



Al-Raida

women = family
in 1994?

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Production - Al-Raida is a quarterly newsletter of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College. It focuses on Lebanese and Arab Women's issues. It is written based on local interviews, field-work, research studies and information gathered through various sources, notably, exchange publications and women's communiques from all over the world. Al-Raida also conducts its own book reviews of books purchased or offered to the Women's Documentation Center of The Institute for Women's Studies in the Scholtzfuz Library of Beirut University College.

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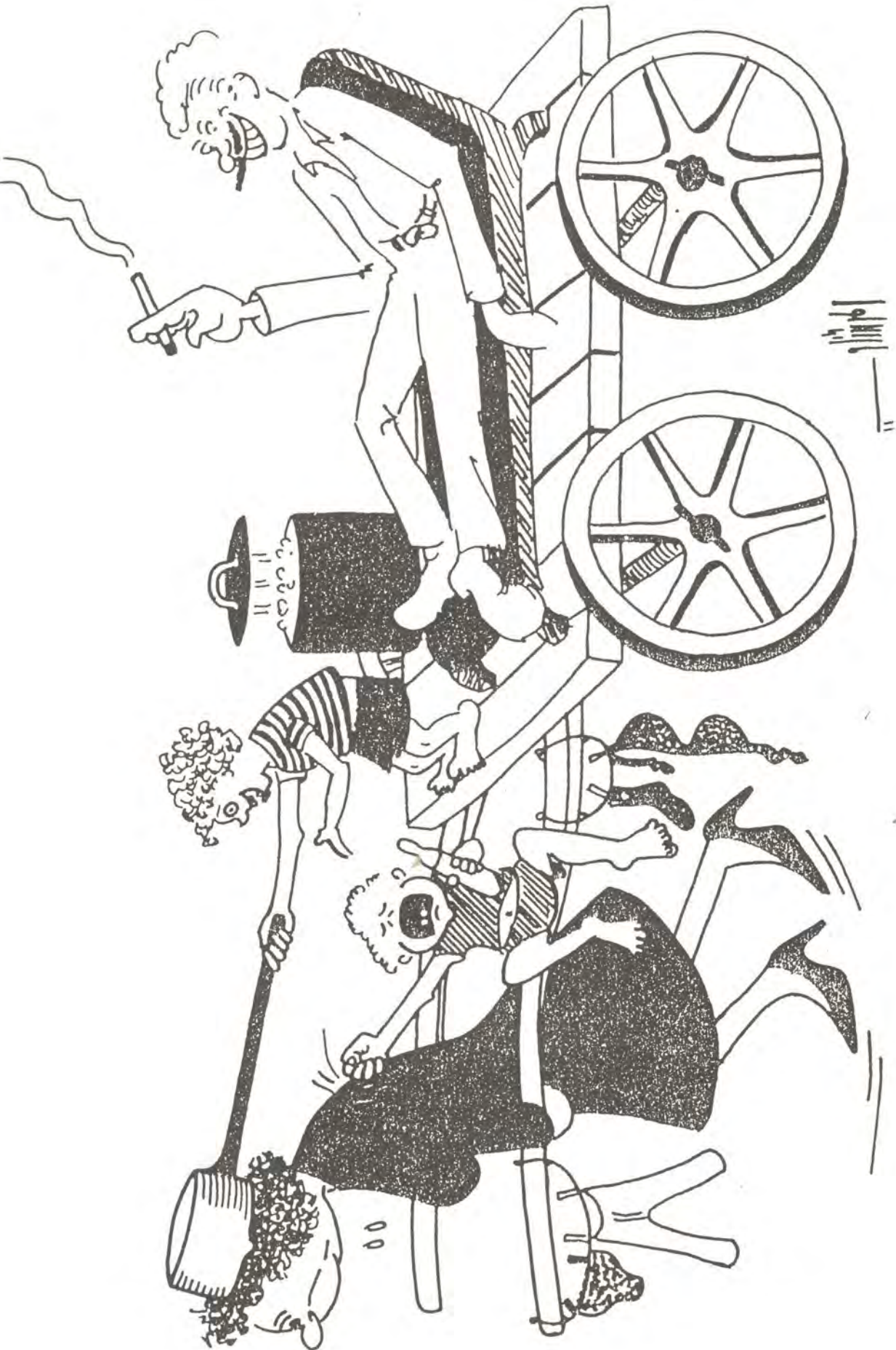
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1994.

Naming Gender and Ideology in Arab Culture

***Are women's names to men's names
what nature is to culture?***

***What are the meanings of first names
and what cultural ideologies do they represent?***

these answers and more on page 12

Women's Human Rights are Universal!

Fortunately, women's human rights have become an intrinsic item on world agendas, whatever and whoever the declared International Year may promote. United Nations committees, concerned institutions and feminist groups all over the world highlight women's human rights in the family and warrant for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

For instance, at its Twelfth Session, in January 1993, The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) examined the issues of women's human rights under the articles concerning nationality (article 9), legal capacity (article 15) and family laws (article 16) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Examination of women's human rights in the family discussed in CEDAW and IWRAW (International Women's Rights Action Watch) conferences in preparation for the International Year of the Family, brought forth various recommendations, of which the following are basic premises:(1)

- women's human rights under the Convention are a universal norm to which all countries and legal systems should adhere;
- protection of the family as a social unit should not be used to justify restrictions on the individual rights of family members;
- women are entitled to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms within the family as well as within society;
- the definition of "family" should be expansive, to include the many kinds of family structures;
- the principle of legal capacity under Convention Article 15 is fundamental

to the exercise of all other rights, including those stated in article 9 and 16.

- the Convention should be used by governments and NGOs, as a practical tool for the protection and advancement of women.

Initially, one would wonder if the International Year of the Family, 1994, will promote women's emancipation or intensify submission to the roles of mother in the first place and wife in the second place, not to mention other avenues of domesticity. These fears would seem more justifiable in the Arab World than in the West, where the family is the dominant socio-economic unit. As such, society is likely to resist changes/reforms for women lest they endanger the family's cohesiveness, and consequently create anomie on a larger societal scale.

Hence, the debate over priorities, i.e. women's individual fulfillment on one hand, and the family's -- including all its members -- socio-cultural sustainability, on the other hand, come into play here. The majority of Arab women and men value the family over and above all other considerations. Various professional Arab women, who face the conflict of compensating between career and family, confirm priority to the family. (see Al-Raida #60, Winter 93, Cultural Dimensions to Women's Issues, Interview with Dr. Layla Nimah, Dean of Beirut University College; #57, Winter '92 -- Bouthaina Shaaban's article Middle East and Arab Women Speak.; #53 Spring 1991, Interview with Dr. Nisrine Ghaddar, the First Arab Women with a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from M.I.T).

The International Year of the Family's

contribution to women will most likely be to push for better economic, legal, social, educational conditions for them, within the family. It is the strategy whereby progress is made by improving women's lot in the family as opposed to radicalizing the whole structure. Hence, the rally for women's human rights, worldwide, is a powerful advocate for change, especially when it comes to reforming domestic responsibilities.

The need for the elimination of discrimination and preservation of human rights in the family is imperative more than ever. The Arab world can no longer shun away under the pretext of unique religious and cultural characteristics. These do not contradict world wide causes and trends. It is worth noticing that more Arab women are receiving basic and higher education, their participation in the labor force is increasing, and they are experiencing gradual entrance into political offices in some of their countries. There is visible and growing awareness even in the Gulf states where women are restrained by explicit codes of behavior.

Once again, Al-Raida calls upon Arab countries, who have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, of which Lebanon is one, to acknowledge women's human rights. Doing so does not jeopardize the family, quite to the contrary, it gives it added potency to deal with social and economic change.

(1) Source: IWRAW - Human Rights in the Family: Issues and Recommendations for Implementation, by Marsha A. Freeman, April 1993.

Randa Abul-Husn

Mediation of Spousal Disputes Among Arabs ()*

Muhammad Faour

Despite the dominant role that the family plays in Arab social life, settlement of family disputes remains among the least researched areas on the Arab family. This article attempts to provide a short overview of the methods used in mediating spousal disputes among Arabs, particularly as practiced by the Lebanese Muslims.

When a marital quarrel begins, it is typical for relatives, neighbors, and friends to rise spontaneously to diffuse the dispute. Sometimes, the saying "too many cooks spoil the broth" is quite applicable; rather than settle the conflict, the multiplicity of attempts at settlement leads to conflict escalation. But in other instances, the multiple conciliation efforts, particularly if compatible, are so powerful that the conflict is quelled pretty quickly. This second result predominated in traditional families for generations.

If the disputing couple do not have close relatives in physical proximity, or if the relatives fail to reconcile the spousal differences, friends and/or neighbors often volunteer as intermediates to resolve the dispute. In many cases, the couple or their close relatives seek the services of a trusted mediator, usually a kin or friend of one or both parties. A mediator is a third party, acceptable to the disputants and without decision-making power, who acts to help them reach an agreement (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986:166; Witty,

1980:4). In his attempt to reach a settlement, the mediator usually seeks concessions from both spouses rather than place a definite blame on any of them (Rugh, 1984:169). Should all mediation efforts fail, the case is taken to a shari'a court which often continues the counseling-mediation process for a while. Rarely do couples follow the Qur'anic injunction on arbitration before they take their case to court. Apparently, most Muslims in Lebanon are either unaware of its existence, or their interpretation of the verse gives the judge the right to initiate arbitration. Another interpretation gives this right to the spouses or other family members.

In Lebanon, judges in religious courts and family lawyers, among other tasks, act as mediators between husbands and wives. When they fail, the court appoints two arbitrators from the two families of the spouses. If the arbitrators fail to reconcile the husband-wife differences and recommend separation, the court will issue a legal act divorcing the disputing couple.

An examination of the general attributes of the mediator/arbitrator shows that family mediators and arbitrators possess a set of personal attributes, some of which are common to all mediators across cultures. For instance, irrespective of the type of conflict under study, a mediator, is

expected to be impartial; acceptable to the disputants; has sufficient knowledge of the nature of the conflict; has the necessary communication skills for conflict resolution; and is highly motivated to pursue a delicate, complex process (Murray, 1984:580-582).

Some of these attributes are demonstrated in the way a mediator identifies the issues in dispute to the parties. For the same type of dispute, a successful mediator resorts to different rationales and arguments to suit the variety of personality types he encounters and the variety of socio-economic conditions in society. Closely related to issue identification is the identification of common interests which would form the basis for a mediated settlement.

Another instrumental tactic in mediation generally is the use of superordinate, idealistic goals that lie beyond the contours of the given conflict. In family mediation among Arabs, such concepts as honor, respect, piousness, and love are invoked to surmount the difficulties encountered in reaching a settlement; God's injunctions in Islam or parents' immortal love for their children are often introduced into the mediation process.

A third mediation skill pertinent to Arab Society is to allow the more

powerful disputant to make concessions yet without losing face (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986:176). But the more powerful is less likely to back down before a power balance is created between him/her and the less powerful party. This change often comes about when the mediator sides with the weaker party (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986:168).

In addition to these personal qualities, mediators in the Muslim Arab family should possess such qualities as high status, honor and authority. A mediator from a reputable lineage (like being a descendent of the prophet Muhammad or one of the guided caliphs) is held in much higher esteem and trust than one from an "unknown" lineage. A well-off mediator who has strong connections to the rulers or influential persons in a nation is widely recognized as a trusted, respected third party. Usually, a mediator is a male since the Muslim Arab culture shows preference for males, who also tend to occupy most positions of authority. He is older since age is an indicator of higher status; married because marriage is the norm for Muslim adults; and generous, because in many mediations, the third party sweetens the agreement between

disputants with his generous gifts or financial assistance (see Witty, 1980:45-47).

Yet, these personal attributes of qualified mediators are not sufficient to ensure the success of mediation. Other non-mediator-specific factors are also important in determining the outcome of the mediation process. Notable among them are: the nature of the issues in dispute, the different power relations between husbands and wives (including the power of their respective families), and the extent of economic and social autonomy of each disputant.

For example, when the dispute issue is the absence of affection and love between the couple, the dispute is deep-rooted with complex, psycho-social dimensions. Therefore, its settlement is much more difficult to attain than the settlement of disputes over such matters as household duties or the best way to treat a sick child. Even skilled clinical psychologists may recommend separation rather than union for couples who share no mutual love or warm sentiments. In such a case, identification of common interests, a basic step in mediation and negotiation, may be very difficult to reach.

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(*) This article is based on a more comprehensive paper by the author entitled "Conflict management within the Muslim Arab family", a paper delivered at the AUB-sponsored conference Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Theory and Practice, Larnaca, Cyprus, July 23-26, 1993.

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In family mediation among Arabs, such concepts as honor, respect, piousness and love are invoked to surmount the difficulties

Familism!

Randa Abul-Husn

Women's liberation versus familism is a subject for debate in traditional countries notably in the Arab world. Its implications refer to the private/public dichotomy, where women's power-concentration is in the private/family and men's in the public/society sphere. Almost always, arguments defending the family are used against calls for women's participation in the public sphere. Women are as if left with a choice, when it is applicable, between the family and themselves as individuals. To fulfill ambitions outside the house means sacrificing the private/family. The general conception is that other members of the family endure this sacrifice, which causes a weakening in the family structure. The truth may be that women and men have not found the most efficient distribution of labor that will relieve women of the blame for the decline of the family. In this article we present some of the arguments that burden women. We also review some of the literature on definitions of family and family decline in an attempt to explore their implications on women.

One claim maintains that the time required for work outside the home must obviously be subtracted from that allocated to domestic duties. Consequently, the family and its members are bound to be the victims of various psychological, social, and household-related 'shortages' or 'neglects'. Are they worth sacrificing for the 'self-fulfillment' of one person, who is invariably the woman?!

Another common formulation of the same argument views the Arab family, in particular, as the primary organizational unit that plays the role of government for its members. It secures and distributes material, social, political and economic resources. Thus, most Arab individuals, female and male, get their social identity, socio-economic status, political affiliations, and gender-specific roles from their families. Since women's familial roles are basic for a 'socially and culturally healthy' family, they do not have much freedom to indulge their own individuality. In most cases, economic need is the conscious motive for women's paid work. Yet, they are not relieved of the double burden of 'employment' and 'homemaking' because the latter remains primary and the former applies only to circumstantial economic needs. "The ideology of women's duty and responsibility ... within the family ... is a counterpart for the material reality" (Brannen and Wilson, 1987: 21) of which men are charged by society. Therefore, women's participation in society's dynamics remains relatively limited compared to that of men.

On another level, many Arab traditionalists use the example of the rising toll of social ills in developed countries which they attribute to what social scientists are coming to call the *decline of the family*. Some use terms like *the breaking down, the disintegration, the disappearance* to describe changes in

the structure of the family. The term *decline* seems more appropriate than any other terminology because it denotes the concept of weakening of the family vis-a-vis other institutions in society.

Terms like *decline* and arguments justifying women vs. familism all, obviously, imply change: women are playing more active roles in society. Changes experienced by the family are not all women-bound as some would want us to believe. Many of them, as mentioned previously, are related to various social, political, economic factors distinct from women's gradual exit into society.

Many of these arguments have encouraged social scientists to make a closer examination of the family, bringing forth a number of definitions of the family and interpretations of its status. There are many suggested combinations of family. However, those which extend beyond the more conventional understandings of family will not be discussed here because of their 'irrelevance' to traditional Arab societies.

The prototype family most commonly used today is that of "a married couple who live together with their children." Another prototypical family used in scholarly analyses states that "the family is a relatively small domestic group consisting of at least one adult and one person dependent on that adult" (Popenoe, 1988: 5) This definition emphasizes (a) domestic

duties, (b) dependence as opposed to an intimate relationship between two adults.

Another definition is "a group of kin who live together and function as a cooperative unit." Here, the variables of (a) kinship and (b) the family as a cooperative unit are added to the formula. Essentially they represent what the family does and consequently affirm that it is a social institution (Popenoe, 1988:6).

Accordingly, the duties of a family or of the person in charge of managing the family are:

- Procreation
- Provision to its members of care, affection and companionship
- Sexual regulation
- Economic cooperation

Combining these definitional pieces, one comes up with a general definition of the prototype family: *A relatively domestic group of kin consisting of at least one adult and one dependent person, the adult being charged by society with carrying out the social functions of procreation and socialization of children, provision of care, affection and companionship, sexual regulation and economic cooperation* (Popenoe, 1988: 6).

The range of definitions presented here can apply to a wide range of countries based on their degree of modernization. Sweden has the world's most egalitarian income distribution and the system whereby the government is the primary provider of the people's individual needs

(Popenoe, 1988: xi). Therefore, it would be safe to assume that the Swedish family is the most modern compared to the predominantly traditional family in the Arab world. Opposition to women's liberation because of its assumed implications on family decline use the Swedish family as one example for their arguments. But even in Sweden the family does not seem to be 'disintegrating' or 'dying out'. *The concept of family decline , therefore, refers to the weakening of domestic groups in society, the groups of kin who live together and function as cooperative units in the performance of their functions* (Popenoe, 1988:8).

According to Popenoe the modern family is weakening in five main areas:

1. As a group it is becoming internally de-institutionalized, meaning that its members are more autonomous, less bound to the group and making it less cohesive.
2. The family is weakening by failing to carry out many of its functions notably that of procreation illustrated by a low birth rate in developed countries.
3. The family is losing power to other institutional groups in society.
4. Family groups are decreasing in size, become unstable with a shorter life span and its members spending smaller proportions of their lives in it.
5. Familism as a cultural value is weakening in favor of such values as self-fulfillment and egalitarianism.

Which brings us back to women, who are most directly implicated in the last characteristic of family decline cited above. As suggested by the arguments presented in the beginning

of this article, it also brings us back to the claim that egalitarianism stands opposite to familism. Is this claim an over-simplification of the situation?

Assuming that familism and egalitarianism are equally important and carry the same weight -- which they do not in the respective cultures of the world -- how can we preserve familism without sacrificing egalitarianism? Where familism is a priority, the individual is accountable to the family which has central authority and is his/her focal group in society. Where egalitarianism and self-fulfillment are a priority, like in Sweden, the government provides for the individual thus promoting individualism.

In Lebanon where women are active in the labor market but where familism remains a predominant cultural value, many feel that one has to be sacrificed for the other. In other words, the family must be sacrificed if a woman chooses a professional life. If women's primary culturally accepted roles are domestic-bound, i.e. wife, mother, housekeeper and member of the extended family, then it must be that changes in these roles and their mode and degree of implementation affects family dynamics. Much of this argument is based on the myth of the mother as the sole caretaker in child-care (Myers and Indriso, 1987:11). Although there are variations by cultural context, research results suggest that women generally show greater and steadier allocation input than men for children's health and emotional needs (Myers and Indriso, 1987:11).

Do these arguments suggest ultimatums for women? For, according to these arguments, women's share of involvement and their contributions to society must concentrate on sustaining

"the domestic groups in society, the groups of kin who live together and function as cooperative units in the performance of their functions."

Using the reverse argument, will reverence to the private/public, female/male dichotomy immune the family from influential factors of change that occur in society? If so, then family structure in traditional societies like the Arab world must remain fixed and non-responsive to structural changes. But again if women are half the population, then shouldn't they be involved in directing these changes, the very same changes to which the family is subjected? In fact, they must participate actively if only by virtue of their assigned responsibilities towards the family.

Structural and value changes do not exhibit a direct cause and effect

relationship. Otherwise familism in the Arab world would have immediately been modified, i.e. weakened, upon the import of modern technology. But it has not. Therefore, there are no definite either/or conditions and choices for women.

With proper allocation of gender resources in the family, women and men can share the responsibilities assigned to the family/private and those assigned to society/public. The idea is to move away from either male or female worlds. Women's entry into the public world must be countered by a similar entry by men into the private/family. At this level, the crucial process of preserving values like familism falls upon the quality of men's presence in the family not on women's absence, which remains significantly marginal in Arab societies anyway.

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Third World Women and the Family

Evelyne Accad

Excision: Practices, Discourses and Feminist Commitment

Why does excision raise so many controversies in both East and West? Should one look at it globally? Is one wiping out differences by doing so?

In 1975, declared International Women's Year by the United Nations, feminists around the globe mobilized on this issue. This stirred much controversy, debate, and resentment on the part of some African women who saw European and American interference as reductionist and ethnocentric, representing them in racist, misogynistic, backward, inhuman terms, thus reinforcing the stereotypes.

I remember being myself torn apart in this conflict at one meeting of the African Literature Association in Madison, Wisconsin, during those years. I used the term 'mutilation' in my paper and was immediately attacked by one of my African male colleagues for not using the word 'tradition'. The plenary session was split in a heavy debate bringing in the whole audience which got divided along race rather than gender lines. I was very depressed to see the African women siding up with the African men. But in the evening, I discovered one of the reasons behind this apparent division. I had sung one of my compositions on genital mutilation and the pain it causes in women. Some of the African women present there had

tears in their eyes and came to thank me after the performance. They told me the reason they had sided with their men in the morning was because they had to be loyal to them. In front of the West, loyalty was more important than truth, but I was right in denouncing the practice.

With time, I became more aware of the issue of loyalty versus truth, and how it causes women to be split when they should be uniting on these crucial issues (see my discussion of these conflicts in "Sexuality and Sexual Politics: Conflicts and Contradiction for Contemporary Women"). I have also become aware of the importance of music, poetry, testimony, etc. versus strict analysis. As Françoise Lionnet puts it, talking about Saadawi's novel *Woman at Point Zero* and my novel *L'Excisée*: "It is a more effective and convincing denunciation than many pragmatic or political treatises because it allows the reader to enter into the subjective processes of the woman, to adopt her stance."

According to Lionnet, differences in ideologies among feminists produce disagreements that threaten dialogue. It is therefore very important to examine the sources of these disagreements, to engage in comparative feminist criticism without necessarily finding solutions but in order to stir up dialogues. Ethnocentric value judgements have no place within a diverse, multicultural

Loyalty versus Truth

How it causes women to be split

when they should unite on crucial issues

feminist quest. She uses the debates surrounding the practice of excision to reexamine the debates on universalism and particularism. Two claims emerge from the debates: those who campaign for the abolition of all such practices on the basis of universal ethics and those who favor respect for the cultural autonomy of African societies and criticize all forms of intervention as "acculturation" to Western standards.

Even though Lionnet tries to "create a relational space where intersubjectivity and reciprocity become possible," there are some problems with her analysis. For how can there be "convincing denunciation" without "value judgements" and "without necessarily finding solutions"? Is there not a contradiction here? Can one unveil an upsetting aspect of oppression without trying to find a solution? How can one manage to only discuss it and not become committed to changing it? Furthermore, she says that "when Saadawi denounces those practices, she puts herself in jeopardy. By appealing to universal human rights, she attempts to build bridges across cultures, showing the validity of a 'Western' mode of analysis that allows her to name her subjective experience of pain and to situate it within an intersubjective context." (p.4) How can denouncing genital mutilation be a "Western" mode of analysis? Are Westerners the only ones to have denounced the violation of (w)human rights? Do they have the monopoly over human rights? Lionnet must have been aware of the problem since she put "Western" into quotations, and since, in the final analysis, she claims to have been "interpellated" and led to respond in a way that "universalizes the integrity of the body." To such acceptance, is there not only one step into looking for solutions?

Contraception/Abortion, Divorce, Marriage, Polygamy, Sex, Virginity

Methods of contraception exist in the respective countries of the women interviewed, but the information is not always available. However, a growing number of women use contraception for what they consider as financial reasons, namely restricting births because they cannot afford more children. They also gave the reasons that it was in order to be able to continue to work, or even to have a sex life liberated from some of its problems--unwanted pregnancies. Abortion is forbidden, except in Tunisia, where it is legal. Some clandestine clinics practice abortion at exorbitant prices, and sometimes in disastrous conditions. Otherwise, women have to go abroad in order to have an abortion.

All the women interviewed

declared that in their respective societies marriage was the ultimate goal in a woman's life, that relations between men and women outside of marriage were looked down upon by both family and society, that a woman ought to remain a virgin until her wedding day. However, each of them lives this dictum in a different way. Some make the necessary compromises in order to get married and not live as marginals, others prefer marginality to the compromises they would have to make to get married in spite of the complications it may cause in their lives.

Islam allows polygamy as long as the husband is able to maintain total equality in the treatment of his wives. Thus, men can marry four women simultaneously. Tunisia is the only country with a population with a Moslem majority that prohibits polygamy. Other Moslem countries either follow the laws of Islam to the

According to Lionnet, differences in ideologies among feminists produce disagreements that threaten dialogue. It is therefore very important to examine the sources of these disagreements, to engage in comparative feminist criticism without necessarily finding solutions but in order to open dialogues... Ethnocentric value judgements have no place in a diverse, multicultural feminist quest.

methods of contraceptives exist in the respective countries, but the information is not always available

letter in this matter, or try to moderate them, more or less, by constraining the husband to tell his first wife of his decision to remarry. She can then ask for a divorce if she likes. In some places the conditions under which a man is allowed to take a second wife are limited (sterility of the first wife, illness, madness,...). The standard of living of the population in those countries is so low that polygamous husbands are becoming rarer and rarer, but the legality of polygamy allows men who get divorced to remarry and to start their lives over again whenever they want to. This is not the case for women. Men can even complicate and delay the divorce proceedings in order to be able to put off paying divorce costs and reparations due to his wife. This is not to the wife's advantage. Opinions differed among the women interviewed: some told us that polygamy was disappearing, others, however, thought it was on the rise. All of them denounced it.

It seems that, in the societies the women interviewed have come from, virginity up to the time of marriage is always required of women by the family, the husband, etc.. Because of this, couples often have so-called "superficial" sexual encounters, that is without penetration, girls try to have their virginity restored when they receive a marriage proposal after having lost their virginity in a relationship that didn't last. Sometimes there can even be a pregnancy when a girl is still a virgin. Girls' sex lives are clandestine because they do not want their families to know. Relationships between men and women, whether intimate, friendly,

or even (encounters) in the street, are very tense and emerge out of a total absence of dialogue.

Education/Work, Evolution, the Veil/Clothing and Make-up

Girls' education is not always a priority in the respective countries where I interviewed women. Parents and the social environment are still discouraging girls to study. They often only reach elementary school. Many families continue to think that a girl's future is in marriage. In disinherited classes, girls are pulled out of school to help their mothers at home (with housework and the education of the younger children) or to find jobs as housekeepers for wealthier families. This keeps the family from having one more mouth to feed and sometimes even gives it an extra source of income. These girls with no diploma or professional training whatsoever are often badly treated by their employers, exploited, and paid miserable salaries.

Some governments seem concerned about the instruction of their people and have planned enormous budgets to that end. The women interviewed are convinced of the advantages of salaried work. They believe that it gives them a certain independence with respect to their families, autonomy, and the power of choice over their lives. However, they all mentioned difficulties encountered by working women: the double work-day because husbands do not help women with housework. Those who can afford to hire

housekeepers, others have a member of the family at home, a woman (daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, cousin,...) who helps them, or they simply face the difficulties of doing double chores alone. The near total absence of day-care centers is another obstacle for mothers. Finally, the discrimination of women who have the same diplomas, qualifications, and abilities as men is an added problem.

The women had fairly different answers to questions about what they would like to change in their lives if they had the opportunity to do so. Some talked about material problems while others talked about a change in outlook. Some talked about both.

Whatever their age, their social class, their level of education, the condition of women seems to have improved over time.

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Naming Gender and Ideology in Arab Culture

Adele Khudr

Introduction

First names have been studied in different settings to identify specific patterns of culture and interaction (Goodenough, 1965), or changes in the political and social arena (Bulliett, 1978). Very few studies, however, have addressed the question of whether names represent ideological structures. This article summarizes the findings of a study on ideology and gender in a specific cultural context by examining first names.

The study attempts to answer the question of whether first names of males and females depict the dichotomy between men/women, culture/nature, private/public, profane/sacred, light/dark, and so on. The distinction between public and private spheres focuses on the fact that while "private refers to relations within the family concerning intimate life, "public" refers to relations between families and thus focuses on political and religious life (Rosaldo, 1974). The polarity of the sexes and its transposition from one level of analysis to another occupies a significant place in the literature on gender. The theoretical origin of the idea is in Lévi-Strauss's paper (1966) where he argues that "the existence of differentiating features is of much greater importance than their content."

Lévi-Strauss considers the system of binary oppositions as a universal intellectual instrument. Starting from binary opposition between male and female, there is an aggregation at each of the two poles of new elements chosen because they stand in opposition to each other. Along the same line, Bourdieu's work (1979) on the Kabyle indicates that the house is divided into the dark, nocturnal, lower part and the light-filled, noble upper part, one as female space and the other as male space. Similarly, Kallab (1983) in her analysis of school books for children, concludes that these view the world as divided into two, male and female, and accordingly, there is a

clear delineation of the roles and duties of each sex.

The basic assumption is that first names may, potentially, be representations of parents' commitments to ideological differentiation between the sexes. The definition of ideology adopted in this article is that of Clifford Geertz (1973): "A system of interacting symbols and a pattern of related meanings that has to be reconstructed from disconnected bits and pieces of cultural practices."

The study addresses the question of whether the nature/culture,

First names ... identify

patterns of culture

patterns of interaction

changes in the political arena

changes in the social arena

**MEANING OF FIRST NAMES
USED IN TEXT**

NAME: MEANING

NAME: MEANING

NAME: MEANING

<p align="center"><u>Culture/Politics</u></p> <p>Fadi: saviour Adil: just Amin: loyal Jihad: fight Mahir: competent Fawzi: winner Fayiz: winner Fawaz: winner Asma: higher Malaki: queen Fadia: saviour</p>	<p align="center"><u>Culture/Honor qualities</u></p> <p>Nabil: noble Kamal: perfection Afif: chaste Wafa: sincere Afaf: chaste Muna: hope</p>	<p align="center"><u>Nature/Animals</u></p> <p>Nimr: tiger Asad: lion Dib: wolf Rim: deer Yamami: a type of bird</p>
<p align="center"><u>Culture/Tribal origin</u></p> <p>Ghassan: an Arab tribe Adnan: an Arab tribe Wail: man who occupied district Kalthum: beautiful face Hind: number of camels Rula: an Arab tribe Alya: high</p>	<p align="center"><u>Culture/Intimacy</u></p> <p>Samir: companion Khalil: close companion Nadim: sharer in pleasure Hanan: tenderness Samar: night talk Sahar: charming</p>	<p align="center"><u>Nature/Plants</u></p> <p>Riad: garden Ghusn: branch Randa: branch Sawsan: a kind of flower Yasmin: Jasmin</p>
<p align="center"><u>Nature/beauty</u></p> <p>Lamia: dark lips Lama: dark lips</p>	<p align="center"><u>Nature/Precious stones</u></p> <p>Zumurud: Emerald Almaz: Diamond Fayruz: Turquoise Jad: Jade</p> <p align="center"><u>Nature/beauty (cont.)</u></p> <p>Bashir: handsome Wadah: resplendent w/beauty</p>	<p align="center"><u>Nature/Celestial bodies</u></p> <p>Suhayl: canopus Nada: moist, fresh ground Nazik: one of the planets Suhayla: canopus</p> <p align="center"><u>Nature/color</u></p> <p>Asmar: brown Lubna: white</p>

Females have a higher proportion of names reflecting intimacy and companionship

female/male dichotomy is applicable to the analysis of Arab gender ideology, and more precisely if name-pattern analysis is useful in such a cultural context? Specifically, it attempts to answer the following questions: How does the study of names reflect the nature/culture, female/male dichotomy? Are female names closer to nature and male names closer to culture? If so, then do female names change at a slower pace than male names? If gender is part of an ideology, how does it vary with the different religious groups? (This article reports only the results of the study that are related to the first question).

Materials and Methods

The study used a name-pattern analysis of male and female students at the American University of Beirut for every 10th year ranging between 1931 and 1981. Classification of first names into various categories was set according to sex and meaning. Categories illustrating aspects of culture on one hand, and aspects of nature, on the other hand, were carefully distinguished. Thus, categories classified under culture included those that comprise conceptions of religion, politics, interest in public matters and organization, borrowed names of Western origin, names reflecting qualities of honor and other desired human qualities, and names of tribal origin. Categories classified under nature include those that signify

conceptions of nature, whether objects or qualities.

The dependent variable consists of first names classified into the above categories, and the independent variables are nationalities, religion and time of use. After coding this information for all AUB students every 10th year ranging from 1931 to 1981, a frequency distribution of the names in each category and cross tabulations between each category and the independent variables were calculated.

Results

The results show that female names under the categories of culture are significantly lower than those of males, as revealed in table No. 1.

More specifically, it was found that female names with religious implications are significantly less than those of males. Thus, the percentage of female names in these categories is 6.1% compared to 32.0% for males.

In addition, there are name categories for males implying religion that do not apply to females. These include, in the Islamic tradition, names with the prefix 'abd (servant) added to the 99 names of God mentioned in the Qoran emulating mercy, power, authority and generosity, or the word Din (religion) added to certain qualities.

The discrepancy in frequencies between males and females in the categories of religious tradition (Islamic or Christian) and the mere existence of certain classifications for males only, both support the argument that male names are closer to culture than female names. This is also asserted by the prominence of male names in religious categories.

With respect to the male/female dichotomy in names signifying politics, power and authority, 16% of male names fell under this category compared to only 3% of female names. Moreover, relevant female names tend to echo power and authority statutes rather than processes, i.e. the process of achieving status. Frequent male names in these categories include Fadi, 'Adil, Amin, Jihad, Mahir, Fawzi, Fayiz, Fawaz, all of which suggest process and achievement; in contrast to female names, which include Asma, Malaki, Fadia, denoting status. In other words, male names involve performance, and status that have to be

Female names that reflect aspects of culture echo power and authority rather than the processes of achieving power

Table No.1
Distribution of Proportion of Male and Female
in the Nature/culture Dichotomy
from 1931 to 1981

<u>Category</u>	<u>Males %</u>	<u>Females %</u>
I. Culture Categories		
1. Religious categories		
Islamic traditions	22.0	1.7
Christian traditions	<u>10.0</u>	<u>4.4</u>
<u>Sub-Total</u>	32.0	6.1
2. Politics and public figures	16.0	3.0
3. Borrowed names of Western origin	14.0	16.8
4. Names of tribal origin	1.5	5.6
5. Names signifying honor	<u>33.0</u>	<u>35.5</u>
Sub-total	96.5	67.0
II. Nature Categories		
1. Signifying animals	0.5	7.7
2. Signifying plants	1.0	7.0
3. Signifying celestial bodies	0.7	5.2
4. Signifying precious stones	0.05	1.4
5. Names of Tribal original referring to nature	0.5	4.4
6. Others	<u>0.5</u>	<u>7.3</u>
Sub-total	<u>3.5</u>	<u>33.0</u>
Total of Totals	100.0	100.0

achieved rather than ascribed.

Names of tribal origin reflecting culture such as Ghassan, Adnan, Wail among males and Kalthum, Hind, Rula and 'Alya among females seem to have different frequencies. A high proportion of the names of females fall in this category 5.6%, compared to only 1.5% of the males'. The use of tribal names illustrates a kind of nostalgia in going back to the past to ascertain one's identity and status. The higher proportion of females in

this category can be interpreted as emphasizing the traditional status of women. It also indicates a slower pace of change in women's names because of their proximity to traditions, to nature which does not change as fast as aspects of culture.

The label of culture also includes categories of names reflecting qualities of honor and other desired qualities of secular significance. These exist for both males and females alike, and can

be roughly divided into (1) names reflecting qualities of honor such as Nabil, Kamal, Afif, Wafa, Afaf, Muna, and (2) names reflecting intimacy and companionship such as Samir, Khalil, Nadim, Hanan, Samar and Sahar.

By looking at the percentage distribution of males and females in these categories, one notices that the proportion of these names are almost alike for males (33%) and females (35.5%). However, a closer

women are not dealt with in terms of honor, while men are . . .

because they are responsible for imposing the social and cultural controls relating to honor and the protection of women

examination of the sub-categories shows that females have a higher proportion of names reflecting intimacy, companionship and desired qualities of "secular" implications, while males have a higher proportion of names reflecting honor. The proportions of male names in categories depicting intimacy, companionship and desired qualities are 8.5% and 16.1% respectively; those of females are 11.9% and 21% in the same categories. By contrast, the proportion of male names in categories signifying honor is 8.4% and that of females 2.6%.

There are two observations that can be made concerning these findings: First, females have a higher proportion of names reflecting qualities of intimacy and companionship, which can be considered closer to the private realm. Thus, the private/public, female/male dichotomy seems to apply here. In addition, and unlike what is expected, females have a lower proportion of names reflecting honor. Here, one may refer to Shore's work (1981) which speaks of an intermediate position between nature and culture. He argued that social and cultural controls must be imposed on natural processes in order for facts of nature to be transformed into artifacts of culture. Women, through their sexuality, represent the potential for effecting such a transformation. Thus, women are not dealt with in terms of honor, while men are because they are responsible for imposing the social and cultural controls relating to honor and the protection of women.

Modernization trends are partly symbolized in the use of borrowed names of Western origin. By looking at the percentage distribution of male and female name categories, as shown in the table, one notices that these

proportions are close to each other, and that there are no major differences between males and females. Yet, when we subdivide names of Western origin into those signifying "secular"/religious traditions and political/historical figures, one finds many interesting distinctions. Female names signifying "secular" traditions outnumber male names -- 4% vs. 0.8% -- whereas male names signifying political and historical figures outnumber female names -- 14.8% vs. 8.8%. It is tolerated for female names to represent only a superficial notion of modernization, e.g. the adoption of names of secular origin, but it is not tolerated for their names to illustrate cultural, political, and religious qualities.

Names illustrating nature categories include those of animals, plants, celestial bodies, precious stones and names reflecting qualities of beauty. As reflected in the table, there is a wide difference between males and females with respect to such names. Differences also seem to exist between males and females with respect to the meanings of those names: male names tend to refer to

animals which are very ferocious and represent male vigor and strength such as Nimr, Asad, Dib, while female names signify more peaceful and tender animals like Rim, and Yamami.

Names classified under categories of nature also include names after plants, celestial bodies, precious stones and names reflecting beauty. Names signifying plants include for males Riad, Ghusn, and for females Randa, Sawsan, Yasmin. While the proportion of female names in this category is 7% that of males is 1%.

Names signifying celestial bodies include for males Suhayl, and for females Nada, Nazik and Suhayla. Again here, one finds a significant difference in the proportion of males and females, 0.7% and 5.2% respectively.

Names designating precious stones include Zumurud, Almaz, Fayruz for females and Iad for males. The percentage distribution is 1.2% for females compared to 0.05% for males.

Other names of nature include those signaling beauty including Lamia, Lama, Lina for females and Bashir and

there is a slower pace of change in women's names because of their proximity to traditions, to nature which does not change as fast as aspects of culture

Wadah for males. Names describing colors are Asmar and Lubna. While the proportion of female names in this category is 5% that of males is 0.4%

The first difference between males and females with respect to names after nature is in terms of percentage distribution between the sexes, with females having a higher proportion than males. The second difference is that there is a bigger number of female names, as such, in these categories. In other words, male names after nature are very few compared to female names, not in terms of their frequency distribution but in terms of name count. This is exactly the opposite of the trend that was found in the categories of names depicting religious attributes, where male names were originally more numerous.

Conclusion

The study of the percentage distribution of males and females among categories reflecting nature and categories reflecting culture leads us to say that the female/male, nature/culture dichotomy seems applicable to Arab gender ideology, based on examination of first names and according to the data presented here. The analysis of our data show that female names tend to be closer to "nature" than male names, while the latter are closer to "culture". An important remark worth mentioning here, however, is that "nature" and "culture" are both symbols, artifacts of

human thought. They do not exist in reality. Therefore and according to this dichotomy, one cannot claim there is a conscious process for naming.

Future studies should include other samples, because the one addressed in this study is taken from a private institution that caters to an upper middle or higher socio-economic class. Thus, we cannot extrapolate or generalize these results to the society at large. Socio-economic class could also be an important determinant of attitudes towards naming.

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Leila Ahmed's Women and Gender in Islam

Leila Ahmed's book *Women and Gender in Islam* is not another description of the conditions of women in Islam. While researching for her book, the author soon realized she would have to concentrate on historical and contemporary Islamic discourses. She examines "constructs, institutions and modes of thoughts" central in the definition of women's place in Muslim societies.

The debates going on in the contemporary Arab world between Islamists and secularists -- between advocates of veiling and its opponents -- and the ways in which the issues of the veil and women as they figured in these debates were apparently encoded with political meanings that on the face seemed to have little to do with women, again brought the issue of discourse to the fore. Similarly, the way Arab women are discussed in the West, whether in the popular media or the academy, and the sense that such discussions often seem to be centrally even if implicitly engaging other matters through the discussion on women also highlighted the importance of taking the discourses themselves as the central focus of investigation (pg. 2).

Hence, Ahmed analyses the various contentions that religious and secular, East and Western debates assign to women in Islam, as well as their political interpretations. The historical framework of the book begins with pre-Islamic discourses and works its way to the present reemergence of the veil in Eastern Arab societies. It includes discourses during the rise of

Islam, colonialism and the turmoil that followed and persist, new discourses in the twentieth century, and the evolution of feminist thought.

Ahmed's analysis of discourses is quite enlightening and places relevant debates in their political, economic and socio-economic contexts. Hence, since definitions of women's roles reflect a continuity of Islamic civilizations with previous civilizations in the region, relevant mores and traditions entered into play with the rise of Islam. Eventually, colonialism and contemporary politics induced interregional and international discourses and debates over women's status in Islam.

Ahmed states that *the place of women in Islamic societies is essentially related, in a reactive manner, to the struggle over culture (pg. 237)* which sprung with colonial patriarchy at first and Western interpretations of women in Middle Eastern Arab societies at present.

Still part of the reactive nature of politics in the Arab world, women, among other tools, are used for political pressures and leverages by various political movements in the region.

Areas surveyed in the book, therefore, include regions that played basic and leading roles in the development of women and gender constructs during the respective periods of history. Thus, Arabia and Iraq were crucial during the rise of Islam. Egypt played a leading role


during colonialism in the nineteenth century and the feminist discourses which followed. *The first region in the Arab world to experiment with social change for women, Egypt played and continues to play a central role in developing the key Arab discourses on women, while developments in Egypt continue to parallel, reflect and sometimes anticipate developments in other Arab countries (pg. 6).* Mesopotamia, Greece and Iran were equally important for their importance or influence in the region and their relevance to the Islamic system.

Women and Gender in Islam presents an in-depth examination of discourses about women's place in Eastern Arab societies. The historical review spells out the history of women in Islam, and the historical analysis elucidates the development of women's status and its impact on Western-Arab cultural and political influences. Ahmed's analysis of Islam and women is absolutely enlightening for she cuts across all established ambiguities and misconceptions surrounding the issues in Western literature as well as the Middle East itself. Ahmed's skillfully makes the necessary distinctions between religion and politics exposing where, why and how overlaps occur, and how women are brought into the formula. *Women and Gender in Islam* is an profound interpretation of history for a better understanding of the present.

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992. ISBN 0-300-04942-0

R.A.H

W O M E N
and
G E N D E R
in
I S L A M



LEILA AHMED

From the Winner of the Franco-Arab Book Award, 1993

Evelyne Accad 'Blessures des Mots' (Wounds of Words)

Reviewed by Rose Ghurrayib

You know her from the articles and book reviews she has contributed to Al-Raida. Yet, Evelyne Accad is well-known through her own books. They are regularly reviewed in this periodical, thus highlighting, even further, her special interest in Arab women's issues. After publishing The Veil of Shame, L'Excisée, Le Coquelicot du Massacre, Sexuality and War, she reveals, in her latest work, Blessures de Mots, the poignant experience of a daring young woman.

Evelyne Accad won the the Franco-Arab Book Award, 1993 for her book Des Femmes, Des Hommes et La Guerre 1993, Paris, Côté -femmes.

Blessures des Mots (Wounds of words), is her journal of a year spent in Tunisia with "wonderful Tunisian women," some of whom she had met on a previous visit.

These "wonderful women" were a group of cultured young Tunisians whose lives were torn between modern European and traditional Maghrebi

cultures. They felt a burning desire for freedom and displayed a relentless energy which allowed them to divide their time between home, job, extracurricular social activities and feminist interests. Some were widows, others divorced or leading unhappy lives.

They formed a group of satellites around a visiting Lebanese writer and journalist called Hayat, who was none other than Evelyne Accad. In her company, they poured out their grieves, problems and hopes. They discussed stories about militant women writers from Lebanon and other Arab countries. They talked about projects of their own like "al-Nissa," a feminist magazine they published in French, and "The Taher Haddad Club" that organized regular meetings and colloquiums to deliberate important issues.

They discussed the Tunisian constitution promulgated by Bourguiba in 1965, supposedly the most progressive in the Arab world with respect to the personal status

code. This code establishes the abolition of the veil, polygamy, unilateral or non-premeditated divorce and forced marriage. It stipulates the legality of civil marriage and adoption, but it confirms the law which allots a woman half of a man's share in inheritance and forbids the marriage of a Moslem woman to a non-Moslem. Other claims dealt with women's non-representation in the judiciary courts, general administrative offices, and university faculties and staff. They charged that the martial law requiring a woman to obey her husband should be replaced by one of mutual respect between the spouses.

Several other topics were suggested for the next colloquium at the Taher Haddad Club, and these progressive women finally agreed to debate the following basic question: "What kind of women movement do we want for Maghreb?" This issue entailed various sub-issues such as absence of democracy in the workers' syndicates where women's claims were neglected; and, women's silence over physical and social problems like abortion, birth

control, and lack of social interaction between the sexes causing serious psychological problems. Furthermore, analysis of the causes of women's indulgence in jealousy and chattering were discussed from a psychological point of view.

The more conservative members of the group brought up the problem of the influence of fundamentalism on the women's movement, which it accused of westernization. Fundamentalists condemned women's ignorance of Arabic and demanded their return to Arab history for the roots of women's emancipation and of successful family relations.

Hayat, moderator of the meeting, noted that many advocates of Western culture misunderstood Eastern people. They looked down on them and treated them with an air of superiority. She felt a strong desire to do away with this bias by creating a means of rapprochement. Therefore, she suggested that a lecture on American feminism be included in the next colloquium at the Club and offered to give it herself. The suggestion was immediately debated but the group was divided into those in favor and those against. Americanism, to most of them, was an object of mistrust. Yet after long argumentation those in favor won the debate. Hayat felt that her success in this particular case was the climax of her successful activities in Tunisia.

At the appointed lecture she spoke about American feminism as a

flourishing movement with four objectives: First, a democratic one entailing a firm belief in women's right to freedom in accordance with the Charter of Human Rights which proclaims gender equality. Second, an economic objective, i.e. working to improve women's economic conditions through the application of the American law prohibiting discrimination against women in education and work, and stressing equal representation in academic fields. Third, a scientific objective encouraging women's studies on a larger scale and in all areas, especially sexual problems which require an analysis differentiating between acquired and inherited sexual behavior. Fourth, a universal trend which makes this movement non-racial, seeking to reach all the women of the world and, at the same time, taking into consideration ethnic and cultural differences.

Hayat amplified this general plan by presenting a brief history of the movement, its evolution, the rise of Freud's theories and how they have been amended. She spoke about the burden that women have to carry when they perform the double task of home-making and working outside the home. She emphasized the necessity of men's participation in housekeeping and children's upbringing. She also stressed the need for women's active role in legislation and in studies concerning women.

Some members of the audience objected by saying that American

feminism dealt with problems like rape, lesbianism, pornography and others which do not concern Eastern women. The goal of the latter concentrated on obtaining sexual equality while in America it was granted long ago.

That is exactly what American feminism refers to, answered Hayat, when it insists on considering pluralities and recognizing the impossibility of generalizing experiences to all the women of the world. "I just said that this feminism is both universal and local. This precaution, however, does not exclude behavior in every group, in light of modern scientific methods which are universal. Do the women of the Third World consider love and sentiments to be Western imports or superfluous forms of luxury?"

The discussion that followed revolved around the following question: "Does feminism imply an annihilation of woman's identity and her identification with foreign cultures?" The answer to which they agreed was as follows: "Because we, Eastern people, depend to a large extent on Western theories and ideologies in our present evolution, it seems necessary to modify them that they may fit our particular needs. A defensive, negative and hostile attitude towards them would not be productive."

Hayat's year in Tunisia was filled with experience and exchange of ideas which led her to believe that she had found a center of open-mindedness and solidarity among women. She thought it would provide answers to the many

does feminism imply an annihilation of woman's identity and her identification with foreign cultures?

questions confronting women in the Arab world.

Her hopes were shaken when she discovered that, despite their progressive demeanor, Tunisians still indulged in magic rites and incantations to expel demons from the bodies of hysterical women. Why aren't these rituals used in the treatment of men? she asked. How is it that modern-minded women could still accept these practices and yield to their influence?

Her adventure in Tunisia was not free of difficulties. She was criticized for socializing with men in the neighborhood and for maintaining friendly ties with the American Embassy there. Hayat overlooked the first criticism because of its pettiness. As to her connection with the embassy, it was a natural result of the cultural links she developed with Americans when completing her higher education

and having a teaching position in one of their universities. Criticism was instigated, especially, because of the help and attention she received from the embassy when she was molested by her landlord.

Nevertheless and on the whole, Hayat succeeded in creating an atmosphere of understanding with her Tunisian hostesses because she was willing to consider opposing arguments in her presentation of American feminism and objectively condemn certain imperialistic practices adopted by Westerners.

The Wounds of Words represents a step toward more understanding and friendly relations between people from different countries. It offers a glimpse into the active feminist movement in Tunisia. It shows that Tunisian women have decided to give up silence and burst into words: bleeding words, impressive words, words carrying

weight and energy, a strong arm which can shake mountains without shedding a drop of blood!

The author is a committed writer, poet and musician. She travels all over the Arab countries carrying her pen and guitar, raising the sound of optimism in the midst of pessimism, watching flowers bloom from the blood of massacres, and breaking barriers with words that address everyone without discrimination. Her style takes the form of a narrative with vivid and detailed descriptions, dialogues and genuine comments. In moments of deep emotion, she moves from prose to poetry, especially toward the end of her chapters (see excerpt below).

Evelyne Accad. *Blessures des Mots*, *Journal de Tunisie*, Indigo, Collection Premices, Côté Femmes Edition, Paris 1993.

*I write in the language of love
Accompanied by the rhythm of the lute
The guitar and the drum.
My voice is a song, crossing barriers,
A sweet sound of flute traveling from East to West
No frontiers in words gathered
On the roads of countries that call me
I discover them in the signs and symbols
Deciphered on open pages,
To my desire for comprehension
For communication,
For finding out meanings that burst out in sunlight
Or in feeble candle light,
I invent a melody for each name,
Draw a design for each wound
I give a color for each word
Thousands of rainbows floating
Around the Earth*

Fertility and Social change in Oman: Women's Perspectives

In her book Women and Community in Oman (1984), Christine Eickelman discusses women's understanding of family, privacy, propriety, education, work, children and status, based on a field study of a Omani oasis, al-Hamra, undertaken in 1979-1980. She visited al-Hamra again in 1988 and reported observed changes in a recent article entitled Fertility and Social change in Oman: Women's Perspectives (The Middle East Journal, 1993). Having reviewed the book in a previous issue of Al-Raida (#57, Spring 1992), we hereby, still with Eickelman, trace changes in women's perspectives of fertility and family in Oman.

Eickelman notices that the population of the oasis more than doubled between 1980 and 1988. The quarter's composition also changed in that its inhabitants had abandoned their mud homes and moved into cement houses with running water, electricity and telephone facilities. In 1980, water management had been a primary pattern of socialization for women, who were the ones to fetch it from the river. By 1988 the oasis had a bank, a garage, government offices, a house for the governor and his family, two large schools -- one for boys and one for girls -- and shops. Two women worked in the girls' school, a number of others were studying in the capital and planned to return as teachers to the oasis.

Women in 1988 discussed fertility and birth in significantly different ways than they had in 1979-1980. During the earlier period, women often discussed their concerns and anxieties

about fertility-related issues by discussing them in a joking manner. By 1988 ... the most surprising aspect of these conversations were the statements by several women that they wanted as many as 20 children. Young children were everywhere, and many women had given birth to four or five children in eight years (pg.655).

Children are perceived as signs of social strength (pg.657). Women's status is directly related to giving birth to live children on a regular basis with the first born giving the mother the right of passage into adulthood. Postpartum visitations, Eickelman notes, are fundamental representations of status and social strength rendered by having many children. Therefore, the number of people who come, the length and frequency of visits reflect the social standing of the family.

The significance of formal visitations, and notably postpartum visitation, in Omani society has a powerful influence on family size and social contracts. Consequently, Eickelman affirms, any government effort to decrease fertility that ignores the impact of this cultural ritual is unlikely to succeed. Family planning programs and birth control devices *will need to reorient the people toward a transformed lifestyle, where networking is no longer dependent on women giving birth ... Breaking the pattern of multiple births quickly and effectively in Oman requires a program that sensitizes people to the subtle relation between fertility and other aspects of culture and prompts them to articulate issues related to fertility, potency, and family planning (pg.666).*

High birth rates are common in many countries of the Middle East -- namely Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen -- and demographers expect the population to double by the year 2000 (Eickelman's sources: Sultanate of Oman Statistical Yearbook, 1988 and World Population Data Sheet, 1992). Islamic values, according to Eickelman, are not responsible for high fertility patterns in Oman. Rather, these patterns are new, and reflect only a micro-level response to recent economic transformations, notably the oil economy that can still accommodate the increase in population.

Eickelman role as a participant observer, so-to-speak, allows her to notice, inquire, understand and then interpret cultural characteristics that are otherwise distorted in reports. Attention to details in description and particularly in the reporting of change that has occurred between 1979 and 1988 provides substance for analysis. One such analysis is that the increase in the rates of fertility despite the structural changes -- which would otherwise reduce family size -- seem like a counter-reaction to change on a wider level, maybe even a form of cultural determinism. This article is rich in its anthropological and sociological substance. It is written in an objective manner that pleases even the Arab reader who is alert to any racist implications.

Christine Eickelman. "Fertility and Social change in Oman: Women's Perspectives." The Middle East Journal. Volume 47, Number 4, Autumn 1993. pp. 652-666.

R.A.H.

Tribute to Nina Berberova (1901-1993)

Mona Takieddine Amyuni

Nina Berberova was born in Russia in 1901 and has recently died in Philadelphia. Recognized as a distinguished novelist late in her life in 1985, it took a man of great insight, Hubert Nyssen, editor of the elegant publishing house in Paris, *Actes Sud*, to feel immediately the unique and original talent of Berberova. In a moving tribute he pays her upon her death, Nyssen writes that before meeting the novelist in May 1985 in Paris, he had come across a confidential translation of her novel *The Accompanist* and could not understand why such a luminous and tragic novel, written in 1934 in a Chekovian vein, had not been immediately consecrated. Following his discovery, Nyssen sought Berberova out, found her in Princeton and they both agreed to meet later, that same year, in Paris. Nyssen's career knew a major breakthrough upon this meeting. He started to publish her novels, each at a time, to give the public enough space to appreciate their very fine quality, followed by the autobiography which she had completed in 1965. Originally written in Russian, Berberova's works were first translated into French and quickly into other languages. *Actes Sud*, thus, was instrumental in her worldwide fame as of 1985.

Berberova's books penetrated Russia in secrecy first; later in 1989 she paid her country of origin one short visit upon the publication of her

autobiography *The Italics are Mine*. About this visit she says that it did not move her and when asked whether she would resume writing her autobiography and update it she said: "No, I am tired of italics." When the autobiography came out in New York in 1992, the N.Y. Times wrote under the title "An Émigré in Paris Willing to Start Afresh";

The belated publication last year of Nina Berberova's collection of stories, *The Tattered Cloak*, introduced American readers to a captivating Russian writer: a nimble, observant writer, who captured the lost hopes and dreams of a Russian émigré community in pre-World War II Paris with unusual emotional precision. With the publication of her autobiography, *The Italics are Mine*, in a newly revised edition that incorporates an amended translation from the Russian, fans of her stories now have the opportunity to read Ms. Berberova's firsthand account of that exile experienced by so many Russian intellectuals in the wake of the 1917 Revolution.

In contrast to the sad, Chekovian group of men and women who populate her fiction, spending their days and nights trying to recapture a receding past or imagine an impossible future, Ms. Berberova emerges in this volume as a spirited, indeed indomitable woman, who willfully lives in the present. As a precocious child in czarist Russia, she restlessly rebels against the rituals of domesticity. Even at the age of 10, she is obsessed with finding a vocation, obsessed

with cramming her days full of as much experience and knowledge as possible. "I chiefly hated everything to do with the 'nest,'" she writes, "with family spirit, paternalism, the defense of small ones - that is, me - from something terrible, or dangerous or simply risky."

Deeply independent and autonomous, anti-dogmatic to the extreme, totally free, she leaves Russia in the early twenties with her companion the poet Kodassevitch, when the persecution of intellectuals intensified. Extremely poor, she cultivates the virtues of forgetfulness and liberty, lives fully the moment, and does all kinds of small jobs to survive in her new environment. She draws strength, all along, from her detachment, her basic freedom, her impassioned temperament, and her ironic bend of mind. She gets profoundly attached to the brilliant Paris of the twenties, the Paris of Valerie and Proust, Breton and Tzara. She later turns her back to France and moves to the United States in 1950, with \$75 in her pocket and no knowledge of English.

When a little before her death, Bernard Pivot, the well-known founder of the Paris literary TV program "Apostrophes" interviewed her, he was impressed with her strength. He told her, in admiration, "You are a rock," she replied "No, I am not a rock, I am a river." A little later in Philadelphia where she spent the last years of her

life, she said: "I wonder, when the ultimate moment will come, whether someone would sit by my deathbed and listen to the secret of my life. A secret I would naturally be able to reveal only then."

Well she leaves us hungry for more. Her secret runs through her fiction which is highly charged with emotion, nostalgia, and great irony. Men and women in her novels, love and suffer, share and part, and the human drama goes on. Highly poetic, elusive and suggestive, her narratives move by image and metaphor, by pattern and rhythm, much closer to dramatic poetry than to prose. Below are two excerpts that would speak far better of Berberova's talent than any other comment.

Of her unique relationship with the poet Kodassevitch she writes:

Our life was made of a succession of days and nights which intermingled ... We were two beings within four walls, open to each other, transparent and close in body and soul (my tr.).

And when the heroine of The Rebellious Reed (1988) parts with her lover upon the German invasion of Paris the novel starts thus:

It happens in each one's life that, suddenly, the door banged at your face, opens a little, the iron gate is pulled up again, the final "no" turns into a "may be," the word is transfigured, new blood runs in your veins. This is hope. We have been given a reprieve. The judge's verdict, the doctor's, the consul's, is postponed. A voice announces that all is not lost. Shaking, tears of gratitude in our eyes, we go to the next room where we are asked to

wait before we are thrown into the abyss.

This is what happened to me on the evening during which I waited in a queue close to Einar who was flying to Stockholm. We waited for those who were flying. Without thinking I remained standing next to Einar... Hidden under his overcoat, which he carried, our fingers were interlocked... He looked at me every now and then. I saw in the darkness that he seemed tired, at a loss, strange... He was worried... He is not handsome, I thought... I never knew he was ugly"...

... "Come up" said the bus driver... I couldn't believe it... Even today I can't believe it...

... "I didn't know you could be ugly" I told Einar in a murmur, feeling a sudden burst of laughter. He probably thought I was crying, he kissed me on the eyes. I took his hand and pressed it against my lips. These minutes were a gift to me. I was given a reprieve. One hour only, but so precious...

... "Promise not to forget me" he said.

Seven years pass. She has no news of him. Later, accidentally they meet. He is married. His wife is stocky, bossy, ugly. The lovers stand no chance, whatsoever, to open up again to each other.

She says in her inner monologue, in recitation:

Since my early youth I thought, that in this world, each one of us has his own no man's land, where he is his own master. there is the apparent existence, and also the other, unknown to people, that belongs to us, absolutely. This does not mean that one is moral, and the other immoral, or one is accepted, the

other forbidden. Simply, each man, from time to time, escapes all control, lives in freedom and mystery, alone or with somebody, one hour a day, or one evening a week, or one day a month. And this secret and free existence unfolds from one evening or one day to the other, and the hours run in succession, one after the other. ... Whoever has not known this... discovers one day with surprise that he has never met with himself... I pity those who, outside their bathroom, are never alone. ... Einar and I had met in this no man's land. Then, as usually happens, the new life started to kick out the other...

... At present, my no man's land was full of thoughts for Einar. All boiled down to three questions. Was he alive? Shall I see him one day? Did he still love me? ... Deep in me, in my second existence, these hours full of anxiety, of despair and hope, remained my secret property. I was, as always, the sole mistress of my no man's land (my tr.)

In this fashion, Berberova takes her reader by the hand and allows him/her to penetrate into her no man's land, into the heart of the meaning of life. One comes out a far richer and happier human being, aesthetic joy balancing out the tragic vein which speaks so deeply of the human condition.

Dr. Mona Takiieddine Amyuni
Assistant Professor,
Civilization Sequence
Department, AUB.

Arab Women Artists

The International Council for Women in the Arts (IWCA) is planning the first exhibition of Arab women artists in the United States, **Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World**. It is a traveling exhibition that includes contemporary works by 70 artists from over 15 Arab countries, presenting an overview of artwork produced by Arab women in the last fifty years, with an emphasis on the more assertive and experimental work of the past ten to fifteen years.

The Exhibition will open at the National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., in February 1994. Among museums lending their collections are L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, the National Gallery in Amman, Jordan, and the Contemporary Art Museum in Tunis. After Washington, the Exhibition will travel to other museums and universities in major cities across the United States, including Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and Santa Fe.

ICWA is presenting American audiences with a rare opportunity to see art by Arab women who have gained recognition in their own countries but are relatively unknown abroad. Organized thematically, the artworks represent ways Arab women artists have responded visually and imaginatively to their own culture and to the world. This exhibition should provide a dynamic forum for new dialogue and broader cultural exchange.

Hereby are samples of the work of some of the Lebanese and Arab artists.

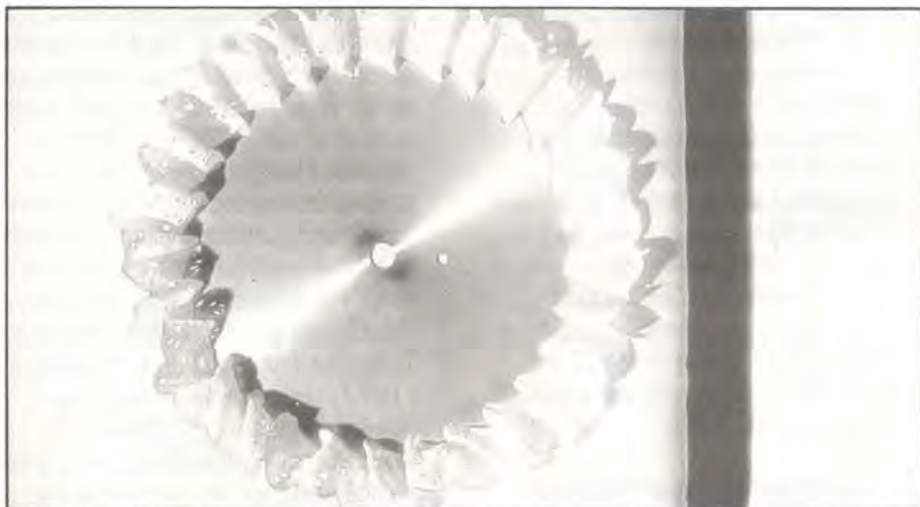


Foule. Huguette Cland (Lebanon) 1970, Long robe.
Photo credit: Bruce Wright. Published by permission of ICWA.

Huguette Cland: Bodies - bustling, pushing, pressing against one another. The physical reality of bodily contact is inextricably from the work of Lebanese artist Huguette Cland. The female body is her primary vehicle. Her depictions of the feminine form in all of its aspects - undulating breasts, curvaceous hips, the public triangle - is daringly defined yet simultaneously ambiguous. Body parts drawn in ink, pencils, pastels or paints, convey a monochromatic tension; supple and organic yet deceptively simple.

**Bayah Mahieddine, Algeria.
Femmes Portant Des Coupes.
Photo: Ph. Maillard.**

Born in an age bridging colonialism and modernity, into a land of national struggle and male domination, her artwork speaks from a difficult present to another place and time. Steeped in turmoil over the Algerian revolution of her youth, she found escape through history and fantasy. These are the foundations of her artistic expression. She mixes mysticism, paganism, and Islamic ornamentation in aesthetic depictions intended to inspire and lend vision.



**Rabia Sukkarieh, Lebanon.
Description of sheherezade 101
38cm square mixed media
works, installed on a single
wall, 11 feet high by 35 feet
wide, to appear as a series of
lines of written text.**

The piece consists of 101 two- or three-dimensional 15" by 15" paintings which are installed 5" apart in one line at eye level. The artist has chosen this order to achieve "humility and intimacy of a small field of vision, to contain the viewer's gaze and to avoid standardization by the square foot or categorization as miniature."

Exhibit highlights

The exhibition brings together 20th century works by women artists from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian West Bank and Gaza, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates; as well as artists of Arab origin living in the United States and Europe. These artists represent the wide range of ethnic and religious groups that make up the Arab World.

The exhibition includes contemporary and traditional modes of expressions - from installations and video works to figurative painting,

sculpture, ceramics, jewelry and tapestry.

Publications and programs

In conjunction with the exhibit, the following will be presented:

- a richly illustrated interpretive catalog;
- videotaped interviews with selected participating artists;
- lectures and educational programs related to the exhibition's theme; and
- a festival on Arabic films produced by Arab women to be launched by renowned Arab film star Fatin Hamama.

The national museum of women in the arts is the first museum of its kind to celebrate the artist achievements of women from the Renaissance to the present. Its permanent collection, educational programs, extensive library resources and research center are dedicated to this goal.

Funding: ICWA, is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. All its properties and assets are dedicated to advancing women's arts. ICWA has no formal membership structure and welcomes donations from companies worldwide. Donors will be acknowledged in the exhibit's printed material and will receive the Council's annual report. Please make out and send checks to: ICWA/Arab Women Artists Exhibit, P.O.Box 226, Lafayette, CA. 94549, USA. Tel: (510) 256-0808; Fax (510) 944-9479.

Child 94

Beirut University College, 27-31 October

Child-94 was a national Conference organized by Beirut University College on October 27-31, 1993. Speakers and participants included, physicians, scholars and pioneers in the fields of education, early-childhood education, and educational administration from the university and other academic and developmental institutions in the country.

"Child-94" reminded Lebanese educators of important social, psychological, and cultural aspects of children's education. The organizers, leading educators themselves, assessed needs that are vital for further development of the Lebanese child, age zero to sixteen. Some of the issues raised in "Child-94" were: develop the child's awareness of human rights and social issues, the role of school in promoting children's health, role of education in prevention of smoking, nutrition, immunization and prevention of communicable diseases, Dentistry, Education of children with special needs, play in the social and intellectual context of development - the role of peers, developing awareness of

environmental issues in children, the child's identity, children's literature, emotional health and growth, and the role of the computer in education.

Dr. Nabil Haidar, Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Beirut University College and the driving force behind this Conference identified the goals of "Child-94":

- 1- To transmit the largest amount of available knowledge and data on comprehensive education of the child to school teachers and staff;
- 2- To aspire for using this knowledge for better changes and development.

The three days conference was transmitted, live, on public television making use of yet another dimension for raising awareness.

Beirut University College plays a leading role in assessing educational needs, creating social awareness and directing development in the country. It is known to address important issues often perceived by other

educational institutions as peripheral. In the last few years, BUC was a catalyst in directing attention and awareness towards mental disabilities and environmental issues. It was the first institution of its kind in the country to devise and implement an environmental program on its campuses (1992-93). The relevant project was also presented to the Ministry of the Environment for implementation in public schools and spaces all over the country. Furthermore, BUC was the first to establish an Institute for Women's Studies (1973) in any Arab country. And just recently (1993-94), courses in Women's Studies were introduced to the university's curriculum.

The only shortcoming of Child 94, however, may have been its neglect of any discussion of gender awareness for the child. This mirrors educational curricula in Lebanon, which dismiss the issue. Nevertheless, Women's Studies in the university is a breakthrough and, probably, a good place to begin because it is where future educators are trained. It is hoped that they will opt to introduce gender awareness.

Women, Family and Human Rights

Arab Women and the Environment.

November 25-27, 1993. Conference by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College. Various Arab environmentalists and speakers presented papers. Topics included: Sustainable Development, Pollution and its Impact on Health, Protection of the Environment from Pollution, The Environment and Education, Environment and the Media, Urban Environmental Policies, and Rural Environmental Policies. Proceedings and studies will appear in a special issue of Al-Raida.

Media and its Impact on Women's Participation in Development.

December 10, and 11, 1993. The second Conference of the Lebanese Council of Women in collaboration with the Friederich-Ebert-Foundation. Papers revolved around political, economic, social, and educational issues. For more information contact: The Lebanese Council of Women, Mithat Basha Street, Labban Bldg., Beirut, Lebanon.

Teaching Human Rights and

Democracy. December 10, 11, 1993. Conference organized by the Lebanese Association of Human Rights. Topics included: Teaching Human Rights and Democracy in the Educational Sector, Teaching Human Rights and Democracy in the Judicial and Police Sectors, Teaching Human Rights and Democracy in The Media and Cultural Associations.

For more information contact: the Lebanese Association for Human Rights-ALDHOM, 145 Tabaris, SNA Bldg, P.O. Box 16-6472, Beirut, Lebanon.

The Effect of War on the Conditions of the Lebanese

Family. December 15, 1993. Evaluation Congress by the Lebanese Family Planning Association. A research study based on a pilot survey of 200 families living on the green line previously was presented. The study particularly focused on women's conditions and their status in the family based on data concerning education of spouses, employment and income levels of families, family

planning and fertility patterns, and socio-cultural attitudes towards male and female offsprings.

For more information contact: Lebanon Family Planning Association, Corniche Mazraa, Al-Maskan Bldg. P.O. Box 118240, Beirut, Lebanon.

Psychological Impact of the War on the Family.

December 6, 1993. It was one of the lectures at the Conference organized by the Programme of Psychiatry and Psychology at the St. Georges Hospital in Beirut. The lecture was based on a survey examining the association between specific stressing events and health problems on a sample of families living in Beirut. It also examined symptoms of insomnia, depression, and their impact on marital and interpersonal relations. Intervening variables that were considered included social support systems. These variables were surveyed among the mothers, fathers and adolescents of the study population. Psychiatry & Psychology Clinical & Research Service, St. Georges Hospital, Aschrafiyeh, Beirut, Lebanon.

Lebanese Women Denied Bench Training

The High Magistrate Court of Lebanon has denied all of 195 women applicants the right to sit for the written entrance examination to the Training Magistrate Institute. Among the men applicants, 79 out of 159 were given the entrance exam.

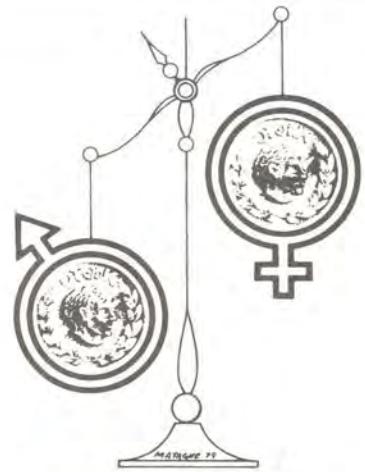
Why None of the WOMEN?

This decision was made at the highest level of the High Magistrate Court. Many lawyers and judges claim that women themselves have refused and continue to refuse magistrate appointments in distant rural courts, an essential part of the training process of judges.

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and Beirut University College, issued the following press release in response to the High Magistrate's decision regarding women on Tuesday, December 15, 1993

Discrimination is practiced all over the world in various forms and degrees. But, humanitarian trends of thought seek to reduce it to the lowest possible level in the hope of eliminating it. In Lebanon, the highest office of law violated human rights when it denied 195 women the right to sit for the entrance exam to the Institute of Judicial Training. The news was absolutely shocking and insulting to the integrity not only of women but of the Lebanese people as a whole.

Lebanon is one of the countries that have not yet ratified the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and therefore, in the legal sense, is not really violating any laws. It appears that, in this time of restoring law and order, it is the people who must preach to the authorities about issues pertaining to human rights, equality and lack of



discrimination. In our minds and perceptions it is evident but in practice it is not, obviously. Not all of us practice them in reality either, but we, at the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and at Beirut University College, are certainly trying to, by creating public awareness and educating our students along these principles. We find significant social opposition as is, but we never imagined the real opposition would come from the Supreme Court.

These women were denied magistrate training because of their gender or for gender-related reasons. Whatever the reasons may be, they are not acceptable. All we ask is that women be treated like men, without any concessions. If women are denied magistrate training so should men. And if men are granted access to these examinations, so should women. And let the best man/woman win.

Hanan Ashrawi Moves Away from Politics

Ms. Hanan Ashrawi, member of The Palestinian Delegation at the Middle East peace talks has refused any political post in the Palestinian administration. Ashrawi declared that her role as speaker for the delegation and member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization ended with the signature of the peace treaty between Israel and the PLO.

Instead, Ashrawi will concentrate on the newly established Independent Palestinian Committee for Human Rights. According to Ashrawi, the Committee will act as the "conscience" of the Palestinians in their era of self-determination.

Ashrawi indicated that the Committee is due to receive funding from Norway and expects to open an office in Jerusalem in January 1994. Ashrawi also stated that leading and international Palestinian personalities like ex-delegate, Mamduh al-Aakr; poet Mahmoud Darwish; political scientist Edward Said, and lawyer Raja' Shehadeh have all agreed to join the Association.

Our Source: Al-Nahar daily newspaper, Saturday December 11, 1993. Beirut, Lebanon.
Original Source: Reuter, AP.

Toujan Faysal: First Female Deputy in Jordanian Parliament

Toujan Faysal is the first woman to be elected to the Jordanian Parliament. She had lost the race in the previous elections, and is said to have been strongly lobbied by fundamentalists. Her victory this time is largely due to a strong and aggressive support from women. Notably it is said that 15 women-supporters took over Ms. Faysal's campaign securing votes needed to see their candidate in Parliament.

Family Planning in Syria

The fertility is still high in Syria. On the average, there are 6 children per woman. However, according to Ms. Hajar Sadek, Secretary General of the Syrian Family Planning Association, family planning provision is weak but has relatively improved. There are now 560 maternal and child health clinics throughout the country.

In the past, the government had a law encouraging women to have as many as 10 children. Ms. Sadek, formerly a member

of Parliament, succeeded in repealing the pro-natalist law in 1988. Further policies for family planning are in process.

Source: abridged from "Girls Ahead in Syria" by Jeremy Hamand in People & The Planet, A Joint UNFPA, WCU and IPPF publication Volume 2, Number 1, 1993.

Iran Revives Family Planning

The Government of Iran allocated the equivalent of US\$150 million for population activities in 1992, evidence of its determination to revive the family planning programme suspended since 1978.

Family planning was pioneered in Iran by a Family Planning Association established in 1967. Although it ceased to function in 1978, the Government has not opposed birth control. The population grew at the rate of 3.9 percent in the decade 1976-1986 but has since declined to an estimated 2.7 percent in 1992, when contraceptive prevalence was expected to be about 41 percent of the population.

Source: People & The Planet, A Joint UNFPA, WCU and IPPF publication Volume 2, Number 1, 1993.

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The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW)

was established in 1973 at the Beirut University college. The Institute started modestly with a grant from Ford Foundation with Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr as its Director. An Advisory Committee of seven social scientists assisted the Director. In 1977, the Institute began publishing its newsletter, Al-Raida.

Objectives of IWSAW

- To serve as a data bank and resource center to provide knowledge on subjects pertaining to Arab women and children.
- To assess the impact of change on the role of women.
- To develop awareness among women as to their potential and help them develop it.
- To improve the quality of life for women and children in Arab countries.
- To serve as a catalyst for policy makers.
- To promote better understanding of Arab women and children.
- To promote and facilitate communications among individuals, groups and institutions concerned with women and children in the Arab world.
- To enhance Beirut University College curriculum.

IWSAW Projects

Documentation: IWSAW's Documentation Center houses a unique collection of over 5000 books and 2000 periodicals, individual articles, bibliographies and unpublished papers in Arabic, French and English. The material relates to the various aspects of women in the Arab countries and in other parts of the world. The Documentation Center, located and incorporated with Stoltzfus Library of Beirut University College, is a pioneer in this respect.

Publications

On Women Several books about women in the Arab world have been published in English and Arabic. A series of Monographs discuss Arab women and education, work, industry, economic development, literature, art, image of women in textbooks, contemporary women's movement in the Arab world, women in religion, legal rights and others. Please note that these publications may be ordered from IWSAW.

On Children Seven children's books with illustrations and a guide for setting up children's libraries and writing and illustrating children's books have also been researched and published.

Teaching and Action Programs

Women's Studies In collaboration with the Humanities Division of Beirut University College a course on Arab women was instated. Presently, the Institute's proposal to offer additional courses in Women's Studies has been approved by the College.

Basic Living Skills Project (BLSP) To combat social literacy, a non-formal integrated educational program for semi-literate and illiterate women was devised. The content of the kit consists of eight units in health, environment, home management, sex education and family planning, nutrition, child care, civic education and legal rights of women. They are written in simple Arabic, accompanied by audio-visual material.

Income Generating Project In answer to the painful cry of needy and war-stricken families, a variety of Income Generating workshops are administered and implemented. The objective is to teach women a skill which would help them generate income for themselves. Training is complimented with instructions in the various issues from the BLSP. Thus far, 200 women have benefited from the project; some have become trainers and others are employed in leading establishments or are free-lancing.

Additional projects by IWSAW include a **Portable Library Project** for children's. A **Puppet Theater** travels presents puppet shows to children at local schools. **The Rehabilitation Program for Children's Mental Health** and **Teaching For Peace** are new IWSAW projects.

Conferences, Seminars and Lectures

Conferences have included a regional conference on Women and Economic Development, a national conference on Women and the Environment. Another regional conference on Arab Women and the Environment is under way. The Institute conducts an annual event on the occasion of International Women's Day. Furthermore, a number of informal lectures and seminars on women's issues are conducted in addition to Early Childhood and Special Education.