

quick perusal of Iran's constitution, official translations of which are available on the Internet, would have yielded that information too. The author apologizes for "inconsistencies" in the transliteration of Persian

words and names; the problem is not inconsistency but the fact that too many transliterations are just plainly wrong.

Houchang Chehabi, *Boston University*

Hold on to Your Veil Fatima! And Other Snapshots of Life in Contemporary Egypt

By *Sana Negus*

Reading: Garnet Publishing Company, 2010, 371 pages, ISBN 9781859642382.

"Hold on to Your Veil Fatima!" takes the reader on a journey into 21st century Egypt. The book provides an overview of the forces on the ground, which animate social and political life in the streets of Cairo today. While the issue of veiling is central to at least two chapters of the book, and is sometimes addressed with an Orientalist twist, the issues of rights, citizenship, political participation, social protests, gender and sexual identities, are tackled through a variety of methods including interviews, participant observation, as well as the author's immersion into Egyptian society and exposure to street politics at the aftermath of the American-led invasion of Iraq and the ongoing Palestinian struggle for statehood.

Thus, Negus offers a nice overview of the types of debates taking place among Egypt middle classes and the social forms of organization of protest and gender dynamics in Egypt's metropolitan city, Cairo. The journalistic style of the book makes it very accessible to a general reader, and to anyone looking for a quick glimpse on Egypt's recent history, and economic transformation under the "revolutionary" era of Gamel Abdel Nacer's and the liberal and neoliberal eras of Presidents Anouar Sadat and Housni Mubarak.

Because of the descriptive style of the book, the book lacks an organizing argument, which diminishes its appeal to an academic audience. However, since the book nicely weaves stories, news, and events with historical snapshots it offers a nice intrusion into Egyptian daily life, social struggles, and gender dynamics as observed, experienced, and interpreted by a western female journalist.

The first chapter provides a historical overview about the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood under British colonialism, their appeal to the revolutionary zeal of the Free Officers, and their tension with the regime of Gamel Abdel Nasser. It also details the internal divisions among the various jihadis and non-jihadi groups, and the centrality of the Palestinian struggle, which led to the assassination of President Sadat in 1981. The chapter provides also an overview of the struggles by various jihadi groups against the state power under Mubarak's regime, as well as their splits around issues of violence and armed response to foreign intervention.

The next two chapters are devoted to gender dynamics and the question of women's rights. The author describes her own exposure to questions of gender transgres-

sions in Cairo's streets. Sexual harassment, attire, and gender morality are discussed in relation to women's presence in the public space, and the grounding of this debate in the context of over a century of Egyptian feminism.

In fact, that chapter offers an introduction to the early debates about women's emancipation in the context of the reformist Salafi movement at the end of the 19th Century, as well as in the post-independence era. It exposes the differences and similarities among the various secular and Islamic tendencies of the early 20th Century, as represented by the two emblematic figures of Huda Sha'araoui and Zaynab al-Ghazali. Negus bases her discussion of women's rights in her meetings with major Islamist and feminist activists, such as Hiba Rauf Izzet and Nawalal-Sadawi. She shows the similarities between the Islamist and the secular feminist claims for women's right to political participation as well as their understanding of the patriarchal causes of women's marginalization in the public sphere.

The chapter records some of the most important moments of feminist struggles for gender equality, in respect to their successes and shortcomings. As it is expected in this kind of writing, the book focuses on issues that are very dear to western liberal feminism, such as the veil, the Niqab, female circumcision, and honor killing. These are some of the topics viewed through an Egyptian feminist lenses which allows the reader to understand the form of oppression women face both in the Muslim and the Coptic communities. Negus is very aware of the impact that Israeli and American policies have on the Middle East and subsequently on religiosity and veiling. But the most important contribution of this section remains its focus on forms of agency and resistance by veiled women

to state and non-state sanctions, and the importance of the judiciary as recourse for claiming rights for women. While these issues are widely covered by a literature on the Middle East and from which the book remains completely alienated, the next sections are most appealing to readers interested in knowing about Egypt's political life from the stand point of 'dissident' groups, individual players, and pop culture.

These last sections record Egypt's most publicized stories of divisions among the Coptic and the Muslim communities, and the less known stories of the advertised trials of heavy metal rockers in the 1990s, as well as the struggles of individuals to affirm their sexual orientation, and homosexual identities. The centrality of the media for both Islamist and secular politics is highlighted as well as the growing importance of bloggers in Egyptian political life and young people mobilization under the state of emergency. The narrative is straightforward and offers details supported by the authors' immersion in Egyptian middle class homes, bars, and her personal exposure to the major street protests that broke out around the issues of Iraq and Palestine. Negus records street life from the lens of rebellion, resistance, civil disobedience, and also by high profile individuals, academics, human rights organizations, bloggers, and singers.

While the book does not bring anything new to an informed audience, it does offer a nice exposure to Egypt from the stand-point of a western journalist, living in Cairo and in touch with Cairo's middle class. The book could benefit anyone interested in knowing the recent dynamics animating political life and social dynamics in Egyptian cities.

Zakia Salime, Rutgers University