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CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

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Panel 71

Childhood, Youth and the Construction of Subjectivity in the Maghreb and the Middle East

Although anthropology has brought to light overarching structures driving kinship systems in the Maghreb and the Middle-East (Tillion, 1966; Lecerf, 1956; Descloitres & Debzi, 1963; Berque, 1959; Fogel, 2006) individual paths and the construction of subjectivities has attracted less attention amongst researchers.

Three disciplinary fields have contributed to shed light on this dimension:

1. Ethnographic studies of relationships between men and women (Lacoste-Dujardin 1991) or the treatment and education of children in traditional settings (Granqvist 1947, 1950; Ammar 1954; Zerdoumi 1982; Cahiers de l'Iremam 1997) ;
2. Psycho-analytic study of children's psychological development (Bendahman 1984; Elfakir 1995) or studies aiming to identify a specific feature of subjectivity in the context of Muslim cultures (Hirt 1993; Benslama 2002; Chebel 2002) ;
3. Broad-based essays on sexuality, the body or women's place in Islam and Muslim societies (Bouhdiba 1975; Aït Sabbah 1982; Bessis et Belhassen 1992).

The purpose of this workshop is both to combine these different perspectives and to renew them in the contemporary context. Therefore, it follows the line of recent multidisciplinary works (Insaniyat 1998, 2008, 2016; L'année du Maghreb 2005; Lachheb 2012) to explore contemporary transformations of childhood, youth, education, family, as well as of body perception and sexuality. One of the hypotheses in question is that of an increasing individualization of the individuals' relationship to themselves.

Person in charge and discussant: Paul Luciani (Aix-Marseille University, IDEMEC)

Program

Lachheb Monia (IRMC)

Gay masculinities in Tunisia. Construction and reproduction of gender norms

Masculinity is expressed in the plural form since Connel's works (2014). "Hegemonic masculinity" constitutes a hardcore and a standard that assists in analyzing and understanding the relations between different masculinities: complicit, subordinate and ostracised. The different forms of masculinity are developed and understood in a political and socio-cultural context.

This contribution will focus on the "subordinate" masculinity that is gay masculinity. It aims to highlight the meaning of masculinity, its modes of construction and its implications in social relationships in Tunisia, within a socio-anthropological perspective.

The study is based on a survey conducted through biographical interviews with 12 young Tunisian men who declare themselves to be gay. The qualitative analysis seeks to report on the central attributes of gay masculinity (Siraj, 2014). Within this context, investing in physical appearance and ways of engaging

in sexual practices between men arise as crucial issues. They also provide evidence of the gendered conception of social relationships.

Lecestre-Rollier Béatrice (University Paris-Descartes, CERLIS)

Youth under stress

The question of individual liberty is a major issue within the insurrectional movements that have shaken contemporary Arab societies since the “Arab spring” of 2011, of which youth were the driving force. The demand for democracy lies beyond political life and extends to the family sphere. Starting from ethnographic field surveys conducted with young Moroccan men and women, we wish to reveal the tensions stemming from the reconsideration of relationships between sexes and generations. While youth yearn for the freedom of opinion, self-accomplishment or the consumerist ideal – which all characterize the westernization of the ways of life – they must nonetheless confront expectations relating to family duties, demonstrating a sense of honor and not betraying what is conceived or lived as a Muslim identity. The link of hierarchical protection – between men and women, but also between men – is at the heart of this issue. The gap only grows between expectations, between words and facts, between wishes and reality. The reflections of youth are framed by this divergence between different norms, between these norms and their aspirations and a difficulty to reconcile them as it appears in their statements. Many confess to feeling “lost”, “anxious”, “divided” or “schizophrenic”.

Mokdad Zmitri Meriem (University of Tunis, LCPI)

“Co-maternity” and “Bel-Oedipe” : windows on the process of subjectification of children in the Arab worlds

This contribution aims at shedding light on children’s subjectivity in the Arab worlds from the perspective of group and family psychoanalysis. It draws on an eighteen-year clinical and academic experience with Tunisian couples and families. Throughout this work, the articulation of the different spaces of the subjective constitution was considered by the researcher: the intra-subjective space (that of the subject and the unconscious) and its inter-subjective equivalents (that of the subject of the link) and trans-subjective (that of the subject of Culture), by observing the child, the couple and the family struggling with links which are often strained in a mutating socio-political context. It enabled her to bring to light two original familial configurations designated as “Co-maternity” and “Bel-Oedipe”. They both question the emergence of the subject and the progress of their subjectivity in the Arab world. Working to conciliate traditional benchmarks that are still marked by communitarianism with the requirements of hyper-modernity and its individualistic claims, these configurations also emphasize a trend of resilience that arises from families and from inter and transgenerational transmission.