason that many agents now stipulate that restrictions like the withholding of passports and the refusal to leave the house are required as conditions of the guarantee. From the employer's perspective the withholding of the passport and restrictions are to safeguard this 'investment' at least until the contract period has expired, or sufficient labour has been served to work off the money expended. Even the withholding of payment of wages is practiced supposedly for the same reasons. In other words, there exists a type of debt bondage here in addition to the kind of "contract slavery". There is a lot of support for this argument not only from employers and agencies, but even from priests and nuns who assist domestic workers in need, and from some embassies.

The second argument is that all the types of physical restrictions are required to insure against the employee 'getting into trouble' by meeting others whom may use her to enter the house for theft, becoming pregnant or getting diseases. She also might meet others who will tell her to leave because she can make more money in other ways (implying prostitution, or freelance domestic work). If taken seriously, these justifications concern personal protection and fears of added complications, which the employer simply does not want to have to deal with. The last matter concerns the labour market and the employer does not want competition or poaching of the employee who may be attracted by other arrangements." (Ray Jureidini, *Women Migrant Workers in Lebanon*, International Labor Office.)

From Iran

Nobel Prize goes to Iranian Rights Activist

Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi was chosen by the Nobel Prize Committee to receive this year's Peace Prize. Ebadi won the Nobel prize for her efforts in promoting the rights of women and children in Iran and worldwide. She is the first Iranian and Muslim woman to win the award. Ebadi was the first female judge in her country, serving as president of the Tehran city court, from 1975. With the advent of the Islamic republic in 1979, however, she was forced to resign when it was decided that women were not suitable for such posts. Ms. Ebadi was jailed in 2000 for several weeks on charges of publicizing evidence of official involvement in those attacks, and she was barred from practicing law for five years after a closed trial.
(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3181992.stm

From Iraq

Aquila Al-Hashimi Dies

Aquila Hashimi, one of the three women on the U.S. – appointed Iraqi Governing Council, died of gunshot wounds five days after her convoy was ambushed by six men in a pickup truck near her home in western Baghdad. Al-Hashimi was supposed to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York and was expected to become Iraq's new ambassador to the United Nations.
(http://www.4reference.net/encyclopedias/wikipedia/Aquila_al_Hashimi.html)

Afghanistan

Women Still Being Arrested for "Moral "Crimes

The Taliban may have left Afghanistan but women, especially those in rural areas, still live in fear due to restrictions that recall the morality policing of the Taliban.

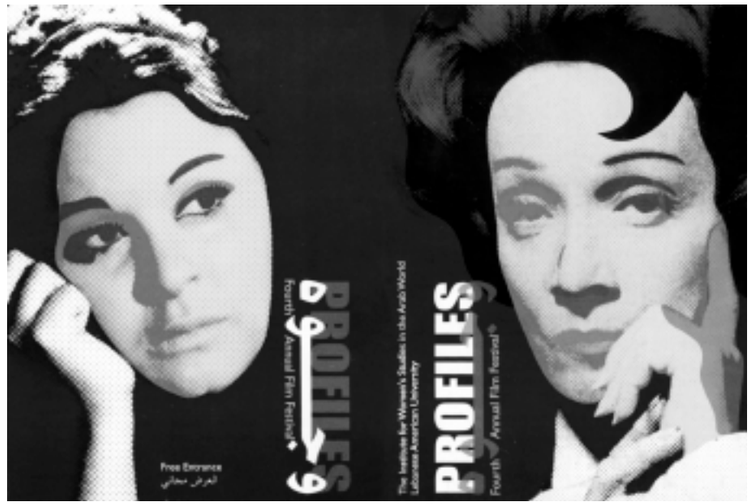
Women who are arrested for talking to men who are not their husbands, brothers or fathers are still subjected to "chastity tests." Some women are arrested while talking to a relative or riding in a cab with a male driver.

In the Western province of Herat, women have been arrested for driving cars and threatened for working with foreign organizations. To prevent "un-islamic" behavior, the governor, who was once a warlord, assembled a battalion of 13 to 14 year old boys to spy on women. The boys lurk in parks and other public gatherong places watching for indiscretions.

According to a recent report by the European Commission. women are very susceptible to punishment for "family crimes" as a result of the country's very conservative patriarchal society.

When the Taliban were finally chased out of Afgahnistan in early 2002, US President George W. Bush declared in his first State of the Nation Address: "Today, women are free." In some ways the lives of girls and women have clearly improved since the toppling of the Taliban. According to UNICEF, an estimated 1.2 million girls went to school last year. Educated women have returned to work as teachers, doctors and lawyers. These developments however are mostly limited to the capital Kabul. A substancial portion of Afghanistan, now ruled by provincial governors and former warlords, is still being issued restrictive orders that are just a few degrees away from the Taliban's radical Islamic code. (We, Isis International, September 2003 No. 35, p. 2)

Fourth Annual Film Festival



The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University - in consultancy with Cine-Club Direct Line - organized its fourth annual film festival entitled "Profiles". The festival lasted for 4 days (May 27 -30, 2003). The films and documentaries screened, directed by several renowned directors, featured various profiles of women such as Marlene Dietrich, Rose Al-Yusif, Valerie Solanas, Nico, etc. On the final day, IWSAW hosted Lebanese-Egyptian director Marianne Khoury who presented "Les Passionnees du Cinema" a documentary she prepared in 2002.

Launching of Al-Raida's Centenary Issue

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University launched, on July 28, 2003, the centenary issue of Al-Raida entitled **Women's Movements in the Arab World**. The issue in question is divided into three sections and includes: a historical introduction to the Arab women's movement which covers three basic areas namely the Mashreq and Egypt, the Maghreb and the Gulf; an email interviews conducted with 19 respondents who are either movement activists, scholars, or Muslim feminists; and a gender-sensitive fact file with comparative data related to gender for each Arab League country. Moreover, the issue also includes a book section, as well a bibliography containing books published on the Arab Women's Movement.

The keynote speaker for the event was Mrs. Mervat Tallawy, Under-Secretary of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA. Moreover, President Riyad Nassar, Acting Vice-President Abdallah Sfeir and IWSWA Director Mona Khalaf gave individual talks about the history of IWSAW and AL-Raida. The audience included UN officials and staff, NGO representatives, faculty members representing various Lebanese universities, journalists, as well as gender studies researchers.

IWSAW Director Mona Khalaf with Mrs. Mervat Tallawy, Under-Secretary of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, at the launching.

Non-Arab Women in the Arab World

■ **Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous**

Delineating gender and cultural identities is closely related to power. Rarely, if ever, are individuals permitted to freely choose how they wish to live their lives as women or men, as members or outsiders vis-à-vis the societal mainstream.

This issue of *Al-Raida* deals with the many forms of "not-belonging" and the struggle for recognition within the member states of the Arab League. It is divided into five sections reflecting the disparate vantage points from which non-Arab women have viewed their role in the Arab world over a period of over 150 years.

In the first section, both Rabha El Asri and Arda Dargarabedian portray the position of two of the most significant non-Arab ethnic groups in the region - the Berbers and Armenians - as members of these minorities. Dergarabedian reports on the initial results of one of Jordan's first scholarly surveys on its ethnic mix, whereas El Asri attempts to debunk the romanticised view of Berber mountain life. Juxtaposed to this position, L'Hocine Ukerdis and Ulbani Aït Frawsen expose the historical roots of the heroicised portrayal of Amazigh (Berber) women in the struggle of their people for cultural and political self-determination. One of the great disappoints in the production of this issue was our inability to find authors willing to write background articles on the position of two of the other key ethnic groups in the region, the Maghreb Jews and Middle Eastern Kurdish populations.

Along with the region's indigenous ethnic groups, the immigrant minorities in the Arab world deserve particular attention. Focusing on the overlapping of issues of colour, class and gender, Alia Al Zoughbi demonstrates how being classified "Abed"[1] can lead to an almost total loss of social status in the Middle East. Ironically, as Mary Abowd points out, experiencing oppression, exploitation and a non-recognition of one's human rights does not protect employers from passing it own to their hired help. In the short interlude between the two Intifadas, Asian and Africa domestic workers were treated no better in Palestine than were their sisters in other parts of the Arab world.

Alisa Perkins and Maria F. Curtis provide insights into the lives of non-Arab women from the other side of the power-divide, illustrating the motives, experiences and integrational success stories typical of the life of Western women in modern Moroccan society. As a Malaysian academic, Azza Basarudin has written a moving portrayal of her personal experience as an Asian, non-Arab woman researching issues related to gender in the Arab world. Finally, both Jim Ross-Nazzal and Aglaia Viviani have provided an historical vantage point from which to understand the way American and British women viewed Palestine and Egypt in the mid 19th century.

Some of the weaknesses of this issue's first section are made up for through the inclusion of powerfully individual testimonials by both indigenous minority women and Western women with a wealth of personal experience in the Arab world. Diane King reflects on her work researching the ethnic and gendered oppression of the women of Iraqi Kurdistan during the dark days at the end of the regime of Saddam Hussein. In her view, Kurdish women are far from being the "helpless victims" they are often portrayed as by well meaning Western NGOs. A good friend from my native Austria, Ingrid Jaradat Gassner describes the process of becoming Palestinian over a period of almost two decades. Arda Ekmekji compares herself to the layers of identity one finds in Beirut's old city. Her life as an Armenian academic in a number of Arab countries raises more questions than it answers about the true identity of the Middle East. Looking back over decades of feminist activism in her "native" Egypt, Margot Badran describes how the women's movement allowed her to join the Arab world via her dedication to female emancipation. Speaking from the perspective of a young Portuguese-German student of Palestinian origin living in Lebanon, Mona Katawi provides a bridge to the last section of this issue, dealing with mixed marriages and the thorny topic of patrilineal cultural and citizenship rights.

Sharon Nagy has aptly juxtaposed the historical and current experience of Western and South East Asian women who have married into upper, middle and lower-middle class families in the Arabian peninsula during the last several decades. Rima Habib and Lina Abou-Habib provide an activist's insight into the struggle to find local support for the human rights of Arab women who have married non-nationals and thus seemingly forfeited their children's cultural identity.

The articles in this issue have opened the debate on who decides the nature of ethnic and gender identity in the region. Ultimately, consensual agreement on definitions is less important than the recognition of the synergetic overlap of both the individual and collective right to self-definition.

End Notes

1. Significantly, the double meaning of the Arabic word "Abed," i.e. African and slave, finds its historical parallel in the European term "Slav/e," signifying both a social class and membership in the ranks of the Slavic forced labourers in the early Medieval Byzantine sugar industry.

An announcement on the bulletin board of one of the leisure clubs in Lebanon

The Role of Young Women in Berber Society

■ **Rabha EL Asri**

The unique position of girls and young women in society has become a topic of widespread interest. Indeed, although much has been written and many conferences held on the correlation of gender and age, very few studies have truly dealt with the unique injustices and hardships undergone by young female populations in different parts of the world. The majority of the gender- and age-related work done to date seems to be a response to an academic fashion, an attempt to be en vogue, resulting largely in generalities and clichés, a repetition of stereotypes taken from the mass media, without probing deeply into the respective context and unveiling the hidden social realities upon which the suffering of young women and the injustices inflicted on them are based. Only by dealing with these social realities can the position of all women, but especially Berber girls and young women living the mountainous regions, be significantly improved.

My concern in this paper is to "give the floor" to the Berber women themselves, to enable them to express their ideas concerning their social position, how they lived in the not too remote past, during which circumstances seemed too awful for them to cope with and what has changed in recent years. I have tried to report, as objectively as I could, on what I have personally witnessed or have learned through in-depth interviews with various elderly women, whom I asked to tell me about the memories of their individual lives. These women also revealed to me the tales told to them as girls, stories from the remote past, recounted to them by their mothers and grandmothers. I have questioned them about changes taking place in the present. For practical reasons, I have limited my research to the Middle Atlas region, and more particularly, to the Bni Mguild (Ayt Myill) women. But what I found out about their lives can be generalized to they extent that it allows the drawing of conclusions about the life of the entire Berber community.

The Life of Young Berber Women in the Past: Infancy and Early Childhood

In the past, the difficulties of Ayt Myill women's lives began soon after birth. The entire family mourned the birth of a baby girl. An elderly woman told me that fathers, when being told that their new born child was a girl, visualized her as another man's future property, that, in the meantime, he had to nourish, nurture and raise her, only to hand her over later on. Thus, fathers tended to spend as little as possible on their daughters.

The members of the fathers extended family, but especially the paternal grandmother, would often considered the baby girl as a burden befalling her son's family, an extra and useless mouth to feed, a worthless object that also potentially threatened the honor of the entire family.

As of early childhood, Berber girls were reminded of their supposedly base nature. They were expected to atone for the disgrace that they had caused their family by being totally obedient and submissive, by serving the male members of the family, who were also considered to be superiors. Mothers knew that it was their duty to bare a baby boy, and were therefore eager to keep trying, even it they had to have ten pregnancies and more. Mothers who had gone without sons would transfer their bitterness to a new daughter, and indirectly blame her for the fact that her first child had not been a boy. As soon as possible, the mother would begin training her newborn daughter to help around the house so that she could quickly learn her duties and be prepared to face her ultimate destiny. A successful childhood was judged by the speed by which a young girl was able to carry out the everyday chores of a whole household on her own. If her daughter was slow at learning, a mother knew all too well that her in-laws and the entire extended family would blame her for it exclusively.

Women are still seen as being lower, debased creatures; they are still viewed with suspicion and considered a potential family liability

Until recently, girls were denied their human right to childhood, the development of their potential through play. They were frequently rebuked for manifesting childlike behavior, even at a very early age. Young girls were constantly reminded that they had no right to seek satisfaction of her own, that their role was to serve others, that their mothers were only looking out for their daughters' own good by preparing them to manage an entire household successfully. In so doing, both the mother and daughter could avoid the insults and rebuke commonly heaped on women who were not willing to be thankful for their allotted role, to obey without asking the reason why.

Preparing Girls for Marriage

At approximately the age of nine or ten, suitors became attracted to the daughters of those mothers well known for their hard work and patience. In order to test the patience and perseverance of his potential wife, a man would have his mother put the young girl through her paces. Elderly woman were seen as being much better able to find a young girl's weak spots. One means of testing her was to place an elbow on the girl's bosom and then push as hard as she could. If the pain caused the girl to flinch she was not deemed a proper match. Failure in this way was certain to play out very negatively because the potential, rebuked mother-in-law would spare no effort to expose the girl's fragility and inability to further the interests of the tribe. No young man is his right mind, especially if he came from a respectable or influential family, would consider wedding such a "weak and lax creature." However, if a young girl did pass the test, worse laid in store for her after the marriage ceremony.

If the families of the two wedding candidates did reach agreement, young women were conventionally left in the dark as to which household they were to be transferred, into Thus, in most cases, brides were sent to serve in a new household, among strangers, and with no preparation. Involving their daughters in this process, or even informing them of the family's decision was considered a source of shame for their fathers or other heads of the family, e.g. the grandfather or uncle. By considering his daughters feelings, a man proved himself to be emotional and weak, revealing womanly characteristics against which every respectable man was to guard himself. If it were to become public that a father had these attributes, he would lose the respect of his peers and the entire community.

In the past, the concept that marriage should be based on love was foreign to the Berbers of the Middle Atlas region. This lack of mutual affection was another source of suffering for many women. The presence of love in a woman's relationship to a man was attributed largely to coincidence. Families judged a new marriage as successful if the recent addition to the family was a very young woman, willing to fulfill her newly acquired responsibilities without hesitation, if, as the saying goes, she had an "obedient head" and was willing to follow the commands of her husband, but more importantly, her mother-in-law. Thus, women passed this form of oppression on from generation to generation. A mother who had delivered a son had honored her family and earned the right to be relieved of her family chores as soon as her son married. The new daughter-in-law was expected to follow in her footsteps, to relieve her of the disheartening household tasks that had robbed her of

her youth, and made her an old woman at a much too early age. The "old women" of a community, often only in their late twenties, had earned the right to command their daughters-in-law around the house, to force them to work outdoors in extremely hot and cold weather conditions, so that they could now enjoy their remaining years paying visits to neighbors or entertaining guests. A wife could only acquire the honor of this belated state of relative freedom if she had produced a male progenitor. Thus liberated from household responsibilities, elderly women often dared to contradict their husbands and express their own opinions, a luxury closely linked to the newfound prestige of mother-in-law status.

After marriage, a young bride's position deteriorated continuously. After the initial seven days of privacy, traditionally, but not automatically, allotted a newly wed couple, husband and wife spent their nights together in the same room as the rest of the extended family. Thus, after marrying a stranger, a woman's husband normally remained a stranger to her for many years. In those cases in which a young husband did express the desire to become more open and intimate with his wife, he was normally afraid to act on it, fearing the scorn of his relatives. Frustrated in this manner, many men compensated by being excessively rude and demanding when commanding their wives about. By publicly demonstrating toughness and harshness, he could prove that he had his wife "under control", as was befitting a member of the "lower order." Intimacies could only be exchanged quietly, in the dead of night when everybody else was sure to be sleeping. Couples were, however, unable to speak openly with each other in such moments for fear of awakening other members of the family and thereby exposing their "shame." Life as a girl and young woman in these communities meant being not only robbed of the right to relax, to play and choose, but also to be denied the opportunity to openly feel and live out ones emotions as a young wife.

The responsibilities of a new, female in-law centered on serving the senior members of her family, to whom she was not permitted to express her real feelings. Resistance was generally broken by a sound beating in an attempt to "reform" her. Daily chores included gathering wood, breaking the ice to fetch water and preparing a fire for heat and cooking purposes. Because women had to collect and prepare firewood with their bare hands, resulting in a constantly bleeding and blue-swollen condition, they attempted to prepare an ample supply of wood for the winter before cold weather set in. If a woman was prevented from doing this because of childbirth, illness or other reasons, it was expected of her that she dig through the snow in the dead of winter in order to fulfill her wifely responsibilities.

However, even if she was able to live up to her in-laws' general expectations, she was still keep on her guard by habitual snide comments and criticism from them, or from her husband, who could demonstrate his manliness to his family by mistreating his wife. As is well know, past generations of women suffered from a lack of birth control, leading to a large number of pregnancies, which were only considered successful if a woman bore a son. The effects of years of hard work, maltreatment and multiple childbirths caused a young wife to become old before her years. She could only look forward to escaping this situation by producing a healthy son, who would bring a new daughter-in-law into the family, liberating her and repeating the cycle in the next generation.

The Present-Day Position of Young Berber Woman

Life has changed for everyone during the last few decades, so it should come as no surprise that the girls and young Berber women of the Middle Atlas Mountains have also begun to benefit from this transition. Unfortunately, the harshness of mountain life has improved only slightly, and the difficulty of human existence in this region weighs especially hard on the living conditions of the young, female population. Many have pointed to the recent introduction of a modern school system in these mountains as proof that the current, youngest Berber generation is finally being introduced to the norms of the modern world. Signs of this ongoing process of integration in the midst of the Atlas Mountains include the processions of children, proudly carrying their school bags on their backs, on their way to and from school, and the significant number of little girls amongst them. But will this recently introduced access to primary education in any way free the next generation of young Atlas Berber women from the hardships experienced by the grandmothers, mothers and, in many cases, their older sisters as well? If the social and economic environment in which they still live remains largely the same for the foreseeable future, which forces of change can improve their lives? In one of my recent visits to our tribe in the Middle Atlas Mountains, I observed that far reaching changes could neither be observed on the cultural nor on the socio-economic levels.

... women suffered from a lack of birth control, leading to a large number of pregnancies, which were only considered successful if a woman bore a son.

Women are still seen as being lower, debased creatures; they are still viewed with suspicion and considered a potential family liability in all aspects of their private and public lives. Studies that I am currently carrying out have revealed that these young women continue to be understood as creatures guided by instinct, not by reason, and that they are portrayed as being too weak to be more than "mere dolls in male hands." On the positive side, newborn baby girls are no longer considered to be exclusively a burden to the family. They are now usually welcomed and cherished, although a slight distinction is still made between baby boys and girls during the traditional birth celebrations. In a significant shift in roles, some families now even consider the affectionate and caring attributes expected of their daughters to be an asset, guaranteeing that the parents will be taken better care of in their old age.

The erosion of the position of the traditional extended family in Berber society is also taking its toll on the roles expected of young women. Many young men now chose to withdrawal from the control of their father and mother. They set up a household outside the confines of the extended family. This has broken the passing on of responsibility from the mother to the daughter-in-law, the later of which is generally blamed for undermining the traditional blood relations between parent and child. These claims are based on the fact that she is of "separate blood." Having fled from the expectations to free her new mother-in-law of her traditional household duties, young brides are accused of conspiring with their young husbands and encouraging them to escape the authority of their parents. Although the hardships of running a newly founded household under extreme mountainous conditions can be quite daunting, the traditional household chores have been diminished because the young bride is now living alone with her husband. Gathering firewood and fetching water have become no easier, but now she is doing these things for her own nuclear family. This new generation of independent brides tends to actually embrace their age-old responsibilities, one reason for this being that they can thereby prove their value to their husbands and reassure them that they have invested their money wisely. Young women thereby also demonstrate to their in-laws that the departure of the newly wedded couple has deprived the extended family of a treasure that it does not deserve.

Women are still seen as being lower, debased creatures; they are still viewed with suspicion and considered a potential family liability ...

In order to shore up their newly gained position of responsibility, the young wives will often be overly critical of other newlyweds, chastising women who have, for whatever reason, been less successful in transitioning to nuclear family status. Successful young housewives are known to gossip and spread rumors about other women in the neighborhood, accusing them of being careless about their households, totally ignoring the circumstances that these new families might find themselves in. Thus, these women take on the male role in society. Emboldened by their newly found household success, they consider any other woman who does not perform her marital duties to perfection to be an inferior wife and thus an incomplete human being.

Changes are also taking place with respect to the freedom that young girls and young women enjoy when choosing a future partner. It is now no longer considered out of the ordinary for them to visit the weekly market with their parents. There they can survey the available young men, engage with them in conversation and thus make a preselection about whom they wish to marry. This new freedom can also encourage a young woman to take the precarious step of using public celebrations and social events to secretly meet the young man of her choice, knowing full well that she risks serious punishment if caught. The sanctions for such illicit liaisons are normally accompanied by a sullying of a woman's reputation, thus stamping her as unsuitable for marriage and the role of running a proper and respectable household. If a girl or young woman is accused of violating the socially accepted rules and values, her reputation will be ruined for life. Although the heads of the Berber tribes set up laws that most male members are no longer willing to live by, female non-compliance is still viewed as a crime that accompanies a woman to her grave. As a form of retribution, women are often forced by their families to marry another man against their will, a lifelong punishment for youthful delinquency. Young women thus are now living in a situation of cultural

schizophrenia; while embracing their decision to choose their own partner, whom they wish to love and live with in peace for the rest of their life, they still live in a social environment that does not recognize this right.

Anecdotal evidence of the identity crisis now confronting Berber girls and young women can be found in my own extended family. I can give a concrete example of a cousin of mine, which just occurred two years ago. She was discovered to be in an amorous relationship with a young man from the same tribe. The young man was a constant visitor to the family home, and feelings of love grew between them. The discovery that my cousin had acted on her own in this manner greatly angered her father; he tried, and he is still trying to prevent any legal bonds that might unite the two and thus legitimize their relationship. His desperate attempts to separate my cousin from her freely chosen partner has even led him to attempt to send his disobedient daughter to Saudi Arabia although she is only 17 years old. Ironically, my uncle is actually aware that what he is doing violates both the rules of logic and respect for legitimate human feelings. However, his male ego has lead him to believe that he has been violated as a father; this prevents him from acquiescing and is blinding his sense of reason. This family crisis will most certainly put an end to any similar expectations on the part of his other four daughters.

It is important to mention here that a woman's choice of a future partner in not longer rejected out of hand. However, the decision of a young couple will not be tolerated without the blessing of the parents. They are the ones who have the final word; either it is consent or a refusal of the match. In order to prevent the family crisis described above, the parents of the potential bridegroom often select trusted individuals from their tribe to approach the future bride's father and beg that he agree to give his daughter in marriage. If this strategy fails, frustrated couples in our tribe have been known to elope. Defying both social norms and their parents in this way, these newly wedded couples are frequently confronted with a major scandal in the community, which often undermines their relationship and replaces romantic intentions with the most unpleasant of feelings. The stereotypical romanticism of the Berber tribes is indeed relegated to folklore, tribal celebrations and tales from the distant past that have no bearing on the reality experienced by young women today. Parental opposition to a marriage that does not enjoy their support is constant and overbearing. The continuous intervention of the family against the young couple frequently breaks down their romantic expectations, leading, sooner or later, to divorce. In the end, deadly indifference surrounds the separated couple.

When a relationship ends in divorce, it can have very detrimental consequences for a young woman. She will normally find it almost impossible to return to her family and continue living there the way she did prior to her marriage. Her father, who assumed that he was no longer responsible for her well being, is now her only source of income, thus adding a new and unexpected financial burden to his family. Faced with this highly unpleasant alternative, many recently divorced women are drawn to the attractions of life in town. Of late, girls and young women often do have the opportunity to visit urban centers now and again. Town life promises to provide comfort, cleanliness, and more modern social values. In recent years, rural women, especially young divorcees, have moved to Sidi Addi, Azrou and Ain Leuh. Here, they often form collective groups in order to cover the rent and living expenses and cope with the new demands of a life alone in an urban setting.

Tragically, many young divorced women have young children to provide for, this compelling them to find income at any cost. Appropriate work at a decent wage can rarely be found in these towns because their economies are largely based on agriculture and controlled by men. Consequently, it is not uncommon that young rural women are forced into prostitution in order to provide for themselves and their children. Beginning as a casual pursuit, the demands of day-to-day life turn prostitution into a profession.

When a relationship ends in divorce, it can have very detrimental consequences for a young woman.

In conclusion, this portrayal of the transition in the lives of Berber girls and young women in the Middle Atlas Mountains has illustrated that the key to improving their situation lies in an overall improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the general mountain population. In order for them to maintain the hope that their lives will someday be better, emphasis should be placed on the financial resources necessary for development. On its own, broadening the horizons of young girls through the introduction of primary and secondary education in the mountainous regions will only serve to deepen the social and cultural contradictions that young women are faced with today.

The Origins of Amazigh Women's Power in North Africa:

An Historical Overview

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Background and Definitions

The term "Amazigh" denotes the major linguistic minority of North Africa. However, "Berber" still remains the more widely used ethno-linguistic word for them. In antiquity, the Romans and Byzantines used this term to refer to those who did not speak the region's "lingua franca", Greek. During and after the arrival of Islam in the seventh century, the Arabs followed this Greco-Roman practice and referred to the indigenous peoples they encountered as "barbar." The French and English speakers adopted the vulgarised term, "Berber", and coined the word "Barbary," with respect to the region of North Africa and its people.

The "Berber" people prefer the term "Amazigh", which they use to describe both themselves and their indigenous languages. "Amazigh" signifies a "free" or "noble" person; the plural is "Imazighen". To define, in the most generic way, the language that they speak, Imazighen use the term "Tamazight." This term is also used specifically for the language commonly used by the Imazighen of Kabylia and Shawia in Algeria, the dialects used in the Middle Atlas (Rwafa) and Shlowh in Morocco, Zwara and the Nofusa Mountains in Libya and in parts of Egypt and Tunisia. Regional Tamazight speakers use their own localized terms to define their own local linguistic variations, such as Tariffit in northern Morocco, Tashilhit in Morocco's Sous Valley, Tanfusit in Libya's Nofusa mountains, Tashawit in Algeria's Awras mountains and the like. The original Amazigh alphabetic transcription system is referred to as "Tifinagh." Variant transcription systems in use today include the Latin and Arabic adaptations of Tifinagh representations.

The Tuareg populations in Mali call their ancestral homeland Azouad (in north-western Mali), and the Tuareg of Niger call theirs Air (in the Air mountain massif of north central Niger, with its capital at Agadez) and refer to themselves as the Kel Air (i.e., "People of Air"). Other groups of Imazighen are also found in Libya, Tunisia and at Siwa Oasis, Egypt. The word "Amazighité" (i.e., Berberism) is often used to sum up the qualities that all Amazigh peoples tend to share commonly. These include speaking the Tamazight language, revering the national homeland (Tamazgha) and honouring of the Amazigh people, residing in the region including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, as well as other areas, including Siwa Oasis in Egypt, and parts of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and the Canary Islands. Practicing various common customs and traditions, instilling a historical awareness of

the basic outlines of Amazigh history and honouring famous historical figures are all part of this shared identity. They have all played a role in influencing the struggle for the improvement of the social and cultural positions of Amazigh women.

Origins

Since the dawn of history, Imazighen have been the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, their territory stretching from Egypt to Mauritania and from the Mediterranean to the boundaries of historic sub-Saharan Black Africa. Throughout their history, women have played a vital role in the development of Amazigh society. Various empires and peoples have conquered portions of historic Tamazgha, beginning with the Phoenicians and Greeks and continuing through the Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, French, British, Spanish, and Italians. Imazighen have been subjected to various religious beliefs: their own early pantheistic concepts; the polytheistic dogmas of the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; and monotheistic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Since the 13th century, most Imazighen have professed the Islamic faith and Islam has penetrated deeply into their collective psyches.

Throughout their history, the Imazighen have always had their heroes or heroines who have defended their ancestral homeland, only to succumb to the superior "civilizational" might of their foreign conquerors. In 814 B.C., for example, Amazigh chief Larbas negotiated a deal to marry Princess Dido, daughter of the King of Tyre, in return for a small piece of real estate that eventually became Qart Hadasht (i.e., the New City, or Carthage). King Juba and King Massinissa plotted with the Romans against the Carthaginians. Prince Jugurtha mastered Roman fighting techniques and subsequently led a formidable rebellion from 106 to 104 B.C., according to the Roman historian Sallust's account of the Jugurthine War.

In the early stages of the arrival of Islam, the Aures tribal chief Kusaila, and later Kahena, resisted the Arabs in the late 7th-early 8th centuries until they were overwhelmed by the Arab forces, and forced to submit. Salih (Moroccan Amazigh) from the Moroccan Berghawata, took Islam as their role model and translated an "Amazigh" Koran in order to repulse Arab cultural penetration of Morocco's Atlas mountains. The Amazigh leaders, Yusuf ibn Tashfin and Ibn Tumart, established the great Amazigh medieval empires of the Almoravids (al-Murabitun, "People of the Ribat") and the Almohades (al-Muwahhidun, the "Unitarians"), which dominated much of North Africa and Spain in the 12th and 13th centuries. From the 13th century on, however, Arab Bedouin tribes (the Banu Hilal, Banu Sulaym, and Banu Ma'qil) began to inundate the low-lying plains of North Africa and began a unfortunate process of Arabization that would continue into the 20th century.

Imazighen only retained their native Tamazight tongues in the Atlas Mountains and remote sections of the Sahara, not penetrated by these Arab groups. As a result, Amazigh communal consciousness remained strong in the High, Middle, and Riff Atlas sections of Morocco; the Kabylia mountain massifs east of Algiers; the Aures Mountains of eastern Algeria; the Mzab region of the northern Sahara of Algeria; Algeria's Tuareg sectors of the Ahaggar and Tassili-n-Ajjer; the Nofusa Mountains south of Tripoli, the Saharan Siwa Oasis complex in western Egypt, the Tuareg Azouad territory of northwestern Mali, and the Tuareg-occupied Air Mountains massif of north central Niger.

Amazigh Women

As mentioned above, women played a very important role in Amazigh societies throughout the various phases of Amazigh subjugation. There have been female rulers, holy women or queens even during the period of the Islamization of North Africa. A female Amazigh leader name Kahina put up fierce resistance to the Arab conquerors of her time. Women were also important contributors to the Amazigh economy. In many cases, weaving provided independence for Amazigh women, especially widows. A comparatively large percentage of Amazigh women were versed in their people's literature and poetry and thus enjoyed exclusive knowledge about the Amazigh's Tifinagh tradition.

Women played a very important role in Amazigh societies throughout the various phases of Amazigh subjugation.

Not only the Amazigh themselves, but also the conquering peoples of the region were familiar with the tradition of strong female leadership role models. As early as 1200 B.C., Phoenician sailors, coming from what is now Lebanon, recorded what they had found in North Africa (then called Libya), namely a race of Caucasians who worshipped the sun and sacrificed to the moon. Soon the Phoenicians became North Africa's first known conquerors and settled in what is now Tunisia. From there they exercised dominion over North Africa and the Mediterranean for more than a thousand years. A famous Phoenician queen, Didon Elishat , founded the fabled city of Carthage near modern Tunis, where she successfully defended it against the forces of her brother who sought to unseat her in about 980 B.C. By 150 B.C., Carthage was the greatest maritime power in the world. It had successfully disputed with Rome in two of three Punic wars and sent Hannibal over the Alps to conquer Spain and invade Italy. But in the third Punic War, Rome ended Carthaginian rule (by 140 B.C.) and reduced Didon's empire to a Roman province.

Amazigh women are thought to be the fabled Amazon female warriors recorded by Diodorus Siculus, who reported that they had led their men to war, mutilated their enemies, and hennaed cowardly men. Pre-Islamic desert Amazigh society has been described as being almost entirely matriarchal in nature.

Who was the legendary Kahena?

By 682 A.D., during the Islamic invasions of North Africa, a legendary female leader, queen of Carthage and ruler of the Amazighs and Mauritanians, rallied and united her diverse subject peoples. Her forces challenged the Arab/Islamic invaders, who were in the process of capturing and re-building Carthage in 698 when she successfully drove them from her city. She was historically know by many names including Dhabba Kahena, Dahia-Kahena or Dihya al-Kahin. This Amazigh heroic leader decided to leave nothing for successive waves of Arab invaders and therefore laid waste to her own country. Because of this sacrifice she was given credit for successfully preventing Islam's southward spread into the Sudan.

Kahena was know as the Veiled Queen by the of Jerawa tribe of the Aures Mountains, from where she supposedly hailed. She was universally recognised as the most effective and savage of the feminine enemies of Islamic expansionism in North Africa. According to Ibn Khaldun, Kahena was an adherent of the Jewish faith, who claimed that her entire tribe had converted to Judaism. She continued her struggle against the Arab/Islamic onslaught until her death in battle in 702 AD. She is still gratefully recognised as the "Ancestral Queen Mother" by the Amazigh people. According to legend, she was born into a Jewish Amazigh tribe in the Aures Mountains some time during the 600s AD. During her lifetime, Arab generals began to lead armies into North Africa, preparing to conquer the area and introduce Islam to the local peoples. The Amazigh tribes fiercely resisted invasion, and decades of war resulted.

Pre-Islamic desert Amazigh society has been described as being almost entirely matriarchal in nature.

Very little is known about Kahena's family, or her early life. Her father's name was reported to have been Tabat, or Thabitah. The name Kahena or al-Kahina is a recognised feminine form of "Cohen", and it may indicate that her family or tribe were Cohanim. It could also have been a title given to her personally, meaning something like 'priestess' or 'prophetess'. Her followers, and their enemies, credited her with prophesy and magical knowledge. She married at least once, and had sons. Beyond that, almost nothing is known about her.

The Imazighen of the seventh century AD were not religiously homogenous. Christian, Jewish and pagan Amazigh were spread through the region that is now Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya. They shared a common language and culture, however, and the invasion of the Arabs presented them with a common cause, enabling them to join forces in order to drive out the foreign invaders. Kahena emerged as a war-leader during this tense period, and proved amazingly successful at encouraging the tribes of the region to join together against their common enemy. Her reputation as a strategist and sorceress spread, and she managed to briefly achieve an historically unique feat, uniting all the tribes of Ifrikya, the Amazigh name for North Africa, ruling them and leading them in battle for five years before her final defeat.

Another famous female Amazigh warrior was Barshako who dressed as a man and led camel raids on other tribes. She is said to have returned home only to dismiss her husband, saying that she would no longer cook and keep house for a man.

The Tauregs call Tin Hinan "Mother of Us All."

The tall, noble, proud, fierce and nomadic Tuaregs (Imucagh or free people) live in the Ahaggar and Tassili N'Ajjer Mountains of Algeria and the Air Mountains of Niger. They are called "The Blue People" because the indigo dye of the robes they wore coloured their skin blue. These historical robes are now reserved for wearing exclusively at fairs and festivals. They trace their origins as a separate people to an Amazigh desert matriarch, Queen Tin Hinan, who led them on a desert trek to the Ahaggar Mountains.

The strongest impression of genuine Amazigh culture is conveyed by the Tuareg. This people lives in the Sahara desert and because of its seclusion was able to preserve its uniqueness over time. Only in the beginning of the 20th century did the French succeeded in subduing this proud people. The tomb of the legendary Tuareg queen, Tin Hinan, is located in Abalessa, the ancient capital of the Hoggar region.

In Tuareg custom, only the men are veiled, women wear a head-dress. The sight of a veiled Tuareg noble astride his prized white camel is as romantic and it is arresting. However, it was a sight thought to strike terror in the hearts of all who beheld them sweeping across the desert in raids on caravans of traders and travellers, seeking bounty and slaves – a pursuit that gave the Tuareg tribes a reputation of being wealthy and powerful beyond their borders. Historically they were feared and respected as daring, deadly warriors. A position they retained for as long as merchants crossed the Sahara by camel.

Now that the deserts are traversed by truck, automobile and airplane, and a large portion of the tribesmen's livestock has been destroyed by drought, Tuareg nobles no longer rule their world. Some still keep livestock, while others now lead tours to the ancient, enigmatic rock paintings at Tassili N'Ajjer, northeast of the Ahaggar, and still others work in the cities. Although the freedom loving people understandably dread the perhaps inevitable, future transition to a settled, rural life style, they continue to be proud and noble.

The Transition in the Role of Women

Although the unveiled Tuareg women lost some of their power after their conversion to Islam in the 11th Century, they still retained more economic and social power than most of their urban counterparts. They lived in a completely matrilineal society. Tuareg women regarded themselves as men's equals, marrying at will, speaking in council and serving as heads of encampments. Wives went where they pleased, owned property, taught and governed the home. Tuareg children, in this distinctly hierarchical society, acquired their mother's rank and regarded maternal uncles as next of kin. Matriarchs presided over some the Tuareg tribes and the men who headed others were chosen by women.

At the height of the Arab/Islamic empire, Amazigh women were famed for their beauty as well as for their energy, strength, and the heavy work they cheerfully performed. In the huge, opulent homes of the Islamic Caliphs of Baghdad, Egypt, Spain and Istanbul, captured Amazigh women were described as the most beautiful of the beautiful, as well as the most desirable and entertaining. The mother of the second Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad was an Amazigh slave named Sallama. Zineb Nafzawi, one of the most famous Amazigh queens, shared power with her husband after the Islamic conquest of Spain, led by Islamicized Amazighs. Together, she and her husband ruled a huge empire extending from North Africa to Spain, between 1061 and 1107. When the Spanish expelled the Moslems from Spain at the end of the I5th century, many Andalusians, who were of Amazigh ancestry, settled in North Africa. From there some engaged in piracy, raiding the Mediterranean for slaves and treasure. Sayyida Al-Hurra was so successful a pirate leader that she became the governor of Tetouan, Morocco. She retained the office for many years and was the undisputed leader of pirates of the western Mediterranean, while her ally, the famous Turkish Barbaros of Algiers, led the pirates of the eastern Mediterranean. Sayyida was a key player in the political bargaining between the Mediterranean powers as well. After the death of her first husband, she married the king of Morocco (on her terms, requiring him to come to her for their wedding). She reined in Morocco from 1510 to 1542.

According to local custom, a woman enjoys the right to marry a new husband every year if need be.

As recently as in the 19th century, an Amazigh prophetess, Fatma n Soumer or Lalla Fatma (Lalla, "Lady") took part in the resistance to the French in Kabylia in 1854, a woman leading the North African peoples to war once more , this time against the invading French. It took an army of 30,000 to finally defeat the prophetess. The Kabyles, however, remained unconquered until 1933.

The freedom and independence of Amazigh women is well known. An Algerian traveler, Al Warthilani, complained that the women in some Algerian towns went about unveiled, "exhibiting their ravishing beauty and shapely breasts". During Warthilani's pilgrimage to Mecca, Amazigh women from the Beni Amer tribe joined his caravan and virtually drove the pious man mad, displaying their bare-armed, bare-legged charms and gaily trying to seduce those men whose attention they attracted. Claiming divine powers, whether in jest or in all seriousness, these flirtatious pilgrims threatened

Picture Credit: Ayman Mroueh

anyone who rebuked them, which Warthilani did with disastrous results. Their curses seemed to materialize, he complained, calling these "playful girls" slaves of Satan.

Freedom for some Aures Mountain Amazighs extended as far as free love and polygamy. In the same Aures Mountains that spawned the legendary Kahena, some girls of the Azriya tribe enjoyed ample sexual freedom, their inaccessible location protecting them from officials, travellers and the attention of the region's patriarchal prudes, whose intervention embittered their Ouled Nail sisters. The Azriyat (plural of Azriya) of two communities, the Ouled Abdi and the Ouled Daoud, were dancers who traveled from mountain village to mountain village to perform as well as have sexual relations with their patrons.

If an Azriya dancer became pregnant, she was expected to keep her child and was feted by the villagers with baby showers to insure the child's good fortune. Most Azriyat would eventually marry, and/or, if they were financially successful, perhaps make the pilgrimage to Mecca to secure Islamic status. But whatever their fate, they were always accepted by their own community.

Historically, Aures Mountain women shared with the men equally in the hard labour carried out by her family, including ploughing, sowing, harvesting, grinding and shepherding. In order to establish their equality and independence, girls were know to elope in groups with young men. After this "honeymoon" they returned home with the respective husbands that had been chosen by them during this absence. This practice was attacked by the Algerian Arab nationalist movement in the 1950s, which established headquarters in the Aures Mountains and effectively curbed these liberties.

In Morocco, Amazighs account for at least one half of the total population. Although many Amazighs became citified and Islamicized over the centuries, many continued to live in pueblo-like, mud homes in villages of the Atlas and Rif Mountains of the Sahara where they honoured their ancient heritage. Many remain semi-nomadic even today. Some of these nomads are known to have retained their matrilineal traditions. They are famed for their strength, independence, bravery and fighting spirit. Despite some intermarriage with the Arab/Islamic population, which began a rapid undermining of the traditional Amazigh freedom accorded to women, many mountain villages merely pay lip-service to this encroach-

ing religion, and the women still remain quite independent.

An example of this split relationship with the predominant Arab/Islamic culture can be found in the continuation of the Amazigh tradition of the autumn bridal fair, which has survived to varying degrees throughout Moroccan Amazigh society. The Amazigh of Ait Haddidou, who gather on the Imilchil plateau in the Atlas Range for the annual September Moussem or festival are a good example of this ongoing resistance to cultural encroachment. Combining a local saint's day with a market, the Moussem also serves as a bridal fair.

It is here where one can see how reverence for the ancient female heroines of Amazigh civilisation encourage the enduring independence of the region's female population. During the three days of livestock trading, jewelry, clothes and kitchenware vending, sweet-mint-tea-drinking, respect-paying at the domed, white tomb of a marabout (saint), and family and friendship reunions, young Amazigh eyes eagerly scan the lanes between tents and stalls for glimpses of prospective brides and grooms. Swathed in deep blue, striped woolen capes, adorned with huge amber, coal, turquoise and silver necklaces, some displaying the emblem of the Carthaginian Great Godess of the Sky, Tanitt, rouged and khol-eyed marriageable "daughters of Kahena" gather, gossiping and jesting, to discreetly study prospective grooms who, in turn, observing the bulkily-clad girls as best they can.

On the last day the traditional selection process is carried out. Women and girls promenade down the central path while their suitors rush to grab the hands of their favourites. When her hand is seized, the girl can accept or reject by clasping his hand or pulling hers away until she and the man of her choice find each other and proceed, hand in hand, to stand together before the notary. Later, after the harvest, the traditional marriage of a virgin bride will take place. First there is a mock fight between members of the two families, then comes the bride's ride on a sheepskin-saddled donkey to the groom's house and finally, she is carried over the threshold by her mother-in-law. Unless, of course, she has already been married and divorced, which seems to not be that uncommon. The majority of brides at the Moussem marriage fair wear the peak headdress of a divorced or widowed woman, while minority virgins wear flat headdresses.

According to tradition, these Atlas Amazighs, like their Aures Mountain and Tuareg cousins, are permitted to initiate a divorce as well as retain their dowries after separation. It is possible for them to remarry and there is no upper limit to the number of men a female divorcee can marry. According to local custom, a woman enjoys the right to marry a new husband every year if need be. The historically independent female Amazigh leaders remain legendary role models for young village women to this very day.

Amazigh Women in the Present

The stories of the past aided in the mobilisation of modern day Amazigh women in Algeria. Their struggle dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, at a time when the position of village women had rapidly degenerated. The early Amazigh pioneers pressured their elected Algerian leaders to appeal to the French Government regarding the need for reforms in favour of Amazigh women (NB: at that time only French women had the right to vote). These demands were largely unsuccessful. These early attempts at change were, however, later rediscovered by the leading Amazigh political parties during the 1940s. The movement for an improvement of the rights of Amazigh women found support amongst the ranks of leading literary figures. These included the novels of Djamila Débèche (Leila, An Algerian Woman, Aziza) and Assia Djébbar (The Innocent Larks).

If an Azriya dancer became pregnant, she was expected to keep her child and was feted by the villagers with baby showers to insure the child's good fortune.

The best know literary champion of Amazigh women's rights was Fadhma Amrouche, a women of Kabyle origin. Born in 1882/1883 in a simple Algerian village, her father never legitimised her birth. Thus, she was subjected to endless ridicule by the villagers, prompting her mother to send her away to a Christian convent school for her own protection. Several years later, at another convent, she was to meet her future husband. They were married, thus necessitating her conversion to Christianity. In the pages her novels, Amrouche describes her schooling, her marriage, and her children. Her personal and family struggles are the clear focus of her literary work, while two World Wars, various epidemics and the Algerian War of Independence flicker through in the background. Despite her popularity, Amrouche's life was not easy. She was never able to feel at home, neither in France and Tunisia, nor in her husband's house, or her own village of origin. But when you consider the time period she lived through, how different was her experience, in the end, from those of her compatriots?

Amrouche's books are well worth reading for the wealth of information they contain about conditions in late 19th century Kabylia as well as for their portrayal of the simple art of endurance.

Fadhma Amrouche later became a well known Amazigh poet and singer in Paris in the 1960's. She is the mother of the famous writer Marguerite Taos, and the Amazigh singer Jean Amrouche. Her detailed autobiography portrays what it was like to grow up as the illegitimate outcast of her village. A bright and strong-spirited girl, she was educated in French in an age when few women enjoyed the privilege of receiving an education. Her books describe her constant worries about providing for her eight children. They represent a fascinating insight into the traditional family dynamics of a polygamous household, and reveal her passionate love for Amazigh culture.

The Amazigh women's political struggle would come to an abrupt halt in 1962 following the achievement of independence by the National Liberation Front (FLN). A single party was established and retained exclusive power until 1989. After coming to power with the support of the country's women, the FLN would fulfil few of the promises made to women with respect to their emancipation. Furthermore, the FLN, backed by Egypt, imposed Arab-Muslim nationalism as the predominant state ideology, thus further undermining the position of Amazigh women.

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Forthcoming

Arab Women and War

Armenian Women In Jordan

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Armenians are among the smallest ethnic minorities in Jordan and have been in the country for a fairly long period of time. This paper will deal mainly with the position and role of Armenian women in Jordanian society by reviewing their general characteristics, social and economic status (based on data from a recent study about Armenians in Jordan), using indicators that reflect their position and role in the concerned areas from a gendered perspective.

Jordan

Jordan is located in south-west Asia, east of the Mediterranean Sea. The population has increased since the 1950's due to high natural growth rates and external forced migration, and is estimated to be around 4.900 million. The majority of the population are Arab Muslims, who make up about 95% of the population; Arab Christians make up most of the rest. However, there are also a number of (non – Arab – Muslim) ethnic minorities such us the Circassians, the Chechens , Druzes, Turkomans and Bahai's, as well as a small minority of Armenian Christians. Together all ethnic minority groups make up about 2% of the total population of Jordan. Inspite of Jordan's general interest in collecting data about its population, there is no specific information on minority groups. The official argument for not collecting this data is that they are considered Jordanian citizens and thus treated like all other Jordanians. The existing studies on Armenians in Jordan are very limited, and are mostly historical articles which focus upon the "Armenian Question" and their migration to the Arab world. The first sociological study of the Armenian community in Jordan was done recently by this author in an unpublished MA thesis, which explored their demographic, social and economic characteristics. It also sought to examine the extent to which Armenians have preserved their identity, as well as the extent of their cultural, social, economic, and political assimilation (integration) into broader Jordanian society.

The Armenians in Jordan

1. Historical Background and Migration:

The Jordanian Armenians originally lived in the southern Caucases between Turkey, Iran and the Soviet Union. They were under Ottoman rule from the 16th century until World War I. Armenians were treated as second class citizens of the empire until their virtual elimination in 1915, when the Armenian homeland in Turkey was reduced to a wasteland and they were subjected to successive massacres by the Turks. There were several migrations throughout these difficult times. Those Armenians that arrived in Jordan migrated there after the First World War. Most Armenian refugees settled in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine; a few made their way to Transjordan. However, after the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967, a large number of Armenians left the West Bank and moved to Jordan. (During the sixties, many Armenians migrated to Canada, Australia and the US). According to Armenian sources, the estimated number of Armenians who now live in Jordan is around 3000. The majority of them live in Amman Governorate; a few are distributed throughout the other cities of Jordan. Upon their arrival in Jordan, the Armenians started building their own institutions. They now have their own churches, schools, clubs and charitable societies. The activities of their institutions and the fact that they marry within their own ethnic groups (NB: not with close relatives), helped the Armenians to maintain and preserve their ethnic identity. To some extent, Armenians were also able to integrate into social, economic and political life in Jordan , and consider themselves to be Jordanians by nationality.

2. General Characteristics of Armenian Women

According to the Jordanian constitution , all Jordanians are equal before the law and have the right to assume public office and the right to work. Women were given the right to vote and the right to run for general elections as of 1974. Various laws and regulations safeguard the equal rights of women and protect them against discrimination. However, there is still a gap between the law and its practical implementation. This means that women still suffer from discrimination to a large extent.

Women in Jordan have achieved some progress in a number of spheres and efforts have been made in order to enhance their participation in positions of power and decision making. However, the influence of women in the political, economic and social fields remains limited. Armenian women in Jordan are no exception; their position in society is similar to that of Arab Jordanian women. Female Armenian participation in the various fields of public life is still limited, as will be examined below.

The following information is taken from results of the MA thesis mentioned above, and was based on questionnaires distributed to 213 Armenian families who live in various parts of Amman. Questionnaires were completed by the women's husbands.

Age Composition

Age is an important factor in all demographic studies. The data collected for this study showed that there are disparities between the age distribution among Armenian women and Jordanian women in general. There are fewer Armenians represented in the lower age groups (20 – 29) and more represented in the higher age groups (40 – 50) than is typical for Jordanian society as a whole. These differences are the result of the rate of fertility among Armenian women, who have fewer children than the population as a whole. Thus, the average size of the Armenian family is smaller than the average size of the Arab Jordanian family.

Age at First Marriage

Age at first marriage is an important factor affecting levels of fertility and is determined by demographic, economic, and socio-cultural factors.

It was found that 89.7% of Armenian women were married by the age 20 – 29 and 9.4% were married by the age 30 – 39 .This indicates that Armenian women marry at a later age than do Arab Jordanian women. This effects the fertility rate among Armenian women and it was found that the maximum number of children of an Armenian woman did not exceed four.

Level of Education

Level of education refers to the highest level of schooling completed by an individual. The study revealed that the percentage of illiteracy among the Armenian women is lower than the percentage of illiteracy among men; 2.3% among husbands and 0.09% among wives. The study showed that more than half of Armenian women have an education that ranges between secondary and college, and almost a quarter of them have university degrees. However, those husbands who do have degrees in higher education have degrees that are somewhat higher than their wives, although their overall education levels are similar. These results demonstrate that Armenian husbands tend to marry wives of a similar educational background. It also indicates that Armenians are aware of the importance that education plays for both men and women in achieving progress in life. It is recognized that there is a strong correlation between a female's educational level and her employment success.

Marital Status

According to the above mentioned study, most Armenians are married. According to church records, divorce rates among Armenians are limited. There are different forms of betrothal among Armenians who live in a traditional society such as in Jordan. The data indicated that 63.4% of Armenian marriages were arranged by spouses with parental consent and approval, and about a third of the marriages were arranged traditionally by parents with the spouses' consent. This means that Armenians have been effected by modernization because it seems that a large percentage of them have the freedom to choose their marriage partners.

Another important issue in marriage behavior is the relationship between the husband and wife; considering that this is an important factor for any minority attempting to maintain it's identity. The study revealed that individuals

tend to marry within the same group, though only 8.9% of the sample were married to someone from the same family, e.g. a close relative such as a cousin. The findings also showed that 10.3% of all males were married to non-Armenians (mostly to Arab women). This indicates that there is a low level of marital integration (mixed marriages) of Armenians in Jordanian society. However, there is also a tendency among Armenian women to marry Arab men. Being an Armenian myself, I know of some of those cases personally though the exact numbers are not a matter of record because the Armenian church does not keep files on marriages carried out in Arab churches. An increased number of mixed marriages between Armenians and the general population can be expected in the future, especially if the degree of social integration increases, particularly among the younger generation.

Economic Situation

Certain key indicators reflect the economic situation of Armenian women, such as monthly family income (from all sources), type and location of residence, occupation, etc. After studying these indicators, it was ascertained that the average monthly income of the Armenian families in the study is higher than the average income of Arab families in Jordan. Most of them own the home they live in (house or apartment), and the areas they live in are considered to belong to the good housing areas in Amman.

Concerning the occupational independence of Armenian women and the rate of their participation in the labor force, the study showed that their position was no better than that of Arab-Jordanian women. 73.2% of them do not work outside the home (housewives); 26.8% have joined the labor force, largely in the private sector. This means that their husbands remain the breadwinners of the family, a situation typical of traditional cultures. The study also identified the types of professions they prefer, indicating that 13.2% of all Armenian women work in the educational professions, while 2.8% are doctors, engineers, and lab technicians. The same percentage (2.8 %), have their own their private business. The data presented above illustrates that the rate of Armenian female participation in the work force is still low, similar to the rate for the rest of the Jordanian female population. All women in Jordan suffer constraints that limit their economic participation in general, including the following: low female educational attainment, early marriage and high number of children, the economic recession, unemployment, religious, social and cultural influences, and above all the weak female representation in decision making bodies, especially the legislative and executive branches.

Political Participation

Jordanian women's participation in politics, whether in the parliament or in the executive branch of government, in foreign affairs, or in local councils, is very low. With respect to Armenian women in this area, their participation is limited to voting in parliamentary elections, since their chances of winning as candidates is very low. This is largely due to the fact that Armenians do not have reserved seats in Parliament as do other ethnic minorities. This is because of their numerically limited size and that they are lumped together with the general Christian minority. Though they can run for the Christian seats, their numerical size discourages Armenians from running as candidates. However, there is no law that forbids them or prevents them from running for election if they so desire.

The government of Jordan has made a tremendous effort to encourage and increase Jordanian female political participation. A new law was passed recently, whereby women were given eight reserved seats in Parliament, and this law was implemented in June 2003 elections. Armenian woman made no attempt to mobilize in order to win one of these eight seats for the above mentioned reasons.

Summary

In conclusion, the position of Armenian woman is similar to that of Arab-Jordanian woman. Their role and rate of participation in the social, economic, and political spheres is still limited due to many social and economic constraints. They suffer from gender disparities which are mostly the result of income disparities. These are reflected in the following areas. First, the female rate of labor force participation is much lower than that of men; secondly, their work is limited to certain professions, mostly to education. However, a trend towards gender equity can be ascertained in many areas. First: In marriage behavior, for both men and women have the freedom to choose their marriage partner. Second: Both have access to education, and women's rate of illiteracy is lower than that of men. Third: The political participation of both men and women is limited to voting in parliamentary elections.

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The Street of Slaves

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Preface

According to a recent American report, Lebanon is one of the countries black-listed for engagement in human trafficking (The Daily Star). Domestic labor is one of the two occupations harboring the largest number of trafficked victims in the country, the other being prostitution (AFROL). Domestic laborers in Lebanon consist largely of African and Asian migrants. These are only permitted into the country under a job contract, which stipulates live-in arrangements, a 12-hour working day and one day off per week, usually spent at home (Kristianessen 11). It is only after the termination of their contracts that laborers may choose to work as free-lancers. Free-lancers may be defined as those who "live independently (either renting, or staying in a room in exchange for services rendered) and work on an hourly basis for different employers" (Jureidini and Moukarbel).

This paper focuses on the experiences of free-lancing Ethiopian female migrant laborers in the area of Ras Beirut in Lebanon. Six Ethiopian female migrants acted as the focus group from which information for this paper was gathered[1]. Of central concern to the interviews were issues regarding the process of trafficking from Ethiopia to Lebanon and the problematizing of race, gender and class within this context. The creation and perpetuation of social networks across the two countries and within Lebanon is also addressed. I begin by presenting the data collected from the interviews, and proceed to frame the findings theoretically.

Introduction

My interest in exploring this topic was generated by becoming aware of an apartment across from mine inhabited by Africans. As far as I had known, my area of residency in Beirut, known as Ras Beirut, and more specifically my neighborhood, was inhabited exclusively by locals and other Arab nationals. The street on which I live is known for some of the most luxurious residential buildings constructed after the Civil War (1975-1991), inhabited by wealthy Arabs. The remaining buildings, sprayed with bullets from the Civil War, are inhabited by lower or middle class locals. Behind this street is an isolated cluster of four buildings also constructed before the war, each no more than seven stories high. A narrow alley, barely noticeable even to the area's residents, leads to those buildings. The apartment I was interested in was situated among that secluded cluster.

I intended to speak to the locals of this cluster in order to get a notion of their perception of the African inhabitants only to find that Afro-Asian migrants were the predominant

inhabitant groups of three of the four buildings on the street. The locals estimated that the migrants added up to roughly 95 residents. "They're decent people," said one woman, "You know, they're not dirty. The only problem is that, because of them, our street is now known as Shari' al Abeed (The Street of Slaves)."[2]

I randomly chose one of the apartments as the setting for a focus group. Upon discovering that I had a few questions for her and her friends, my host insistently repeated, "Ask whatever you want. There's nothing here. We are all very happy here in Lebanon". Inside were four other female Ethiopians, all nodding their heads in agreement with her statements; except for one, who eyed me with a suspicious, blatantly unwelcoming frown.

"Are you a reporter?" she asked repeatedly. My negation would not suffice. She spoke angrily to the others in the room in sharp, disapproving Amharic, probably rebuking them for having let me in. She snatched my list of questions from my hand for scrutiny while waves of hands rejected my proposition to record our conversation. Meanwhile, the host re-asserted, "Ask all you want. We have nothing to hide. In the first place, we shouldn't complain. Didn't I choose to come to Lebanon? Did anyone force me to come? No, I chose to come here. I can't complain. Lebanon has been good to me … it has been good to us." She was by far the eldest one among them. The rest were young.

Questions and probes soon revealed that these women were all but happy in Lebanon. The opening declaration of contentment was the result of frustration with reporters. Their stories of penance, they later told me, were manifested in the form of black and white newspaper columns for the reading enjoyment of the journalists and their audience. The painful recounts they entrusted to journalists in no way led to positive action. Their status quo was maintained, along with their suffering.

Independence after Abuse

Domestic laborers arrive in Lebanon with a three-year contract during which passports are confiscated and salaries are occasionally withheld. They either complete the term of their contracts and return home (with the option of later returning to Lebanon), or else they run away prior to the completion of their contract. The latter case often occurs because of abusive treatment. The only reason Mary [3], 28 years old, resides in Lebanon to this day is due to such an incident. Mary spoke of her "crazy Madam" who, upon the termination of her contract, refused to return her papers unless she was paid $1000. Mary did not have the money and refused to endure more malnourishment and ill-treatment. "Even if I stayed," she added, "if I wanted to leave later, she would have asked for the same amount of money. My friend helped me pack my baggage and catch a cab. When the cab driver found out what had happened, he claimed to be an agent and offered us a well-paid job in return for $500 each. My friend took care of the expenses since I had no money, but we never heard from the cab driver again."

A common denominator among the interviewees in this apartment is the a priori ignorance of the job they are supposed to be given in Lebanon before arrival. They had all been lured in by an illusory work-study program, unaware that they would be working as domestic laborers. One of them explained that she had had twelve years of schooling, after which she attained a diploma in typing. They had all fallen into the same trap. A job offer posted on the front glass-pane of an agency announced an offer of a work-study program; work during the day, studies in the evening, and a monthly stipend of $300 to $400 (as opposed to the meager $100 they received on average as their pay upon their arrival to Lebanon). None of them expected to be working as domestic laborers. "I never even used to sweep the floor of my own mother's house," said the typist, "And here, I was expected to do everything. My life with them was intolerable. I had to leave with or without my papers."

With no money, no papers, and no justice to expect from the Lebanese judiciary system, migrants find no other option but to become free-lancers while they are held as detainees in the larger jail, which is Lebanon. By running away, these migrants have acted out their desire to depart, but the system will not allow it. The government does not deport illegal aliens immediately (Al Zougbi: b). "I wish they would," was one comment. Instead, they are arrested and imprisoned.

The Darak and the Jail

According to the locals, the Darak (the internal security forces) conduct regular busts of the migrant residents of the street. "Those who are illegal aliens pay some $100 and then they are let loose," said a local grocery shop owner. The reaction was different when I brought it up among the migrant apartment inhabitants. "Sure, if you have $100, they'll take it and go. But if you do not, you think they care? They'll arrest you and take you to prison."

Harking back to the debtor prison tradition, Lebanese legislation favors imprisonment over deportation. According to an officer in the Hobeish police station in Ras Beirut, the duration of imprisonment is calculated based on the fine to be paid (Al Zougbi: b). For illegal residency, the fine amounts to up to $1500. The duration of imprisonment is based on an calculated time equivalent of the monetary amount owned the authorities (estimated at around three months in prison). Upon release, the migrant is expected to pay 5000 Lebanese Pounds (approximately $3) for each day spent in prison. If the detainee has the money, she is released. If not, she must remain incarcerated until she pays the money owed for her jail stay (this is usually covered by friends residing in Lebanon). Only after that are illegal migrants gathered in a form of communal housing of sorts, until they add up to a sufficient number for transportation, after which they are deported as a group.

In prison, "They don't care whether you're a murderer, a thief or just someone with no papers. They throw you all in together," said the suspicious one. "They don't even give Kotex [sanitary pads] to women who need it. You live in your dirt and mess."

Ethnic Enclaves

As a result of the difficulties they face, Ethiopian migrants have created tightly knit ethnic enclaves. In times of hardship, this migrant group constructs a strong sense of community and solidarity. My host told of an old, blind Ethiopian lady who had been living in the very apartment in which I was conducting the interview. She was also an illegal resident. Due to her age and physical disability, the woman could hardly work and therefore had no source of income. The people in the building would take care of her by providing her with food, clothing and money. On one of their regular busts, the police arrested her and imprisoned her in spite of her deteriorating health. In collaboration with the Lebanese Red Cross, Ethiopians from all over the country donated money to support her case. "There was money coming in from Jounieh, from Kaslik, from Sidon … from all over Lebanon," said the one I had regarded as suspicious. They gathered enough money to pay her fines and send her home.

"We do that for the needy. We help each other out," said the elderly one before she left, saying she had a job appointment.

A New Form of Remittance

Remittances sent home by Ethiopian migrants are not economic in nature. "We barely make enough money to make ends meet here, between rent, food and clothing," said one. Remittances are sent in the form of warnings. Network theory suggests that a bank of information is created as a result of information remittance; a bank of information consisting of the knowledge that the initial migrant has collected about her new environment, which she sends back home (Hugo ; Massey et al. 448). Networks are created as facilitators for the next wave(s) of migrants. Potential migrants are informed of what to expect in the country of destination. They then travel there and are received by the previous migrants who are better acquainted with the ways of the foreign land. In the case of the Ethiopian migrants, the networks created act as virtual blockades. As such, the type of informational networks created do not serve as "pull" forces by the country of destination, as the literature assumes would be their primary function (Taylor). On the contrary, the information sent back home serves the purpose of halting the arrival of a new wave of potential sufferers.

Sex and Servitude

During the course of our conversation, the one I regarded as suspicious had stepped out. When she came back, she was wearing a vibrant green dress. I complimented her taste. "You think it's pretty," she replied, "Other people call me a whore[4] when I wear this dress."

If they go out in modern attire rather than their traditional clothing, these women are often physically and verbally harassed by Lebanese men. "When we're walking in the streets, guys on motorcycles slap our asses and say nasty things." "Once I took a cab," said the typist, "There was another woman already inside. When she was dropped off, the cab driver started saying all sorts of nasty things to me. I told him, 'Why are you saying this to me? Why weren't you saying these things to her?' I wanted to get out, but he wouldn't stop. Then he picked up another local lady and he just stopped talking altogether. 'Why don't you say anything to her? Come on, tell her the things you were telling me,' I said to him right in front of her."

Her friend added, "Once I went to visit my friend in prison. I had to wait two hours before they let me in to see her. When I got home, it was dark. My boss called me a whore for staying out this late.'" "Why are we called whore when Lebanese women dress worse than we do?" asked the suspicious one. I asked her what she thought. "Because we have no family behind us," she replied, "Usually if anyone messes with you, they have your father and your brother to deal with. We have no one."

Discrimination: Gender, Family and Race

There are various ways of dealing theoretically with the phenomenon of gender discrimination described above. The race/family interface is a good starting point. To this day, females are associated with domestic servitude (OSCE 17) in the Arab world; this exacerbates the discrimination migrant women encounter. But the disparate inconsistency in the treatment of local woman and migrant woman is rooted in notions of racism and a lack of familial support. The protection of the family's reputation through the preservation of the woman's honor (Schneider 19) is central to Arab culture, as it is to Ethiopian culture as well (AFROL). As such, the local woman does indeed have her 'father and brother to stand up' for her, while the migrant woman is here alone. Family ties, kinship and the lack thereof play a central role in the discrimination faced by these women.

Racism is also central to the Ethiopian experience. Associations between skin-color and servitude have long been embedded in Arab culture. "In Arabic, the term abed

is used to denote both a 'black' person and a 'slave' (Jureidini 2). This can be traced back to the Jahiliyya (the days prior to Mohamed's prophecies). The hadith [5] abounds with stories of how the Prophet freed black slaves and denounced their subordination [6] (Khoder 16-18). This indicates the presence of black slavery in the past. The association of servitude with black-skinned people is carried through to this day.

Cultures of Honor

Discrimination goes beyond gender, skin color and family ties. Culture also plays a decisive role, as can be seen in the following juxtaposition of the Lebanese and Ethiopian experience in the "Diaspora." In his article, Citizenship and Honourability, Ghassan Hage invokes Levi-Strauss' idea of 'communal living' to define 'mutual obligation' as "an ethical structure of reciprocity that can only exist and be reproduced in societies that valorize, or honor their members" (7). From that perspective, he argues that the reason heightened tension exists between Australians and the Arabs in Australia is because the Arabs are "well-versed in the game of honour" (7) whereas Australians are not. Drawing upon their own cultural practice and 'etiquette', the Arabs define their status in Australia as that of 'guests' and resent the 'refugee' treatment they actually receive from the Australian community, which Arab culture would deem 'humiliating'. In defining themselves as a 'culture of honour', the Arabs differentiate between themselves and the Australian community at large. They invoke this 'characteristic' of Arab culture not because 'honor' and 'guesthood' are unconditionally adopted in their culture, but because in their subservient position in the Australian culture, invoking this notion delineates the differences between their culture and Australian justifications of the maltreatment of the Arabs in Australia. It is ironic that the Ethiopian community in Lebanon, an Arab country, is suffering from the same maltreatment. This same Arab culture of honor serves as a source of humiliation for our "Ethiopian guests", who, for their part, question the validity of the concept of 'cultures of honour' in the Middle East altogether.

Rather than explain discriminating behavior in terms of "cultures of honour", perhaps the notion of power relations would serve as a better explicator. Hage's notion of empowered practical prejudice proposes that racism is the result of "subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that racial group" (Sivanandan in Hage 2000, 35). Portraying Afro-Asian migrants as inferior and incompetent maintains their subordinate position in the looking-glass of both the self and the other; locals reinforce the culturally embedded servile position of dark-skinned people, which in turn impedes the migrants' ability to discard this status.

Problems of Integration

In light of what has been revealed regarding the conditions under which the Ethiopians live, issues of integration and communal belonging can provoke further discussion. As these women's declarations have pointed out, the interviewees were not interested in staying permanently in Lebanon. The return home is a journey they await desperately. This is of primary interest to this study, specifically in light of the publication of Massey et al., in which the suggestion is made that once migration has begun, it is not only maintained, but is also more likely to reoccur. Massey further suggests that the duration of stay in the country of destination positively affects the probability of permanent settlement, despite earlier intentions to eventually return home (1986). How, then, can we explain the lack of interest in settlement shown by these women?

Theories that argue for the perpetuation of migration, such as Institutional Theory (Massey et al.) and the Theory of Cumulative Causation (Massey, 1990), may be used to explain the depreciation of migration, as we did before in explaining the transmission of negative information through the use of Network Theory. Institutional Theory suggests that the market adjusts within migratory cultures encouraging the activities of private profit-oriented institutions and voluntary human rights organizations. The private institutions (in the form of recruitment agencies) find a profitable business in coordinating migration between sending and receiving countries [6]. Humanitarian organizations then arise to ensure the establishment and enforcement of migrants' rights and to restrain possible abuse, be it physical, verbal or emotional, along with other forms of discrimination. Hence, migration is encouraged due to the lessening of red tape, the facilitation of finding a job in the host countries, and enforcement of rights through the creation of humanitarian organizations. Although recruitment agencies abound in Lebanon, the activities of humanitarian organizations are still underdeveloped. As the anecdote of the old, blind lady demonstrates, migrant communities must rely largely on themselves in times of hardship.

The theory of Cumulative Causation stipulates that the tendency to migrate is reinforced through a cycle involving the social labeling of jobs as unsuitable for locals, and the migrant's development of a taste for the host culture (Massey et al. 462) [8]. Although domestic labor has indeed become an occupational reserved for migrants [9], the extent to which the migrants have developed a taste for the host culture is questionable.

Racist reactions and living conditions typical of illegal residents – often encountered by migrants in the country of destination – are a vital cause of disinterest in remaining in a host country. In Lebanon these are most certainly not the only factors repelling migration. Research by Leo Chavez has shown that despite racist conditions, undocumented migrant Mexicans in the US persistently voice a desire to belong to the community. This he attributes to their "overcoming feelings of isolation, developing a network of family and friends in the local community, acquiring local cultural knowledge, and reconciling [themselves] to the possible threat of deportation" (62). As such, these undocumented migrants choose to stay in the US due to fabricated networks.

This can be contrasted with Lebanon's migrant population. The migrant community in Lebanon is predominantly single; they either leave their families behind or are unmarried. As such, there are few migrant family units. As we saw in Chavez's findings, forming a family and giving birth to children in the country of destination can help incorporate a migrant, legal or not, into the new community. The children begin attending local schools, acquiring local culture, and interacting with local children. Furthermore, the process of integration is easier for a family unit than an individual unit as the community interaction of each individual can then be carried back into the household in which the family members themselves interact. Information about the community, friendship networks and cultural knowledge can thereby be acquired and transmitted at a more rigorous rate as several individuals—rather than just one—are being exposed to the new community. On a different level, the need to belong is in itself satiated by being a member of a family. In a strange environment, a sense of family mitigates one's alienation and makes one more willing to endure difficulties. The company of men and children is absent from most women's lives in Lebanon. When I brought up the subject of family, silence surged into the room. None of them saw the founding of a family as a possibility in the near future.

According to Chavez's findings, a steady source of income also serves as an invitation to permanent settlement. Ethiopian free-lancers are often illegal residents who find jobs either through word of mouth or through illegal agencies (Al Zougbi: c). A steady source of income is therefore far from what the clandestine market offers free-lancing migrant laborers in Lebanon.

As was illustrated through the story of the old blind lady, the Ethiopians have managed to carry their 'imagined community' into this new country, by establishing a strong network of friends (Anderson). However, the isolation of the 'Street of Slaves', its name, and the locals' reaction to the migrants, reflects the marginalization of this migrant community. Social discrimination, political policy and abusive treatment illustrate the larger community's refusal to imagine the intruders as part of their own community. Official attempts at assimilation, integration or multiculturalism have yet to be introduced. On the contrary, there is a complete lack of attention to the migrants' presence. One reason for this is a disregard of the culture, beliefs, and language of migrants. The Lebanese see the Ethiopian presence as a physical phenomenon divorced of any humanity. These workers are expected to perform manual labor with no consideration for the human identity, culture, beliefs and language, which these migrants automatically bring with them. Another reason is the assumption that the migrants' stay is temporary and therefore ineffectual. According to my sources, however, the stay of those illegal migrants I interviewed may not be temporary after all.

Conclusion

The information gathered on the living conditions, remittance practices, ethnic enclaves and problems of integration among the Ethiopian migrant community in Lebanon allows for two conclusions. First, the decision to work independently among the interviewees arose from work in abusive households, signifying a direct relation between household abuse and free-lancing, in isolated cases. Furthermore, none of the interviewees wanted to remain in Lebanon. Free-lancing seems to be the middle ground between avoiding live-in abuse and the inability to go home. It must be noted here that whether or not this can be generalized to all free-lancers is questionable. Previous research has shown that domestic abuse is the exception rather than the rule (Jureidini & Moukarbel).

Second, the incorporation of this migrant community into the larger Lebanese community does not seem likely in the near future. This I attribute to the lack of family units, unstable sources of income, racist surroundings, and the isolation of the migrant community from the local imagined community. Perhaps if the aforementioned factors were present, the interviewees would be more likely to choose permanent settlement over departure.

On a final note, human trafficking and exploitation has certainly been of academic as well as a humanitarian concern. Current legislation policies and procedures in Lebanon have proven inadequate to reform and correct the trafficking and household abuse of domestic migrants. This is because trafficking and undocumented settlement is approached primarily a security and an illegal migration issue. Consequently, most law enforcement strategies target victims of trafficking and household abuse and not the agents that traffic in and/or abuse them. Hard academic results achieve little when they merely reprimand the perpetrators within a system of abuse, who victimize female immigrants. Lebanon is one of those countries that facilitate the negative conditions under which immigrant women live; it turns a blind eye to the abuses they undergo. The Ethiopian interviewees who have been provided a voice in this study have successfully survived the slavery in the households of their initial employers. They continue to suffer from the entrapment of a prison on a much larger scale.

End Notes

1. It must not be assumed that all labor migrants in Lebanon are trafficked. The scope of the research in this study does not permit further in-depth work on this issue.
2. Abeed is plural for Abed in Arabic. The term Abed may be used interchangeably to mean 'slave' or 'black-skinned'.
3. Pseudonym; all names used in this paper are fictional.
4. With the authors consent, the authentic Lebanese term sharmoota, which the Ethiopian domestic workers continuously used in their interviews, has been replaced with the English term "whore", with respect to the sensitivities of certain readers.
5. The hadith is a collection of statements made by 'reliable' individuals, usually relatives of the Prophet, about the life and undertakings of the Prophet.
6. Stories about Bilala al-Habahi, a slave turned Muslim whom the Prophet designated to call for prayer, are among the most popular in the hadith. 'Ubadah ibn Samit was another former slave who rose to prominence.
7. Lebanon is infested with such agencies for housemaids, which take care of an immigrant worker's paper work and guarantee her a job prior to her arrival. In Lebanon, these agencies have attained a notorious reputation regarding their abuse of maids. Cases have been covered by such journalists as Reem Haddad.
8. Finding proof contrary to neoclassical claims, Massey further contends that the decision to migrate soon no longer necessarily relies on wage and employment opportunities alone, but also on networks present in the country of destination.
9. It is considered unsuitable for locals to work as domestic laborers today, but in the past, domestic help came from local women. (Jureidini)

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In Service to the Movement

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In the pre-dawn hours of March 25, Mila Windsari Affendi, a 15-year-old maid from Indonesia working in the home of a prominent Gaza attorney, climbed the stairs of her employer's four-story residence, unlatched a window, and perched her small, shaking body on the frame. While the three young children she cared for slept soundly, Mila clutched her handbag and flung herself off the ledge.

Whether it was an attempt to escape her abusive work conditions and run away, or to end her life, Mila's jump accomplished neither. After crashing onto the dusty street below, she was alive but could not move. One of the girl's legs was paralyzed; the other was fractured. She was bleeding internally from a punctured liver.

While her story provided sensational headlines and a buzz of gossip that spread like wildfire across Gaza, Mila's desperate leap from the window cracked more than just her frail bones. For the first time, it seemed, the news media and the public broke their silence and began to examine the increasingly prevalent practice of hiring foreign women like Mila to work as domestic servants in the homes of wealthy Palestinians.

Even in the wake of her jump, however, the precarious situation of these women persists, as it has since they first began to appear in the West Bank and Gaza following the return of the PLO in 1994.

When the former revolutionaries and freedom fighters came home, some of them brought with them trappings of the lifestyle they had grown accustomed to in places like Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and the Gulf, where employing live-in maids from Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines is commonplace. (A dismal human rights record accompanies this phenomenon.) There, in well-to-do homes, shirts are ironed, floors are mopped, tea is served and children are cared for by hired domestic workers who migrate thousands of miles to earn a mere pittance for their services.

"You would never have seen this happening here during the [first] Intifada," says one former activist and political prisoner, who has several friends who now have maids. "Many things have changed in our society since then. Our values have changed."

In recent years, the custom of hiring foreign maids has trickled down from returning PLO cadres to the mass-

es—those masses with the cash, that is. The up-front cost for obtaining a maid is $2,500, made payable to the Palestinian agency that facilitates the maid's trip from her homeland.

On a typical Thursday evening in Ramallah, the open-air Al Sirreyeh social club is buzzing with families out to enjoy conversing with friends. It is not uncommon to spot half a dozen Sri Lankan women chasing after toddlers and feeding ice cream to children, while their parents drink tea, smoke argilas, and chat with friends. In Bethlehem, maids can be seen sweeping the front steps inside the ivy-covered gated entrances of some of the town's grandest homes. And in Gaza, an estimated 500 women are employed in the offices, beachfront homes or high-rise apartments of the new returning elite.

There are currently an estimated 1,000 foreign maids working in the West Bank. They come for two-year terms to escape countries of devastating poverty and earn salaries of $100-$150 per month. Their employers are required to provide them with food, clothing and shelter and to pay for their medical expenses. The maids typically range in age from early twenties to early forties; often they are forced to leave behind their own children, in order to seek a living by caring for someone else's.

It is customary for a maid's passport and work permit to be confiscated and held by either her employer or the agency that brings her. She is often kept isolated from other maids, for fear she will escape.

"The agency that arranged for our maid told us not to let her out of the house and not to let her talk to other Sri Lankans," says a Ramallah woman who hired a maid to care for her three young children while she and her husband are at work. "We ignored this. But there are four or five Sri Lankans in our building, and sometimes I see them whispering to each other from the balcony."

If this weren't enough cause for concern, there's the fact that these workers have no legal rights and sign no work contract. "We have a new labor code now, but maids working in people's homes aren't mentioned in it," says Ghazi Al-Khalili, general director of planning and information at the Palestinian Ministry of Labor. "These women are working all day and all night. The law says nothing about their hours or their wages."

Following Mila Affendi's jump, Al Resaleh newspaper in Gaza wrote a series of articles that resulted in the closure of Morning Star, the agency responsible for bringing this young maid from Indonesia. Though successful, the campaign focused less on rooting out a system that brings women there, virtually as indentured servants, and instead condemned the specifics of the girl's case. Morning Star had allegedly smuggled her into the country and forged the age on her passport, representing her as a woman of 27, instead of the five-foot, 80-pound teenager she really was.

"The problem is bringing people into the country illegally," says Ghazi Hamad, editor of Al Resaleh. "To bring girls who are too young, or to deal with these servants in a bad way, this is a problem." However, Hamad says he sees no problem with the concept of having a servant. "It's not a bad thing as long as people deal with the servant as a human being," he says. "Islam tells us to deal with anyone who is serving you as your brother."

But if brotherly love does not extend to one's unlucky maid, as was the case with Mila Affendi, then what? Terrified and desperate in a situation where she was being beaten, Mila could not simply walk out the front door of her employer's home, passport in hand, and file a complaint. Perhaps it is not surprising that she had to exit from a fourth-floor window.

"Palestinians are generous by nature, kind by nature. We don't mistreat these women, like in other countries," says Mohammed Faris, owner of Rosy, one of three companies in Gaza that bring in maids from Sri Lanka and Indonesia. (The other two are Al-Wafah and the Sri Lanka Office for General Services, which advertises "Sri Lankian and Phelipinian (sic) charwomen.")

A two-story operation, located in the wealthy Remal neighborhood, Rosy doubles as a $1.5 million luxury beauty salon and gym. Upstairs, while women from Gaza's elite are slimming their thighs in an aerobics class, having their eyebrows shaped or dipping into the jacuzzi, Faris is busy downstairs matching maids to work in homes like theirs.

His large desk is littered with xeroxed copies of work permit applications and passport photos for hundreds of maids seeking employment in Palestinian homes. Young, empty-eyed faces stare searchingly into the camera; they engage in a bizarre silent exchange with the posters that hang on Rosy's walls. There, creamy-white European models with pouting lips advertise cosmetics and miracle skin treatments: "Without distress and doubts," they promise, "100 percent herbal; 100 percent effective."

How did Faris decide on the name Rosy? "See, I believe every woman is a rose," he says. "Every woman has her own ... essence." Just then, one of the three Sri Lankan "roses" that work for him enters with a tray of coffee. She wears a white cotton shirt and a black skirt. Her nails are filed into points and lacquered with bright red polish, most likely courtesy of the salon upstairs. She makes no eye contact and says nothing, nervously setting down the coffee cups and exiting the air-conditioned office, back into Gaza's blazing afternoon sun.

Formerly the owner of a household appliance store in Gaza City, Faris sounds like any other entrepreneur when he describes how he got into the maid business. He leans back in his black leather desk chair, takes a drag from his cigarette and explains: "I got the idea to start this business because my dad was sick with diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis," he says. "We got a maid and paid her $125 per month. Slowly my friends started to bring them, and I thought if there's a demand, why not open an office for it?"

The agency makes a written agreement with the employer, or "second party" that reads something like a warranty for a refrigerator or a TV. "The second party has the right to exchange the servant within 30 days from the date of receiving her if she is ill or unable to work," it states. "After 30 days from the date of reception, the second party may not return her or exchange her." The contract also requires that the family treat the maid well. But, in the absence of laws to protect her, that is largely up to the family.

"The problem with this type of migratory labor is that these women are working in hidden settings, private homes," says Rema Hammami, a professor and researcher in Birzeit University's Women's Studies Program. "They don't have legal rights, nor do they have relatives and family around for support. This puts them at incredible risk."

Tales of abuse, though mostly still recounted by word of mouth, are rampant. Maids have attempted to flee their employers' homes, some escaping into Israel where salaries are higher, though there as well abuse and lack of legal rights remain a problem.

Nonetheless, Faris is right when he says there is a high demand for maids. "There are families who have elderly people living with them, big families with many children. Sometimes because of people's financial situation, the women have to work. But who will look after the children and the house, who will clean and cook?"

"You can't find a Palestinian woman to do this work," he adds. "The Arabic man won't allow a wife, a sister or a daughter to work as a servant in another person's home."

But some women who have hired Sri Lankan maids say they did so because it was the only affordable option. "I needed someone to work 4-5 hours a day to help care for my elderly parents and my brother who is disabled," says Iman, a 45-year-old Ramallah woman who never married and now carries the responsibility for these family members, in addition to working on her master's degree. "I tried to get a Palestinian to help us, but it would have cost 6,000 NIS ($1,500) per month. That's more than my monthly income."

The burden is perhaps even more crushing for married women with children. As more and more of these women pursue degrees in higher education or careers outside the home, the social expectations to produce many children (the average Palestinian household has four), cook fresh meals every day, and keep the home immaculately clean, have remained rigidly in place. "We are a male chauvinist society," Faris says. "If the woman has to work, the man is not going to help her around the house."

Yet, cheap as they may come, Sri Lankan maids are still too expensive for some middle-class couples. "I wish we had the money to bring in a Sri Lankan," sighs Nawal, a 34-year-old mother of three young girls. A former Intifada activist with a local women's committee, she now works full time as a nurse in a West Bank clinic, taking classes at night to complete her bachelor's degree. Members of a leftist faction, she and her husband once espoused Marxist principles of class conflict and worker's rights.

In more recent years, those ideals have gotten lost in the shuffle of a hectic daily schedule. "Every morning I'm up at 5 a.m. to prepare breakfast and get the girls ready for school. I arrive home from work at 2:30 p.m. and begin making dinner. Somewhere in there, I have to find the time to study for school. My husband won't help clean the house; he won't even pick up a dish or peel a potato. I feel like a zombie."

In the context of this dilemma, foreign maids, even in their fragile circumstances, end up playing a mediating role. "The whole issue of sharing work between men and women gets buried," says Hammami. "In the absence of a major transformation in domestic gender relations, hiring a maid solves the problem for everyone."

End Notes

* In 1999-2000, Mary Abowd lived in Bethlehem, Palestine, where she worked as a journalist. This article originally appeared in Palestine Report (September 2000) and was published just before the outbreak of the second Intifada.

Tâlibât l-Ilm in Morocco: The Non-Arab Woman Ethnographer as Student of the World

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The status of Moroccan women in the public sphere is undergoing dramatic change. Last September (2002), 35 women won seats in the Moroccan 325-member House of Representatives, whereas previously, there were only two (ArabicNews 2002). This trend toward increasing visibility challenges long-held notions about the gendering of public space in Arab societies.

Three late-1990's ethnographies by non-Arab women offer insight into changing conceptions of Moroccan womanhood: Deborah Kapchan's Gender on the Market (1996); Elizabeth Fernea's In Search of Islamic Feminism (1997); and Stefania Pandolfo's Impasse of the Angles (1998). By developing sensitive and innovative ethnographic approaches to understanding sex differences in Morocco, these works counter negative and enduring trends that have characterized Western feminist research of Arab societies. As described by Azza Basarudin: "Arab women are marginalized within the sphere of Western feminism(s) because they have been portrayed as passive victims instead of active participants seeking mobility and change in their society" (2003: 62).

The ethnographies of Kapchan, Fernea, and Pandolfo share three central characteristics that contribute to the success of their projects. First, each posits a process of social change in Morocco that operates by the subtle reinterpretation of tradition instead of outright rejection, and in which the ideal of gender complementarity serves as the basis for conceptualizing sex differences. In contrast to the universalizing approaches of earlier feminist ethnographers who imposed a Western sex/gender binary onto their studies,[1] these scholars begin by seeking to understand how the individuals they study theorize womanhood.[2]

A second strength uniting these works is a commitment to analyzing gender relations in Morocco as part of a network of international power relations. Early Western ethnographies largely regard non-Western societies as self-contained systems, and have studied kinship and male/female relationships as isolated and independent of other concerns. Yet the imperative to take engagement with other countries into account is especially salient in the case of Morocco, due to its geographical proximity to Europe and its history of French colonialism.

Finally, each ethnographer rigorously situates herself within the study, both in ethnographic methodology and in its written representation. Each engages in close relationships and self-revelation with the individuals from whom they wish to learn,[3] and each writes in a personal narrative style that forefronts the conditions under which knowledge was gained, achieving what Donna Haraway refers to as "the partial perspective" and abandoning claims to the "view from above."[4]

In Gender on the Market, Kapchan carries out fieldwork in marketplaces and homes of Beni Mellal, a provincial capital at the foot of the Middle Atlas mountains, and deftly engages hybridity [5] and performance theories[6] to trace how women are transforming and restructuring these sites to meet their changing economic needs. In the Morocco section of In Search of Islamic Feminism, Fernea enters into the university, the courthouse, and a house of Parliament to engage in discussions about women's changing status. In Impasse of the Angels, Pandolfo conducts fieldwork in a rural village in the Wâd Dra' valley of southern Morocco, and the section of her book that deals most explicitly with gender is comprised of psychoanalytic and etymological exploration of a long, free-flowing dialogue with one of her informants, a man of ideas named Hadda.

Each ethnographer documents social change by focusing on the interplay between conservative ideologies found within religious and quasi-religious sayings such as Hadiths,[7] and the enactment of female autonomy. Fatima Mernissi, a prominent Moroccan sociologist, writes about the centrality of these sayings in Morocco and has devoted an entire book, The Veil and the Male Elite (1987) to tracing the influence and pervasiveness of one particularly influential Hadith: "Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity" (1987:3). Although such sayings would seem to indelibly confine and restrict women's place, ethnographic investigation reveals a complex and contradictory process of their deployment.

Strategies of negotiating oral tradition surface throughout Elizabeth Fernea's exploration of Moroccan women's empowerment in the public sphere. Fernea engages in interviews with influential Moroccan women, such as Dr. Fouzia Rhissassi, chair of the women's studies steering committee at Muhammad V University; Latifa Djebabdi, dedicated activist and member of Union de l'Action Féminin, and Mesdames Bennani-Smires and Badia Skalli, the first two female members of parliament. Fernea finds that these women do not see their empowerment in opposition to the ideologies of the Qur'an and Hadith, but rather against conservative interpretation of these texts. For example, Madame Skalli attributes the suppression of women in Moroccan politics to "conservative ideology…The Qur'an specifically gives women the right to prophesy and participate in political and economic life" (122).

Similarly to the way Mernissi's interpretations of the Hadith serves as a counterpoint for the analysis of lived experience in Fernea's study, a saying attributed to the Sidi Abderahman al-Majdub[8] serves to animate the discussion of marketplace oratory in Kapchan's analysis. "The woman's market is volatile/He who enters beware! / They'll show you a ton of profit/And walk away with your capital" (1986: 29). There is no doubt that this saying condemns interactions with women in the marketplace. Yet, it is a female majduba/vendor who voices it, and instead of driving away customers, it serves to legitimate her presence and increase the effectiveness of her sales pitch. In analyzing this reversal, Kapchan reveals a complex pattern by which women mobilize patriarchal discourses to increase their own power and authority: "Subversive messages are coded in subtle ways in the Moroccan suq. If marketplace women sometimes employ negative stereotypes of feminine gender, it is in order to situate themselves in a domain that has always been inhabited by men" (Kapchan, 72).

Pandolfo also meditates on a common saying in the section entitled, "Contra-diction: Hadda, Son of Tammu:" "And the Prophet said: I haven't left behind me a more harmful fitna [chaos or disorder] to men than women" (Pandolfo, 160). Her presentation of an extended dialogue with Hadda consists of three parts: "Dialogics of Fitna," in which Hadda and Pandolfo discuss this Hadith and relate fitna to femininity; "Hasab and Nasab," in which the complementary aspects of masculine and feminine are mapped out through an etymological discussion; and "My Father and I" in which Hadda discusses his relationships with each of his parents. Pandolfo juxtaposes Hadda's explanations of the concepts of fitna, hasab, and nasab with Freudian and Lacanian exploration of how he figures his parents. By laying out fundamental contradictions between different levels of discourse, she taps into unconscious embodiments of the feminine and the masculine. Her analysis reveals the presence of many competing discourses on gender at work at an individual level and national level.

> *We don't use this word, feminist… It has a bad connotation. It means we are borrowing someone else's culture…*

The three ethnographers place their analysis within a transnational framework. Kapchan centers her exploration into women's new forms of economic agency upon the concept of hybridity, and investigates how discourses of Western origin mix and blend with other discourses on "pragmatic, symbolic, generic, and semantic levels" (1996: 7). In the chapter "Shtara [Bargaining]: Competence in Cleverness," Kapchan provides an analysis of how a female marketplace vendor defines and legitimates her right to determine the price for her own wares by setting her marketplace strategy into opposition with the Western convention of prix fixe, a relatively recent mode of exchange in Beni Mellal. The woman vendor asks her Moroccan clients, "Aren't we all Muslims?" (1996: 58) a rhetorical question traditionally exchanged exclusively among men. Kapchan shows how the presence of Western vendors in the marketplace serves as a factor that reduces the salience of sex differences in this interaction and emphasizes identification along national origin, facilitating the female vendor's ease in appropriating "male" speech.

Fernea also describes interactions with the West, especially regarding the large number of Moroccan men employed overseas. She observes, "This meant women-headed households, and a real shift in the patterns of authority in the traditional Moroccan family" (1998: 116). Fernea also delineates Moroccan women's disidentification with the language and ideology of Western feminism in favor of developing their own paradigms. Each of the women's rights advocates with whom she meets espouses the wish to distance herself from the term "feminist." As expressed by one female undergraduate: "We don't use this word, feminist…It has a bad connotation. It means we are borrowing someone else's culture…We are still trying to find a word to express our desire for women's rights" (1998: 96).

Pandolfo draws attention to the shadow of Western colonization at the outset of her book. During her first visit to Wâd Dra' valley, residents compare her to a colonialist from the past who came in the guise of a tâlib l-ilm, or wandering scholar, only to leave and return at the head of a French army convoy. Pandolfo is told that he asked residents of the region for information about its communities, "Like you are asking us now" (Pandolfo, 1).

Although Western women scholars carry the stigma of both Western origin and feminine gender, the tâlib l-ilm represents a cultural prototype that might account for their presence in Morocco. This figure, typified by Ibn Battuta, the 14th century Moroccan icon celebrated for his journey into foreign lands for the sake of learning and experience, provides a native analog for Western scholarship in the Arab world. These ethnographies suggest that to earn the status of tâlibat l-ilm, the non-Arab ethnographer of Morocco must prove herself on two levels: she must demonstrate a remarkably adaptive intellectual capacity, and she must engage with Moroccans on an intersubjective level.

Each ethnographer demonstrates her capacity for insight to her informants in a unique way. Kapchan's ability to perceive the lineaments of the social drama or performative ritual structuring everyday life guides her to the crux of situations, allowing her to formulate questions which bridge the distance between herself and her informants. Fernea's reputation for producing sensitive and insightful work facilitates her friendship with Moroccan women during her research. Pandolfo's demonstration of her mental agility earns the respect of Hadda, a man who holds himself aloof from even the most respected of his own society. At the beginning of their acquaintanceship, he poses a riddle about the nature of insight and understanding, and by solving it, she simultaneously proves her intelligence and her capacity to identify with him.

Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity.

At the same time as they are achieving intellectual connections, these women engage in emotional bonds with those from whom they wish to learn so that their work takes on an intersubjective dimension. Each of these women become involved in a network of social relationships in Morocco, and we catch this in glimpses throughout the ethnographies. We see Pandolfo carrying Hadda's child from his mother's to his father's arms, Fernea enveloped in a heartfelt embrace with her longtime friend Aisha, and Kapchan on the rooftop hanging laundry with her friends as they discuss the details of their lives.

Basarudin asserts, "Without accepting Arab women as subjects in their own right, and 'making way for them to come forth not as spectacles, but in their contradictions', cross cultural inquiry will remain a relationship of domination, and feminist solidarity will continue to be elusive" (2002; 64; qt. Ghosh and Bose 1997: 203). The studies by Kapchan, Fernea, and Pandolfo reflect this insight, and will serve as models to guide future ethnographic work in Morocco. By focusing on changes in women's social agency, emphasizing relationality within the fieldwork encounter, and analyzing women's perspective in dialogue with Western feminisms, these three works facilitate the theorizing of woman's modes of empowerment in contemporary Morocco from the perspective of the non-Arab ethnographer.

End Notes

1 Second wave feminists such as Rubin (1975) Rosaldo & Lamphere (1974), and Ortner & Whitehead (1981) emphasized the separation of biological sex from socially constructed gender roles as a necessary step to understanding the basis of universal female subordination.
2 Rosa Braidotti notes: "The sex/gender distinction, which is one of the pillars on which English feminist theory is built, makes neither epistemological nor political sense in many non-English, western-European contexts, where the notions of 'sexuality' and 'sexual difference' are used instead (Braidotti and Butler 1994: 38).
3 For an explanation of the concepts of intersubjectivity and distance within ethnographic fieldwork, see D. Kondo (1986), L. Abu Lughod, (1986), and R. Rosaldo (1984).
4 On the situated perspective, Haraway writes, "I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims…I am arguing for the view from a body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (Haraway 1988: 596).
5 Kapchan explains: "Hybridity is effected when ever two or more historically separate realms come together in any degree that challenges their socially constructed autonomy" (1996: 6).
6 On her use of performance theory, Kapchan writes: "While drawing upon its definition in speech act theory as language which performs…I also allow it to resonate with the concept of performance as cultural enactment or public display" (1996: 22).
7 "The Hadith collections are works that record in minute detail what the Prophet said and did. They constitute, along with the Koran (the book revealed by God), both the source of law and the source for distinguishing the true from the false, the permitted from the forbidden—they have shaped Muslim ethics and values" (Mernissi 1987: 3).
8 "A majdub is someone who has supernatural magnetism, and thus a certain authority, in regard to the world of the spirit… The most famous majdub in Moroccan history was Sidi Abderhman al-Majdub" (Kapchan 1996: 73).

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Flights of Fancy:

On Settling in a Feminine "Home" in Morocco

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My grandmother, wise like other grandmothers, once told me that life is the stuff that happens while we are making plans. In many ways, this article adheres to her philosophy. When I asked a friend why she had come to Morocco, she told me, "Well, I was just angry in England. I was tired of the people and the society, I needed to go anywhere, and it was just Morocco I ended up going to". That was a couple of years ago, and she still has not left. What is interesting in hers as well as in other women's narratives, is the fact that their presence in Morocco is somehow a critique of their own culture. Leaving is a sort of protest, and the act of setting up household, the most personal of human spaces, then becomes at once an act of defiance as well as an escape into a more comfortable culture. Never intending to write about the non-Moroccan women I met in my travels and studies, I find myself trying to understand the larger-than-life gravitational pull to this place that many of us never intended to go to, but now call "home". Considering that in Morocco foreign women get unwanted male attention in some public places, are the recipients of comic marriage propositions, that they are forced to fight for acceptance in ways they might not have to in their own countries, not to mention the need to learn one or more of the languages that allow them to function (Moroccan regional dialects, Classical Arabic, French, various Berber dialects, and Spanish) what makes them want to stay?

While coming and going to Morocco, I have met many different kinds of "Western" and non-Arab women. The terms "Western" and non-Arab do not fit neatly in this context, although my own impressions fit into this category. The foreign women I have met in Morocco have been from Korea, Germany, France, Pakistan, the U.K., Egypt, United States, Senegal, Vietnam, France, Belgium, Spain, Afghanistan, Canada, Mauritania, and Turkey. They have been students, nuns, teachers, housewives, travelers, journalists, administrative assistants, business owners, restaurant owners, hotel proprietors, retirees, artists, café owners, heiresses, NGO directors, Sufi adepts, government attachés, and missionaries.

Some, like Edith Freud in *Hideous Kinky* [1], come to Morocco to live out chemically induced dreams of spiritual fulfillment, and sometimes really do find it. Others, like Jane Bowles [2], run from their own culture, then discover that the people to whose country they have just arrived sometimes try awfully hard to be like the folks back home. Fantasy and ex-patriotism mix with a shock of the encounter of "the other", leaving some newcomers perpetual pariahs. Some do not adjust but others do find what they were looking for.

Among these women are some who settle in, in every sense, until it is hard to imagine they came from some other place. They are harder to detect because they have learned to fit into their new surroundings. These women seem to take the best of the world from which they have come and the world they have chosen. This article focuses on those women who are harder to detect, who sculpt notions of femininity and identity both gently and mindfully.

One archetypical woman who wrote down her impressions of life in Tangier's environs around the turn of the 20th century was Emily Keene, the Shareefa of Wazan. A young Moroccan girlfriend upon meeting me asked, "Do you know Emily?! Did you read her book? We read about her at university. Everyone knows her!" Her writing style is similar to firsthand feminist accounts that are now required reading in any Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course like Marjorie Shostak's Nisa [3] and Elizabeth Fernea's A Street in Marrakech[4], and she is often one of the first Western women that Moroccans meet in their literature classes. Emily the Shareefa of Wazan, however, did not write her autobiography, My Life Story [5], in the midst of a movement that acknowledged the necessity of female voices. Her text was edited by a British man who says in no uncertain terms in the preface that she had no writing experience and that he chose to leave out personal details "better left unsaid". We can only regret the many delicious details that he must have deleted, but still, we must also thank him for being slightly ahead of his time. This work is at once a rich ethnographic text of Moroccan women's daily lives, as well as a rarely heard account of Morocco's history as it fought off colonialization on every shore, vis à vis the English, the French, and the Spanish, as well as documenting the Algerian-Moroccan border disputes that still haunt current Maghrebi politics.

Although Emily was not free of all of the prejudices of her day, her willingness to look at the other with a determined optimism while never losing herself is remarkable. She remained in Morocco for the majority of her life, and traveled extensively at a time before the advent of the railroad and paved roadways. She married a Moroccan Shareef, a descendant of the Prophet, raised two Muslim children, grandchildren, as well children from her husband's previous marriages. In her writing is evidence of the opening of a space wherein the nature of what it means to be a woman, and a mother, and to build a home become malleable through her interactions with other Moroccan women:

> I was in despair of ever acquiring the language until a woman related tales to me, in the style of the "Thousand and One Nights", and helped me considerably in attaining different modes of expression. Today I speak fluently the Tangerine dialect, but the purity of my accent leaves much to be desired, and caused amusement to my grandchildren. I am sometimes guilty of grammatical errors, but must know the language pretty thoroughly, or I should not find myself thinking unconsciously in the same, and my dreams are often in that direction too. (9)

One recognizes the refrains of Emily's voice echoed in that of other women who have come to settle in Morocco today. A French woman, she had come to Morocco some twenty-five years prior, for what she thought was a vacation. Today she teaches English in a French middle school in Fes, is married to a Moroccan man, mother of three children, and a devoted Muslim. I met one such woman while conducting fieldwork in Fes. Our contact began during Ramadan when I was invited over for a wadifa, or prayer and recitation session, that was to take place from 'Asr, afternoon prayer, to Maghreb, the prayer which signals the breaking of the fast, when we would pray and then share ftour together. It was clear from her memorization of the long recitation that she too had settled in Morocco. Although there were other Moroccan women present, she was without a doubt leading the session. Our first meeting had taken place in her small house that she was renovating in the medina of Fes. The house was mostly hers, as she was paying for and seeing to every detail of its restoration. She and her husband now live outside of the medina and she dislikes being in a part of town where people live with fences created for ensuring nuclear family privacy. In her first years in Morocco, she had lived in the medina and learned Arabic from neighborhood friends. She now missed the intimacy of the medina whose walls do not wholly contain the lives of its inhabitants. Her daughter, an architect, shares her love of the medina and together they are creating her retirement home.

Our second meeting was at another ftour that she had organized. This time we ate with a group of Moroccan women and three Catholic nuns, one Spanish, one Korean, one Belgian. Here I learned that these nuns, "les petites sœurs", had lived in Morocco for more than fifteen years. They do not proselytize, but live and work among poor women. One worked in a factory, one embroidered at a cooperative, and the other was now retired, but taking classical Arabic classes with illiterate women at an NGO in Fes. All three were fasting for Ramadan and navigated easily between the different classes of women who were in attendance that day, some Moroccan, some French, some domestic assistants and their friends. Morocco is a culture where women of different classes have substantial contact with one another. Unlike in my own country, the United States, where poor people live within government maintained housing and financial programs, poor people in Morocco are obliged to look directly to their wealthier neighbors for assistance. This face-to-face confrontation with poverty is often difficult for "Western" women in Morocco, and they deal with it in their own individual ways.

I met one Australian woman, a café owner in Fes, who talked about this point at great length. She had met her Moroccan husband while he was working in Sydney, and came to Morocco with him where she had been living for more than sixteen years. Before speaking to her, I had seen her shopping in the market and doing errands. I had seen her walking with her children and heard them speaking Arabic and assumed she was Moroccan. It was not until one day later when I was in her café and she asked in perfect English what I would like that I realized that I had finally met "the Australian woman who speaks perfect derrija", or Moroccan dialect, that I had heard other women talking about.

Her café is full of paintings of Moroccan women in all their finery. She seems to admire the idea of women who are comfortable, beautiful and surrounded by other women. Her café exudes a femininity that is rare outside a Moroccan household, and it is a place where women of all nationalities gather. She said that she liked raising her children in Morocco because "there is always someone around who can help", that one is never left alone. She says that her husband's family has helped her in sharing family responsibilities and her children's lives are richer as a result. She sympathized with poor women and girls in Morocco, saying she had two women at home helping her and their being there enabled her to come home and share lunch with her family every day. These women helped maintain her home while she contributed to it financially through the income generated in the café. Furthermore, she emphasized the female honor code in Morocco and felt happy that her daughter "grew up in a place where others looked out for her". She commented that girls her daughter's age, "16, in Australia have often already slept with boys and sometimes even live away from home, or are expected to contribute financially at an early age". Morocco provides her with the means to raise a family in a preferable way to that of her home country, where she would never be able to stop in the middle of a workday to have a healthy home cooked lunch with her family.

Her home is a combination of Moroccan and Australian cultures. Her children have their own rooms but she explained the importance of the family room and how activities revolved around that room and that her children "did not lock themselves away only to interact with electronic devices". She repeated several times the fact that being in Morocco made her feel grateful for the things God had given her, and that even if life were not as convenient or straightforward as in Australia, here she was able to maintain a frame of mind that made her appreciate the things she had. More importantly, she wanted her children to grow up with such an appreciation.

In addition to home structures and their impact on family relationships, foreign women find the image of the female body healthier in Morocco. Many women commented on being deeply affected by the Moroccan women's tradition of "dressing up", because contrary to the stereotypical Western fashion magazine where only thin women are beautiful, in Morocco, every woman at a party is beautiful, and if she is not, her friends and family do their best to change this. My Turkish grandmother-in-law warns me of "nazar", or the evil eye, "'ain", which in Morocco is apparently far less ruthless because beauty is never in short supply. On my first trip in 1997, a woman I hardly knew insisted that I wear all of her gold and her favorite wedding dress (Moroccans typically have several when they get married) to a wedding I had been invited to. The last time someone had taken such pains to help me prepare for a special day was my mother on my first communion. Women in similar age ranges shift roles, playing that of sister, confident, mother. Many foreign women I know in Morocco find this friendship extraordinary and it is a trait they try to share among other non-Moroccan women.

In 1998 in Tangier I experienced a marathon nine wedding summer. In the region of Tangier at that time, it was common to have segregated weddings with separate festivities for men and women. I felt caught in a perpetual state of dress up slumber parties, filled with all the elements of tea parties little girls dream about; sparkly clothes, jewelry, little cookies, and dancing and merry making until all hours of the morning. In Morocco, such experiences are not relegated to the realm of childhood only, but are shared by women of all ages. Although Moroccan women's family and household responsibilities are extremely heavy, especially when they work outside the home, when they are a guest at someone's wedding or at other functions they are regaled, and are the recipients of the hospitality they so often offer in their own homes. The women's party is a culturally sanctioned institution, a powerful female space wherein household tasks and responsibilities are suspended until the party is over [6]. In such parties, the music is simply too loud to complain about quotidian worries or work related problems. As a guest, one's only choice is to dance and have fun.

Emilie, a French friend now living in Fes, related an experience of attending a Sapho concert in France when she fell in love with Morocco. Sapho, a Moroccan singer now living in France, performed an exclusively Um Kulthoum repertoire dressed in Moroccan kaftans that she changed every few songs. As Emilie tells her story, the performer's ability to put everyone at ease exuded for her a new sense of home and femininity. She spoke of the performer's loose kaftan as an alternative vision of femininity that she had not imagined before. She said that Morocco is a place where women are allowed, even encouraged to be "feminine", whereas in France women so often are forced to take on male characteristics if they are to be successful. She says she thinks deeply about the "freedom" that Western women claim to have, "freedom to wear revealing clothes, freedom to damage their bodies on diets, freedom to date men who never commit to them". She instead has found another kind of feminine freedom in Morocco.

German artist Ulrike Weiss, who also has had a long relationship with Moroccan culture, explores femininity through painting and theater in Morocco. In an exhibit housed in the Goethe Institute in Rabat she explored the notion of "Oriental/Occidental" women. This exhibit was one installation of some 400 black and white images of women's faces which were strung closely together horizontally on something like facsimile paper. The faces were meant to be "read", and Western faces turned into Eastern ones, and vice versa. The gestalt moment is the realization that there is not so great a distance between the East and West. After staring at the women's faces their origins eventually dissolve into their femininity. Weiss also produced a theatrical production entitled "What does the Jelleba Mean for You, My Mother?" where she and Moroccan actresses and actors explore what the bounds of clothing mean with regard to notions of gender. Hers is a feminist inquiry that does not judge, but remains open to Moroccan voices and allows their perspective to shape her own.

In conversations with foreign women I have learned that marrying Moroccan men is not what necessarily brings them to Morocco. In fact some women seem to choose Morocco over men. An example of such a case is an American woman who told of how she almost did not go to graduate school to study Arabic because it meant leaving behind her family, and for a short time, her husband. To assuage her, he proposed buying a nice house close to her family. The couple threw themselves into seeing houses and buying magazines to imagine how they might decorate their home. She saw an issue of Marie Claire Maison, a French home magazine, which had a special focus on Moroccan interiors. The images of Moroccan homes in the pages of the magazine made the thought of not going to school seem like a life prison sentence. Three days later she left for graduate school. That was seven years ago, and her relationship with Morocco proved stronger than her marriage. Morocco was the space in which she found the courage to divorce her husband, and where she first discovered Islam. For her Morocco is like a dear friend, one that she may not be able to live with permanently, but must visit regularly.

A French friend, Maud, initially came to Morocco because her Moroccan boyfriend led her there. She was studying to become a teacher in France and had the opportunity to do an internship abroad. She had three choices for countries to go to, her choices were Morocco, Morocco, and Morocco. When speaking to her at the end of her internship in Fes, she confessed she was reluctant to leave even though it meant being reunited with her fiancé in France. She was looking into job opportunities and ways that she could support herself in Morocco because she wanted to live there with her husband and to raise her children as Muslims. Although she had not yet become a Muslim, she spoke of being interested in Islam and how she was not looking forward to going back to France where she would find herself in situations where people would not understand her no longer wanting to drink or eat pork. She had been exploring Islam on her own during her time alone in Morocco and she showed me her calligraphy workbooks, in which she had lovingly written the word "Allah" on many pages in various styles. At the time of this article, she had just finished making her wedding kaftan, half Moroccan/half Western, and was making serious plans to resettle permanently in Morocco.

What makes these women flock to Morocco as they do? This is no easy question to answer, but many seem to have first come because they were looking for a "home" they had not yet found in their own cultures. Some come because they feel they have to escape a culture that is too centered on the individual, and they come looking for a community. Some come looking for Islam. Some come and discover new sides of themselves that they did not know existed, an inner beauty too long eclipsed by the Western fashion magazine. Some find Morocco a safe space, one that is better for raising children, and especially girls. Some appreciate the fact that gender segregated space also guarantees female space wherein female friendships and modes of being flourish. Although being a woman in Morocco is not always easy, these women find a kind of trade-off; they gladly exchange what they do not like about their own cultures for the things they do like about Morocco. Theirs are flights of fancy that weave, knead, embroider, paint, and nurture a connection between the disjunctive entities of East and West.

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Mazes of Boundaries, Identities, Memories and Longings:

Letters Between Two Border Passing Women

Azza Basarudin and Maddy Mohammed

Azza Basarudin, Doctoral candidate in Women's Studies, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
Maddy Mohammed, Intellectual-activist, Chicago

Dear Maddy,

It has been quite some time since we had a dialogue in this format, and I welcome the chance to do it again. How are you? Not writing you as often is unhealthy for my soul. Lately, I have been thinking a lot about the topic we so often used to discuss when I lived in Chicago – about a non-Arab woman doing research on Arab women. I know we covered so much ground on this topic, but being back in graduate school makes these questions more prevalent, frustrating and at times, painful. Shall I demonstrate what I mean?

Scene 1: In a graduate seminar at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), a white woman sitting next to me introduced herself and we started talking. One of the questions graduate students obsessively ask each other is about research and/or areas of interest. I explained that I am interested in researching how factors such as gender, culture, religion, colonialism and imperialism (among other factors) shape the construction of Arab-Muslim women's identities (as I have been "trained" to do!). She looked at me and said how exciting and brilliant it sounds. Than came the real comment – but you are not Arab right? You do not look Arab. Looking pleased when I shook my head negatively, she asked me where I am really from and upon knowing my nationality (disregarding that nationality is a complex concept), asked why I am not interested in studying my own people/culture. Surely, she said, that would make my research process uncomplicated and more meaningful. She of course sees nothing wrong with her research about Chinese women working in the agriculture industry in Hunan, China.

Scene 2: In a Women's Studies conference, I was having lunch with a group of graduate students from various institutions in the United States. The topic of conversation revolves around who is doing what type of research, in which geographical locations, etc. I dreaded my turn. When it came, I embarrassedly mumbled something similar to the explanation from Scene 1. Sure enough the onslaught of questions began – why the Middle East? Why Arab-Muslim women? Why not your own people/society? Is it less fascinating and less challenging to study your own people?

Scene 3: I was visiting a close Arab friend in Oakland, California. A noted artist and writer, her house is never void of family, friends and strangers who cannot seem to get enough of her company. At one of these gatherings, I was introduced to a Lebanese graduate student visiting from New York. The topic did not fall far from our research interest. For some reason (probably my physicality), this person assumed I am researching South East Asia until with some embarrassment and an uncomfortable silence (after my clarification), he asked why I am interested in Arab women and the Middle East. I wonder if he felt "put in his place" by my clarification. Perhaps not because he then asked if I am Muslim. He seemed pleased that I possess at least one "requirement" (despite the fact that Islam is not just a religion, but also a world view that does not seem to matter to him – e.g., people can be Muslims, but are not necessarily religious). He proceeds to mumble on how interesting it is that my name is Arabic and that perhaps I have some long lost connection that "legitimizes" my interest. After countless such encounters since starting school, I never cease to be amazed how many ways there are to inquire about one question, to patrol borders and boundaries, to authenticate, and to rationalize and/or de-legitimize my interest!

Azza
Tuesday, 2003, 12.41pm

Dear Azza,

Good to hear from you. I am doing well, thanks for asking. So it would seem our discussions on the topic of non-Arab women doing research on Arab women did not go in vain. I hope you have found some usefulness in our intense conversations. I wish we had more of them. But let us use this opportunity to engage in dialogue once again. One can look at your scenarios from a variety of locations: whiteness, identity politics and questioning of authenticity and representation, racializing and qualifying, border crossing/passing and patrolling - institutionalized and internalized.

Scene 1- I had to smile when I read scene 1. It is all too familiar - classic experience of American racial politics between a white person and a non-white person. It is important to note the place of where this is all happening, in an institute of higher learning in the United States.[1]

It has been my experience that many white Americans do not believe race is an issue, so I am told, but with a critical eye and a closer look, their life beliefs and practices and social interactions reveal this is not the case. This statement in itself bares witness to the colorblindness that prevails in our society and recycles unexamined practices of maintaining and sustaining a system built on white supremacy that subscribes people to categories that carry power, authority and status. What becomes clear is that a system built on whiteness over the ages has repositioned and reshaped and recycled itself and often resurfaces in encounters such as the one you described. Keep in mind though that we have ample examples of whites that are aware of white privilege and whiteness and reposition and rearticulate themselves.

You might be thinking why I am connecting Scene 1 with whiteness when you are depicting how people respond to your research. Let me try to explain my intentions by asking some questions. Her being a non-Chinese woman researching Chinese women and you being a non-Arab women doing research on Arab women can/would be a location for sameness. So why was it not the same in her eyes? Why could she not find sameness and some sort of link/connection? Why was it that she identified your research as harder or less meaningful for you because you are not studying your "own" while her interest and meaning goes without question? She is not only non-Chinese, but white and you are not only non-Arab but Malaysian ("colored"). One can speculate that she was not just asking questions, offering you advice and sharing/exchanging conversation, she was asserting her white privilege over you and naming and authorizing you through a sense of knowing and belief system assumes that whiteness holds superior authority and status. I wonder what would have been the response if you told her that perhaps she would make more meaning of her research process if she studied whiteness history and culture?

I have grown to become troubled by this idea that people need to place each other in categories, it can be quite dangerous when squeezing into something that does not fit

Scene 2) Perhaps the obsession of graduate students as you pointed out, of obsessively asking each other their area of interest and research, is something you may need to adjust to. It doesn't seem though that this is only what frustrates you. It is assumed that your interest would be your own people and therefore maybe you should be doing research on this. I guess when folks assume incorrectly they cannot seem to place you. I think it is natural for people to place each other as a way to sift through knowledge and learn something about someone. But I have grown to become troubled by this idea that people need to place each other in categories, it can be quite dangerous when squeezing into something that does not fit. It creates a sort of mental, spiritual, intellectual crisis. It fragments people and creates an unhealthy relationship

between self-actualization (meeting one's own human potentials on this earth) and our responsibility and contribution to community, greater society and the global world.

Scene 3) Well at least you do have that one check off on the list, you are a Muslim, and there is that name of yours that sounds Arabic! I apologize for my remarks, but after a while one needs humor to deal with such things. Before I respond further, I am curious to know if this is also a common example of your encounter with Arabs in relation to your topic of study?

Maddy,
Wednesday, 2003, 2.30pm

Dear Maddy,

I can always count on you for making these issues more complicated! I thought of whiteness when Scene 1 was happening, but given the topic of conversation, whiteness was the furthest factor from my mind. Often times I forget how white privilege is exercised in so many different ways, and how it reshapes and represents itself in even more dangerous ways. Perhaps I was just too agitated with the question to really take notice of how whiteness was in action (not that I should ever forget). Why the overwhelming need to categorize people in this country? (I realize that this form of categorization takes place in many other countries as well). I guess when "attacked" that way, more often than not I am "silenced", regardless of who is asking the questions. Why the silence? Entitlement, ownership, identity, borders, boundaries, privilege, ethics, social reality, representation, intruder, outsider, belonging, and purpose are all agents of silencing when it comes to researching a people/group not my own.

My dilemma is neither new nor unique. Many scholars have debated and written about the phenomenon of the insider/outsider in conducting research.

My dilemma is neither new nor unique. Many scholars have debated and written about the phenomenon of the insider/outsider in conducting research. I am thinking of our professor at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Heather Dalmage's theory[2], whereby people are taught from an early age to know where "borders" exist, why there are needs to "patrol" those borders, and the consequences of attempting to cross them. As a non-Arab woman researching Arab women, the borders I encounter are loaded with meanings and signify the most important sites of struggle, resistance and accommodation. I think the woman in Scene 1 asserted her whiteness over me through policing the boundaries of authority and superiority, in Scene 2, the borders are created to identify and locate me to fulfill categorization needs and in Scene 3, cultural borders are created to protect power and privileges, which are kept in place by cultural norms, language, and individual actions. By being a Muslim and fulfilling one of the "requirements" I am allowed to "cross" the border. However, this "crossing" also comes with a price - does "crossing over" legitimize my research interest? Perhaps other forms of "border patrolling" will now come into play? Who and/or what determines the boundaries of outsider/insider? Isn't the insider/outsider category fluid and ever changing?

Interesting that you asked about Scene 3. Recently I had an encounter with an Arab-American woman who was about to begin graduate school. When it came to the question of my research, she did not exhibit any of the responses from Scene 1, 2 or 3. To her, the project sounds important and exciting. Even when I asked her opinion (of the fact that I am not Arab but doing research on Arab women, etc) the response was simple: "Why do white people think they can study us and never exhibit guilt or discomfort? Why should you? Besides, are you not a Muslim?" For her, the Muslim half of me allows one foot into the world of Arab-Muslim women and minimizes the question of identity and authenticity. I am not claiming that being a Muslim automatically grants me an "insider status" because the differences that exist in our histories, cultures, norms and languages are all very salient factors. By positioning myself as a Malaysian-Muslim woman interested in researching Arab-Muslim women, I hope to expand the possibilities of discovering, examining and understanding sameness and/or differences. Going back to my encounter with the Arab-American woman, I think our mutual respect for each other also stems from the fact that we are both women of color and perhaps that is a bond the also 'legitimizes" my research interest. To answer your question about my encounter with Arabs, I would say that many are generally curious as to why I have so much interest in the Middle East. Sometimes when they find out that I am also a Muslim, the curiosity sorts itself out. Interesting isn't it? Perhaps the Muslim part of me (which I cherish dearly) does "legitimize" certain issues.

As an Arab-American, how do you feel about this? No doubt our friendship might make you biased, but what do you really think? This is the perfect opportunity to hear an Arab woman's perspective on my dilemma. How do you feel about non-Arabs doing research on "your people"? (your people is in quotation marks because I know like many people, you inhabit multiple spaces and negotiate multiple identities as Palestinian, as Arab, as Arab-Palestinian, as Arab-American, as Arab-Muslim woman, as Palestinian-Muslim woman, etc)

Azza
Friday, 2003, 3.27 am

Dear Azza,

I am going to attempt to answer your question about my views on non-Arabs doing research on Arabs. It is a loaded one and not that easy for me to use written language to explain.

Let me begin by speaking from my experience of growing up in the American Educational "banking" system (note Freire's Chapter 2 (pg 52) in Pedagogy of the Oppressed for the definition of "banking concepts" in education). From grade school through secondary school I was surrounded by teachers, textbooks, curriculum and social experiences that portrayed histories, cultures and identities of Arab people in ways that were false (particularly when the topic involved Palestinians), and romanticized, orientalized and misunderstood, along with the history of Blacks, Latinos, Asians and the first Americans who always seemed to be remembered last - the indigenous ones.[3] I grew up suspect of those that constructed and taught knowledge, in general, and in particular on that dealing with Arabs. I was able though to get a good sense of self-identity as a youth through groups such as my family, my Arab ethnic communities and solidarity groups. I was also fortunate enough to visit and live with relatives in Palestine for a short time. It was not until I got to college that I was introduced to positive curricula, images, history and culture on Arabs.[4] However, this was not consistent and I can count the places this happened and with which academics, fellow students and associations it happened. And with every positive experience there were more negative ones. It did put some hope in me and over time I began to re-think the possibility of non-Arabs doing research on Arabs (I must be honest and say my sense of distrust has not completely disappeared).

It is important to have a place of one's own to think and make sense of what is happening in our lives and the lives of others.

Growing up Arab in America is a story I'm not inclined to discuss that much. I'm sharing this because I feel that I can offer you insight by speaking from my locations and experiences, my sense of knowing. I believe that counts as "legitimate" knowledge. If you can't speak from your location and recognize it, you sometimes, through process, repeat and recycle the very thing you are attempting to get some knowledge or better understanding of. We are in different locations, spaces and environments. I am speaking to you outside the academy, as a non-student in the university (this does not mean one is not learning). I have chosen to postpone graduate school until I am "ready". I am very interested in your experiences because I think you can share some insight about what it is like. I work at a civic public policy organization in Chicago, our initiatives and projects center around public policy and race. Because we work with all sectors of society I get to step inside the academy occasionally to work with people and network. Many times I feel back at "home". I always did enjoy the classroom, even with all its limitations one can still appreciate the opportunity of space and time to study, learn, deconstruct and re-create ideas and such. It is important to have a place of one's own to think and make sense of what is happening in our lives and the lives of others.

So with that said I will answer your question and say that I have no trouble with the idea of non-Arabs doing research on Arabs. Purpose and meanings are exposed through research and analysis: what was set out to do and why; what was attempted to do and how it was done; what was the process and challenges, how one adjusts and performs and interacts with informants, what was the outcome, and with equal importance, what the research and constructed knowledge is being used to do. This is the judge and indicator of whether the research holds "valid" knowledge, is it not? Even bias or questionable and suspectable research (from anyone's perspective) can be deconstructed, re-created and such. This does not take away from the damage of what this type of research can do and the purposeful intent and sponsorship of the scholarship. And I will add that I am not just critical when dealing with non-Arabs but with all that do research and construct, govern and process knowledge.

I have a few questions of my own; I hope you don't mind answering them. "Do you feel guilty about doing research on Arab women or not doing research on your own "people" (more and more that is beginning to

sound intrusive for me)? Do you always have a sense of "solidarity " among women of color? Because I do and I don't. Is it becoming easier to find your space among the academy and communities and groups you encounter relating to your studies (this includes places outside the academy that offer support to your studies and sense of knowing)?

Do people honestly think that it is fascinating to study their own people? I would imagine it is not fascinating but rather necessary (and you don't need the academy for this but I know what context you were writing in). Perhaps, though I am bias in this sense because I am Palestinian and feel studying one's own people and culture is crucial to survival and existence (but I can't be the only one to think this way).

Why the guilt about doing research on Arab women? It is probably because I am a "woman of color."

Sometimes I wonder why people from other countries come to America to study their own country? I know there are many different answers and I don't want to be ignorant to the fact that there are global conflicts, occupations, wars and economic instability that would bring someone here to study. I suppose I'm talking to those that might not fall into those categories (I'm using the categories now). I think though we unwillingly volunteer to put American institutions in a higher place and I'm not so sure they have earned it. But who am I to judge?

I would imagine that doing research on the topic of Muslim or Arab Muslim women reveals many complexities? How are you finding it so far?

Maddy
Saturday, 2003, 1.45 pm

Dear Maddy,

You are not being intrusive. We are comfortable in our spaces with each other and that is why we are able to dialogue about this. This dialogue feeds and nourishes my soul. There is something to be said about researching a group not one's own. I cannot describe this feeling, but it is a combination of trespassing, guilt and pain. I wish I could name and explain this dilemma, but it is something I am still struggling with and for now it is the "problem that has no name."[5] I often wonder if perhaps this is a problem because I dwell on it constantly, but this is an issue that I need to come to terms with (the sooner the better) and to work it out the best way possible. Why the guilt about doing research on Arab women? It is probably because I am a "woman of color." Reflecting on your question about solidarity, I've always had a problem with the word "solidarity" and term "women of color." I did not become "colored" until I arrived in this country, and even then, the term didn't evoke "solidarity" as I would hope. Yes, maybe we should have solidarity as "women of color", but we are also divided through our nationality, religion, sexuality, race, class and various other issues. Do I feel solidarity? It depends on who is asking the question. Solidarity reminds me of my experiences in "sisterhood," being turned down for my volunteer effort for a non-profit Arab organization because I am not "Muslim enough." What does "Muslim enough" mean? I would feel better if they turned me down because I am not Arab or because of my lack of fluency in Arabic, etc. I am reminded of Audre Lorde's words, "It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences."[6] So much for solidarity and sisterhood. Having organized with other women of color reminds me of how sometimes we are not only fighting white racism, but also racism among people of color. Sometimes internalized racism has a more damaging effect. As of now, I prefer alliances, for alliances "advocate love, commitment, responsibility. They are about concrete manifestation of our rebellious spirits and our sense of justice. They are about shared visions of a better society for us all."[7]

Does my research on Arab-Muslim women reveal many complexities? Definitely. For as long as I can remember, I have always been fascinated and intrigued by the Middle East. As a child, I remember studying the history of Islam and Muslims and wondering why Islam was revealed in the Arabian Peninsula and not elsewhere. Never having the chance to visit the Arab world (I will this summer), and only hearing stories from family members who performed the Haj, and had the opportunity to explore other Middle Eastern countries, ignited my curiosity. Why the fascination? Perhaps I am reproducing colonial fantasies. Perhaps I am romanticizing Islam and its revelation some fourteen hundred years ago. Perhaps I am terrified of discovering the "truth" about my own society. The speculation is endless. I honestly do not have the answer. You must be frustrated and think that I should pack my bags and leave the graduate program!

Am I finding more agreeable spaces in the academy? Yes and no. For the most part, many people in the academy

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think there is nothing wrong with them studying/researching other people. After all, that is how we produce knowledge for the human race (not to devalue other forms of knowledge and knowing). So, in that sense, I get away with it, but most of the time, scenes like the ones I've depicted come into play. But other times my conscience gets the better of me and thinking how anthropology originated (as a tool for colonialists to gain insight into native societies) brings out all these troubling questions: Who am I to feel "entitled" to pick and choose any group of people, any geographical location and any issue to further my academic career? Is this how privileges are supposed to be utilized? How can I be accountable to my informants? Who owns knowledge? How do we reinterpret knowledge so that we can give back to the community and the rightful people and let it benefit them? How can we be accountable in transmitting knowledge?

Your question on studying one's own society reminds me of a book I read some ten or eleven years ago, entitled Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society by Altorki and El-Solh (published in 1988, perhaps it's too old to be referenced, but I think the book is still useful). Some of the benefits of studying your own society are that one has the advantage of possessing a similar body of knowledge (is this likely?), meanings of cultural patterns are more readily understood (I am inclined to agree), it is easier to build rapport and closeness and to better understand social reality on the basis of minimal clues (what about differences among people of the same group?).8 Do all those factors (among others) make researching your own people more exciting? Like you said, perhaps not fascinating, but necessary and in that necessity, I think fascination and/or satisfaction will kick in. Possibly.

It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences.

So this is my dilemma – given all the uncertainties and fears I have about the research process and its outcome, I know that I will try to present knowledge as it is given to me, but why do I still feel like an unwelcome intruder? Not a complete foreign intruder (interesting that I say that, perhaps the Muslim half of me that has "crossed over"), but an intruder nonetheless. I am thinking of Anzaldua, "Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a travesia, a crossing. I am again an alien in a new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape 'knowing,' I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. 'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens, I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before."[9]

Azza,
Monday, 2003, 2.54 am

Dear Azza,

It sounds like you are in the process of working your issues out. Because I know you I have all the confidence that you will be conscious and use each challenge to be an accountable educator and researcher. Perhaps this is part of your "training" process.

I absolutely do not want to see you pack your bags and leave graduate school. I think the pain and silencing you speak of is real and should be recognized. If you didn't care you would not be agonizing. I think you should always remember the pain, whether it is yours or someone else's, use it as a tool to heal injustice, create and work for change.

Of course you did not become colored until you came to the United States. It comes with the territory. Were you not stamped and labeled "alien' when you entered the borders? That's a hint courtesy of United States hegemony. People have told me that we are so obsessed in America about race. I would have to agree and that is one of the reasons why I need and want to make sense of it all. Remember this is my topic of interest and research. We have been naming and giving examples of what we mean by all this. I feel no need to keep going. It becomes quite draining.

About the women of color issue. Your experience in being rejected and your feelings about solidarity I can relate to and validate. I have had my share of border patrolling (you defined it rather well earlier) in my in-group and outside groups to know that it is a life process that fluctuates, moves and grows. One last thing about your comments on fighting racism among people of color, whiteness is not only sustained and practiced by whites alone, there is room for non-whites to believe in the system, and they benefit from it too. Whiteness becomes a state of mind- very clear but mythical. It is not enough to have a sense of sharing sameness with a certain race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender sexual orientation, but also one must possess and share like minds and actions.

I thought maybe you were rejected by the non-profit Arab-group because you don't wear the hijab (in addition to what you've mentioned) - interpreting you as not "Muslim enough" thereby disqualifying you. I have myself experienced this among some Arab Muslims/Muslims (mostly women and men who believe all Muslim women should wear the hijab). Sometimes being born something does not necessarily give you the "inside status," being a Muslim woman wearing or not wearing the hijab can be an example. I'm not sure if I am correct in my statement though because rarely do I get an opportunity to discuss this openly and honestly with others and don't have a good sense of all the multiple feelings and experiences.

Thanks for sharing with me your story of how and why you became interested in your studying Arab women. I get a better sense of your location and where you are speaking from. I love to hear autographical testimonies. I would be interested to know more about what your relatives described of their travels to the Middle East. Perhaps another time.

In closing, I would like to end with our beginnings. In many ways it highlights some of the intersecting themes and topics we have been discussing through out this exchange.

We both were taking the same women's studies class on the history of ideas on women. It was the second or third day of class; we were finishing up reading/discussing the philosophy on creation of man and women. The instructor and most of the students were focusing on Christianity and citing passages from the Bible and having what seemed to be a "inside" limited discussion in many ways. I felt frustrated because the last class period they were doing the same thing and I didn't understand them and no one, including the instructor, seemed to notice and went on as if everyone knew what they were saying. I felt a little invisible and did not want to disappear in this class, I thought to myself: is this how the rest of the semester will be in this class? I did not want to continue in this position. I hesitated but spoke up and said something like I was not that knowledgeable in Christianity and although I am familiar with some things I am not familiar with what they were discussing and asked if someone could explain so and so. The professor (who newly emigrated from Europe) turned red and apologized for assuming we all knew. She thanked me for bringing this to her attention. The white female student who was doing most of the talking turned to me and asked me what I was. The discussions after that were more inclusive but had many agents of silencing throughout the semester. I felt out of place, but was relieved that I was able to move out of invisibility and pass into visibility and voice myself. I remember looking around the room and came upon your smiling face. I felt a warm connection. We talked afterwards and re-introduced ourselves outside the circle. I later learned you were interested in doing research on Arab-Muslim women and you discovered I was interested in race and whiteness. I remember feeling that sense of hope I was writing to you about earlier. You are a welcomed "intruder" in my space!

Who owns knowledge? This is a great question to ask and reminds oneself to stay grounded. There are endless multiple answers to this question and even still you cannot finish seeking all of them out. I would like to believe we all own it. But that is somewhat naive.

I enjoyed this dialogue very much. I am reminded of Freire in concluding, "dialogue requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in the power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is not privilege of an elite, but the birthright of all)."[10]

I wish you the all the best. Take care and keep in touch.

Peace, Maddy
Wednesday, 2003, 5.50 pm

Dear Maddy,

I smiled to myself when I read the story of how we first met. I remember looking at you (you were sitting across from me and I sensed you were looking around for some "connection") and when you asked that question (about Christianity), I knew I had found an ally (perhaps I am categorizing you?).

Feeling trapped in this maze of complexities (despite every now and then seeing a light at the end of the tunnel), I can only hope that the pain and silencing that you and I speak of will heal itself as we move along in our lives. I identify with what you wrote, "I think you should always remember the pain, whether it is yours or someone else's use it as a tool to heal injustice, create and work for change."

You also wrote, "Sometimes being born something does not necessarily give you the 'inside' status …" – but being born an "outsider" will never make a person an "insider" ever, no matter how connected oneself is to a group that is not one's own.

Dialoging with you gives me hope and makes it more viable to think through the issues that I am dealing with. I was not hoping for solutions, but insights and pointers to raise more questions (it's unavoidable) and take it to the next level. My location as a woman of the global south now living and working in the United States also plays an integral part not only in constructing my new fragmented identity, but it also unfortunately contributes to my dilemma as a researcher. One might ask if I lived in my country of origin (Malaysia), would my positionality and the research process be less problematic? That is a question that I constantly ask myself and I regret to say that might be something that I wish I had had the opportunity to explore before I migrated to the United States. New knowledge occurs through tension, difficulties, mistakes and chaos.11 I am hoping that the knowledge I am gaining, sharing, exchanging and producing is a knowledge that will go through such stages.

Thank you for going on this journey with me. I hope we have many more ahead. Say hello to your feline friends for me, perhaps I will see them sometime soon. I leave you with this poem12 that speaks to and for my troubled soul.

The bridge I must be
Is the Bridge to my own power,
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate

My own weaknesses
I must be the bridge to nowhere
But to my true self
And then
I will be useful
By Donna Kate Rushin

Azza
Thursday, 2003, 1.45 pm

End Notes

* Azza Basarudin was born and raised in Penang, an old colonial town in Malaysia and grew up living among a blend of working and middle-class Muslim, Chinese, Hindu and Eurasian cultures. Maddy Mohammed lives in Chicago where she is a fulltime student of conscious living. She is an intellectual-activist working on multiple social justice projects. She is interested in returning to the Academy some day to continue her research in Race, Ethnicity and Whitness studies.

1. See Churchill, Ward. *White Studies: The Intellectual Imperialism of U.S. Higher Education* (1995) and Semali, Ladislaus. *Perspectives of the Curriculum of Whiteness* (1998).
2. See Dalmage, Heather M. *Tripping on the Color Line: Black-White Multiracial Families in a Racially Divided World*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2000.
3. As I write this the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq continues. The American educational institutions that educated me rather poorly on Arab people's history, culture and religions is now in an authority and holds "consulting" positions in overseeing Iraqi educational institutions. This is truly concerning.
4. This does not mean that it was only in college I was reading credible research on Arabs by non-Arabs. I was reading in and out of school, (multiple kinds of books and narratives by non-Arabs and Arabs alike) on my own.
5. I am borrowing this term from Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).
6. Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider.* New York: The Crossing Press, 1984.
7. Cited from Molina, Papusa. "Recognizing, Accepting and Celebrating Our Differences." *From Making Face Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspective by Feminist of Color.* Ed. Gloria Anzaldua. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990. pg.328.
8. The benefits of studying one's own society is cited from Altorki and El-Solh's book.
9. Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987. pg. 70.
10. Friere, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum, 2000. pg 71.
11.Cited from Anzaldua, Gloria. "Now Let Us Shift…the Path of Conocimiento…Inner Work, Public Act." *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation.* Eds. Gloria E. Anzaldua and Analouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 1990. pg. 563.
12. Cited from Andemicael, Iobel. "Chameleon" from This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation. Eds. Gloria E. Anzaldua and Analouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 1990. pg. 40.

Writing their Own Way:
American Women, Palestine's Bedouins and Issues of Safety in the Nineteenth Century

Jim Ross-Nazzal

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> We felt no fear of them, for we had heard in Jaffa that if there was a woman in the caravan there was no danger of their attacking it. They have a profound respect for courage. (Kate Kraft, shortly after arriving in Palestine, 31 March 1868) [1]
>
> Joseph rushed into the tent, exclaiming: 'Sir, your revolver, the Bedouins!' Until then we had believed but little in attacks of Bedouins. (Kate Kraft, on the night Bedouins attacked her encampment, 25 April 1868)[2]

Throughout the nineteenth century, more and more Americans traveled abroad, especially after the American Civil War (1861-1865). Many, upon their return home, published their travel accounts. I have collected and analyzed the published accounts of fifty American women. What follows is an investigation into how American women travelers who ventured to Palestine perceived and interacted with Palestine's Bedouin populations by examining their published travel accounts. American women either tended to feel safe because they were in the care of Bedouins who acted as their guides and guards, or, conversely, they felt unsafe because Bedouins were nearby. In either case, it was rare for these American travelers to identify Bedouins without some negative descriptor. Most, such as Mary S. Allen, qualified Bedouins as "the wild Bedouin tribes."[3]

Also, some American women compared Palestine's Bedouins with American Indians. Hilton Obenzinger notes that Americans typically equated Arabs with American Indians, usually within the settler-colonial context of seeing Palestine as the American West and the Arabs as American Indians who fought against being "civilized" by American settlers.[4]

At first, few American women drew connections between feeling or being safe and being in the presence of Bedouins. In all but one case, Bedouins were hired to serve as guides and guards for these Americans. Sarah Haight, being the exception, still recalled a sense of safety when she was in the presence of Bedouins. While traveling from Jerusalem to the Jordan River, Haight and her party came upon a group of Bedouins who sought to race the Westerners. "We were not to be outgeneralled [sic] by a Bedouin . . . so we slacked our reins and put our fleet coursers to their utmost speed."[5] Haight reportedly beat the Bedouins in the race, and established her camp right in the middle of the Bedouin encampment.

While she did describe them as "wild," she noted nothing but hospitality and respect from them. According to Haight, the Bedouin "sheik" offered both pipe and tea to her. After smoking, and drinking a cup of tea, many Bedouin men came to her tent in order "to pay their respects to us." Before leaving the next morning, Haight presented the "sheik" with a pair of Turkish pistols in exchange for his hospitality. In fact, Haight never felt that the Bedouins, while "wearing so rough an exterior," would ever harm her or her fellow travelers because the Bedouins were simply too hospitable, as she told her reading audience.[6]

Almost all American women in my study hired Bedouins to be their guides or to act as personal guards while in Palestine. This indicates that the women believed themselves to be in harm's way and thus needed an armed guard; they nevertheless did not feel the harm came from Bedouins. For example, Lizzie McMillan hired "a Bedouin guard from the time of leaving Jerusalem until we got back, as they say it is not safe to travel in this country without one." Unlike Sarah Haight's description of Bedouins as wild and rough, McMillan called her Bedouin guard "very handsome . . . [who] took good care of us."[7] Similarly, Mrs. Marie and Miss Emma Straiton hired Bedouins as guides. Mrs. Straiton also described Bedouins as "wild Arabs" who were traditionally noisy. "The Bedouins and camels kept up such a noise and every moment I expected to see a dusky head peep through the covering."[8] Likewise, Louise Griswold hired a Bedouin "sheik" to act as the group's escort and guard.[9] Mattie Wood hired a Bedouin not only to guide her through Palestine but also to act as her personal guard. It was not her idea, however, to hire this particular Bedouin. According to Wood's account, he was "furnished for our protection at the request of the United States Consul." Furthermore, Wood claimed that some Bedouins were "paid by the Turkish government to protect travelers from the assaults of wandering Bedouins."[10]

Bedouins were not only to serve as American women's guides and guards, however. Sometimes they provided information and other times they were trading partners. Sarah Barclay Johnson noted her relief when she came upon a party of Bedouins. Johnson became lost somewhere in the "wild region" near the "banks of a deep and rapid river." She had unsuccessfully looked for a place to ford the river when she came across a group of Bedouins: "A party of Bedawin [sic] approached, and for the first time we felt a sense of relief" because she had hoped that they might be able to tell her where she could safely cross the river.[11]

Near the Jordan River, Johnson came across another group of Bedouins who traded their fruit ("the veritable apples of Sodom" as Johnson described them) for her telescope. It was not her telescope that these Bedouins were most interested in obtaining, however. Johnson claimed that Bedouins always treated her with respect and "with the greatest kindness" because she had medicine, which they needed.

Yet she also noted that "the profound ignorance of these semi-civilized beings, very naturally leads to the grossest superstition, of which we often had instances." Also, "of medical knowledge, they have none," reported Johnson. She noted that Bedouins would frequently place their sick upon the tombs of saints, or a Koran would be hung around the patient's neck in the hope that divine intervention would cure the malady. "Another popular mode of treatment is a severe flogging!," proclaimed Johnson.[12] Nevertheless, according to Johnson, she and her party were always safe in the company of Bedouins because Bedouins needed and sought western medicine.

Johnson's characterization of Bedouins as "semi-civilized," ignorant, and superstitious does not seem to be outside the norm for how westerners viewed non-westerners. According to Judy Mabro, "accusations of prejudice and superstition are common." Yet, Mabro also sees these accusations more prevalent when the subject is a non-European woman.[13]

There was one thing that each of these six women who portrayed Bedouins in a positive manner had in common: none of them traveled alone. Each one came to Palestine with at least one American companion. This could suggest that these travelers already felt a level of safety and security simply because they were not alone. This cannot be said about those who felt unsafe when Bedouins were near by, however.

While those six travelers felt most safe when in the company of Bedouins, the majority of American women, both the lone travelers as well as those who ventured in groups, felt just the opposite. Ten of the twenty-two travelers who observed Palestine's Bedouins noted in their published accounts being unsafe when Bedouins were nearby. Jane Eames felt generally unsafe because each Bedouin she saw was armed "with a gun or a sword or pistol, and sometimes with all three."[14] Eames had heard stories about Palestine being "unquiet and unsafe." She said that seeing all of those armed Bedouins was an indication that those stories were true. Not surprisingly, Eames concluded that the reason, at least in part, for the safety problem in Palestine was due to the extensively armed Bedouins. She never suggested that the Bedouins were armed because Palestine was unsafe. Instead, she believed that Palestine was unsafe because Bedouins were armed.[15]

Like the ideas purported by Eames in her travel account, many other American women, such as Susan Brewer Thomas, believed that Palestine was unsafe due to the hostile, as she called them, "wild Arabs," and consistently portrayed Bedouins as unruly, uncivilized, and untrustworthy vagabonds.[16] Susan Wallace believed that Palestine was unsafe because the Bedouins did not acknowledge law: "They are a law unto themselves, and acknowledge no other ruler."[17]

Others, such as Susan Elston Wallace, Mary Ninde, and Clara Moyse Tadlock believed that Bedouins were born thieves.[18] While passing through Hebron, Wallace noted that soldiers were stationed in the area. She attributed the presence of these soldiers to "thieving Bedouins, who infest these desolate roads, robbing with impunity, unless the avenging sword is in sight."[19] Ninde and Tadlock also portrayed Bedouins as murderous heathen who would put to death any foreigner they came across. According to Tadlock, Bedouins killed travelers just to steal their possessions, "like those Texas stage-robbers."[20]

Likewise, L.L. Adams reported that "Bedawin [sic]. . . are known to be great robbers, and often attack parties of travelers." [21] Nonetheless, she hired a Bedouin for protection: "In front, on a splendid white horse, rode an Arab Sheikh, in all the warlike array of gun, sword, and spear, and dressed in the gay colors of his tribe . . . He was to be our guard as well as our guide." She believed that she needed the help of a Bedouin to protect her from other Bedouins. "This Sheikh is the chief of a tribe of Bedawin [sic] in that region," Adams reported, "and his presence with us was a sufficient protection against the attacks of his men, who might otherwise have plundered us on our way."[22]

Not only were Bedouins portrayed as murderers, but also, according to Mary L. Ninde, Bedouins turned killing into a game for their self-amusement. Ninde recalled a story she heard about six scientists who were robbed by Bedouins. After relieving the scientists of all worldly possessions, according to the story, the Bedouins gave the scientists a choice in regard to how they would die: either jump off a cliff or be shot.[23] Finally, Cora Agnes Benneson, an Illinois attorney, simply reported in her travelogue that she proceeded through Palestine "cautiously, with our guard always ahead, for the Bedouins live by plunder, and often attack strangers."[24]

Most of these women who forwarded racist or stereotypical views of Bedouins never experienced a negative encounter with Palestine's Bedouins themselves -they were merely passing on to their readers the rumors and innuendoes they had heard about Palestine's Bedouins. In fact, it was not unusual for these women who reported over and over that everyone should be frightened of the murderous, thieving Bedouins as a group, to describe individual Bedouins as caring, hospitable fellow travelers. Cora Benneson, for example, noted that the Bedouins she met respected "the laws of hospitality, however, and if any one in trouble solicits their aid, they give him the kindest reception, and protect him for three days after his departure from their camp."[25] On the one hand Benneson told her readers not to trust Bedouins (as a monolithic entity) because they were known murderers and thieves. She also told her readers how individual Bedouins were helpful to, kind towards, and receptive of foreign travelers.

Picture Credit: Ayman Mroueh

Benneson described an encounter she had with a Bedouin troupe led by a man named Ibn Ishmair. First, this is one of the few cases I have encountered in which an American traveler took the time to note the name of their Bedouin host. Second, while Benneson told her readers to fear Bedouins, she also described her chance encounter with this particular Bedouin in nothing but pleasant terms. For example, she said how one wife of Ibn Ishmair entertained them in "European" custom, while his other wives observed "traditional [Bedouin] hospitality." She noted that Ibn Ishmair and others in his group lived simply, yet were wealthy and had "a native dignity and grace of manner, which might have been envied by a prince."[26]
Nevertheless, Benneson continued to fear Bedouins, even after her meeting with this one Bedouin leader. Upon departing from Ibn Ishmar's camp, she once again reported being very nervous for fear of running into a group of Bedouins. "We finally reached Kuneitirah in safety," she reported.[27] This entire exchange is rather odd because while Benneson witnessed or experienced nothing that should have made her fearful of Bedouins, she nonetheless feared Bedouins and passed on those feelings to her readers by never challenging or questioning the veracity of the rumors that Bedouins were, by nature, a thieving, murderous lot.

If anyone had initial cause to fear Bedouins out of personal experience it was Dr. Sarah Wells who reported being captured by a group of Bedouins. "Horrors of those who before had fallen into the hands of these lawless rovers, rushed before our minds. What were we to do?," Dr. Wells pondered. She noticed "no indication of mercy . . . in their black fierce looking eyes [while] they demanded our money and other effects." Wells, et al, were ordered to mount their horses. "For hours we traveled on under the guidance of our captors," Wells noted.[28]

Upon reaching the Bedouin encampment, Wells' dragoman was taken to the leader's tent while the travelers awaited their fate. "In a little while, we were invited into the tent," recalled Wells, "and to our surprise and great relief, the sheik received us with the utmost hospitality." Wives of the sheik spread out new mats on the ground for Dr. Wells and her fellow travelers to sit upon. They also served fresh milk, coffee, bread, and eggs to the Americans. In exchange for the food and drink, Dr. Wells gave them lemons, oranges, and some sugar.

After "resting for a while," as Wells called it, the sheik provided the travelers with a guide and an armed escort. She noted that the Bedouins were from the "Azeneah" tribe which she called "the largest and most powerful of all the wild Arabs." Interestingly enough, she believed it was divine intervention that delivered her and her party "from these wild, fierce, marauding people."[29] It was not that the Bedouins she met were hospitable, kind, and generous. She believed that it was Providence that saw them to safety. It must be remembered, however, that Wells' ten-year long trip around the world resulted in a large, published account, which in turn spawned an across-the-country circuit of lectures about her ten years away from the United States. In other words, it is not impossible that Dr. Wells just made up, or at least embellished, her encounter with the Bedouins in order to sell more books, which in turn would bring more people to her lectures, which would result in more sales of her book. She portrayed herself as a woman who faced certain death, yet somehow God intervened on her behalf to deliver her back to the United States to share her harrowing experiences with the American reading public.
Similarly, Kate Kraft never believed that Bedouins would attack a party of travelers, until her party was attacked one night. Her concern, however, was not of being killed by Bedouins. "I already fancied I was carried off by an Arab chief, tied behind him on his horse, riding at a fearful rate over mounts and valleys to the place of his abode."[30] There seems to be a possible romantic nature to Kraft's wording, nonetheless. Her fear of being taken by an Arab sheik "to the place of his abode" was unique among her fellow American women travelers.

Even when individual "wild Arabs" proved to be hospitable, provided shelter and food, and gave American travelers guides and escorts, these women still continued to believe and portray Palestine's Bedouins as a monolithic entity of ruthless barbarians who would opt to steal from and kill travelers over being hospitable.
This does not suggest, however, that American women travelers saw nothing good or placed no positive characteristics upon individual Bedouins. In fact, just the opposite was true. For example, Maria Ballard Holyoke called Bedouins "lawless and predatory" when speaking about them monolithically.[31] Yet, she placed positive characteristics upon individual Bedouins such as "the Sheik of the whole district" who offered her protection. She identified him as "a splendid fellow, with a keen black eye, and a countenance expressive of sagacity, dignity and good nature." She described another Bedouin man as "brilliant eyed" who "readily returned a courteous salutation."[32] Similarly, Nellie Sims Beckman was interested in the Bedouins because she saw them as contradictory:

Murder and plunder they delight in, yet an act of kindness they will never forget. They respect the laws governing their ideas of hospitality, but do not hesitate to rob, plunder, and murder any one to whom they are not obligated. They have scanty food and clothing, but their evident happy and contented tent life make them objects of interest.[33]

Marion Harland placed both positive and negative characteristics upon Palestine's Bedouins, yet her "observations" were based on stories she heard from other members of her traveling party. She never actually met, spoke with, or reported seeing any Bedouins. "Their object in living seems to rob other tribes, and to fight the injured parties afterward," Harland believed. She identified their "leading characteristics" as "politeness and hospitality to guests; revenge and ill-doing to enemies; and a large and

level eye to the main chance, especially in the matter of robbery and horse trades."[34]

According to Harland, not only were Bedouins harsh to their enemies, they were equally harsh to their wives or daughters who they suspected of carrying on extra-matrimonial liaisons. The husband or father would take his wife or daughter on a hunting expedition, or for a long ride, and always return alone. According to Harland, no questions were asked. Or, "her father or brother takes her off out of sight of the camp, and shoots her as he would a dog suspected of hydrophobia."[35] No other American woman traveler recorded this unusually severe method of dealing with adultery or suspected adultery or other acts of "dishonor," however. Yet that is not to say that "honor killings" were not widespread in Palestine or any other place in the Middle East in the nineteenth century.

These examples tend to suggest that the American travelers did not differentiate between Arab culture and individual personalities. Thieving and murder were seen as cultural traits, while physical features and adherence to law codes were viewed as personality traits that were shared by particular Bedouins. Yet even though some Bedouins were portrayed with handsome physical features who routinely followed cultural laws regarding hospitality, underneath that veneer, so believed some of these Americans, were the sociopathic traits of thieving and murder.

As stated above, some Americans identified the Bedouins they came across as something akin to American Indians. Again, Obenzinger notes that it "was a standard association" for American travelers to equate Arabs with Indians.[36] Louise Griswold, from New York, noted that the Bedouins she came across resembled "the Camanche Indians of our own country."[37] Later on, she came upon a Bedouin encampment. She noted that they were "savage looking" and their yell resembled "an Indian war whoop."[38]

Anna P. Little came across a group of Bedouins near Jericho. Some of the Bedouins began dancing and performing for the travelers. "The leader came up to us," recalled Little, "placed his mouth to our ears, and with his hand patting his lips gave the most thrilling howls, something like the Indian war-cry."[39] Also, Little noted that the leader of this Bedouin group, whom she called "Shiek Yosef" (possibly a take off on the Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph, who would have been known in the United States at that time) gave the women a presentation "of a Bedouin on the war-path." According to Little:

He suddenly dashed off, racing over the plains, and quickly turning his horse, came like a flash to Aissi [Little's guide], who had also started his horse, and when the two met, Yosef gave an unearthly yell and drew his sword as though he intended cutting off Aissi's head.[40]

It was not the yelling of Bedouins that reminded Lucia Palmer of Indians, rather it was their horsemanship. In Bethany, Palmer noted that the government placed a group of Bedouins in charge of protection for the town and its vicinity. "The sheik was an old man; he came out to meet us, but his son, heir apparent, was to accompany us. At our appearance the son came galloping down the hill at a speed that would astonish an American Indian," recalled Palmer.[41] In another account, Lucy Bainbridge portrayed the English spoken by her Arab dragoman as broken and awkward: "Must go now, gemman; run horse six mile. Day's bad, bery bad Bedouin here; me can no make 'em do."[42]

Several women in this study tended to portray Bedouins as "Palestine Indians." It is unclear just how widespread that mentality was among the other women in this study, however. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay noted that Americans developed more intense anti-Indian views later in the nineteenth century.[43] It is clear that some of the women in this study described Palestine's Bedouins as Middle Eastern Indians. If there was a pervasive anti-Indian sentiment among the American women who ventured to Palestine, and if they tended to view Bedouins as Indians, it should not be surprising to discover Bedouins being characterized in a negative manner. Of the six who consistently portrayed Bedouins negatively, Benneson, Tadlock, Ninde, and Wallace all traveled to Palestine after 1872, the year of the Modoc War.[44]

Overall, American women travelers drew a connection between their personal safety and the relative proximity of Bedouins. While some believed the presence of Bedouins meant that they were safe and secure, others felt anything but safe and secure when Bedouins were present. Even though almost every woman in this study placed some good qualities or characteristics upon individual Bedouins, nonetheless most also feared collective Bedouins.

Only one woman in this study viewed Bedouins in a neutral manner. Mrs. D.L. Miller simply noted "During the day Bedoiun [sic] Arab camps were passed, as we saw their tents, which were made of goats' hair closely woven together, making them water-tight . . . These people are of a roving nature, therefore remain but a short time at one place. Their families go with them, of course." Miller also noted that the Bedouins she saw hunted and fished for their food in and around the Lake Hulch area. She did not place any fear in connection to their presence, nor did she seem relieved that Bedouins were in the vicinity, thus suggesting that Bedouins were not connected to safety, as many of Miller's contemporaries tended to believe. Miller's account is also unique because she used the words "people" and "families" in describing the Bedouins. In short, she never judged them; she just described them.

In conclusion, while most American women portrayed Bedouins in their published accounts as a monolithic entity and reacted with fear, some also showed individual Bedouins to be kind, honest, helpful, and hospitable. Even a few Americans drew parallels or connections between Palestinian Bedouins and American Indians. Those women never mentioned the sources of their apprehension thus suggesting that they could have simply feared what was culturally and socially foreign. Of course, by equating Bedouins with American Indians they were possibly perpetuating stereotypes of "savage" and "uncivilized" American Indians and transferring those stereotypes on people who they believe physically and socially resembled American Indians.

End Notes

1.Kate Kraft, *The Nilometer and the Sacred Soil* (New York: Carleton, 1869) p. 197.
2. Ibid., p. 263-264.
3. Mary S. Allen, *From West to East* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1898) p. 84.
4. Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) pp. 190-191.
5. Sarah Haight, *Letters from the Old World* Volume II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840) p. 136.
6. Ibid., pp. 137-140.
7. Lizzie McMillan, *Letters of Lizzie McMillan* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1902) p. 209.
8. Marie and Emma Straiton, *Two Lady Tramps Abroad* (Flushing, NY: Evening Journal Press, 1881) p. 89.
9. Mrs. Stephen M. Griswold, *A Woman's Pilgrimage* (Hartford, CT: Published by the author, 1871) p. 289.
10. Mattie Sisson Wood, *England and the Orient* (North Attleboro, MA: J.A. Wood, 1882) p. 247.
11. Sarah Barclay Johnson, *Hadji in Syria, or, Three Years in Jerusalem* (New York: Arno Press, 1977) pp. 47-48. A reprint of the edition published by J. Challen, Philadelphia [nd].
12. Ibid., pp. 125-127.
13. Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991) p. 155.
14. Jane Anthony Eames, *Another Budget.* Second Edition (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1855) p. 386.
15. Ibid.
16. Susan Brewer Thomas, T*ravels in Europe, Egypt, and Palestine* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1860) pp. 306, 307.
17. Susan E. Wallace, *Along the Bosphorus* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, 1898) p. 84.
18. Ibid, p. 84; Mary L. Ninde. *We Two Alone in Europe* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg & Company, 1886) p. 292; and, Clara Moyse Tadlock, Bohemian Days (New York: John B. Alden, 1889) p. 371.
19. Wallace, *Along the Bosphorus*, p. 84.
20. Tadlock, *Bohemian Days*, p. 371. Besides comparing the Bedouins with Texas stage-robbers, she also compared them to Mormons due to their shared custom of plural marriage. Ibid.
21. L.L. Adams, A Ride of Horseback Through the Holy Land Written for the Children (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1874) pp. 44-45.
22. Adams, A Ride on Horseback, pp. 195-106.
23. Ninde, We Two Alone in Europe, p. 292.
24. Cora Agnes Benneson, "Palestine To-Day," *The Unitarian*, September 1890, p. 431.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Dr. Sarah Furnas Wells, *Ten Years' Travel Around the World* (West Milton, OH: Morning Star Publishing Company, 1885) pp. 204-206.
29. Ibid., pp. 206-207.
30. Kraft, Sacred Soil, p. 264.
31. Maria Ballard Holyoke, *Golden Memories of Old World Lands* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1893) p. 481.
32. Ibid., pp. 472, 473.
33. Mrs. William Beckman. *Baksheesh, A Woman's Wanderings.* (San Francisco: Whitaker and Ray Company, 1900) pp. 202-203.
34. Marion Harland, *Under the Flag of the Orient* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1897) p. 171.
35. Ibid.
36. Obenzinger, *American Palestine*, p. 190.
37. Griswold, *A Woman's Pilgrimage*, p. 300.
38. Ibid., p. 304, 305.
39. Anna P. Little, *The World as We Saw It* (Boston: Cupples, 1887) p. 350.
40. Ibid., p. 348
41. Lucia Palmer, *Oriental Days* (New York: Baker and Taylor Company, 1897) p. 164.
42. Lucy Seaman Bainbridge, *Round the World Letters* (Boston: D. Lothrop & Company, 1882) p. 379.
43. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, T*he Frontier of Women's Writings* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996) p. 178.
44. As Georgi-Findlay points out, Americans tended to view Indians in a more negative manner after the 1872 Modoc War. Ibid.

"When One Sits Among The People"

Lucie Duff Gordon's Letters from Egypt

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As a child Lucie Duff Gordon (née Austin) had travelled a lot with her intellectual parents, learning to appreciate the customs of different people in many foreign countries. Yet it was not for pleasure, or by her own choice, that in 1861 she left England for good. TB forced this forty-year-old lady to leave her children, her friends and her country for The Cape of Good Hope. There she first met (and was immediately fascinated by) Islam, almost by chance:

> Yesterday I sat in the full broil for an hour or more in the hot dust of the Malay burial ground. . . . round me sat a crowd of grave brown men chanting 'Allah il Allah' to the most monotonous but musical air, and with such perfect voices. The chant seemed to swell, and then fade, like the wind in the trees. . . . I kept at a distance and sat down when they did. But a man came up and said: 'You are welcome.' So I went close . . . There were 80 or 100 men, no women, and five or six Hagees . . . the whole lot making less noise in moving and talking than two Englishmen.[1]

After a short unhappy summer back in Europe, in 1862 Lady Duff Gordon emigrated to Egypt. She stayed there, and became a sort of Bint el-Beled (daughter of the land) until her death in Cairo, where she asked to be buried, in July 1869. On her arrival in November 1862 she was welcomed by a young boy chanting the Zikr: "I never heard anything more beautiful and affecting," she wrote home.[2] Duff Gordon was immediately enchanted by Cairo: "well may the Prophet (whose name be exalted) smile when he looks on Cairo," she told her mother in November 1862.[3] The writer fell in love at once with Egyptian customs. After a short while, Islamic prayers became her prayers: for example she acquired the habit of saying Al Fatah when starting on a journey, or concluding a bargain.[4] While many Victorian women travellers preferred to be left alone and — like Marianne North — were more interested in exotic flowers than in foreign people (often labelled as "ungrateful blacks"),[5] Lucie Duff Gordon liked to be among the native people.

At first the writer (just as the Oxford-educated Katherine in the Postmodern novel The English Patient by Michael Ondatje) "read" Egypt as a three-layered text: "This country is a palimpsest in which the Bible is written over Herodotus, and the Koran over the Bible. In the towns the Koran is most visible, in the country Herodotus," she wrote home.[6] Yet, soon her perspective changed. Lucie, like a sort of Shakespearian Bottom, was gradually "translated." Living in "The French House" (or "Maison de France") in Luxor gave her the opportunity to get to know the natives exceptionally well. The house she rented was built on the ruins of the Khem temple, and was considered one of the best houses in town: even Gustave Flaubert had sojourned there in 1850. However, Lady Duff Gordon was struck by the violent way Egyptian architecture had been defaced to westernize its aspects. The effacement of Egyptian architecture therefore came to mean for her the erasure of a whole culture: "shabby French houses, like the one I live in, are being run up; and in this weather how much better would be the Arab courtyard, with its mastabah and fountain!" She wrote.[7]

If "Orientalism" (as Edward Said named the discoursive construction of the East as opposed to the West) had taken travel books by women into account, borderlines all around us and within ourselves would probably be positioned differently.[8] Unfortunately, however, the encoding of the East as "other" (meaning inferior, worse; meaning countries to be exploited, people to be enslaved, cultures to be blotted out) is a crucial patriarchal structure of Western society. And patriarchy, to protect itself, has systematically erased women, women's her/stories, women's point of view, and their writings.[9] Lady Duff Gordon's Letters from Egypt could have contributed to shape the Western conception of the Orient in quite a different way. She happened to witness what was to be a pivotal period for Egypt, the one in which Ismail Pasha succeded Said Pasha. In her letters the Victorian aristocrat juxtapposed their violent rule, as well as European exploitation and disrespect for human rights, with Islam.

The main characteristic of Islam, as Duff Gordon perceived it, was in fact its respect: particularly for those who are small, poor, female; particularly for foreigners. "What I have met with everything Arab — nothing but kindness and politeness," she wrote to the prejudiced Baronet who was her husband.[10] To her mother she explained:

> The most striking thing is the sweetness and delicacy of feeling — the horror of hurting anyone . . . the creed is simple and there are no priests, a decided advantage. It is enough for you if you do no injury to any man, and above all to any woman or little one. . . . pretty sound morality, methinks, and might be preached with advantage to a meeting of philanthropists in Exeter Hall.[11]

Victorian philathropy was characterized by the will to "improve" the life of the lower classes at home and of the natives in the colonies. Lady Duff Gordon, however, affirmed: "I don't want to improve mankind at all, or assist in the advance of civilization. Quite the other way."[12] The writer took a firm stand in favour of the oppressed Egyptians: "My heart is with the Arabs," she seemed to cry, and she stuck to her position.[13] "This country and these people . . . are so full of tender and affectionate feeling, when they have not been crushed out of them," she affirmed.[14] Lady Duff Gordon indignantly reported how ill-treated the Egyptians actually were: "What chokes me is to hear English people talk of the stick being 'the only way to manage Arabs' as if anyone could doubt that it is the easiest way to manage any people where it can be used with impunity."[15]

Having grown up among "Radicals," literally on John Stuart Mill's knee, Lucie thought it only natural that the Egyptian people should have the possibility to enjoy the same rights as her own fellow countrymen. She also earnestly believed that British authorities were intent on using their influence to help the natives obtain their "natural rights." Unfortunately, she was proved wrong: "I have been amazed at several instances of English fanaticism this year. Why do people come to a Mussulman country with such bitter hatred 'in their stomachs' as I have seen three or four times?" Duff Gordon asked in 1865.[16] Two years later she remarked: "I wonder when Europe will drop the absurd delusion about Christians being persecuted by Muslims. It is absolutely the other way — here at all events."[17] The writer, with great political acumen, focus on a further key point: "East and West is the difference, not Muslims and Christians. As to that difference, I could tell volumes. . . . I sleep every night in a makaab open to all Luxor, and haven't a door that has a lock. They bother me for backsheesh; but oh how poor they are, and how rich must be a woman whose very servants drink sugar to their coffee!"[18]

> *What chokes me is to hear English people talk of the stick being 'the only way to manage Arabs' ...*

As far as differences between East and West were concerned, Lady Duff Gordon was impressed by the fact that in several instances Arab women were freer than European women. Not only were corsets almost unheard of in Egypt, she realized, but marriage was not the only possible lifestyle for women. In 1864 she met "an eccentric Bedawee lady" called el Haggeh, The Pilgrimess: dressed like a man but for her beautiful jewels, "she is a virgin and fond of men's soci-

ety, being very clever, so she has her dromedary and goes about alone."[19] Lucie stared at her, puzzled and bewitched. "No one seemed surprised, no one stared," she wrote home, at once shocked and relieved,

> and when I asked if it was proper our captain was surprised. 'Why not? If she does not wish to marry, she can go alone . . . what harm? She is a virgin and free.' . . . She expressed her opinions pretty freely as far as I could understand her. . . . To me she seems far the most curious thing I have yet seen.[20]

For some time Lady Duff Gordon seemed to be obsessed by this queer lady. She kept on asking about el Haggeh, who she is likely to have seen as her own doppelgänger or at least a kindred spirit:

> I made further inquiries about the Bedawee lady, who is older than she looks, for she has travelled constantly for ten years. She is rich and much respected, and received in the best houses, where she sits with the men all day and sleeps in the hareem. . . . As soon as I can talk I must try and find her out. . . . There are a good many things about the hareem which I am barbarian enough to think good and rational.[21]

Several weeks later, the writer was still thinking about the mysterious pilgrimess: "I asked Mustafa about the Arab young lady, and he . . . is to let me know if she comes here and to offer her hospitality from me."[22] In the same year Lady Duff Gordon met a sixteen-year-old girl en travesti: "Her father has no son and is infirm, so she works in the field for him, and dresses and behaves like a man," she wrote home.[23]

Her father has no son and is infirm, so she works in the field for him, and dresses and behaves like a man.

Lucie enjoyed visiting hareems, where she sat for hours listening to intriguing stories told by women storytellers as skillful as Sherazade herself: "Hareem is used here like the German Frauenzimmer, and to mean a respectable woman," she told her mother.[24] Hareem was, from Duff Gordon's point of view, a place where women lived together sharing everything, even motherhood. It was a place where women, removed from the company of men, could learn to love one other: "My pretty neighbour has gone back into town. She was a nice little woman, and amused me a good deal. . . . I observed that she did not care a bit for the Pasha, by whom she had a child, but was extremely fond of 'her lady,' as she politely called her."[25] In a hareem Lady Duff Gordon was particularly awed and moved by an imposing elderly noblewoman: "She asked about my children and blessed them repeatedly, and took my hand very kindly in doing so, for fear I should think her envious and fear the eye - she had none."[26]

The female condition in Egypt was for Lady Duff Gordon at once puzzling and incredibly fascinating. On the one hand there were women who had never left their husband's home since marriage; on the other hand a married woman who had a lover seemed not to be emarginated or blamed as would happen in Victorian England. Among the Arabs there was no "double standard" in morality, as Lucie realized with delight: "Violent love comes 'by the visitation of God;' the man or woman must satisfy it or die."[27] Moreover, Lady Duff Gordon's Arab servants appeared to be "shocked at the way Englishmen talk about the Hareem among themselves, and think the English hard and unkind to their wives, and to women in general."[28] Therefore, comparing the Western "weaker sex" to the Eastern "more spirited sex," Lady Duff Gordon summed up as following: "Tout n'est pas roses for these Eastern tyrants, not to speak of the unbridled license of tongue allowed to women and children."[29]

Little by little Egypt and its Arab inhabitants became the touchstone for Lady Duff Gordon. Egypt was the country of well-bred, well-mannered people par excellance, Europe was "savage" and "incivil." In 1863, after an unhappy summer interlude in England and France, Lucie wrote contemptuously from Luxor: "It is a real comfort to live in a nation of truly well-bred people and to encounter kindness after the savage incivility of France."[30] Although Lady Duff Gordon realized in Egypt how Christianity and Islam had many common aspects ("Curious things are to be seen here in religion. Muslims praying at the tomb of Mar Girgis, St. George, and the resting-places of Sittina Mariam and Seyidna Issa, and miracles, brand-new, of an equally mixed description"),[31] when comparing Christianity to Islam, she always chose the latter. In 1864 there was a terrible epidemic of cholera in Egypt: the Coptic priests exhorted to fast and pray in order to mitigate God's wrath. She seems to have almost cried in her letters: "It is enough to make one turn Muslim to compare these greasy rogues with such high-minded charitable shurafa as Abd-el-Waris and Sheykh Yussuf. A sweet little Copt boy who is very ill will be killed by the stupid bigotry and the fast."[32]

Gradually the writer adopted a form of transculturation: she came to regard Eypt as her own country, she defined herself as a "complete Arab"[33] and "a 'stupid, lazy Arab.'"[34] In her letters home it is clear how Lady Duff Gordon started identifying herself completely with the Arabs: "A fanatical Christian dog (quadruped), belonging to the Coptic family who live on the opposite side of the yard, hated me with such virulent intensity that, not content with barking at me all day, he howled at me all night, even after I had put out the lantern and he could not see me in bed," she wrote.[35] Her estrangement from British people appears evident to the reader when she narrates about the visit of the traveller and painter Marianne North and her father, whom Lucie had known since childhood: "Mr. North looked rather horrified at the turbaned society in which he found himself. I suppose it did look odd to English eyes," she told her mother in January 1866.[36]

... though East and West have not yet truly met but only clashed; yet, they still may meet, Inshallah.

Time itself seemed to flow à l'Arabe for Lady Duff Gordon. Little by little, Western time ceased to convey any meaning whatsoever to her. "7 Ramadan," she dated a letter to her mother in 1866.[37] In April, 1868, she closed a letter with the words: "I no longer have any idea of British time, but here it is the eighth day of Mohazzan."[38] Lucie's very name was then changed by the Egyptian people, who called her Sittee ("Lady") Noor-ala-Noor ("light from His light"). This new name was given to her by a poor widow whose only son Lady Duff Gordon had saved from death.[39] In 1863 Lucie began to study Arabic seriously, although she had already known it a little: "I have been learning to write Arabic, and know my letters — no trifle, I assure you," she boasted with her eldest daughter, "I am beginning to stammer out a little Arabic, but find it terribly difficult. The plurals are bewildering and the verbs quite heart-breaking. I have no books, which makes learning very slow work."[40]

Her own language even gradually became hybrid: "at Cairo . . . we shall be, Inshallaha, on the 19th," she wrote in 1863.[41] In January 1864, commenting on a photo sent from England she remarked: "it is ugly, but very like the Zuweyeh (little one)."[42] Women, even the British, became tout court Hareem. Learned women (such as Lucie's mother, Sarah Austin) she started defining as Halmeh ("which the English call Almeh and think is an improper word");[43] alms became backsheesh, Queen Victoria of England "The English Sultana."[44] In the letters of Lady Duff Gordon expressions such as Alhamdulillah! (God be praised), Mashallah! (God bless you), Wallahy! (by God) are frequent. She also started using, translated into English, typical Arab idioms, for example "darken one's face " (meaning "bring shame") and "do not make oneself big" (i.e. not being haughty).

Lady Duff Gordon was on very good terms with the Ulema, who praised her "Mussulman feelings:"[45] "Fancy a Shereef, one of the Ulema, calling a Frengeeyeh - a heretic — 'sister'!" she exultantly wrote.[46] Although gravely ill with TB herself, the writer spent most of her time taking care of the Arabs, particularly when they became ill. When she realized that she could do nothing for them, that they were already dying, she simply held them in her own arms until the end. Her behaviour, so far from that of European women travelling in Egypt at that time, won her many hearts: "As I kissed [the boy], a very pious old moollah said 'Bismillah!' with an approving nod, and Sheykh Mohammed's old father . . . thanked me with effusion, and prayed that my children might always find help and kindness."[47] Even when a foreign Sheykh showed his disapproval of her, Duff Gordon's Egyptian friends did not let her down:

> There was a tremendous Sheykh-el-Islam from Tunis . . . seated on a carpet in state receiving homage. I don't think he liked the heretical woman at all. Even the Mahon did not dare to be as 'politeful' as usual to me. . . . Then Yussuf came . . . and sat below me on the mat, leaned his elbow on my cushion and made more demonstration of regard for me than ever. . . . It was as if a poor curate had devoted himself to a rank papist under the eye of a scowling Shaftesbury Bishop.[48]

While discussing women travellers in exotic countries, Sara Mills has used the term "going native" not only for the process of their adopting the natives' customs and the abandoning of their own, but also the fact that they "potentially aligned themselves with that culture."[49] Mills adds that "this 'going native' by women constitutes both a challenge to male Orientalism and a different form of knowledge about other countries."[50]

Lady Duff Gordon took a decisive step toward "going

native" by choosing not to differentiate between an Arab and an European tyrant — or at least a conniving accomplice of European injustice. "One feeds six or eight Arabs well with the money for one European," she bitterly remarked,"a water-melon and a loaf a-piece, and a cup of coffee all round; and I pass for a true Arab in hospitality. . . . no European can live so, and they despise the Arabs for doing it."[51] Moreover, the writer witnessed several massacres of unarmed, innocent people. She also realized despairingly that no one in England seemed to care for what the Arabs were enduring: "your letter shows how little moment the extermination of four villages is in this country," she wrote her husband. [52] Lucie, on the contrary, exposed what was happening in Egypt:

> Mahommed was really eloquent, and when he threw his melayeh over his face and sobbed, I am not ashamed to say that I cried too. . . . I know that Mohammed feels just as John Smith or Tom Brown would feel in his place. . . . Every man and woman and child in any degree kin to Achmet-et-Tayib has been taken in chains to Keneh and no one here expects to see one of them return alive.[53]

In a desperate letter to her mother, Lady Duff Gordon expressed her views with great clarity, situating her perspective in the same dust where the Arabs were forced to stay: "You will think me a complete rebel, but . . . one's pity becomes a perfect passion, when one sits among the people — as I do, and sees it all; least of all can I forgive those among the Europeans and Christians who can help to 'break these bruised reeds.'"[54]

Lady Lucie Duff Gordon's letters told the story of two cultures, the Eastern and the Western culture, which never really met each other. It would seem the violent, stupid, prejudiced Europeans still bear the blame for that.

To conclude in her spirit, though East and West have not yet truly met but only clashed; yet, they still may meet, Inshallah.

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The Doubly Bound World of Kurdish Women

By Diane E. King

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The original caption of this picture, which appeared in the 2000 Amnesty International wall calendar, tells us that it is of "Kurdish refugees" as they "collect wood for heating, village of Doganli, Turkish Kurdistan 1997." While other women trudge through the snow behind her, a woman has taken a moment out of her task of burden-carrying to pose for the camera. Most likely at the behest of the photographer, she affects a needy, helpless person reaching out for assistance.

Photograph courtsey © of Sebastiao Salgado (Amazonas Images/Contact Press Images), All Rights Reserved. "Kurds in Doganli, Turkish Kurdistan, 1997.

By the most commonly - accepted definition, a refugee is a person who has been granted protection from violence after crossing a state border. Such people rarely live in villages; they are usually housed in cities or in camps. The women in the picture are residents of a village built by the Turkish army after it

destroyed their homes in its conflict with Kurdish separatists. The image shows them gathering wood, most likely for use as fuel. This suggests the agrarian lifestyle that Kurds, and other people in the region's villages, have lived for centuries. While not materially rich, this life is nevertheless one in which people meet their own needs through cash-cropping, subsistence agriculture, and gathering, as the women are doing in the picture.

If a careful reading of this photograph and its caption thus suggests self-sufficiency to a greater degree than it suggests flight and dependency, and that the women are not "refugees" in the conventional sense of the term, no doubt there is a reason Amnesty International chose this image for its wall calendar, which is distributed annually all over the world: a list of the world's most famously battered ethnic groups would surely include the Kurds somewhere near the top. A disproportionate number of Kurds have become refugees and asylum seekers or displaced within their own countries. Around 25 million Kurds (perhaps more, perhaps fewer, since reliable census data does not exist) live mainly in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. As many as one million may now live in the West, mainly in Western Europe.Most went to the West in search of refuge.

This essay is about situatedness: the situatedness of the Kurds in global and regional context, of Kurdish girls and women within the larger body politic of Kurdish communities. Kurdish girls and women live in a double bind. As Kurds, they suffer the effects of political instability and repression. The sources of these are multiple, and implicate everyone from consumers of oil to Western governments. Until very recently, one source, Saddam Hussein and his government, loomed largest over the Kurds I know. Fear, displacement, and violence have been a way of life for many Kurdish girls and women. Hundreds of thousands were victimized on Saddam's orders. Secondly, Kurdish girls and women suffer the effects of being females in a heavily male-dominated society in which their movements and achievements are restricted, sometimes violently such as in the case of honor killings.

The future is uncertain, but one important thing is certain: that Saddam and his regime is out … nothing worse than that could happen to us in the future.

I have chosen to tell their story through the lens of my own situatedness as a female Western anthropologist studying the Kurds and living in the Arab world. As I show, the lines between the Kurds' experience and that of my own have become blurred, and this has recently made for some rich moral dilemmas. As I have spent time with the Kurds I too have experienced the binds of working under political repression and a restrictive gender system.

My entrée into the world of the Kurds began in the mid-1990s in California when I was searching for a research topic in cultural anthropology. I was interested in social change in traditional societies when the local population of Kurds caught my attention. The Kurds I met in California were mainly from Iraq, and it seemed all of them reported having suffered and fled, in most cases from the Iraqi government. When I learned that their traditional homeland had enjoyed relative political stability and openness to the outside world since the 1991 Gulf War, I decided to try to carry out my research there.

At the time, the Kurdish part of northern Iraq was not under the control of the Baghdad government; a Kurdish administration governed behind an internal border enforced in the air by the U.S., Britain, France and Turkey. People who were not of Iraqi origin, such as myself, were only allowed out of Turkey and into the region in conjunction with the relief and development efforts there. After lobbying several NGOs by fax, phone, and email, I eventually found one that would allow me to visit northern Iraq under its auspices. In return for pledging to generate data that would benefit the local population served by the NGO, I received border-crossing authorization.

On my first trip in 1995, I stayed for five weeks during which I secured permission from the Kurdish authorities to conduct research, and learned as much as I could about the social environment so as to design a research project that I would start the following year. I remember very well the day I first crossed from Turkey to Iraq at the Habur border-crossing. I hired a driver to take me from Diyarbakir, the main city in Turkey's Kurdish area, to the border a few hours away. At the border my luggage was copiously searched by gruff border guards as we waited in the scorching heat. Finally I crossed the bridge, where I was met by a representative from the NGO, an American man who worked as a veterinarian.

My first discussions with the American NGO personnel involved where I would stay, and this was determined by the local gender conventions. I had made it clear in correspondence that I wanted to be as immersed as possible in the local social environment, and I therefore insisted on living with Kurds. As a young unmarried female, however, there were few households that qualified. If I lived in a household that included one or more men, I would be the object of sexual gossip by the watching community. This would cause social problems not only for me, but for the host family. Households without men were few and far between.

One such household existed of which the NGO personnel were aware, and they had arranged for me to live there during my stay. A woman around the age of fifty who had been widowed several years earlier lived with five of her twelve children, daughters who ranged in age from early teens to early twenties. I was not the first outsider to live with them; they hosted another American, a woman who worked as a nurse for an NGO. Over the following five weeks the seven of them gave me a crash course in local mores. I hired one of the daughters as a translator and assistant. She and I made numerous visits to homes, NGOs, and the offices of local officials as I worked out the details of my research topic and settled on a plan that I would implement beginning the following summer. I returned to the US with plans to begin the following year with six months of language study followed by a year of residence in a village examining how villagers interacted with and understood the presence of international NGOs.

From the start, my introduction to Kurds and Kurdishness centered around the world of Kurdish girls and women. For me, the most striking feature of life for the girls and women I lived among was its restrictedness. During the initial weeks I struggled to learn the rules. I learned that it was considered uncouth to be seen eating in public, to walk alone anywhere, to chew gum in the presence of a man, or to drive a car. My research assistant and I took taxis and rode the bus around town, but she was very careful about where we went, and we reported all of our movements to her mother when we returned. Whenever possible, we stopped by her brother's shop near the main souq. A chat of a few minutes sufficed, and showed him and the watching community that we were not engaging in any unsanctioned behavior. As I got to know more people, I began to see this family as relatively liberal in its ways. In other households, the female members were even more restricted, and it is likely that in many families, the older members, both male and female, would have prevented any female members of the household from working with me.

… Even though Iraqi Kurdistan has been free from Saddam for the past 12 years, we were not free from the fear of him.

In 1996 I attempted to return to Iraq to begin my language study and fieldwork as planned, but arrived just as the Habur border was closed due to an incursion by the Iraqi army into the Kurdish area. I waited in Turkey for the political situation to stabilize and for the border to reopen, but neither happened as I waited for two months. Carrying out my research in Turkey was impossible due to the political repression of Kurds there, which was much in evidence. As an outsider associated with Kurds, I was also considered suspect. I was followed regularly by the secret police, interrogated in a threatening manner, and heard many testimonies from local Kurds of Turkey's violent repression. Faced with all of this, I made an unplanned trip back to the US. Determined to continue my trajectory of learning the Kurdish language and culture even if I was displaced, I visited a refugee English course for women and asked for their help. One woman told me that her husband was away working in another city, that she was living alone with her six children, and that I was welcome to come and live with her. I thus took up residence in my second Kurdish household, this time in California. Again, gender conventions dictated where I lived and among whom I associated. My host made it clear that I was able to stay only because her husband was away for an extended period. She guarded her movements and those of her teenage daughter in a manner similar to what I had observed in Iraq.

A few months later I was hired by a refugee resettlement agency as a counselor for Kurds evacuated from Iraq as a result of the same events that had prevented me from crossing the border from Turkey. The group I counseled had been employees of the NGO that had initially invited me to northern Iraq. We marveled at the unanticipated turn of events that led to our being together again, this time on the other side of the world.

In 1997 I tried again to return to Iraq. After waiting for two more months for border-crossing permission through Syria, I was finally successful. The moment I actually crossed the border is etched in my memory as a kind of homecoming. My involuntary displacement from the Kurdish region the year before, and attempts to reconstruct a Kurdish experience elsewhere, had rendered this "authentic" Kurdish locale highly desirable to me. I understood the longings for homeland that I had heard from diaspora Kurds with a new potency, one rooted in similar experiences.

"Interiors"
by Azhar Shemdin.
Winner of the Alice Peck Art Award, a juried exhibit in Burlington, Ontario, Canada

know of no female Kurdish colleagues in my field of anthropology.) I want more Kurdish artists like my friend Azhar Shemdin, who recently wrote to me, "I, as a person and artist, cherish my free spirit and individualism and detach my judgment on things from the influence of relatives and groups whatever they are. I paint what I see and experience, or read about. I try to look at the positive things that come out of misery, and try to heal life's wounds by taking refuge in nature." Azhar paints Kurdish subjects, yes, but more importantly she paints human subjects. She paints life and death. She paints tolerance. She paints pain. She paints beauty. You can see her art on the web. There are so many ways to tell the story.

End Notes

I am especially grateful to my Kurdish friends for sharing their lives with me so generously. I also thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, which funded my 1996 trip and my research in 1997-1998. I have also received funding from Washington State University, American University of Beirut, and the University of Kentucky.

Ingrid Jaradat Gassner

An Austrian Media Activist in Palestine

This is an interview conducted via email with Ingrid Jaradat Gassner, director of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights. Jaradat, who is of Austrian origin, recounts what it is like to be a foreigner living in the Arab world.

1. Background information about your self and previous political and personal interest in the Middle East before moving to Palestine.

My name is Ingrid Jaradat Gassner. I was born and raised in Austria and am an Austrian citizen. Since I grew up in an environment without any personal relations to the Middle East - no Palestinian relatives, no Jewish relatives - I grew up knowing very little about the region and the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. I was also too young to understand events during the so called "high-times" of Austrian (Bruno Kreisky's) involvement in the Middle East, and later on there was no longer any Austrian involvement. I did, however, always have a lot of curiosity and a strong sense of doubt in the validity of Austrian public opinion, including in what was said and reported by the media about the Palestinian people, starting from the days of the June 1967 war, when Austrians admired a strong and victorious Israel. My first trip to the Middle East was to an Israeli kibbutz - by pure coincidence and not by choice. Simply because there was nobody to help me and my friends travel after high school and work anywhere else, Latin America, for example, would have been our first choice.

My political education therefore began in Palestine: it was easy to understand that the kibbutz had nothing to do with socialism and that Israelis' missed the major root causes when trying to explain the conflict with the Palestinian people. Later on, I finished my B.A. degree at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At that time, I already was active with a small group of anti-Zionist Israelis and Palestinians (Matzpen). I have remained a political activist sence then, was involved in socialist organizations in Austria, the solidarity movement with the anti-colonial struggle in Latin America, until I returned to Palestine at the time of the first Intifada. For 12 years now, I have been married in Palestine. My husband and I have one son (Nadim). We live in Beit Jala, West Bank and are both founding members of BADIL Resource Center, an organization working to promote Palestinian refugee rights, foremost their right to return, as well as to restitution.

2. Why did you decide to move to Palestine?

Although I did return to Austria for a period of time (1983

- 1988), I did not really feel at home there anymore. I graduated (M.A.) from Salzburg University with a thesis on educational policies and the Palestinian minority. When I was asked to come to work at the Alternative Informaton Center in Jerusalem, an organization operated by anti-Zionist Israelis and Palestinians from Jerusalem, it seemed the natural thing to do. I was not planning an academic career for myself, and there were very limited perspectives for political activism in Austria. In addition, I had the experience and knowledge required for this type of work in Palestine. So it was mainly for reason's of political activism that I came here.

3. How did you manage to fit into the Palestinian society? Which factors facilitated and hindered your integration?
The major factor that facilitated my integration was the fact that I have shared political activism with the people here in Palestine. The fact that there were organizational frameworks in which I could work and live with the people here very much helped me to feel part of this society. I thus rapidly began to feel that the people here, and their society, were not so different from what I had been used to. In fact, I am convinced that much of what appears to be so different, culturally and socially, are customs and habits that can be negotiated if understood and taken into consideration.

Of course, I will always remain a "foreigner" for Palestinians who do not know me. This is sometimes disturbing. However, there is an advantage to the small size of Palestine - which in fact has become Bethlehem district in my case due to the military closures - and closed character of Palestinian society: People can always know who is who, and I can move freely within my network of social support.

4. How is your relationship with your Palestinian relatives?
My Palestinian relatives, i.e. my husband's mother, brothers and sisters live in Sa'ir, one of the large Palestinian villages (in the meantime declared towns) in the Hebron district. My husband's mother, Um Hamdi, is a very tolerant and smart woman, although she never had any formal schooling. She has always loved me, because she is so happy that her son found the woman he wanted to marry - after years that she and the whole family thought that he will never get married. She, as well as his brothers and sisters accept the fact that I live differently from the way they do. It is enough for them that they feel that I respect them and they respect me. The fact that we do not share a household, and even live in a different town, has certainly helped to avoid all kinds of tensions that would have appeared if we lived next to each other. So - no problems on the family front.

5. Please describe your work at Info Badil?
I am the director of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. We are an organization with a General Assembly of some 50 veteran community activists in the West Bank refugee camps, a Board of seven, and a staff of nine. It is my job to draft overall institutional strategies, raise funds, write institutional reports - in addition to taking part in the advocacy and information work implemented as part of our program.

6. How would you describe your identity today, as a woman of Austrian origin having lived in the Arab world for an extended period of time?
I would describe myself as a woman with Austrian citizenship, familiar with central European culture and thinking, but feeling like a Palestinian. I have very little tolerance for Western ignorance regarding Arab history, culture and religions, Zionism and the Palestinian struggle - and even less tolerance for Western arrogance and the percieved Western monopoly on democracy and civilization.

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights is a Palestinian community-based organization that aims to provide a resource pool of alternative, critical and progressive information and analysis on the question of Palestinian refugees in the quest to achieve a just and lasting solution for exiled Palestinians based on the right of return.

BADIL was established in January 1998 and is registered with the Palestinian Authority and legally owned by the refugee community represented by a General Assembly composed of activists in Palestinian national institutions and refugee community organizations.

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Arda Arsenian Ekmekji
An Armenian-Lebanese Academician Recounts

Myriam Sfeir
IWSAW Staffer

Arda Ekmekji is an Armenian Lebanese scholar living in Beirut. Born in Jerusalem, Ekmekji lived in Jordan until 1968 after which she came to Lebanon to enroll in the American University of Beirut (AUB). She holds a BA in Ancient History and an MA in Archaeology from the AUB. She also has a Ph.D. in Archeology from the University of Paris I (Sorbonne). Ekmekji served as a faculty member at AUB for around two decades teaching Cultural Studies, Ancient Religions and Civilizations as well as Archaeology. She then moved to Haigazian University in 1997. She began as Director of the Faculty of Humanities and since 1998 has served as Dean of Arts and Sciences at Haigazian University.

Ekmekji recounts that her family fled to Palestine due to the ethnic cleansing of Armenians that took place at the beginning of the century in Turkey. She recounts: "Thousands of Armenians fled to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq." Ekmekji asserts that even though she is ethnically Armenian she feels very Lebanese and admits that culturally she is very Arab because she has been living in Lebanon for the past 35 years. She asserts: "I think I have lived in Lebanon more than I have lived any where else in my life. I feel very Lebanese and part of the system. I strongly believe that when you live through a war and then peace in the same county that counts for something." Ekmekji admits that most Armenians living in Lebanon consider themselves Lebanese. "Lets face it, we are very much part and parcel of the local fabric. We have no anxieties regarding not knowing where we are or where we belong. We feel we belong here, that is why we never thought of leaving Lebanon during the war years. We lived the hardships of the war just like our Lebanese next-door neighbors. We were threatened by the same bombs, endured the same misfortunes."

On living in Lebanon Ekmekji continues that the Lebanese system accommodates everyone. The multi-cultural makeup of the Lebanese society is what is distinctive about Lebanon, she admits. Moreover, the fact that the system in Lebanon is based on 19 denominations with religious representation makes all the difference. Ekmekji explains: "In Lebanon you are born, you get married, get divorced, inherit, die and are buried based on your religious sect. Things happen first at the religious level unlike the West where matters are settled at the civic level. In this part of the world religion is not an option, without a religious passport you can't do much. Hence, the fact that you are an Armenian living in Lebanon does not

imply that you are an outsider. On the contrary, you are seen as belonging to one of the 19 different equally balanced and accordingly proportioned denominations that make up the Lebanese society. Therefore you are given your own little niche and you do whatever you want as long as it is permissible."

However, Ekmekji admits that despite the fact that Armenians are well integrated in the Lebanese system and have adopted it as their own in certain aspects, they still prioritize the Armenian culture first and foremost. Armenians, in an attempt not to forget their Armenian heritage have founded their own institutions in Lebanon such as schools, universities, academic centers, churches, etc., which cater to Armenian cultural and educational needs. Given that the Armenians have lost a lot of their heritage due to the Armenian exodus, they strive to preserve what is left of their culture. She admits: "We are burdened in a sense because we are fighting a number of battles. On the one hand we want to preserve our Armenian heritage and on the other we want to fit into the Lebanese culture. Our children are expected to learn the language and familiarize themselves with Armenian culture.

Ekmekji goes on to explain that Armenians living in Lebanon do not face any restrictions. She admits: "In Lebanon no one says we can't speak Armenian or found our own institutions or have our own church, or teach Armenian. Had we been living in a country where we are not allowed to even mention that we are Armenian, that would have been traumatic." However she acknowledges the fact that Armenians are stereotyped by the Lebanese: "If you are an Armenian you are supposed to eat Basterma, speak broken Arabic and live in Bouj Hammoud." Ekmekji explains that the reason why Armenians, when speaking Arabic, mix genders is because the Armenian language is gender neutral. "Our grammar has no feminine and masculine and I think that is very indicative of the way we think. Our minds fail to differentiate between masculine and feminine objects."

Being an archeologist I think of myself as downtown Beirut with all its layers ... I have all these levels which are extremely rich in my culture.

Ekmekji continues: "My identity is extremely rich. Being an archeologist I think of myself as down town Beirut with all its layers, namely the Byzantine level, the Roman level, the Greek level, etc. When I think of myself I have all these levels which are extremely rich in my culture. Given that both my parents are Armenian, I feel very Armenian, I appreciate the Armenian culture and speak the Armenian language and this is one important layer of my personality. The fact that I am Armenian is like the cherry on the cake, it never slowed me down. Another enrishing layer is due to the fact that I was born in Jerusalem and lived there till the age of 17. Besides, having lived all my adult mature life in Lebanon, I have an enormous layer which is Lebanese. Also there are all the other sub-layers that come in like being exposed to the American system of education, the American and the French. Besides, being engaged in academia, in voluntary work through various NGOs, being a member of various committees, belonging to the Armenian evangelical church, etc. Ekmekji affirms that these multi-faceted layers that form her identity have added spice to her life. "Being able to shift gears between all these different layers is vital and enriching. It does not affect me negatively or make me feel schizophrenic. On the contrary, I think its very boring to hear an orchestra playing on one string. If you can play on a number of different strings you will get nicer music provided you can blend the sounds properly."

According to Ekmekji, what unifies Armenians is the Armenian culture and language. She recounts that she once attended an International Armenian women's gathering in which there were around 200 Armenian women from all over the world and the only common denominator between all these women was that they were Armenian. Yet culturally they differed intensely. "What is common between an Armenian women brought up in Tehran, a second brought up in Los Angeles, and a third brought up in Lebanon? When they get together there is only the Armenian culture and heritage that binds them. However, in terms of modes of dress, mentality, and ways of thinking one is typically Iranian the other is typically American and the third typically Lebanese. How I think, vote, the way I dress are all influenced by the culture in which I live. For instance, an Armenian woman living in Tehran might be wearing the chaddor when she steps out of her house. On the other hand if you take me as an example, as an Armenian woman living in Lebanon, I am no different than any Lebanese. When walking on the street I do not send out signals indicating I am Armenian. I do not have a specific mode of dress, I do not wear a sari for instance. In my private life I am different because I talk to my daughter in Armenian. Moreover, if there is an Armenian dance group performing I would like to attend the event. Besides, I attend a church service each Sunday that is in Armenian. Yet, I do

all the other things the Lebanese way i.e.. I celebrate my independence day, labor day, I vote, etc. If I sit with my Lebanese neighbor, who is a non-Armenian, and discuss the situation of women within the family we wouldn't find much difference in our situations."

Ekmekji affirms: "We Armenians are very conservative. A single mother is an issue of great scandal, a divorced women is still unacceptable in society, and a widow living alone is still frowned upon, but this is the case of Armenian Lebanese. An Armenian living in France will not suffer the same problems. It depends on the country you are living in and the rules of the game." She holds that the typical image that comes to ones mind when one thinks of an Armenian woman is the image of the Armenian mother. She explains: "Armenian women are expected to take care of the children and raise them properly. Hence, any woman who ventures outside the home and decides to work in the public sphere has to fulfill all the domestic requirements first." On mixed marriages Ekmekji admits that intermarriages between Armenians and non-Armenians are acceptable nowadays. Given that Armenians are dispersed all over the world they are marrying non-Armenian men. These marriages are taking place because it is hard to convince the new generation why they should marry Armenians only. However, Ekmekji asserts that getting married to an Armenian and in the Armenian way is still highly valued and essential in order to preserve the Armenian culture and heritage.

Ekmekji recounts that when the Armenians first came to Lebanon they were unable to mix with Lebanese because of the language barrier. Given that they only spoke Armenian and Turkish they felt very isolated. Moreover, the trauma of belonging to a country and nation which has experienced genocide drove them to cling to each other, haunted by the importance of survival and the need for protection and even over protection. This is where the myth, that Armenians live in ghettos, developed. Armenians are accused of living in their own cocoon, refusing to mix with others and forbidding their children to play with their non-Armenian neighbors. This was partly true, though later generations saw the situation change because Armenians gradually learned Arabic and thus the artificial barriers disappeared. Ekmekji holds: " Given that we live in Ras Beirut, my daughter is mistaken for a Ras Beiruti because she has the typical accent. She is one hundred percent Lebanese despite the fact that she is Armenian and has attended an Armenian school for 14 years of her life. Moreover, if I am to ask her where she would like to live and encouraged her to choose any country in the world she would choose Lebanon. She is a typical Armenian Lebanese.

... despite the fact that Armenians are well integrated in the Lebanese system ... they still prioritize the Armenian culture first and foremost.

On moving to Haigazian, Ekmekji admits that leaving AUB was not easy. The move was a big and challenging one she affirms. "Given that Haigazian is a small institution, the challenges were great and I felt there was so much I could do." Ekmekji explains that Haigazian was founded in I955 in honor of Dr. Armenag Haigazian, a highly respected Armenian educator who was killed during the Armenian genocide. When Haigazian opened its doors in 1955 it had an enrollment of 43 students. With time student enrollment increased and the current student body is 750 students. When the university was first established it was designed to function as a Junior College, offering two years of university-level education. However, the demand for upper classes increased, pressuring the institution to develop a variety of four-year programs. The student body is 50% Armenian, the rest come from a large number of different nationalities. Ekmekji holds: "I am very happy with the move because at Haigazian I feel I am reaching out to students. Qualitative changes happen very fast at Haigazian because we are a small institution. If someone has a creative ingenious idea it is easily implemented, there is no need to go through the bureaucracy imposed by big universities. We have implemented great changes in curriculum design and programs. Given that I have worked in the field for many years I am aware of the loopholes and try to make things better for faculty members."

Ekmekji concludes that Armenian women living in Lebanon have all the advantages enjoyed by Lebanese women and suffer the same handicaps, crippling them. Women in Lebanon have made great strides in improving their status, however, discrimination still persists. Despite the fact that the Lebanese female population is the most educated in the Arab world and although women in Lebanon have a high rate of school attendance that exceeds that of males, yet, they still are absent from the political arena. Women in Lebanon could make a difference if they were given the chance. "Mind you, Armenians are obsessed with educating their children irrespective of their gender. Actually, they would rather go hungry than not educate their children. Also it is important to note that Armenian women have made huge strides and are pushing to reach decision making and top ranking positions."

Experiencing Feminism as "De-Foreignizing"*

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The following is a brief account on how feminism became a road in, or a common route, for a non-Arab woman - one not born an Arab nor claiming Arab ancestral links - who went to an Arab country to live as an "insider".

As a young woman when I went to Egypt to settle after my marriage to an Egyptian I met with many different people who took it upon themselves to tell me how to act in ways that I found restrictive. While I was chaffing at ways people were trying to reshape me, I met some first-wave Egyptian feminists. I discovered that many things that I had been told were part of my Egyptian culture - things that I, the female foreigner, must accept - they called injustices perpetrated against women and they encouraged my resistance. Patriarchal controls imposed on women were not part of a sacrosanct culture, they insisted, and must not be given the gloss of indigenous culture or religious prescription to be preserved. Saiza Nabarawi, whom I met in 1967, and who became a mentor and elder friend, had, along with her mentor and elder, Huda Sha'rawi, removed the veil from her face thirty-four years earlier in an act that signaled their refusal to conform to patriarchal control cunningly imposed in the name of Islam and "indigenous culture"[1]

The unveiling was enacted on the eve of the feminist movement they would help lead for a quarter of a century. In telling me the story of her unveiling, Nabarawi was urging me to investigate and question restrictions and injustices imposed in the name of culture; she was teaching me that there was also a local tradition of dissent and resistance against injustices to women and that this was as much a part of the culture as the restrictions it opposed. She told me about the feminist movement of which she had been a part from the 1920s until the mid-1950s and how, after the dissolution of an independent feminist movement in 1956 by the state under President Nasser, she had kept a low profile at home and had become more visibly active in the international arena.[2] Had I not met Saiza Nabarawi, Hawa Idris (the niece of Huda Sha'rawi), Inji Aflatun (a communist and feminist writer, activist and artist), Duriyya Shafiq (leader of the Bint al-Nil feminist movement), and others in whose homes I visited, I would not have been aware of the continuation of a behind - the - scenes feminist discourse. I could point now to them and their activism as examples of a tradition of insider resistance: I could make their arguments mine - arguments framed in the discourses of culture, nation and religion. I did not have to be the dutiful pupil forced into remedial learning.

Early last century, when Egyptian feminists exposed and confronted patriarchal oppression, they were branded foreign. They and their feminism were discredited as Western despite the fact that these disturbing "aliens" were Egyptian women with impeccable nationalist credentials, who had been active in the nationalist movement against British colonial rule, and whose nationalist activism - inseparable from their feminism - was enthusiastically accepted. Thus, it was with Egyptian activist women castigated as foreigners that I began my journey through the minefields of the gendered "us-es" and "thems". From these women, I learned about ways of thinking and behaving that were alternative to the conventions that had been presented to me as obligatory in the discourses of nation, culture, and Islam. I learned from them how they had fought to construct a new identity for Egyptian women, initially simply as persons with the right to move in public space, to alter their dress and habits, and to be respected while exhibiting new forms of decent behavior; and I learned how they later demanded their rights to be fully participating citizens of a modern, independent state. These women, who had bridged colonial and postcolonial society, found that their own subject positions had changed from fully accepted participants in the militant nationalist struggle to second-class citizens in the new quasi-independent state in 1923.

From them, I learned how they experienced being foreign. This was first, by not being accorded in practice the full and equal rights of citizenship that the Egyptian constitution granted them and, second, by being labeled as "Western" and thereby delegitimized because they dared to object. I was reinforced in my own will not to succumb to the attempts of others to define and control me, not to bow indiscriminately to inherited modes of behavior. I saw firsthand that it was not simply one set of Egyptians - or only conservative Egyptians - who could admit one into society, nor one set of conventions, to which one must adhere to become "properly" Egyptian. I learned that the epithet "Western" used in a pejorative sense could be applied to anyone in an attempt to place her outside the borders of acceptability, to "foreignize". The last of the "first-wavers" accepted me as 'one of them", in Saiza Nabarawi's words. She, Hawa Idris, Amina al-Sa'id, Inji Aflatun, and others understood that I had not come to Egypt to perch on the fringes, enjoying the easy social and economic benefits that accrued to expatriates, but to settle, to live the hard times with them, to become one of them. Intentions and actions mattered as they dissolved the borders between themselves and me. These feminists, who well understood the manipulative, delegitimizing, and stigmatizing uses of the foreign, gave me the chance to become an insider and to choose what to accept and reject, and the chance to shape my own identity.

My interactions with these Egyptian feminists drew together two projects: the personal project of becoming an insider in Egypt and a professional project of academic research on the history of the rise of feminism in Egypt. The two projects worked to reinforce and enhance each other. I felt that my research was a path to a deeper understanding of Egypt and a grasp of its culture - of both its plural realities and its possibilities for change. My relationships with my elder mentors, meanwhile, helped me live Egypt differently.

By the mid-1980s, Egypt had been my home for twenty years, although during these years I came and went frequently. Several years earlier I had finished my thesis on the first wave of Egyptian feminism for my doctorate at Oxford University. throughout the process I had continued to mesh personal and professional projects.[3] Twenty years was a long time and my sense of being foreign in Egypt had become muted. I had staged resistances and had made accommodations. If I felt that people had given me more space to be myself, I also was a different person than I had been before. And it would not be long before I would lose my early feminist mentors and guides: Saiza Nabarawi, Hawa Idris, Inji Aflatun, and Amina al-Sa'id, all of whom died in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

We came together as women & formed our own feminism from the base of shared experience and the common problems we faced living in Egypt.

Egypt was a different place from the country I had first entered. In the afternoon of Nasser's death in 1970 and with the coming to power of Anwar Sadat, Arab socialism was dismantled "open door" capitalism was introduced, a multi-party system was permitted to surface, and formerly silenced voices and ideologies were once again allowed in public space. This period saw the rise of Islamism, or political Islam, and with it the dissemination of a reactionary discourse on women and gender. But feminism, too, found expression once again in this new, more open public space. If the first-wavers I met in Egypt lent me a hand in pulling me in and mentoring me, I participated alongside second-

wavers in enacting our feminism. We came together as women and formed our own feminism from the base of shared experience and the common problems we faced living in Egypt.

Second-wave feminism inside Egypt was constructed around our shared experience and positionings as women. A major concern of the new second-wave feminism was the rise of a reactionary discourse about women articulated by political Islam. As participants in the construction of second-wave feminism, we articulated what we lived in Egypt, or witnessed at close hand in a place where we spent our daily lives; we were conceiving a new wave of feminism from within (although the perennial and ignorant allegations that feminism was Western could be heard in certain quarters). Ethnicity, race, and origins were not constitutive of the "us". The "us" of Egyptian feminism accommodated difference; it was pluralistic; it included foreigners; it included men. My participation in this second-wave feminism, which continued the fight against the patriarchal, social, and economic injustices women faced, brought me further inside.

In the 1980s, Nawal al-Saadawi, who combined socialism and feminism, encouraged me to join the Arab Women's solidarity association (AWSA) in Cairo, which she had recently founded. I attended the monthly nadwas (public seminars) held at the AWSA headquarters where women and men debated gender issues affecting our lives in Egypt. As a historian, I gave papers at AWSA analyzing aspects of women's nationalist and feminist past in Egypt.[4] I published both scholarly papers and articles in the local Arabic and English press. In 1990, Sana' al-Bissi invited me to write an essay on the meaning of feminism for the mass circulation magazine she had founded called Nisf al-Dunya [Half the World].[5] Through such projects, I participated in Egyptian intellectual and activist life, exploring and experiencing Egyptian feminism as pluralist rather than particularlist.

Feminists wanted to hold the ground and Islamist women activists wanted to change the ground ...

In the 1980s and early 1990s, identity politics was rampant both in Egypt and in the West, though its reverberations and concepts of foreignness were markedly different in these two settings. In Egypt and other parts of the Middle East, identity politics pivoted around secular and religious poles. Second-wave feminists were concerned with what we saw as the dangers of a spreading, gender-conservative Islamism. Feminists wanted to hold the ground and Islamist women activists wanted to change the ground as part of a larger movement intent upon establishing an Islamic state. In 1990, Valentine Moghadam organized a conference on Women and Identity Politics in which I participated along with many scholars from the Middle East.[6] At this conference, we discussed the dissatisfaction we detected on gender issues from women associated with Islamist movements, specifically the older Islamist movements in Egypt and Iran. We were seeing the seeds of what was later to be called Islamic feminism.

ENDNOTES

*This text is taken from a chapter by the author entitled "Foreign Bodies: Engendering Them and Us" previously published in *The Concept of the Foreign: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* edited by Rebecca Saunders and published by Lexington Books in 2002. (pp. 91 -114)

1. Saiza Nabarawi herself had had insider-outsider problems when, after having been raised ostensibly as a "French girl" in her early teens, she returned to live in Egypt in her country of birth. Her periodic recounting of this story told me that she never quite got over a sense of displacement, even though she felt intensely Egyptian and was a fervent nationalist. See my article "Alternative Visions of Gender", Al Ahram Weekly (Feb. 13-19, 1997), 11.
2. My book, Feminists, Islam, and Nation tells the story of the first-wave feminist movement.
3. My doctoral thesis is entitled, "Huda Sha'rawi and the Liberation of the Egyptian Woman," presented to Oxford University in 1977. The thesis, which is available at the Bodleian and certain other university libraries, contains materials not published in my book.
4. One of the papers I presented is "Al-Nisa'iyya ka quwwa fi al-'alam al-'arabi" ["Feminism as a Force in the Arab world"] which was published in al-Fikra al-mu'asira al-'arabiyya wa al mar'a [Contemporary Arab Thought and the Woman] (Cairo: Arab Women's Solidarity Association, 1989).
5. The article is called 'Ma hiyya al-nisa'iyya?" ["What is Feminism?"] Nisf al-dunya 34, no.7 (Sept. 21, 1990), 85.
6. The conference was held in Helsinki in the fall of 1990; many of the papers were published in a volume edited by Valentine Moghadam called Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective (Denver: Westview Press, 1993). My chapter in this book is titled: "Gender Activism: Feminists and Islamists in Egypt", 202 -27.

To be an Arab or not to be... that is the question!

By Mona Katawi
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When I was offered to write an article as a non-Arab woman living in Lebanon, I paused for a while before answering, wondering whether I really felt like a non-Arab. I have been pondering about this ever since, wondering what makes an Arab. This subject turned out to be more elaborate than I had first thought. If being, or for that matter, not being an Arab were simply a question of origin, of blood and genes, things would look slightly more calculable. I rather doubt that one can be born as an Arab, since "Arabism" is not a state induced by natural processes, but rather through socialization and acculturation. It seems that many factors have to be taken into consideration, as the place where one has lived, which language one speaks and, sometimes, the physical appearance. Two worlds that often clash are the way people view themselves and the way they are viewed by others. This is precisely the point where I faced most of the difficulties. My father was born in a village in Palestine, and he left his village for Germany to continue his studies when he was about 18 years old. My mother's family emigrated from Portugal, turning Germany into their new home decades ago. I thus see myself as a product of three cultures, but my mother tongue is German and Germany is the place where I feel at home. When people ask me whether I feel more like an Arab or a German, I tend to say that I am "fragmentary", that I am a product of many cultures and that such a question is oversimplified. It would certainly be justifiable to ask whether at all it is important to answer this question. However, after one year of living in Beirut, I realized that this question was central to my experience in Lebanon and other Arab countries. This might be linked to the fact that people, in general, are afraid of what they don't know, and therefore like to categorize things. A human being without a culture must seem like a bewildering case!

My impressions are mainly based on my experiences in Beirut, in particular, and Lebanon, in general, and I will narrate a few incidents from my past to clarify the points I'm trying to make. When I was a child, I lived in Nablus for a couple of years. There, people always regarded me as a foreigner. I tried my best to be accepted as an Arab girl, but very often I was spoken to in English, even if I talked to people in Arabic. My friends frequently accused me of not being able to understand their culture and what the Palestinians have been through because I was not a "real" Arab. It seemed to me they had created an intimate circle in which they could talk freely. A silent wall was built between themselves, the Arabs, and me, the

"outsider". There was a general kind of mistrust toward my mother, my siblings, and me. Once, my parents wanted to choose a new school for my sister and me and when we went to look at the new school, many kids started insulting us, calling us Jews and apostates, and saying we would burn in hell.

Interestingly, my sister, who has darker skin than I do, and whose Arabic is more fluent than mine, found it easier to be accepted as an Arab. Here I would like to clarify what I mean by more "fluent". In fact, we both have the same accent, which our friends often teased and called "heavy". The difference between us was that my sister mastered many of the expressions common to the Arabic language. There are expressions in the Arabic language for several occasions, as when somebody has showered, when someone gets a new haircut, or when one returns safely from a trip and many other occasions. I reckon this is an important aspect of the Arabic language I have failed to master. On one occasion, I met the sister of a friend and I asked her how her sister was doing. She said her sister was sick, and instead of using the proper expression "May she get healthy", I said "Thank God for her health", which was certainly unsuitable. Another thing my friends often found amusing was that I never learned how to belly dance and that all my attempts to imitate their elegant dance failed. They used to wrap a shawl around my waist and make me dance in the middle of the classroom, while everybody else was clapping and laughing.

At the time, being called an Arab irritated me, since I felt it cut the truth short and left a major part of my life out of consideration.

Nevertheless, these memories certainly do belong to the positive sides of my experience in Nablus, even though it often was painful for a child of my age to feel like an outsider. Surprisingly, when it came to my behavior, many expected me to behave according to the norms and rules that were common at that time in Nablus. I remember getting angry looks and receiving hostile remarks for the way I walked, dressed or laughed. It was not common to hear women laugh aloud in public. I guess my passion for the hippie style at that time also must have shocked people.

In Beirut, this has seemed to be even more so, even though there has not been one standard way of perceiving me. Often I have felt that people were trying to impose an identity on me that was not my own, simply because of my physical appearance and my name. It is also important to mention the fact that I came to Lebanon after having lived in Germany and Italy for several years. I had come to think of myself as a European, and I had lost a lot of my Arabic. At the time, being called an Arab irritated me, since I felt it cut the truth short and left a major part of my life out of consideration. It also seemed to me a rather patriarchal viewpoint, leaving my mother out of consideration, even though she was the parent that brought me up. I am sure that in many cases, people didn't have bad intentions.

However, the anger I felt was increasing. Since I felt my Arabic was bad, I often talked to people in English. Some would simply answer in Arabic. Once, when I asked a man something in English, another man who was standing next to him said, "Talk to her in Arabic. She's an Arab." One day, I went to an Internet café with my boyfriend, who is German and looks German, as people say. We sat there, surfing on the Internet, when the shopkeeper came and asked us where we are from. We both said Germany, but he didn't seem to like my answer. He told me that I look Lebanese. I just ignored what he said. He left, and I thought the issue was settled. After a few minutes, he came over again, emphasizing the fact that I certainly don't look German. Since I felt he was intruding into my private sphere, I didn't give him the answer he would have liked to hear. He went back to his desk, and a few minutes later, he took out a Koran and started reading some verses aloud. We were alone in the Internet café, and we felt extremely uncomfortable.

However, this is just one part of my experience in Lebanon. I guess that living in Beirut has also helped me solve the dilemma of my identity. I learned to be open about my origin and to talk about the way I view things. I met several people who seemed to be just as fragmentary as I was and who were interested in talking about their experiences abroad and in Lebanon. This experience has helped me to combine all aspects of my identity and not to refuse the Arab elements of it, since without it, I would probably not be the same person. My time in Lebanon will soon come to an end, but I am glad I have realized there were many people who have accepted me for who I am.

Attitudes Toward Mixed Marriages in Bahrain: The Eroticization of Class

■ Sharon Nagy

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Abstract

Drawn from two years of ethnographic research amongst foreign residents in Bahrain this paper discusses marriages between Bahraini men and non-Arab women.[1] The first half of the paper outlines the entry of non-Arab women into the migrant workforce in Bahrain and the obstacles to marriage between these women and Bahraini men. The second half of the paper discusses the cultural attitudes toward mixed marriages and compares Bahraini-European marriages to Bahraini-Filipina marriages in order to explore the intersections of race and class in shaping attitudes towards mixed marriages. Bahraini-Filipina marriages meet with greater criticism and resistance from the extended family of the groom and the participants are subject to greater stigmatization than are Bahraini-European marriages. This paper illustrates how the current economic and social hierarchies shaping migration to the Arab Gulf influence attitudes of race, class and sexual attractiveness.

Migrants and Marriage in Bahrain

Societies in the Arab Gulf are examples of extensive transnational labor migration with foreign residents sometimes outnumbering citizens. Most foreign residents come from South Asia, Iran, and other Arab countries. Yet, as circumstances in the local and global labor markets have changed, significant numbers of East and South East Asian workers have migrated to the Gulf, particularly to work in the fields of hospitality, retail, leisure and health services. With the addition of South East Asia as a source of labor, the number of unaccompanied women migrating to work in the Gulf has increased. Unlike the South Asian countries from which male laborers emigrate more often then women, women represent a large proportion of emigrants from the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia.

Despite this transnationalized population, inter-marriage between Gulf Arab men and non-Arab women has remained relatively low.[2] The endogamous traditions of Gulf societies remain strong. The preference is to marry someone from within a related lineage, similar social category, and religious sect, or at least an Arab. Some Gulf States, such as Qatar, formally discourage marriages to non-Arabs by requiring the prospective groom to apply for "permission" and banning him from employment in the civil service or security forces. Bahrain does not apply any such legal obstacles against marrying non-Bahrainis. In fact, unlike women in Bahrain who are the accompanying spouse of an employed non-Bahraini, who hold "housewife visas" and are prohibited from legally working in fields other than teaching or nursing, women married to

Bahrainis are allowed to work in any field. In addition, the female spouse of a Bahraini can apply for Bahraini citizenship. A wife's application for Bahraini citizenship takes a minimum of five years. In the meantime, she must maintain her residency visa, an often time-consuming and costly process. These visa regulations, however, are not really obstacles to mixed marriage. In fact, it's unlikely that many men and women learn about these legal requirements until after they are married. For them, it's a bureaucratic hassle and a periodic reminder that they've gone against social norms.

Women in the Migrant Workforce

If the legal obstacles are not sufficient to deter marriages across boundaries of nationality, what then has kept the numbers of mixed marriages low? One factor has been the gender balance of the migrant population. Since migration to Bahrain is primarily a migration of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers, the migrants have until recently been overwhelmingly men unaccompanied by their families. Women were at first only a very small part of this labor migration. It was not until the 1980s, with the shift to South East Asian labor and the growth in the service industry, that Bahraini employers began recruiting women in increasing numbers.

Household work was one of the first jobs available to non-Bahraini women. This despite the fact that, until fairly recently, Gulf Arabs hired men to work as household laborers at least as often as they hired women. Like other occupations, both male and female household workers were originally recruited from other Arab or South Asian countries. The feminization of household labor in the Gulf States began roughly in the late 1970s and is still incomplete in some countries (Sabban 2002). The demand for female workers was actually greater in other occupations where women are recruited as groups to work in institutions and factories. In the 1950s and 1960s, Bahrain's schools recruited Egyptian and Palestinian women as teachers. In the 1970s, Indian women joined their Levantine and North African counterparts when Bahrain's hospitals recruited them to work as nurses. At this time, European women also entered Bahrain's workforce. In some cases, these were the spouses or dependents of skilled expatriate employees. However, single unaccompanied European, especially British, women also took jobs in Bahrain. Because of Bahrain's history as a under the United Kingdom's protection, British citizens have long been able to enter Bahrain without applying for a visa beforehand. During the economic boom of the 1970s, some young Britons took advantage of this to find work in Bahrain. The women amongst them often found office jobs in businesses where English was an asset. At the same time, companies serving an international clientele such as airlines and hotels recruited women from Europe.

As Bahrain's economy diversified in the 1980s, employers began to turn to South East Asia, particularly the Philippines, as a source of unskilled and semi-skilled labor. The entry of Filipinas into Bahrain's labor force brought a shift in the gender balance of the foreign population. The South Asian laboring population in Bahrain has always been overwhelmingly male. In contrast, the population of overseas contract workers from the Philippines tips in favor of women - many of whom are young, single, and unaccompanied. International media have drawn needed attention to the South East Asian household workers in the Middle East. However, household work is only one of the many occupations held by South East Asian women in the Gulf. Filipinas, for example, work in jobs of all skill levels from waitresses to doctors, from manicurists to investment bankers. They are particularly ubiquitous in hospital services, the service sector, and the entertainment and leisure industries.

Although women had been recruited as teachers and nurses much earlier than the 1980s, before this point, it would have been quite rare to be served by a woman in a restaurant or shop. The entry of women into the service sector, particularly as retail clerks, waitresses and entertainers represents several significant shifts in the culture of Bahrain's public sphere. First, it puts women into positions where they are in contact with large and diverse clientele. This is not the case with teachers, nurses and household workers. There are still many Bahraini women who would not feel comfortable working in public; such exposure contradicts conservative Bahraini values of gender separation and privacy.[3] Thus, the morality of the foreign women in these positions is subject to questioning based on these very same values.

Second, the recruitment of women in the retail and service sector was accompanied by a change in practices with respect to the housing and supervising of female workers. The teachers and nurses recruited between the 1950s and 1970s lived in dormitories subject to curfews and supervision. Dormitories are no longer the norm. More commonly, staff are either housed in employer provided apartments shared with co-workers or rent their own rooms or apartments. In either case, the level of supervision during their off time is much lower. Employees may be restricted from entertaining guests of the opposite sex in their apartments, but are only rarely subject to curfews.[4]

Third, the feminization of the service sector shapes criteria for assessing feminine attractiveness. Workers serving the public are recruited based on the perceived appeal they will have to prospective clientele. Employers regularly set height and weight standards; impose dress codes; and, screen applicants for personability, physical appearance and personal hygiene. In general, Bahraini men and women perceive South East Asian and European women to be more consistently pleasing and attractive than they do South Asian or African women. Many of the cultural and physical features deemed typical of South East Asian and European women prove to be advantages in the labor market, and the continued placement of such women in positions associated with consumption and leisure reinforce the perception of their sexual attractiveness. However, as we will see in the following discussion, these same features and the nature of work in the public sphere contribute to a stigma associated with immorality and sexual promiscuity. It is important to emphasize here that cultural and class values can be a strong deterrent to inter-ethnic dating and mixed marriages.

Cultural Attitudes Discouraging Inter-ethnic Dating and Mixed Marriages

Until the mid-1980s, marriages between Bahraini men and non-Arab women remained relatively rare. During the 1970s and 1980s, one would occasionally hear about Bahraini men who'd married European or American women. More often than not, these were upper and upper middle class Bahrainis who'd met their wives while travelling or studying abroad. At the other end of the spectrum, are the tales about Arabs traveling to India for "cheap brides"—young women taken from poverty to wed elderly or impotent grooms. While the later were often understood as representing the sexist and patriarchal horrors of polygyny, arranged marriages, bride wealth systems and poverty, the former were interpreted as inevitable signs of Bahrain's emerging cosmopolitanism

While this handful of brides were being brought back from the West or India in the 1960s and 1970s, the occasional marriage must have been taking place between Bahrainis and foreign women working in Bahrain. However, these marriages never became fodder for sustained public discourse. The occasional marriages to household workers would not have represented a significant shift in practice. Arabs had been intermarrying with their African and Arab servants for generations. With regard to the foreign teachers and nurses, these women were employed in respected professions, were carefully supervised during their off time, and came from cultures that prefer arranged marriages over love matches. So, even the few marriages that did take place were likely to have been deemed respectable due to the cultural and, in most cases, religious similarities. In this early phase of women's migration to Bahrain, it was the unaccompanied European, particularly British, women who were often negatively received. The flight attendants working with Gulf Air are an obvious example of non-Arab women working in Bahrain before the 1980s. Although housed together in employer provided apartments, by nature of their work the flight attendants had considerable freedom to move about and socialize in mixed gender settings. Viewed from the perspective of Arab-Islamic norms, these unaccompanied European women raised some consternation and many eyebrows. What sort of families would "allow" their daughters to migrate unaccompanied and unsupervised? What kind of background encouraged them to work and socialize amongst men not related to them? Not only were these women without the social legitimacy and respectability of family, but they also worked in a public occupation and engaged in relatively open practices regarding mixed gender socializing. These factors stacked up to sully the reputations of many of these women and the men who dated or married them.

The "Gulf Air Girls", as they are commonly referred to in Bahrain, quickly came to be viewed as dating stock for upper class Bahrainis. Until today one hears derogatory comments about these women and about the men they dated or married. For example, I was recently introduced to an American woman married to a Bahraini. The Bahraini women who introduced us told me "She's a respectable one, not like those 'trolley dollies". Referring to the in-flight drink trolley, the phrase "trolley dolly" encapsulates the perception of flight attendant as an occupation that displays ones feminine sexuality. An even more derogatory term expressing a similar stereotype is "screwardess". Capitalizing on these stereotypes, some nightclubs in Bahrain offer promotions such as "Air Crew Night" - free drinks with employee ID - to encourage these women, and men interested in meeting them, to patronize their club. Men were also criticized for engaging in liaisons with foreign women. It can be assumed that many of them "use" the women for extra-marital affairs or as entertainment to pass the years as they wait for a respectable arranged marriage.

Inevitably, some of these social and sexual liaisons resulted in marriage. Despite the negative stereotypes, their association with the privileged class often protects them from direct criticism. Most of the Bahraini men involved in these relationships were of relatively privileged social and economic status. While the women, simply by virtue of being European, were perceived to be (rightly or wrongly) from, at the very least, educated middle class backgrounds. The real and perceived class status of these couples has the effect of tempering some of the criticism of their sexual behavior.

Since the influx of female workers from the Philippines began, the situation has changed. Like their European predecessors, the Filipina workers are subject to cultural censure for their unaccompanied family status, their public occupations and mixed gender socializing. But there are some differences. Mixed marriages are now taking place with greater frequency and unlike the earlier mixed marriages, many middle class Bahrainis are marrying Filipinas.

At the same time, cultural attitudes about mixed marriages have also become more critical. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, although Filipinas of all social backgrounds emigrate to work overseas, a large proportion of Filipinas migrating for work in Bahrain are young, single women of marriageable age. On the one hand, these women fit the profile of personable, attractive service workers sought by recruiters. On the other hand, such young women are prime candidates for labor emigration. It is common practice in the Philippines for an unmarried daughter to migrate for work in order to help support her parents and younger siblings. These unmarried women are not hindered from emigration by marriage or children and provide a potential income for their families of birth. Another common profile of a Filipina émigré is the single/deserted mother in need of income to support her children (cf. Constable 1997).

Second, contrary to Bahraini stereotypes of Filipinas, their culture discourages extra marital relations and prioritizes marriage and starting a family during ones twenties. Filipino culture also values exogamy and encourages love matches rather than arranged marriages. Out marriage is an acceptable practice and a strategy for emigration from the Philippines and children of mixed marriages are praised as physically attractive.[5] With few cultural deterrents to mixed marriages, the young, single Filipinas migrating to Bahrain often entertain hopes of finding a spouse while abroad. Bahrain's multinational population offers many options—fellow Filipinos, South Asians, Europeans, Americans (especially US Military personnel) and Bahrainis.

Because Filipinas select their own spouses rather than enter arranged marriages, their courtship practices involve mixed gender socializing and dating. Thus they now share the flight attendants' reputation as accessible and approachable dating options for Bahraini and foreign men. This perception is enhanced by an eroticization of "Asian-ness". South East Asian women and homosexual men have become eroticized in Bahraini formulations of gender and sexuality. The recruitment of South East Asian women to work in the leisure, entertainment and luxury consumption industries has had the effect of suggesting an association between pleasure and Asian women. Furthermore, the unfortunate overrepresentation of Asian's in the sex and entertainment industry, the vulnerability of Asian workers to sexual harassment and abuse, and the often misplaced blame for such incidents all serve to sexualize or eroticize the South East Asian body. These women are considered "hot" and "sexy" by Bahrain's new transnationalized standards. A young Bahraini woman told me that her mother preferred the Filipina housemaid didn't serve her husband. She said, "Admit it. They [Filipinas] are sexy, with those cute little bodies. How can my mom compete with that?" In the same vein, a young Filipina who'd just moved in with her American boyfriend, told me she refused to hire a maid for fear that she'd "Steal my boyfriend".

Economic hierarchies and class issues contribute to the constructed attractiveness of Filipina women as being sexual and potential marriage partners, and may explain why lower middle class Bahraini men enter these marriages. Filipina wives are believed to be less economically demanding than a Bahraini wife might be. First of all, they do not demand a bride price. Second, many of the Filipina wives would willingly continue to work or are at least more likely than most Bahraini women to perform household and child rearing tasks without the assistance of household workers. The opinion that men like to date or marry Filipinas because "they get a housekeeper in the bargain" is widely held in Bahrain, of Arab, European and American men.

The economic aspirations can work both ways. Like many women around the world, the Filipinas I interviewed hoped for a husband and a marriage that would provide economic stability for themselves and their families. For many of these women who come from areas of high unemployment and economic hardship, the chance to marry a foreigner (or an overseas worker) offers greater economic possibilities than marrying at home. Since visa regulations allow the foreign wives of Bahrainis to work in Bahrain, marriage may relieve them of some of the uncertainties about employment continuity. For some of the women I interviewed marrying a Bahraini secured their residency and employment opportunities in Bahrain. In many cases, the boyfriend or husband not only provides for his wife but also provides economic assistance to the wife's kin in the Philippines. In this regard, they replace the woman as the overseas supporter of the family. It is quite common for the Bahraini spouse to find jobs in Bahrain for his wife's relatives or to invest in family businesses in the Philippines.

Grace and Walid, one of the couples I interviewed, have been married for 11 years. In many ways, this couple represents the ideals of many entering these marriages. Theirs is the transnational Cinderella story. Grace came to Bahrain as a singer at age 19. Walid fell in love the minute he saw her on stage and pursued her throughout her contract and after her return to the Philippines. Walid comes from a modest middle class background, but has moved up through the ranks to a management position with an international insurance company. Since their marriage, Grace has not worked. She manages the house, raises their two children, and has a supportive group of Filipina friends (most married to non-Filipinos). Although she does not work, with Walid's help she has purchased two Jeepneys for her family in Cebu, expanded and remodeled her mother's home, and arranged jobs in Bahrain for her older sister, her niece and at least three family friends. Wistfully recalling her childhood fantasy Grace told me, "As a little girl, I always wanted to marry a man who went off to work each day wearing a suit. Someone who worked in an office, not like my father and the men around us." She achieved her dream and most of her friends see hers as a successful and happy marriage.

Not all the relationships between Bahraini men and Filipina women make such pleasant stories. Judith's situation, for example, illustrates another pattern all too common in Bahrain. Judith's Bahraini employer went to the Philippines to find a secretary for his small contracting office. According to Judith, he approached her in a Manila shopping mall, treated her and her friends to a few meals and outings, and then approached her mother and aunt to negotiate the job offer. The negotiations with the older women continued by telephone after he returned to Bahrain and was simultaneously "courting" the younger woman on the phone. Judith admits that the terms of employment were clear. The job description included sex. As Judith describes her relationship with this married man she expresses much gratitude for the financial support he provides for her and her family in Manila. In exchange for his "generosity", "I gave him my virginity" and "maybe I'll give him a child".

Conclusion:
The specific convergence of race and class represented in Bahraini-Filipina relationships open them to even greater criticism and stigmatization than the Bahraini-European marriages that preceded them. The men are accused of hypocrisy and sexism, desiring nothing more than a "sex kitten" and "household slave", or of being too "cheap" to marry a Bahraini. While the Filipina women are viewed as "gold-diggers", willing to "do anything" for money or a visa. The clash of cultural values generates misunderstandings and the stigmatization of these marriages. Filipino culture values marital diversity and encourages marriages that are exogamous and choice based. In contrast, many Bahrainis are skeptical of mixed marriages, preferring endogamous and arranged marriages. Consequently, couples in unconventional marriages face a variety of potential objections, criticisms and stigma. In the earlier cases, of Bahraini men and European women, the perceived class status of the men and women involved tempered the criticisms. The more recent marriages between Bahraini men and Filipina women are subject to greater criticism due to the lower class status of both the men and women involved, by comparison, and the eroticization of Asian-ness in Bahraini culture.

Bahrain is host to many women such as Grace and Judith. It is in their relationships with Bahraini men that we see the inseparability of race and class as factors shaping attitudes about mixed liaisons and marriages in Bahrain. Their respective positions in the economic and social hierarchies, structuring labor migration, make these men and women attractive to each other. Each use different criteria for assessing attractiveness, but each are constructed within specific power relations that eroticize race and class.

End Notes

1. This paper is a small portion of 20 months of fieldwork conducted in Bahrain between June 2000 and April 2003 with support from a Fulbright Research Grant and URC grant from DePaul University.
2. Marriages between Bahraini women and non-Arab men are even rarer. Those that do occur tend to be between western educated women of elite status and highly educated or wealthy European or North American men.
3. Interestingly, as the culture of retail sector has been feminized by the recruitment of Asian women, Bahraini women have more opportunities for jobs in this sector.
4. The Sri Lankan garment workers are the most notable exception to this, as they are housed in labor camps. Household workers generally live at their workplace and their movements are much more restricted than workers in the service and commercial sector
5. For a very interesting and honest first hand account of the mail order bride experience see Makow (2000).

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The Denial of Citizenship
The case of Arab women's rights to pass on their nationality

By Rima Habib and Lina Abou-Habib

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Background and Rationale
At present, women throughout the Machreq and Maghreb regions are being denied their full national identities by being excluded from the rights, privileges, and security that all citizens of a country should have access to. Unjust laws, discriminatory constitutions, and biased mentalities, that do not recognize women as equal citizens, hinder women's rights to such things as political participation, economic security, mobility, and state protection.

In every country throughout MENA (Middle East and Northern Africa), women are not granted full-citizenship, and are thus treated by the state and society as second-class citizens. In many cases, the laws and codes of the state actually work to reinforce gender inequality and exclusion from nationality rather than granting women equal membership in their country. The state can be used to strengthen religious and familial control over women, making them even more dependant on these institutions for representation and security.

Unlike in the West, where the individual is the basic unit of the state, it is the family that is the basis of Arab states. This means that the state is primarily concerned with protection of the family over the protection of the family's members. Within this framework, the rights of women are expressed solely in their roles as wives and mothers. State discrimination against women in the family is expressed through unjust family laws that deny women equal access to divorce and child custody.

Throughout the Machreq/Maghreb, Arab women, should they choose to marry a foreigner, are denied the right to extend their citizenship to their husbands. Furthermore, only fathers, not mothers, can independently pass citizenship to their children. In many cases, where a woman has been widowed, divorced or abandoned, or if her husband is not a national in the country where they reside, her children have no access to citizenship, and are thus excluded from the rights of a citizen. These rights include access to education and healthcare, and to land ownership and inheritance. There is no good reason for men to be able to extend their nationality to their wives and children while women cannot. This inequality not only refuses women their right as citizens, it also denies children their basic rights as human beings.

If the state is designed to only protect women from within their role in the family, the state often fails to protect women who are in need of protection from their families. By failing to protect women adequately from violence such as domestic abuse, rape, marital rape, and honor killings, the state fails to provide the protection forthcoming to a full-citizen. In fact, by ignoring issues of gender-based violence or by granting lenient punishments to perpetrators of violence against women, the state actually reinforces women's exclusion from the rights of citizens.

Additionally, women are frequently denied their right to nationality by requiring a male relative's permission to access the rights and privileges that she should inherently have access to. This works to increase the dependency women have on their male family members for economic, social, and legal stability. For example, in many Arab countries women must attain the permission of their fathers, brothers, or husbands in order to obtain a passport, travel outside of their country, start a business, receive a bank loan, open a bank account, or get married. All of the above should be available to women independently as equal citizens of their country, yet they continue to be denied.

Citizenhip, Nationality and the CEDAW
Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), explicitly holds state signatories responsible for granting women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality as well as the right of women to pass their nationality on to their children and husbands. However, many of its Arab states signatories do not respect this right and have not fulfilled their promise to grant full citizenship to women. Across the Middle East and North Africa, married women are denied their right to nationality if their husbands are non-nationals. In these cases the women cannot pass their citizenship to their husbands or their children while a man married to a non-national can. As such, all signatory Arab states have expressed reservations on this provision of the Convention.

MACMAG GLIP's Campaign on Gender, Citizenship and Nationality
Since 8 March, 2002, the Women's Right to Nationality campaign organized by the Machreq/Maghreb Gender Linking and Information Project (a project of the Centre for Research & Training on Development), is one regional project that aims to focus on this issue across the Middle Eastern/North African region. Through regional workshops, awareness building and training are among the first tasks of the campaign whereby participants identify and understand the concepts of gender, nationality and citizenship. Through research and advocacy training an action group is formed in each region, with experience and the ability to raise awareness and pressure their own governments to change policies that discriminate against women as national and full citizens and implement those already required by the CEDAW. Those countries involved in the campaign and its attendant action-oriented research include Yemen, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan and Syria.

In Lebanon alone around 800 women are in this situation of which approximately 60% are married to Arab non-nationals, 35% to Europeans, 10% to Asians and 5% to Africans. Research conducted with women in this situation has unveiled tremendous suffering at the level of access to social and economic rights, political participation, as well as mobility. It also indicated that women bear the brunt of the consequences at the individual, family and social level and suffer from exclusion as well as stigmatization.

MAC/MAG GLIP is among many grassroots organizations from around the Arab world who have aimed to pressure Arab state signatories of the CEDAW (as well as non-signatories) to fulfill their promise of granting women the right to full citizenship and be held responsible for such a task. It has recognized that the right to nationality is not only a women's right but also a human right based on the right to equal citizenship regardless of age, race or gender stipulated in the Declaration of Human Rights.

Based on the recognition that culture and tradition is one of the major influences of gender perception, GLIP has thus focused on the importance of awareness of women's status and issues in Arab countries. The aim of this awareness in the campaign is three-fold, a) to generate knowledge, b) set the stage for change and c) inform advocacy. Known as the Action Oriented Research Component, the second component of the campaign, organizations are trained to develop their research skills through identification of issues, comparison and assessment of changes pertaining to the issue and examination of different documents. Each in-country focal point (organization) will thus have the means to present a country case study report preparing for the last and most important part of the campaign, the advocacy component.

Through research and identification of the issues, actors and scope, the campaign is thus able to promote change from within rather than without whereby each in-country organization takes the responsibility of forming a campaign on the local level with the supervision of GLIP.

A Suggested Mini-Annotated Bibliography
The three annotated readings suggested in this section from the MAC/MAG GLIP CRTD library, aim to introduce the interested reader to the issue of gender and citizenship in the local, regional and global level. Reviewing the literature will give the reader a general idea of the history and importance of concepts such as citizenship and citizen rights from a feminist perspective. Each book provides ample information on country case studies from the Middle East to Canada and Australia.

Books

Citizenship and the State: A Comparative Study of Citizenship
Legislation in Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon
Uri Davis
Ithaca Press
1997 - ISBN: 0-86372-218-0

Davis provides insight into the definitions of key concepts such as democracy, citizenship vs. nationalism, state vs. nation, and sovereignty. Although lacking in any sort of gender analysis, this work does clearly depict the laws that determine citizenship and citizen rights in the Levant. The special case of Palestinian citizens and refugees is examined in each country case study.

Citizenship: Pushing the Boundaries
Feminist Review
Routledge
1997 - ISBN: 0-415-16174-6
This review aims to give its reader a glimpse of the issues surrounding gender & Citizenship that exist globally. The contributions included are the following: Women, Citizenship and Difference, Gender, Disability and Citizenship in Australia, The Lebanese Case, Fortress Europe, Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada, and Women's Publics and the Search for New Democracies.

Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East
Ed. Suad Joseph
Syracuse University Press
2000 - ISBN: 0-8156-2865-X

Beginning with an insightful theoretical introduction, this work is then organized into four regional sections: North Africa, Eastern Arab States, The Arab Gulf, and the non-Arab Middle East. Each of these sections includes country specific articles that examine the ways in which Arab women are excluded from the identity and rights characteristic of full-citizens. The history behind, and relevance of, concepts of citizenship in the middle East are questioned. Major reoccurring themes include the way in which religion influences citizenship; the importance of lineage/family, as opposed to the individual, as the most basic unit of the state; and family law.

Box 1
Without progress in the situation of women, there can be no true social development. Human rights are not worthy of the name if they exclude the female half of humanity. The struggle for women's equality is part of the struggle for a better world for all human beings, and all societies. Boutros Boutros Ghali, United Nations Secretary General

Box 2
Everyone has the right to nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her nationality nor denied the right to change her/his nationality Article 15 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Box 3
What is Nationality?
Nationality refers to one's legal recognition of their status as a citizen, and their ability to extend this status to their spouse or children

Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East

Edited by Suad Joseph
Syracuse University Press, 2000
Reviewed By Lynn Maalouf

Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East is a stimulating collection of essays authored by twenty women who have addressed the concepts of gender and citizenship across the different states of the Middle East. Following a provocative theoretical introduction, the volume is structured along four regional parts: North Africa, Eastern Arab states, the Arab Gulf, and the non-Arab Middle East, each of which includes specific country cases examining the reasons why women in these countries fall short of being "full-citizens," and offering an in-depth examination of national legislation on personal status, nationality, social security law, labor law and penal law.

The importance of this book derives from the underlying notion according to which the Middle East cannot be examined in a unified and generalized way. Thus, each essay examines the specificity of one state, or draws a comparison between two states based on "points of departure" as the editor suggests, viewed from the lens of evolving gender-state relations. Indeed, from the very beginning, the editor "cautions against essentializing the Middle East or stabilizing any aspect of these continually changing societies" (p. 4).

In the case of Algeria, Marnia Lazreg examines the historical formation of the concept of citizenship regarding women; she argues that since the country's independence, Algerian women have been locked in between the state's conventional interpretation of citizenship and the sharia', which represents women as subjects primarily. Lazreg contends that this paradox has served the interests of all Algerian governments that have existed since 1962: "The extension of formal citizenship to women enabled the state to disregard the antinomy between the assertion of equality before the law, a secular requirement of (substantive) citizenship, and inequality between men and women as prescribed by the sharia'".

Mounira Charrad draws a comparison between Tunisia and Morocco to explain how lineage and kin-based societies have impeded the individual citizenship rights of women. "Whereas in Morocco the legal discourse tends to enshrine kin privileges, in Tunisia the law provides considerably more space to a construct of self as an individual and, consequently, more rights to women". This difference emerged from the two states' divergent interests, and thus foundational policies: "In Tunisia, the newly formed sovereign state had an interest in transferring the allegiance of the population from particularistic loyalties to itself, and attempted to undermine traditional kin-based groups. In Morocco, the state maintained particularistic loyalties by placing them under a supra-authority". Suad Joseph also puts emphasis on the notion of kinship, which is a widely acknowledged factor shaping citizenship in Lebanon. However, Joseph's innovative argument is that in the context of a weak state, kinship in Lebanon has played a hegemonic role over males, females, seniors and juniors - and not only over females and juniors. She blames this shortcoming in studies about Lebanon to the "hyperfocus on the civic myth of sectarian pluralism," which she argues, "has glossed the critical kinship dynamics that have underwritten pluralism (legal, social, and cultural), resulting in the gendering and aging of citizenship laws and practices".

Another major case is that of the Palestinian Authority: Jad, Johnson and Giacaman explain that the fact that the state is in transition, Palestinian women have a role to play in shaping the setting of citizenship: "Whereas women activists in other contexts have often argued for inclusion in citizenship, under the particular circumstances of Palestine in transition, the women's movement must create the conditions of citizenship. This is both an opportunity for engendering citizenship, and an enormous challenge, which the women's movement addresses within the context of the democratic movements in Palestine".

One common conclusion that all the authors seem to agree upon is that patriarchy, "defined as a system of social relations privileging male seniors over juniors and women, both in the public and private spheres," is a decisive factor in the gender-citizenship equation. But they differ on the channels through which women in each country could focus their efforts to expand the scope of their rights, whether in practice or in text. Depending on the cases, some authors strongly denounce the restraints imposed on women as a result of kinship and religious forces, upholding the need to secure women's rights as individuals (Lazreg, Charrad), while others contend that women in certain countries need to work on securing their rights through family, as the basic unit of their societies (Altorki, Al-Mughni and Tétreault).

Deniz Kandiyoti concludes that through the cases studies presented in this book, it would be possible to conclude that women's rights "reveal the most serious fault lines in modern concepts of citizenship for the region." This, she argues, could mark the "differencia specifica" of the Middle East.

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Arab Women and War