مجلّ

سال ١٤

CIRA BULLETIN

Volume 14 Number 2 September 1998

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Published twice a year in March and September by

THE CENTER FOR IRANIAN RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

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Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996). Pp. vii + 177.

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This insightful volume starts with the disclaimer that it seeks neither "grand thematic unity" nor "a self-conscious intention to take stock of the field." It attempts instead to "evaluate the extent to which gender as an analytic category has been incorporated into studies in the Middle East and assess the implications of such a move" (p. viii). The volume accomplishes this aim very well by presenting seven essays that masterfully explore significant social issues through a gendered lens. By the end of the book, the reader becomes thoroughly convinced of the significance of gender in understanding the complexity of social existence in the Middle East.

Deniz Kandiyoti introduces the volume with a very valuable essay summarizing contemporary feminist scholarship and Middle East studies. She periodizes feminist scholarship into three phases, which commence with the establishment of the field of women's studies through combating the androcentric bias, then shift emphasis to gender asymmetries to account for the subordination of women, and finally lead to the current conceptualization that all aspects of human existence are gendered. Kandiyoti then proposes a similar periodization for scholarship on women in the Middle East: the first studies center around the tensions among feminism, nationalism, and Islam in contesting women's position in society, followed by discussions of women's roles within the broader social science paradigms of social transformation, namely modernization theory and Marxism. Dialogues with Western academic feminism ensue, rather unevenly, as issues such as otherness, difference, and patriarchy are discussed within the context of the Middle East. The last stage, entailing the breakdown of consensus within feminist theory over multiculturalism and identity politics, sets the stage for this edited volume: given these current divides, how should one study Middle East societies? Kandiyoti proposes a fully gendered analysis of pertinent social issues and then presents seven essays that undertake such a gendered approach.

The first essay, by Joanna de Groot on the relationship between gender, discourse, and ideology in Iranian studies, argues that gender and feminist scholarship grew side by side with scholarly attention to recent history, but was not usually integrated into it. De Groot identifies three projects of recuperation, redefinition, and transformation to accomplish such an integration. She states that existing studies need to be reapproached with an eye to recuperating gender that has been hidden, marginalized, or overlooked. The categories for interpreting economic activity, social relations, or cultural practices need to be redefined so as to incorporate the role of gender, and actual social, historical, and cultural frameworks need to be transformed in order to rectify their gender-blindness.

The second essay, by Parvin Paidar, focuses on the interaction between Islam and feminism in Iranian history. Paidar argues that early twentieth-century secular nationalist feminism led to statist feminism and cultural nationalism under Reza Shah Pahlavi. The unwillingness of the Pahlavi state to give voice to women's issues lent credibility to the Islamic campaign for a shift from the Western model of an exploited, sexualized woman to an "authentic," protected one. The ensuing Islamist feminism under the Islamic Republic gave a prominent position to women in the new constitution as mothers and citizens, but contradictory policies on women's location in Iranian society inhibited their actual progress.

In the third essay, Annelies Moors analyzes women's property rights in Palestine. She contends that the relationship between property and power is determined by a complex web of gendered social relations. It is not the nature of property itself but the kin relations and class position of women that become especially significant, as wealthy, urban, elderly, widowed with sons, or single women all adopt different strategies in making property claims.

In the fourth essay, Sheila Hannah Katz studies the re-imagination through gender of Palestinian and Jewish identities at the turn of the century. Print media and films gave expression to these nascent nationalisms as they helped articulate, in separate Jewish and Palestinian spheres, ties between nationalism and the valorization of manhood, motherhood, the feminization of land, and the preservation of the 'authentic' location of women. Perceived threats very quickly became sexualized and women's positions politicized; even though gender was thus extremely significant in imagining these new Palestinian and Jewish national communities. It ultimately failed to bridge the deep divide between them.

The fifth essay, by Simona Sharoni critiques the gendered assumptions, language, and relations of power that underlie the Israeli-Palestinian accord. She first makes gender visible by posing the question of where women are in the accord. Sharoni specifically critiques the alternatingly dismissive and co-opting media coverage of Hanan Ashrawi and the Norwegian interlocutors Marianne Heiberg and Mona Yoll. She then concentrates on the differences between the voices and perspectives, comparing the masculine-militarized language of the accord with feminist understandings of peace and security. Sharoni then focuses on the gendered assumptions of the accounts and the resolution, leading her on a search for "webs of meaning" (p. 119) that could potentially unite the two sides.

The sixth essay, on women's writing in Egypt, by Hoda El Sadda, contends that Arab women writers can only gain recognition in the literary cultural scene by assimilating the dominant gender-blind discourse. Only one Egyptian woman writer, Salwa Bakr, seems to be able to successfully challenge this predicament. In trying to decipher the reasons behind Bakr's success, El Sadda identifies her ability to transcend the limits of binary thought, of "the struggle of the sexes," in narrative, structure and style. Bakr's ability to develop "a voice of her own" (p. 141) leads her through all the divides and obstacles in Egyptian society.

Rosemary Sayigh's final essay on researching gender in a Palestinian camp explores the dilemmas gender presents for the researcher and the research community. Her narrative interweaves three histories, that of the Shateela camp in the 1980s, her own as a researcher, and that of the research project, to demonstrate how all three interact to produce a full,

textured account of the human experience in the camp. She once more demonstrates how gender influences the scholar's gaze in both the formulation and the execution of research.

In summary, all the essays successfully intimate a new approach in scholarship on the Middle East: one that blends state-of-the-art feminist scholarship with sophisticated empirical work for a gendered analysis of social issues of the Middle East.

Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1851-1896* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Pp, xviii+ 536.

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The central theme of this book is the life and legacy of Nasir al-Din Shah, especially during the years 1848-1871, when the young shah evolved from inauspicious beginnings as an insecure and badly-educated young prince into a powerful monarch with substantial control over his government and foreign policy. In successive power struggles with his two premiers, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir and Mirza Aqa Khan Nuri, Nasir al-Din Shah retained the ancient institution of monarchy but increased his own political power at the expense of ministerial autonomy. At a time of growing European intervention in the region, the shah played off several European powers against each other, and in the process, transformed himself into a modern absolute monarch. In later years, he used modern means of communication, especially the telegraph, to reduce the authority of provincial governors and to keep a close eye on the actions of his brother Zill al-Sultan and his heir Muzaffar al-Din Mirza. While the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 introduced new democratic institutions that reduced the powers of both the shah and his premier, the political legacy of Nasir al-Din Shah was reinvented in the late 1920s. The Pahlavi shahs reinstated the struggle between the monarch and the Prime Minister for control of the government and in the process used modern means of communication to further consolidate their authority.

Those who enjoyed Amanat's earlier *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Cornell UP, 1989) will be happy to find some continuity of themes here. Amanat presents a highly nuanced image of Amir Kabir and is careful to show both his achievements and his authoritarian nature, which resulted in the destruction of progressive social movements that could have helped him accomplish his modernizing goals. Amir Kabir fought the extravagances of the court and the harem and remained independent of foreign powers. As a power base, he relied almost exclusively on the shah and the small army he had built. Therefore, it was simply a matter of time before his enemies, together with the young shah who resented Amir Kabir's immense authority, joined hands to destroy him.