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Amy Aisen Kallander, *Tunisia's Modern Woman: Nation-Building and State Feminism in the Global 1960s*. Publisher: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 280 pages. ISBN-10: 1108845045/ ISBN-13: 978-1108845045.

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A homogenous image of “la femme tunisienne” (the Tunisian woman) circulates both in and outside of Tunisia. Conversations about Tunisian womanhood bring up mentioning Tunisian exceptionalism with regards to women’s rights in relation to other so-called Arab or Muslim countries; these are tied to the reforms traced to Tunisia’s first president Habib Bourguiba. Where does this homogenous image and linked discourse come from?

Amy Aisen Kallander’s book *Tunisia's Modern Woman* traces this socio-political construction of Tunisia’s modern womanhood in, as the title suggests, Tunisia’s post-independence nation-building efforts in the 1960s. Kallander shows that modern womanhood came to be constructed, negotiated, and challenged at the nexus of global, regional, and local interests of different actors.

Each chapter in the book examines an aspect of the socio-historical construct of modern womanhood in 1960s – the formation of state feminism under Bourguiba (Chapter 1); the construction of rural women responsible for poverty-inducing population growth (Chapter 2) and requiring so-called developmental interventions to educate and urbanize them; through Ford Foundation-funded family-planning programs for example (Chapter 3); the construction of modern and socially-appropriate consumption (like clothing) for women and men (Chapter 4); and the valorization of love marriage over arranged marriage (Chapter 5).

Data on popular and state-discourses on womanhood, along with contestation of these discourses, come from popular women’s magazines (like *Faiza*), speeches or public declarations by key political actors (especially Bourguiba) and organizations (like UNFT – National Union of Tunisian Women), and texts published by Tunisian feminist and/or women academics and writers (like scholar Sophie Ferchiou). Below, I outline the central arguments made in each chapter, and conclude with a note on the questions that arose as I read the text in the context of the contemporary socio-political dynamics in Tunisia.

Kallander starts by tracing the making of Bourguiba as the self-proclaimed emancipator of women, especially through the passing of the Code of Personal Status in 1957 that institutionalized equality between women and men (Chapter 1). The code abolished polygamy, outlined a judicial process for divorce, and required consent from both parties for marriage. Yet, women's emancipation "occurred in a context of juridical constraints on men's patriarchal authority as husbands and fathers" (p.56).

Women participated either directly (through state positions) or indirectly (through civil society organizations or women's magazines) in the enactment of state feminism. Kallander reminds us that women involved in state feminist projects cannot be denounced as mere instruments of the state. Rather, "women's organizing within the state conferred recognition to their struggles, acknowledged women's place within national projects, and granted select women positions of authority" that they used to negotiate women-centered reforms (p. 250).

Most women who directly engaged with state feminism were middle-class urban women, and their participation within and/or critique of state feminism reflected their privileged positions, especially in contrast to women in marginalized rural spaces. The urban-rural divide, as Kallander shows in Chapter 2, is most visible in state discourses on family planning. In the 1960s, rural women in Tunisia were assumed to be the drivers of population growth. Population growth came to be constructed as a problem by Global North-funded international organizations across the Global South, pushing for violent policies of forced contraception or sterilizations. In Tunisia, like elsewhere, the state came to control women's bodies, justifying it with statistics of falling infant-mortality rates. One example of urban women-led state feminist intervention is UNFT's project to train urban social workers and to teach rural women health and hygiene (pp. 136-37).

Institutions linked with the state and funded by Global North-based organizations (for example, Center for Economic and Social Research or CERES) also provided space for (urban middle-class) women and men to point to and critique state feminism as well as international discourses on family planning. In Chapter 3, Kallander gives the example of scholars Sophie Ferchiou and Mahmoud Seklani who questioned the narrow definition of women's labor (which excludes harvesting and textile manufacturing) as well as myths of over population growth in rural Tunisia compared to its urban parts.

In Chapter 4, Kallander links the construction of socially-appropriate women's and men's fashion to global ideas that equate consumption to modernity and development. While the highly-televised image of Bourguiba removing women's veil is often talked about, Kallander also cites Bourguiba's speeches criticizing "mini-skirts are a provocation" (p.159). While make-up and higher

hemlines in skirts were promoted, women were also criticized for overdoing both. What consisted as overdoing or underdoing symbolic modernity remained (and remains) contested.

Love marriage also came to be constructed as an object of symbolic modernity in opposition to arranged marriage (Chapter 5). Love marriage was equated with agency, fulfillment, and urbanity in contrast to arranged marriage, as reflected in the columns of 1960s women's magazines. Yet, love and agency as symbolic objects of modernity could also be overdone by women, as reflected in the popular fictional character of Saadia (Introduction); Saadia, a rural migrant, falls in love with Samir who cannot marry her despite his wishes and end up as a sex worker and later commits suicide.

The book raises questions worthy of many dissertations. For example, across its many chapters, especially the one on gendered constructions of appropriate clothing, we see glimpses of state-defined Tunisian manhood. What does the socio-political construction of Tunisia's modern man – both historically and in the present – look like?

It also opens up questions on what constitutes the state besides state feminism. While we read about Bourguiba's paternalistic policies as constituting state feminism, who else *is* the state? What was the relationship of 1960s state feminism to religious actors and institutions, given that Zitouna-educated men like Tahar Haddad have historically pushed for reforms on the socio-political place of women through religion? In the period outside that covered by the book, I think of the important role of Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD est. 1989) in contemporary constructions of feminism; how is ATFD entangled with the state?

This publication allows us to see the continuities between debates on feminism/s in the 1960s and today across many postcolonial countries including Tunisia. In regard to questions of human rights in Tunisia, the revolution is talked about as a rupture. The rise of several civil society organizations post-2011 revolution has opened up conversations on feminisms and womanhood; these challenged state appropriation of feminist discourses. Yet, dependence on international funding, desires to negotiate and act with the state for policy reforms; and the centralization of civil society organizations in Tunisia has meant that tensions persist and continue between desires for inclusive and decentralized feminisms versus engagements with state feminism.

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