



A Gendered History in the Levant: Citizenship and Decoloniality in Syria and Lebanon (1920-1946)

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Abstract

The question of gender in Levantine societies offers an interesting research perspective on the emancipation of women in the decolonial/postcolonial context. We propose to think the 20th century from the angle of the gender studies approach, integrating an analysis on the place of women in history and in the writing of history. Under the French mandate, Lebanese and Syrian women questioned their status as subordinates and organized themselves in national and regional organizations to demand the status of full citizens as well as the independence of Lebanon. The diversity of women's movements, ranging from Islamist movements to nationalist movements via feminist movements, raises the question of their structure, organization and activism between the years 1930 and 1943 and especially the impact of their actions in the process of -colonial. Thus, for instance, we consider that the independence of Lebanon is not only a male quest but a female quest, which is not only on the political level, but also on the social level. These movements are indeed committed to improving the living conditions of women and children, working more than men to build a Welfare State. Our topic is first of all an analysis of the place of women in academic research in contemporary history and in particular in the Middle East. It is a question of focusing on the female figures who have marked this history, like Ibtihaj Qaddoura, May Ziadé, Rose Shafah as representatives of the women's movement in Lebanon in these years, but also Angela Jurdak Khoury and Alice Kandaleft, first women diplomats, respectively in Lebanon and Syria and finally, Abla el-Khoury, first woman journalist at the Syrian Broadcasting Station, and activist in favor of women's suffrage in Syria Therefore, my topic is interested in another perspective of reading the history of the Levant but also the history of France, by studying the place and the reactions of France in the face of the demands of women, considered in the systems colonials as subordinate subjects. To what extent have women decided to get out of this status by joining feminist organizations? To what extent can feminism be considered a decolonial movement in Lebanon? In what way are Lebanese women, as Elisabeth Thompson suggests, “post-colonial” citizens?



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This gendered reading of the history of the Levant and of mandatory France is intended to supplement the already existing literature, by shedding light on the methods of the making of history, particularly in the region studied, according to an approach which consists of bring women out of oblivion, as advocated by Colette Cosnier or Alain Touraine.

Keywords: Levant, Individual Path, Subaltern, Postcolonialism