

for old people they are thrust into a position of creating their own. They are modern day pioneers in a manner which might compare to Melbin's (1978) notions. Four specific areas are cited wherein old people must work to formulate their own normative standards: (1) death, (2) sex, (3) equality, and (4) with regard to dealing with the weak and helpless members of their groups. Generational factors are dealt with to some degree. Yet, Keith shows how there remains a similarity between the adolescent and the old, based on their being in what she terms a liminal position (transitional/marginal status). The book concludes by setting forth an argument that modern societies lack complete rituals of transition to help old people define their social statuses and map this new and as of yet "uncharted territory."

In conclusion, although the book has a fairly traditional format and set of areas, it does contain the nucleus of a variety of critical insights which should aid the student in formulating a fuller awareness of the aging experience. From the very beginning of the book Keith challenges the reader and the researcher to reconceptualize the theories they use to explain old age as a social phenomenon.

This book could probably be used as a solid teaching resource. *Old People as People* is a fairly good survey of a limited area of gerontology and used in conjunction with other monographs in the Little, Brown series, could be used very effectively as part of a course text in social gerontology.

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REFERENCE

- Melbin, M.
1978 "Night as Frontier." *American Sociological Review* 43:3-22.

Elizabeth W. Fernea (ed.), *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of Change*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. 356 pp. \$24.50 (cloth).

During the last few years, women and change in the Middle East have attracted a number of scholars. The originality of the present work stems from the nature and diversity of materials it contains. Some of these materials are translated for the first time into English from Arabic, French and Persian sources. The book also contains a collection of poems, short stories, essays, interviews, novel excerpts, life histories and more. The topics and issues covered range from family, health and education, to work and politics. Geographically, the coverage is also diverse. Several countries from Iran to Morocco are represented. There is, however, a common theme that runs throughout the book: women and social change in the Middle East.

As such, the book aims at a wide audience. Both the well-informed Middle Easterner and the less-informed reader would find it highly informative. To the feminist student, eager to learn more about Middle Eastern women than the stereotype of secluded Arabian women reported in textbooks, the book offers more than just information. It offers an approach, a frame of mind and a call for understanding.

Organization of the Book

Starting with an enlightening poem, the book is organized into eight parts of varying lengths. Part I, the shortest, introduces the theme of the book. It raises the question of social change and women as they voice the need for change. Algerian women speak of women's place in society, in the family, and their right to work. Not only are they calling for change but they are also envisioning full and true emancipation of women as a vital necessity for their liberation. In this vision of true emancipation, education and work are seen as the two basic conditions for the social advancement of women.

Part II contains a rich selection of three short stories, two fairly systematic papers and one life history. Each contribution treats an aspect of the family and some of the changes affecting it. The most systematic and perhaps the most informative contribution is the article by Halim Barakat, "The Arab Family and

the Challenge of Social Transformation." Barakat provides an overview of change in family systems in the Arab world generally using both Western and Middle Eastern "concepts." Equally informative is the paper by Safia Mohsen on working middle-class women in Egypt. The paper deals directly with social class in relation to women's participation in the labor force and only indirectly with the family structure. Thus, it could have been more in context if used in Part VI on work.

Part III is devoted to the examination of health and education issues. The contribution that stands out as most useful in this part is Nagat Al-Sanabary's general overview of the progress achieved in the area of women's education in a number of Arab states. Despite a shared Islamic-Arab cultural heritage, the variation among the Arab states is pointed out and is accounted for by the differences in income levels among those states. Progress in women's education in wealthy countries has been faster than in countries with a long tradition of female education but which face lack of resources and growing populations. Variation within countries is also noted and accounted for by differences in socio-economic levels at the family level. Indeed, studies the world over have shown the direct relationship between socio-economic background and educational attainment for both men and women. Apart from Nawal Al-sa'dawi's excerpt on "Growing up Female in Egypt" which seems out of context, the remaining contributions provide varying insights into education and health issues in particular socio-cultural settings. The relationship between official-dominant ideology and training women for new roles is discussed in light of the government's emphasis on military training for women in Libya. The subject of women and public health is approached through the experience of a Moroccan family. Women's education and fertility are very briefly reported on in the context of Iraq. Finally, the social and political implications of female circumcision receive a general treatment in the case of women in Sudan.

Part IV explores the position of Middle Eastern women in relation to war, politics, and revolution, features which are more or less intensively experienced in the Middle East. Most countries of the area have fought nationalist wars for independence. Wars usually have ramifications throughout the social system. They are

known to affect social structure and people. Women's experiences of war, politics and revolution are pointed out through a few poems by an Arab female poet in which she expresses her own experience of the Palestinian War. On the basis of previously published articles and a survey of about 900 Lebanese youth, Maroun Baghdadi and Neila De Freige attempt to sort out the effects of the 1975-76 civil war on the youth in Lebanon, a youth symbolically identified as the Kalashnikov generation. In their view, the impact of the war on the youth has not been all negative. The war has contributed to the youth's sense of independence, increased their tolerance and understanding of change, facilitated contacts among them and also reduced the traditional gap between sexes and social classes. More egalitarian social relations have become the objective of the Kalashnikov generation.

A case of friendship between two women of differing socio-economic backgrounds is explored by Emily Nasrallah whose message is that war, more than class, affects friendships. Based on interviews with Palestinian women from different social strata and varying levels of political involvement, "Encounters with Palestinian Women Under Occupation" starts by questioning the western feminist view of the family as source of women's oppression. Taking the complex interrelationship between women and society as a whole and women's problems and national concerns into account, the paper examines the effects of occupation on Palestinian women. The author concludes that occupation has contributed to increased women's activism in resistance movements, politicization, intellectual productivity, leadership and social visibility.

Part V, entitled Religion and Law, explores the reforms effected in the family law and civil code regarding women in Muslim societies. The cases of Egypt, Iraq, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and Iran are used to illustrate the process of reform currently undertaken. Hoffman's contribution, "An Islamic Activist: Zaynab Al-Glazali" seems out of context.

The two major contributions of Part VI examine the choices, strategies and adjustments made by working women in Cairo, Egypt. Similarly Barakah's short story illustrates some of the new problems of working women in the Egyptian context. Using inspiring poems, essays and stories, Part VII explores the

issue of identity among Muslim women. Throughout these materials, the message is the same: "self-identity is becoming important, but identity is still contextual" (2).

The book concludes with a translated excerpt from Djébar's work on Algerian women. This section critically informs the reader about the western view of Algerian women in particular and Middle Eastern women generally.

Although one cannot deny the wealth and excellence of information contained in the book, one is repeatedly reminded that better organization would have added to its value. The overlap in contributions, especially if presented in the same part, confuses the reader. The editor could have been more selective or should warn the reader about the overlap. More confusion arises from the introductory presentations accompanying each part. These introductions could have followed a sequential order that is consistent with that in which the contributions are presented. The introductions shortchange the reader in that they are too brief and relatively superficial. Although some of the contributions are excellent in their own right, their placement in the book makes them out of context.

Overall, the book provides the reader with excellent materials and fascinating insights on Middle Eastern women, their status, roles in the family, education, work, perception of the self, identity and so on. While I was reading the book, a question kept coming to mind: for whom should the book be recommended? Anyone who is interested in women as they live and rationalize their own experience of change, would find the book useful and enlightening.

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