CALL FOR AMEWS PAPERS FOR MESA 1987: HURRY -- PROPOSALS DUE IN BY MARCH 15.

A number of panels have been proposed for MESA 1987 (Nov. 14-17 in Baltimore). If you would like to present a paper on one of the following panels, please contact the person listed. You will need to fill out a presentation proposal form; these are printed in the Fall 1986 and Spring 1987 MESA Newsletter, or can be obtained by writing to the MESA Secretariat: Dept. of Oriental Studies, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721. Tel.: (602) 621-5850.


The Impact of Foreign Language Schools on Women in the Middle East. Mine Cinar (above).

Women's Political Participation in the Middle East. Kathleen Howard-Merriam, Dept. of Political Science, BGSU, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0225. (419) 372-2832. Spring '87 Kathleen will be at: c/o ARCE, 2 Midan Kasr El Dubbarah, (Simon Bolivar), Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. (If time is short, try the OH # and see if her secretary knows about arrangements.)

Middle Easterners in the U.S. Evelyn Shakir, Dept. of English, Bentley College, Waltham, MA. 02254. (617) 891-2944.


Feminist Theology in Islam. Riffat Hassan, 42 Francis Ave., #12, Cambridge, MA 02138 Office Tel.: (617) 495-5761. Home Tel.: (617) 498-4084.

Minority Women in the Middle East. Adele Kazemi-Ferdows, Dept. of Political Science, Univ. of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292. (502) 588-6831. And Linda Walbridge, 200 S. 17th Street, Escanaba, MI 49829.

EVENTS

Edited by Susan Schaefer Davis

In this column we plan to publish announcements of events of interest to AMEWS members, as well as reports on these events to the extent possible — for which we depend on your participation. Please let us know, well in advance, of upcoming events in your area, including conferences, distinguished lectures, and visits to the area by well-known scholars, especially those from abroad. Events from the recent past will also be noted in order to enable members to contact individuals for relevant information. We also want to solicit volunteers to report on the various events they attend; their reports will be edited (mainly with regard to length) and printed here with a by-line. Finally, we would like to solicit your suggestions for additions to this column. Please address all correspondence and announcements concerning events to Susan Schaefer Davis at the address on the masthead.

Past Events

Folklore and Feminism. Special all day program at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Baltimore, MD, Oct. 22-26, 1986. Reported by Susan Slymovics.

Eleven different panels and a feminist forum were presented. Of special interest to AMEWS members was a panel "Women and Jewish Tradition: A Feminist Perspective", and papers by Susan Tower Hollis "Women of Ancient Egypt and the Sky Goddess Nut" and by Susan Slymovics "Ritual Grievance: The Language of Women". The latter paper describes the Egyptian zar ceremony and asks whether this specifically female mode of ritual expression either generates or derives from something that can be identified as female language. Conference papers will be published in a special issue of the Journal of American Folklore.

Women's Roles in Islamic Iran. Women's Studies Colloquium at Cal State University, North Ridge, CA. Nov. 17, 1986.

Nayereh Tohidi, a professor in the CSUN program, addressed a range of issues related to the social, religious and legal positions of women in Iran. Included were a description of the impact of fundamentalism on Iranian women and an analysis of factors under the shah that led women to turn to Islamic fundamentalism; an explanation of how family law has changed since the revolution; and a discussion of such developments as women's return to the veil and the state's lowering to age 9 the legal minimum marriage age for females.

Guest Speaker Etel Adnan

The first part of the meeting was a talk titled "A Woman Writer in Lebanon", in which Etel Adnan described what it was like to grow up in Lebanon in the '30s and '40s, and eventually pursue an education which led to development of her abilities as a writer. The paper covered her early childhood, her family and background, the French convent school she went to, and the influences of school, family and external events on her. There was a continuous theme of the influence of French colonialism on her personally and on the culture at large.

Business Meeting

Several important items were decided at the business meeting; it is in your interest to read the summary that follows.

AMEWS Chair Absent: Unfortunately, Suad Joseph was unable to attend the meeting because of the unforeseen illness of her daughter. AMEWS Treasurer Kathleen Howard-Merriam ran the meeting as Acting Chair. She began by giving a brief history of the organization as provided by Suad Joseph. The idea began in 1983, growing from a desire for networking among women studying women and spurred into action by the 1983 MESA banquet having sexist entertainment in the form of a belly dancer. The idea of a formal group was discussed at a workshop led by Deniz Kandiyoti, and Suad used her position as 1984 Program Co-Chair to press for a plenary session on women at the next meeting. AMEWS began at MESA in 1985, and we now have 152 members on the roster.

By-Laws Approved Provisionally: The By-Laws as published in AMEWS News 1:3 were passed because they were necessary to continue functioning. However, CHANGES CAN BE SUGGESTED IN WRITING; they will be voted on at next year's meeting.

Treasurer's Report: While we are still solvent, the last issue of AMEWS News cost almost $275 to print and distribute. In light of this, it was motioned that annual dues be raised to $10 and this passed unanimously. Further, it was suggested that we could sell our mailing labels to advertisers to raise funds. People found this acceptable, with the proviso that we give members a chance to withdraw their names if they wish: see announcement above for how to do so. Volunteers for a fund-raising committee were requested, and only Shireen Mahdavi responded.

Newsletter Editors' Report: Susan Davis announced that AMEWS News will come out of the East Coast for one more year. After that, editorship will rotate; be thinking if a group of YOU would like to edit, and volunteer at next year's meeting. She also proposed that the News come out three times a year,
once in the fall and twice in the spring, and that this be put in the by-laws. It was suggested that the News list recent articles and books, and that a shortcut to do so would be for AMEWS members to submit lists of their relevant publications from 1985-87; see Announcements for details. Margaret Mills (address on masthead) will provide back issues of the News to late joiners on request. It was suggested that the News be expanded into a journal, but the editors disagreed, noting that it serves an important function as a newsletter. Members were interested in a journal, and a group including Margot Badran, Kathleen Manalo and Mary Jo Lakeland met later to discuss the matter, including potential sources of funding. One possibility is to develop a prototype journal to attract funding.

Papers for Next Year's Meetings: Eleven people proposed topics for panels for next year; see separate notice for details. In addition, Audrey Shabdas proposed and moved that a panel on women be presented at the Social Studies Teachers conference next year in Dallas, which precedes and slightly overlaps MESA's dates. The motion passed.

Plans for Next Year's Meeting: Plans for the AMEWS meeting in Baltimore are being coordinated by Linda Walbridge and Christine Sproul (addresses with proposed panels). Contact them if you would like to help or have ideas for speakers.

Publishing Proceedings of 1986 MESA Panels on Women: Mine Cinar reported on her investigation of the costs of publishing these proceedings, which were estimated at $1400-$1800. If $20 were charged per paper and there were 40 papers, we could easily raise $1600 and probably cover costs, and perhaps make a small profit. She made a motion to publish the papers, and discussion followed. It was noted that we need a board or committee to make such financial decisions and empower a person to proceed, but there were no volunteers. On voting, three were in favor of publication, and the motion was defeated.

Identification and Scheduling of AMEWS Panels: The Officers urged that only panels approved by the Board be identified as AMEWS panels. There were complaints about poor scheduling of panels on women this year, with Mervat Hatem noting that 25% were at 8 AM and another 25% were on Sunday. It was proposed that the Board write to the Program Committee to protest and to suggest that an AMEWS member sit on that committee; Mervat Hatem volunteered to serve.

Child Care Proposed: Judith Tucker suggested that a study be made of providing child care at next year's meetings for members with children and babies, and agreed to present a proposal to the MESA Program Committee. Motion passed.
Boycott of Middle East Magazine: Margot Badran asked AMEWS members to sign a petition of censure and to boycott the magazine (published in England) because of the summary firing of some of the staff. A boycott would involve not buying the magazine and not submitting material to them. No vote was taken.

Banquet

After the business meeting, AMEWS members gathered for dinner. Guests included a delegation of scholars who study the Middle East from the People's Republic of China, and film makers Asia Djebar, Mai Masri and Kamal Boullata. MESA President B.J. Fernea spoke briefly, outlining the history of AMEWS and the central role played by Suad Joseph in its founding. Suad received a round of applause in absentia.

Future Events

AWID Meeting: The third meeting of the Association for Women in Development will be held in Washington, D.C. April 15-17, 1987.

The conference theme is "Moving Forward: Innovations in Development Policy, Action and Research". Papers will focus around the three subthemes of innovation in economic enterprises, achieving food security, and reproductive health and child survival. For information on registration cost and procedure, contact Cornelia Butler Flora or Meredith Smith, Conference Co-Chairs, Conference Office, Division of Continuing Education, Wareham building, 1623 Anderson Ave., Manhattan, Kansas 66502 (913/532-5575).


The theme of the conference is "Beyond the Public/Private Dichotomy: Reassessing Women's Place in History", and a special appeal was made last year for papers on women in the Middle East. The scuttlebut has it that this is one of the best women's conferences for intellectual debates, and the appeal goes beyond history. For information on registration contact Susan Reverby, Women's Studies Program, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02181.

MESA Nov. 14-17, 1987 in Baltimore, MD.

See Announcements for panels proposed at AMEWS; Individual proposals are also welcome, but the deadline for receipt is March 15, 1987. See Announcements for details.
ETEL ADNAN: SYMBOL AND MODEL

The first meeting of AMEWS--after the founding meeting in New Orleans--held in Boston last November was another historic moment in Middle East Women's Studies. Etel Adnan, as keynote speaker, celebrated the event sharing her memories and reflections on "Growing up to be a Woman Writer in Lebanon."

As Etel told her story--seeming at times to be myth rather than life history--many thoughts stirred. Etel's life and work have been and continue to be a prism that catches in itself and refracts the complexities of the Middle East and of women's lives. She is a part of the Middle East yet often apart from it. She is Arab and Greek. She is Muslim and Christain. She is heir to both Ottoman cosmopolitanism and Arab nationalism. At the French nun's school in Beirut under Mandate, she was both colonial soil and pupil rebel. Scaling fences she was the 'sarcon manue.' Dressed in silk she was the 'perfect little girl.' She was removed from school in middle adolescence. Soon--during the second world war--she was part of the first offensive of women in the office work force. She also managed to pole vault herself back into school in Beirut (and later to university in Paris). She led three lives: the restless, rebelling adolescent at home, the worker, and the student--dreamer and poet.

She revealed to us an intense little girl and an intense young woman. She was open and very private, exposed and yet shielded, but always daring. She picked her way through a minefield between worlds and eras taking something from each and leaving somethings of herself. She expressed herself from girlhood in poetry and stories, and later in paint, pulling together familiar textures, shapes, and colors creating new wholes. She liberated and created both herself and the worlds she inhabited. She is inside Sitt Marie Rose and Sitt Marie Rose exists beyond her. Refusing the safety of the ordained niche of sex, sect or nation, she approached the edge where both creation and annihilation are possible. She has dared to live by her own lights which are strong and sure and has succeeded—in poetry, prose, painting, and tapestry.*

I thought how fitting it was that Etel shared her early life with us. She is both symbol and model to us as we move into new terrain in our lives and work. Middle East Women’s Studies is our own creation we continue to shape. We are creating a new inter-disciplinary discipline whose concern is gender. We are part of the universality of Women’s Studies and the specificity of Middle East Studies. How do we deal with the universals and the particulars; do we fit in; do we create new space, how do we go about new tasks while needing to live and work daily in the world as we find it? The life of Etel growing up to be a writer in Lebanon suggested some of the answers.

by Margot Badran

REVIEW
Edited by Margot Badran


Review by Kathleen Howard Merriam, Department of Political Science, Bowling Green State University

THE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF WOMEN edited by Margot Duley and Mary Edwards is an ambitious work. The editors attempt to pull together the literature on the status of women in the third world for course use. They divide the book into two parts: the first on theoretical perspectives covers such familiar issues as biology versus culture, male dominance in anthropology both as subjects of study and authors of the scholarship, the colonial impact on women’s development, gender stratification, and women and religion. In the second part, the focus is on geographical areas: India, China, Sub-Saharan African, Latin America, and the Islamic Middle East and North Africa.

In this review, we focus on the chapter, Women in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa, by Margot Duley, one of three annotated bibliography chapters (the other two address Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) in part two on Area Studies. The other three chapters in this part are presented in the form of lecture outlines. Margot Duley evidently specialized on China rather than the Middle East at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. Her chapter on China is much fuller and is one of the lecture outline chapters. For her chapter on the Middle East and North Africa she has depended on Dr. Aziza al-Hibri, editor of WOMEN AND ISLAM (Pergamon, 1982) and a lecture by Yvonne Haddad. It is to her credit then that she captures well some of the debates on the situation of women in this much misunderstood area of the world. She points out the often negative views in western scholarship on women in Islam such as Vern Bullough’s contention that Islam has strong misogynistic tendencies which are institutionalized by seclusion, veiling, and clitoridectomy to control women. She also rightly cautions that one should not portray women in the Muslim Middle East as homogeneous and that their status is connected with the varying ecological, economic, and cultural realities that Islam’s first promoters found and to which they adapted as they spread out over the eastern Mediterranean and the North African coast. She also notes the varying impacts of the different regimes in the Middle East and North African on the status of women. She then proceeds to make “careful generalizations.”

After citing such well-known bibliographical and general works as Beck and Keddie’s WOMEN IN THE MUSLIM WORLD and Fernnea and Bezirgan’s MIDDLE EASTERN MUSLIM SPEAK, as well as the journal AL RAIDIA published by Beirut College for Women, she proceeds to list a few works under the following topics: Women and Islam, Village and Pastoral Societies, and Selected Social Issues. The latter includes sub-topics: seclusion, polygamy, genital mutilation, and power versus powerlessness. Another topic is Women and Development which deals with colonialism and nationalism, the impact of urbanization, and women and work.
In the section on Women and Islam several works were omitted such as Jane Smith, ed., WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM SOCIETIES, Bo Utas, ed., WOMEN IN ISLAMIC SOCIETIES: SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, and Charis Waddy, WOMEN IN MUSLIM HISTORY.

One gains the impression from the author’s focus that the Middle East and North Africa are primarily agricultural and pastoral societies bound by tradition. More sources are listed for women in pastoral and agricultural societies than for urban women when in fact less than fifty percent of the women are found in rural areas. It is surprising that Nayra Atiya’s FIVE EGYPTIAN WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES and Andrea Rush’s FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPT which deal with urban women are not mentioned, nor are Anne Betteridge, "The Controversial Views of Urban Muslim Women in Iran" in Nancy Auer Falk and Rita M. Gross, eds., UNSPOKEN WORLDS: WOMEN’S RELIGIOUS LIVES IN NON-WESTERN CULTURES or Marjorie Hall and Bakhita Amin Ismail, SISTERS UNDER THE SUN which addresses women’s lives in both urban and rural settings. Historical studies are not adequately covered. For example, the writer might have mentioned Ronald Jenning, "The Legal Position of Women in Kayseri, A Large Ottoman City, 1590-1630," INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF WOMEN’S STUDIES, 111, 559-582, 1980 and Haim Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa, 1590-1630, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES, XII, 242-75, 1980 which demonstrate how women owned and operated businesses and inherited land challenging the notion that female seclusion has been uniform in urban areas. Masrot Badran addresses these topics and sources more fully in her bibliographical essay, "Islam, Patriarchy, and Feminism in the Middle East," TRENDS IN HISTORY, 4, 1, 49-71, 1985, admittedly probably unavailable to Duley, but she should have been aware of the literature reviewed which was published earlier. Judith Tucker’s historical study, WOMEN IN NINETEENTH CENTURY EGYPT, published in 1985 was also probably too late for inclusion.

On the subject of women and work for which there is a considerable literature, Duley gives very brief treatment. Masrot Badran has addressed the subject far more adequately both in the pastoral/rural and urban contexts in "Women and Production in the Middle East and North Africa," TRENDS IN HISTORY, 2, 3, 59-88, 1982. But at least the co-editor does make the point, as Badran does in her fuller treatment, that women’s economic activity has been vastly undervalued in official government sources. Duley hardly mentions studies on women in the professions or the impact of education on women’s lives. Only one work, Safia Mohsen, "The Egyptian Woman: Between Modernity and Tradition," in MANY SISTERS is cited in this context but again it emphasizes the conservatism of Egyptian men and women. On the development of women in the professions in Egypt she could also have mentioned this reviewer’s article, "Women, Education, and the Professions in Egypt," in COMPARATIVE EDUCATION REVIEW, XXIII, 131-43, 1979.

In the sub-section on Power and Powerlessness, very little attention is paid to the question of women in politics in the public sphere. Besides Fleuruh-Lobban, "The Political Mobilization of Women in the Arab World," which Duley cites as a good comparative overview, she
could have mentioned studies on Iranian women in the revolution such as Guiti Nashat’s WOMAN AND REVOLUTION IN IRAN and this reviewer’s, “Egypt’s Other Political Elite,” WESTERN POLITICAL QUARTERLY, 1981, although she does mention other works on Egypt which concentrate on Egypt’s earlier feminist movement in the nationalist politics of the early 20th century.

Finally, the special place she accords genital mutilation seems to distort her presentation of Women in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa. As she, herself, notes this is not an Islamic custom but rather has been practiced by people of different religions concentrated primarily in eastern Africa. To devote two and a half pages to the subject while giving short shrift to women and work, for instance, or women’s participation in the public arena again leaves the reader with a negative view of women in the Muslim Middle East and North Africa as a culture of repression expressed in this practice as well as in seclusion, polygamy, and powerlessness enforced by men.

In sum, this work demonstrates that it is very difficult for scholars who cannot claim specialization in all of the areas covered to do an adequate survey of the literature on women’s status throughout the third world in a single volume. It would have been preferable to invite a specialist on women in the Middle East to write the chapter on that area. To end on a positive note, we in AMEWS can redress this imbalance by producing our own study of the literature.

We apologize for not mentioning that Leslie Peirce, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University was the reviewer of THE OTTOMAN LADY: A SOCIAL HISTORY FROM 1718 TO 1918 in the last AMEWS issue.

BOOKS RECEIVED


Farah, Madelain, MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY IN ISLAM: A TRANSLATION OF AL-GHAZALI’S BOOK ON THE ETIQUETTE OF MARRIAGE FROM THE IHYA (University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1984)


Eickelman, Christine, WOMEN AND COMMUNITY IN OMAN (Columbia University Press, New York, 1984)

Rush, Andrea B., REVEAL AND CONCEAL: DRESS IN CONTEMPORARY EGYPT (Syracuse University Press, 1986)

Women’s Journals in the Arab World: A large bibliography of these journals has been compiled by Alice Deyab at Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138. She would welcome suggestions for additions, and also inquiries, at the address above.
We are eager to announce and review your books and ask you to assure that your publishers' send review copies. At the AMEWS meeting in Boston, November 1986, it was suggested that we publish a list of journal articles on women in the Middle East. Please send by April 1st full citations of your articles published over the past few years and those scheduled to appear in the future so we can publish a list of articles in our spring 1987 issue. We shall keep this updated in succeeding issues. Books for review and article citations should be sent to Reviews Editor, Margot Badran, 1 Morton Road, De Witt, NY 13214

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Palestinian Human Rights Campaign will sponsor an INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN in Washington, D.C., March 27-28. For further information, call the PHRC office at (312) 987-1830.

The annual Socialist Scholars Conference will take place in New York City on March 10-12, 1987. Val Moghdam has been asked to organize a panel on women in the Third World (or the Middle East) and is soliciting papers, ideas, suggestions. Please contact her at (212) 865-7944.

Research Funds. At the AMEWS business meeting in Boston, B.J. Fernea announced that she had recently contacted the Ford Foundation about funding for AMEWS but was told that they do not support organizations. However, they are open to funding research on issues concerning women done jointly by Middle Eastern and Western scholars. Contact B.J. at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Univ. of Texas, Austin, TX 78712, for more information.

Dues Raised. At the AMEWS business meeting in Boston, a motion to raise AMEWS fees from $5 to $10 passed unanimously. For those of you who have not yet renewed, please send dues to Kathleen Howard-Merrin. (Although she is on leave, they will be deposited.)

Can We Sell Your Name? At the fall business meeting, we discussed selling our mailing labels to appropriate people (publishers, or organizations calling for papers) as a way of raising funds to meet expenses. If you DO NOT want your name sold in this way, notify us by March 1, 1987, or we will assume you do not mind. We also welcome letters with your ideas on this, and other ways to raise funds.

AMEWS Directory. We have had an excellent response to our request for your names and addresses for our directory. For those who have not yet submitted this information and wish to be included, please send in the tear-off sheet at the end of this issue.

(The above was contributed by Susan Schaefer Davis and Val Moghdam.)
AMEWS OFFICERS FOR 1986-87

Chair: Suad Joseph, Dept. of Anthropology, Univ. of Calif., Davis, CA 95616. 
Secretary-Treasurer: Kathleen Howard Merriam, Dept. of Political Science, 
Bowling State Univ., Bowling Green, OH 43402.

AMEWS NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

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Northeast: Val Moghadam (address above). Southwest: Elizabeth Fernea. 
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St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

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To join AMEWS, contact Kathleen Howard Merriam, Secretary-Treasurer

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AMEWS NEWS is interested in a Logo and graphics. Please submit to Val Moghadam.

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Submissions to the Newsletter should be directed to the relevant Editor. 
If in doubt, contact Val Moghadam (home tel. no. 212/865-7944).
MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I would like to become a member of AMEWS and receive the Newsletter. Enclosed is my check for $5.

I would like to participate in AMEWS activities, e.g., contribute to the Newsletter, or become a Regional Representative.

I would like to make a financial contribution to AMEWS' efforts. Enclosed is a check in the amount of $____.

Name ________________________________

Address ______________________________

City __________________ State ________ Zip Code ________

***** If a check is enclosed, please mail, along with form, to the AMEWS Treasurer, Kathleen Howard Merriam, Dept. of Political Science, Bowling Green State Univ., Bowling Green, OH 43402. ***** If you would like to write for the Newsletter, please communicate your area of interest, suggestions and/or submission to the relevant editor (see names and addresses on first page).

------------------------------ DETACH HERE ------------------------------

PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT: AMEWS DIRECTORY

AMEWS plans to compile a directory of women (and men) engaged in the study of Middle East women. This is provisionally called The Middle East Women's Studies Project. To initiate what will eventually be an international scholars' directory, we would like to compile data on our own membership, and would appreciate your cooperation. Please fill out the form below and mail to Val Moghadam, Dept. of Sociology, NYU, 269 Mercer, 4th Fl., NYC 10003.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION SHEET

Name ________________________________

Address ______________________________

Telephone Number (s) ________________________________

Area/Discipline ________________________________

Current Research (title and/or brief description) ________________________________

Site and Duration of Project ________________________________

Funding ________________________________

Do you want your name included on any circulating list? Yes ____ No ____.