Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World

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What is Citizenship?

Citizenship consists of the legal processes by which subjects of a state are defined. These processes set out the criteria for citizenship and the rights and obligations of citizens in relation to the state. To use Collier, Maurer and Suarez-Navaz's (1995, 5) phrase, citizenship "constructs the subject of law". Citizenship, however, is also a set of practices -- legal, political, economic, and cultural (Turner 1993, 2). The practices of citizenship, while influenced by the laws, differ from the written laws. Citizenship also generates social processes by which subjects are made, invented, constructed (Ong 1996, 737). Since classical political thinkers usually discussed the citizen in terms of an abstract person (the citizen as an "individual" with undifferentiated, uniform and universal properties, rights, and duties) the citizen appeared in much of classical political theory to be neutral in cultural and gender terms (Marshall 1950; Benedix 1964; Keane 1988;

Barbalet 1988a, b; Culpitt 1992; Turner 1993; Twine 1994). And because constitutions and laws are written in terms of such an abstract citizen, they may appear equitable. But recent research has revealed systematic means by which citizenship, in most countries of the world, has been a highly gendered enterprise, in practice and on paper (Pateman 1988; Phillips 1991, 1993; Yuval-Davis 1991, 1993, 1997; Lister 1997a; Voet 1998). The “civic myths” (Smith 1997) which underlie notions citizenship in most states often conceal inequalities or attempt to justify them on the basis of family, religion, history or other cultural terms.

This paper investigates the impact of cultural and gender systems in the production of the unequal relationships of Arab women and men to the laws and practices of citizenship. I analyze key laws, social practices and institutions through which citizenship in Arab states has privileged a masculine citizen. Given that citizenship is mandatory in the modern "nation-state" (Zubaida 1988), it is striking to observe the reality that the modern "nation-state" has mandated a masculine citizen. Many of the issues affecting the gendering of citizenship in Arab countries appear to be specific to Arab states. Many are shared within the Middle Eastern region. Other issues are similar to patterns found in Third World countries. And some appear to be common to state societies in general. We need to both challenge the misplaced assumptions of cultural homogeneity in the Arab world, as well as sharply identify the patterns which are specific to the gendering of citizenship in Arab states. Therefore, while the focus of this paper is the gendering of citizenship in Arab states, it is my aim to contribute towards the comparative study of processes, which lead to the gendering citizenship in order both to deessentialize Arab cultures and to understand their specificities.

The Nation and Gendered Citizenship

Nations, seen as imagined communities (Anderson 1983), often use “the woman” as a critical symbol in inventing their notions of themselves (Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger 1992; Kaplan, Alarcon and Moallem 1999; Sharoni 1995). Most nations are divided by religious, ethnic, tribal, linguistic, regional and class differences. The image of the national "woman" often creates a place of "belonging," a community of kinship, a safe haven for family, a hearth and "home" (Layoun 1992; Peteet 1991) to overcome internal differences.

The symbolic connection between the idea of woman and the idea of nation and the use of women as symbols of nations by nationalist and liberationist movements (Sayigh 1993; Badran 1995; Afkhami and Friedl 1997) has been critical to the gendering of women's membership in national communities (Hatem 2000; Charrad 2000; Amawi 2000). Despite the diversity of identities and loyalties in any specific nation, the ideal of "woman" has fueled the ideals of "authentic" national cultures, "indigenous" religions, "traditional" family forms (Lazreg 2000; Al-Mughni and Tetreault 2000). The category of "woman", as a stand-in for "nation," has been marketed to delineate "national" boundaries (Joseph 2000; Giacaman; Jad and Johnson 2000). Such usage of "woman" has gone hand in hand with the imposition of forms of behavioral control on women in the name of the nation, in the name of liberation, in the name of progress, and in the name of God (Donzelot 1997; Carapico and Wuerth 2000; Hale 2000; Altorki 2000).

Arab nationalist reformers and leaders, such as Qasim Amin in Egypt (Ahmed 1992), have used women to imagine their communities as modern. They argued that it was in the interests of the "nation" to educate women, recruit them into the labor market, transform their dress-ware and symbolically integrate them into the political process as emblems of the modernity. Often, however, modern Arab reformers argued for modernity by locating its roots in indigenous cultures (Kandiyoti 1998, 271). In attempting to justify modern reforms by locating them in “tradition”, such reformers have paradoxically trapped women in the very “traditions” they appear to be trying to transform (Kandiyoti 1998, 271). Resistance movements, particularly political Islamic movements, also have used women for imagining their political communities. By tying their visions of the ideal political community to women’s dress or comportment, however, they have limited the possibilities of women’s equal citizenship.

The idea of the domesticated woman upholding the sacred family as the authentic core of the nation, has been reproduced in political treatises, manuals and advice literature from the earliest nineteenth and twentieth century nation-building projects of the region (Najmabadi 1998; Shakry 1998). Embedded in these constructs of the nation are implicit and explicit constructs of patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1991; Hatem 1986). When women and motherhood are used as icons of the nation, they too frequently become captive to the structures and ideologies of patriarchy (Papaneck 1994, Hunt 1992), particularly when men and fatherhood are associated with the state (Delaney 1995).

Sara Ruddick suggests that the association of motherhood with nation and fatherhood with state is dangerous, bringing in "the worst of fatherhood: a right, often conjoined with real power, to intrude, humiliate, exploit, and assault" (1997, 213). The political ideas of fatherhood and motherhood, she argues, are used to judge and to exclude (1997, 217). While the forms of patriarchy change, the linkage of woman/mother to nation and man/father to state reinforces the production of gendered hierarchy and facilitated the institutionalization of gendered citizenship in state-building projects.

The State and Gendered Citizenship

No actor is more critical to the gendering of citizenship than the state. States regulate the rules by which one becomes a citizen, by which citizens pass citizenship on to their children and spouses, and by which citizens can lose citizenship. While there are a diversity of rules and means by which rules come to be codified and practiced, the tensions between passing citizenship on through land versus blood are critical to the gendering of citizenship throughout the region. Most states use both land and blood criteria. In almost all the Arab states, however, the privileging of blood in citizenship rules has gone hand in hand with the masculinization of descent and the valuing of patrilineality over matrilineality (Joseph 1999b). That most of the Arab states have permitted fathers, but not mothers, to pass citizenship on to their children and husbands, but not wives, to pass citizenship on to their spouses testifies to the privileging of masculine blood in citizenship rules.

What it means to be a "citizen" of any particular country is a modern invention. Yet, the easy slide between "citizen" and "national" has given the idea of "being a citizen" a sense of history that appears to precede the modern state. The efforts to give a genealogy to citizens (especially the linkage to "blood"), have appeared to "naturalize" being a citizen. In the process of "naturalizing" who is and is not a citizen, states have asserted a continuity to their existence that elevates both the idea of membership and the being of statehood into the realm of the sacred.

Rogers M. Smith (1997) has described this process of "naturalizing" the boundaries of belonging as part of the process of creating the "civic myth" of a state. Civic myths regulate who does and does not belong and inevitably bring with them inequalities based on gender, race, ethnicity, class. The "naturalization" of civic myths, of genealogies, of boundaries of belonging, of notions of who is and is not a citizen, has empowered them with a sacred aura (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995, 3). No institution has had more resources available to naturalize its sense of membership than has the state and therefore no institution has had more power than the state to codify discrimination based on unequal membership.

The state, however, is not a single-minded actor with a unified set of interests. States are composed of different, conflicting, and changing sets of interests (Ismael and Ismael 2000; Hale 2000; Lazreg 2000; Carapico and Wuerth 2000). Political leaders are embedded in local, national, and global communities (Giacaman, Jad and Johnson 2000; Charrad 2000; Joseph 2000). It is most productive to see the state as a contested terrain, its actions reflecting local, national, and global conflicts and contradiction (Hale 2000; Giacaman, Jad and

Johnson 2000; Lazreg 2000; Hatem 2000). Women have directly shaped state legislation and policy, actively resisted state interventions or complicity participated in the development of gendered state programs (Lazreg 2000; Hale 2000; Hatem 2000; Giacaman, Jad and Johnson 2000).

Women have looked to the state (often unsuccessfully) to protect them from the tyrannies of their families (Charrad 2000; Joseph 1982b; Amawi 2000); they have looked to their families (often unsuccessfully) as a haven from the tyrannies of the state (Ismael and Ismael 2000; Altorki 2000). At times, women both sought out and resisted the state (Hatem 2000; Lazreg 2000) as the tyrannies of states and families have worked together against women (Hunt 1992, 17; Donzelot 1997).

While women have worked to define the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, nevertheless, throughout the region, rights and responsibilities have been defined mainly by the state -- top down (Altorki 2000; Tetreault and Al-Mughni 2000; Amawi 2000; Ismael and Ismael 2000). Not only has the initiative been top down, but the defining of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, including women citizens, has been primarily a masculine enterprise (Hale 2000; Lazreg 2000). The struggles, by women, to change the ideas of citizenship (whether by focusing on shari'a or state legislation) from women-centered perspectives challenge masculinist discourses of citizenship, giving many women of the region hope.

Rarely, however, have large numbers of women in the Arab world acted categorically on behalf of their shared interests as women, across the lines of class, ethnicity, race, religion, tribe, family, or nation. That women work on behalf of women, though, has not guaranteed that other women of their societies will accept them as their representatives (Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 2000). While sharing some interests and circumstances, women are not a homogeneous category (Spelman 1988; Kandiyoti 1998). Class, race, religion or other variables have been, at times, more important than gender in circumscribing women's rights and responsibilities as citizens (although rarely does any variable work independently of other variables). Women have experienced citizenship differently from men not only because they are women but also because they are members of particular classes, races, ethnicities, religions -- all of which gender them in complex and contradictory ways. Their loyalties more often have aligned them with men of their class, religion, ethnicity, tribe, or family than with other women across these social boundaries, despite the fluidity of boundaries. Thus women need to be differentiated not only from men, but also from other women in relationship to their class, race, ethnicity, religion, tribe, and other memberships and statuses (such as age and marital status) (Yuval-Davis 1997). Women's experiences of citizenship have been refracted through the lens of these multiple subject positions.

Unlike Europe (where state-building emerged in conjunctions with the rise of bourgeois classes intent on asserting their authority autonomously from the state - hence the arenas of civil society and the domestic/kinship), in the Arab world, state-building, emerged less as an expression of specific local class developments and more in conjunction with the demise of empires, resulting in top-down citizenship. Parallel to these processes has been the on-going enmeshment of state and civil society (Giacaman, Jad and Johnson 2000), state and kinship (Altorki 2000; Amawi 2000; Hale 2000; Tetreault and Al-Mughni 2000; Joseph 2000; Charrad 2000; Lazreg 2000), kinship and civil society (Joseph 2002; Altorki 2000; Al-Mughni 1996). The fluidity of boundaries between governmental, non-governmental and kinship spheres has often meant continuities in patriarchal practices in all these domains (Joseph 2002).

Through legislation, through regulation of courts, through its practices as well as what it has not been willing to do, the state has invented the separations between the arenas of the “state”, “civil society”, and the “domestic” (what might also be called the arenas of government, non-government, and kinship) (Yuval-Davis 1997; Joseph 1997). Recognizing that these are invented separations is important to understanding how women come to be defined as secondary citizens. Particularly important for analyzing women’s secondary citizenship are the processes by which the “family” comes to be marked as a separate domain (Deleuze 1997, x). I would argue that the very idea of the “family” is an invention of the state. Pre-state societies tend not to delimit an arena that is specifically family, nor do they identify family with women. Indeed, David M. Schneider has argued that the very idea of the “social” is a modern invention (1984). Family is an invention that constrains women’s behavior (men’s behavior as well) while at the same time romanticizing and sanctifying the grounds on which the constraints are built. No set of institutions has been more powerful in sanctifying the family, however, than have religious institutions.

Religion and Gendered Citizenship

Religion has been a central force in politics in the Arab world, directly contributing to the gendering of citizenship. In most Arab states, citizenship has been constituted through membership in religious communities. The effect has been to institutionalize religious identity as political identity. Arab citizens have not been imagined as homogenized, undifferentiated, detached, separable, bounded individuals. The mediation of citizenship through sub-national communities appears to be an alternative to the Western liberal contractarian notion of a direct, unmediated relationship between individualized citizens and the state. The "civic myth" of primordial pre-state religious communities has fostered state sanctioned religious intermediaries between the citizen and state (Joseph 1999a).

Membership in a religious sect has been, in practice, a requirement of citizenship in most Arab states. Through this, Arab states have not simply legalized a social reality, but have actively constructed it by requiring and making membership in religious communities strategically necessary for citizens. With the elevation of religious identity to civil status the state, in effect has conceived of the nation as fragmented into subcommunities (Chatterjee 1993). The existence and legal recognition of subnational communities has led researchers, at times, to esssentialize communities, particularly religious and ethnic communities.

Some Arab states have indeed invested in the naturalization of subnational national communities by giving legal authority to institutions, which "represent" "the community," such as religious courts (Joseph 2000; Hatem 2000). Other Arab states have attempted to destabilize subnational communities with varying degrees of success (Charrad 2000; Ismael and Ismael 2000; Hale 2000). Communities, however, are not coherent, bounded or fixed entities with shared mutual interests. They are differentiated internally by class, status, region, religion, nationality, ethnicity, race, and gender. People change religions, ethnic identities, nationalities, regional affiliations, and class memberships. The meanings, structures, and boundaries of religions, ethnicities, nationalities, regions, classes, and races also change. Despite the historical reality of change, the tendency to essentialize community seems to proceed with the gendering of the boundary of community.

Interpretations of Islamic positions on gender, the citizen-subject and especially on gender and citizenship, have changed significantly over time (Ahmed 1992; Lazreg 1994; Mernissi 1996; Messick 1998). Barbara F. Stowasser (1996) argued that Islam has been contested from within by traditionalists, modernists and Islamists. These three scriptualist paradigms on women's citizenship, she contended, have coexisted for some time. Every theological interpretation of Islam's position on women's citizenship, Stowasser concluded, has become ascendant or powerful only as long as its advocates have been situated in positions of power.

Religion has underwritten the gendering of citizenship by its support of patriarchy. That clerics in all religious sects in the Arab world have been exclusively male and that they themselves have been mostly hierarchically organized has invested most religious institutions in systems of male authority. Clerics have supported patriarchy through their support of hierarchal family relations. Religious institutions have tried to integrate persons in their families by teaching respect of family elders and have celebrated sacrifice of self for family love. The on-going use of kin idioms ("father," "mother," "son," "daughter," "brother," "sister") by most religions similarly has reinforced kin patriarchy.

Muslim and Christian religious institutions have supported patriarchy through their support of patrilineality. While patriarchy (privileging of males and seniors, legitimated by kin idioms and morality) and patrilineality (reckoning descent through male lines) should not be confused with each other (Joseph 1999b), in practice, they have reinforced each other. Laws differ from sect to sect, yet, in general, religious institutions (both Muslim and Christian) have assumed that children become members of their father's lineages, indeed, belonged to their fathers and their father’s kin. They support the claims of the father's lineage over a mother's claim to children. In divorces, Muslim women eventually have lost possession and control over children. Many women have avoided divorce for fear of losing their children. Such is the strength of the patrilineality supported by Muslim religious institutions, that a Muslim man's parents and siblings have had rights over his children at his death, superseding those of the children's mother. The patrilineal acquisition of religious status supports the patrilineal acquisition of many rights and privileges.

Muslim (and some Christian religious institutions in practice) have supported patrilineality by favoring kin endogamy. The preferred marriage pattern among Muslims has been for marriage between paternal cousins. In some regions of the Arab world, Muslim religious institutions have supported a man's right of first refusal in marrying certain paternal kinswomen.

The absence of civil marriage and divorce laws (see section on family law below) in many Arab states has left citizens subject to the regulations of their religions on whom and how they can marry. Most religious institutions have preferred religious endogamy. Muslim clerics have encouraged Muslims to marry other Muslims; Arab Christian churches have encouraged Arab Christians to marry other Arab Christians. At times, clergy have even discouraged marriages across religious sects within the same religious rubric (for example, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox).

Such religious constraints have disproportionate impacted women. Since it has been assumed that women will change their religion to that of their husbands and that children follow the religion of their fathers, religious communities have policed the marriages of their women more than those of men. Muslim women have not been allowed to marry non-Muslims in most Arab countries, giving Muslim men more marriage choices then Muslim women. This practice has made the consequences of inter-marriage negligible for men, but often profound for women. Muslim and Christian women, but not men, usually have lost their religious identities in inter-sectarian marriages. The sanctification of the patriarchal family by most religious communities -- Muslim and Christian -

- has come to have legal force. The organization of citizenship through sub-nationalities, therefore, has had a far greater discriminatory impact on women than it has had on men.

Family and Gendered Citizenship

Lynn Hunt argued that the family provided the most obvious material for thinking politically during the French Revolution (1992, 196). Family, both as a model of social relations and as an imaginative construct, has been the most obvious material for thinking politically in the Arab world as well. As Peter Gran has succinctly argued, "the family ought to be studied as a part of politics, if for no other reason than the fact that the state invests a great deal of its resources in upholding its conceptions of an ideal family" (1996, 77).

For all Arab states, the family is the core social institution. Almost all the constitutions of the states in this region define family as the basic unit of society. In general, Arab states have woven family processes into state dynamics. While they may vary in the degree to which they have challenged or assimilated family systems (Charrad, 2000), the family has been a rather explicit political project within the state and nation building projects of Arab states. The state has attempted to challenge family in Tunisia (Charrad 2000), has attempted to co-opt family in Iraq (Joseph 1982a), has built on existing family and tribal structures in

Saudi Arabia (Altorki 2000), Lebanon (Joseph 2000), Jordan (Amawi 2000), Morocco (Charrad 2000) and has revived family and clan structures as a base of state rule in Palestine (Giacaman, Jad, Johnson 2000).

Omnia Shakry (1998), for example, argues that childrearing, mothering and family formation were critical to the nineteenth and twentieth century Egyptian nation-building project. The relocation of responsibility for child rearing from "private” to "public" spaces, the shift of responsibility for raising children from fathers to mothers, and the development of rational-economic and scientific-hygienic child rearing practices required the creation of new spaces, roles, identities, and new notions of selfhood. All this regulation of family, she argues, served the creation of the "efficient citizens of the nation" (Shakry 1998, 143).

What has been meant by family has varied tremendously among states, social classes, rural/urban/pastoral communities, religious/ethnic communities. Extended families, nuclear families, single headed households, and other varieties are found throughout the Arab world. What seems consistent, is the presence of patriarchy. Though there are numerous uses of the term, commonalities in Arab usages of patriarchy are worth noting. For most cases, patriarchy consists of the privileging of male and elder rights. In Arab societies, patriarchy mobilizes kinship structures, morality and idioms to justify male and elder privileges.

Patriarchy has been and largely remains nested in kinship, distinguishing it from the notions of patriarchy common among Western feminist scholars who often separate patriarchy and kinship. This difference is crucial for understanding some of the specificities of the gendering of citizenship in the Middle East.

Arab men become citizen as heads of patriarchal families. Arab states have viewed women and their rights within patriarchal structures, as subordinate mothers, wives, children, siblings (Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 1996; Al-Mughni 1996). Legislation often revitalizes kinship clans to the detriment of women (Giacaman, Jad, Johnson 2000). Women, as citizens, are conflated with children (Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 1996). By regarding women as children needing care and control (Cheriat 1996), Arab states justify laws which require women to obtain the permissions of their fathers, brothers or other male guardians to marry or permissions of fathers, brothers, husbands to travel or to open businesses (Altorki 2000, Tetreault and Al-Mughni 2000, Amawi 2000, Lazreg 2000). Valued primarily in terms of their familial roles (Al-Mughni 1996), women are expected to prioritize their familial roles even when they achieve powerful public positions (Joseph 1982a). .

The implications of Arab patriarchal family systems, their legal status in Arab states, the implications of family systems for the making of citizens, and the critical differences between family-based notions of citizenship and individually based notions of citizenship have not been effectively studied (Joseph 1993a, 1996b, Sharabi 1988, Barakat 1993). Arab patriarchy has been forceful, in part, because of its rooting in kinship, unlike Western patriarchy (Pateman 1988). The impact of patriarchy for the gendering of citizenship has been profound because kinship permeates all domains, all spheres of life: private/public, state/civil society/kinship, governmental/non-governmental/domestic. Boundaries between family and state, public and private, civil society and state are fluid; indeed made of integrally connective social tissue.

Family structures, values, and terminology have been critical to survival in Arab societies (Altorki 2000; Amawi 2000; Joseph 2000; Tetreault and Al-Mughni 2000; Charrad 2000). Political leaders bring their own family members into government and mobilize following through family units (Altorki 2000; Joseph 2000; Amawi 2000). They dispense goods and services through family-based networks (Joseph 2000, Altorki 2000, Amawi 2000, Ismael and Ismael 2000, Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 2000). They use family terminology to justify their leadership, reinforcing the family as a political unit of society and making membership in families politically strategic for citizens (Amawi 2000; Charrad 2000; Hoodfar 2000; Tetreault and Al-Mughni 2000).

Family is also central to political identity. Political identity comes through male geneology. The Arab nation is seen as descending through a series of patrilineal kin groups. Citizens have to belong to a male-defined kin group to belong to a religious sect, to belong to the nation, to acquire the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Children are assigned both the religious and political identities of their fathers. By not allowing women to pass citizenship on to their children (or their spouses), most Arab states cement the linkage between religious identity, political identity, patrilineality, and patriarchy -- that is, between religion, nation, state, and kinship.

Not only do states privileged family above the individual legally (Altorki 2000; Joseph 2000; Amawi 2000; Charrad 2000), but they represent the family as something a priori, "prepolitical," in a domain so beyond current time that it is best understood as sacred. The absorption of family values into religious values is enhanced by religious control over family law, giving religious sanction to patriarchy.

Family Law and Gendering Citizenship

Family law is critical to citizenship laws and practices. That family law is anchored in religious law in most Arab countries has made family law a critical site in the struggle between feminists, nationalists and state builders. Family law has been among the highest agenda items of liberal reformist movements, political Islamic movements, Islamic cultural and secular women's movements --

a testimony to the centrality of women's bodies and behavior to notions of nation and state and a testimony to the centrality of "family" to social and political projects. Usually regulating marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, family law (also called personal status code) may rightfully be said to be the most critical site of power of religious communities over the shape of citizenship in Arab states.

Most Arab states either have deferred family law directly to the different recognized religious sects and have offered no civil alternatives or have incorporated the family codes of the dominant religious sect into the civil code. Only Tunisia, and Yemen have legislated civil family law, but even these civil codes have based challenged, revised and in varying degrees shaped by religious codes. Since all Arab countries have many religious communities (Lebanon legally recognizes eighteen religious sects for purposes of family law), the recognition of a plurality of family codes by most of the states has left women without a common legal framework for working through this arena of citizenship. As a result Arab women experience different legal realities from which they have had no civil recourse, for which there is no shared legal culture as a common referent. Whether such legal pluralism operates to the detriment of women's citizenship rights has become a contested issue. Judith Tucker (1998), for example, shows that Islamic muftis and qadis (legal scholars and jurists) of seventeenth and eighteenth century Syria and Palestine often negotiated between the four Islamic schools of law to protect women's rights.

In practice in most Arab states, family law has upheld men's property in their children. To paraphrase Pateman (1988, 44), political right has emerged in fatherhood, as a paternal right, in Arab states. Children have been born subjects of their fathers. Upon divorce, control of children eventually reverts to the father and the father's family has priority over the mother. Religious laws give men rights of access to wives' bodies, which their wives cannot refuse. Marital rape has not been recognized in practice and in many cases by law in most Arab states. Some Arab states have permitted, either in law or practice, (or given lenient sentences for), honor crimes, reinforcing the notion that women and children are properties of males of their paternal kin. Pateman (1988, 13-14) argued that wives and children were viewed by the classical contractarians as the property of their fathers and husbands. In Arab states, family law has often codified the ownership of wives and children by fathers/husbands.

By locating family law in religious law, Arab states sanctify the family through rules perceived as absolute and non-negotiable. If, for Pateman (1988, 2) the "contract is the means through which modern patriarchy is constituted," one can argue that the non-negotiable sacred arena of the family is the means by which Arab paternal patriarchy is constituted.

Self and Gendered Citizenship

The constitutions of most Western states define the basic unit of society as the individualized citizen. Most constitutions of Arab states identify the basic unit of society as the family. This suggests the masculinization of citizenship in Arab states is tied to a culturally specific notion of the citizen as subject. The Arab citizen subject is seen as a patriarch, the head of a patriarchal family, legally constituted as the basic unit of the political community who accrues rights and responsibilities concomitant with that legal status. Bryan Turner (1993, 5) argues that the emergence of modernity, embodied in the concept of citizenship, is a transition from status to contract. Citizenship, he adds, opposes the particularistic ties of family, village or tribe. C. B. MacPherson (1962, 262) argues that the seventeenth century political theorists who laid the foundation of Western citizenship theory thought of the subject-citizen as a possessive individual. Carole Pateman (1988, 9-10), links the transition from status to contract to the "replacement of family by the 'individual' as the fundamental 'unit' of society." Since contractarians believed only men were capable of contractual relations they excluded women from the status of individual. Father right was displaced only to be replaced by the rights and privileges of men as men (fraternal patriarchy) and by the masculinization of citizenship. Jennifer Nedelsky (1990, 1993) contends that the very notion of citizen rights, in America, was built on the metaphor of bounded private property. Seeing rights as boundaries between citizens and state implies a notion of the citizen as a free, autonomous, bounded self which owns itself (Nedelsky 1989).

The concept of citizenship as a set of contractual relationships between "the individual" and the state exists on paper in most Arab countries. Altorki (2000) observes the idea of social contract may exist on paper in the form of constitutions and legislation, but is less prevalent in political practices. The individual as an "autonomous" subject, endowed with inalienable rights and responsibilities which accrue to her/him as a person, apart from social identities and networks, while juridically and (often) socially salient, is more often than not been overridden by the notion of the person as nestled in relationships of kinship and community (Joseph 2000; Charrad 2000; Amawi 2000; Altorki 2000; Al-Mughni and Tetreault 2000).

As a result, women are not seen as part of "the people" (Hatem 2000), or lack "political personhood" in their countries (Lazreg 2000; Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 2000; Al-Mughni and Tetreault 2000). Women are the dependents of men, who, to a greater degree are seen as "individuals" (Al-Mughni and Tetrault 2000; Lazreg 2000; Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 2000). Women often see the men of their families as their "safe haven" (Botman 1999, 107; Altorki 2000). In some countries, men also have not been treated as "individuals," but have their relationships to the state mediated through kin and community (Joseph 2000; Altorki 2000).

Western notions of the citizen-self as "individual" have been supported formally, legally and socially in most Arab societies. Other notions of the citizen-self, however, have also been supported. Notions of a relational or a connective self are particularly common in Arab countries. Connectivity is a notion of self in which a person's boundaries are relatively fluid so that persons feel that they are a part of significant others (Joseph 1993b). Connective persons do not experience boundary, autonomy, separateness as their primary defining features. Rather, they focus on relatedness. Maturity is signaled in part by the successful enactment of a myriad of relationships. In Arab counties in which the family has been valued over and above the person (Barakat 1993, 98), identity has been defined in familial terms and kin idioms and relationships have woven through society, connective relationships are necessary for successful social existence (Joseph 1999).

When linked with patriarchy, connectivity produces patriarchal connectivity (Joseph 1993a). Patriarchal connectivity means the production of selves with fluid boundaries organized for gendered and aged domination in a culture valuing kin structures, morality, and idioms. In patriarchal societies, connectivity supports patriarchal power by making selves responding to, requiring, and socialized to initiate involvement with others in shaping the self.

The fact that most Arab state constitutions claim the family as the basic unit of membership in the political community implies that it is a person's status as a member of family that qualifies them for citizenship. Given the centrality of patriarchal connectivity in Arab political, economic, religious, and social cultures, this implies the transportation of patriarchal connectivity into the practices and discourses of citizenship. Connective or relational notions of selfhood can underpin relational, rather than contractual notions of rights (Joseph 1994b). Relational rights are neither communal (based on an assumption of a coherent corporate-like group) nor individualist. Relational rights imply that a person's sense of rights flows out of relationships that s/he have. By being invested in relationships one comes to have rights. As a basis for citizenship practices, relational rights require citizens to embed themselves in family and other subnational communities such as religious sects, ethnic, and tribal groups to gain access to the rights and privileges of citizenship.

The differing notions of self and rights pose a dilemma, theoretically and politically, for feminists committed to activist agendas on behalf of women's citizenship rights. How one conceptualizes and/or organizes movements on behalf of rights will be impacted greatly by whether the notion of self and rights is individualist, relational, or communal. Whether women claim rights as individuals, through person-specific sets of relationships, or as members of communities (defined by religion, ethnicity, tribe, or other salient variables) will necessarily lead to different outcomes. The many of notions of rights, self, and family, which co-reside in the Arab world complicates our attempts to search for continuities in the gendering of citizenship.

Public/Private, Civil Society/State, Family/State, Religion/State and Gendered Citizenship

The intertwining of family and state, the meshing of "public" and "private" and the embeddedness of religion and politics feed into the gendering of citizenship. The assumptions of separations of public and private, kinship and state, civil society and state, religion and state do not necessarily hold up in Arab states. Scholars have explained the lack of democracy in the Arab world both in terms of too strong states and too weak states (Sadowski 1993). We see that states often control civil society (Giacaman, Jad, and Penny 2000; Ismael and Ismael 2000; Altorki 2000; Tetreault and Al-Mughni 2000; Hale 2000). And yet, the penetration of the state by family-based patriarchy also contributes to the lack of democracy.

In Arab states, the binary between public and private assumed in the civil society model conflates many areas of social activity in such a way as to hide gender issues. This happens particularly when the impact of patriarchy across politics, economics, society, and religion is ignored (Giacaman, Jad, and Johnson 2000). The public/private binary can be rethought as multiple spheres including the governmental (public), the non-governmental (civil society), and domestic (kinship). Social life is not seamless in Arab societies, but the distinctions are not based on the notion that the spheres of social life are bounded, autonomous, and normatively differentiated entities. The boundaries between spheres of social life in Arab societies are porous, elastic, and shifting. Anti-democratic forces have multiple sites of construction when gender is taken into account.

The patriarchy found in the domestic sphere is also found in governmental and non-governmental spheres (Sharabi 1988). The incorporation of patriarchal family modes of operation by the state is not perceived as a disruption to state and family boundaries, but continuous with them. The fluidity of family provides a lubricant for social relationships outside domestic spheres, for better or worse. Political leaders recruit their relatives into public offices. Lay people expect their relatives in public offices to act as kin to them, rather than as public officials. Face-to-face relationships grounded in kinship are used to distribute public resources. Political leaders privileged the rights of males and elders over familial females and juniors in the distribution of resources or in the adjudication of legal matters. They defer to family heads in matters related to members of their families. They are more willing to give services to women and juniors if they are represented by their men and elders. The continuities of patriarchal structures, modes of operation, and idioms of discourse in different social spheres are expressions of the power of patriarchy in Arab states.

Zubaida (1988,163), following B. Badie, calls this the neo-patrimonial state (personal or clique rule and use of patronage and clientism). Zubaida argues that identification of the state with a particular leader is widespread in the Arab states. And the use of patronage to build and control support and supporters, Zubaida (1988,165) contends means that those who benefit from the state do so "as individuals, families, particular communities, villages or regions." Central to these processes, I would add, has been patriarchal kinship.

These continuities between governmental, non-governmental and domestic structures, modes of operation and idioms, which have been constitutive of patriarchy, are central to the culturally specific gendering of citizenship in Arab states. The boundaries of states, the parameters of nations, the memberships and meanings of ethnic/religious communities, the contents of "public" and "private," the structures of families, the dynamics of patriarchies, and the identities of women and men have continually shifted in the Arab world. The constructedness and the contestedness of categories, however, has not diminished the passions with which they are embraced nor the power of their political and social consequences. As Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney (1995, 5) insightfully argue, the power of social categories comes in their capacity to naturalize themselves. Rogers M. Smith (1997, 10) adds, this has been precisely the power of citizenship myths -- they have been naturalized.

Gendering Arab Citizens

A generation of feminist theorists have investigated Arab states structures (Joseph 1991, 1993a, 1997, 1999a, b, 2000; Hatem 1986, 1994c, 1995; Charrad 1990, 2001 ; Molyneux 1991; Lazreg 1994; Badran 1995; Brand 1998; Botman 1999). Few studies, however, have established a systematic basis for a comparative analysis of the rules and practices of citizenship throughout the Arab world (Brand 1998, Joseph 2000, Charrad 2001). This paper raises the question of identifying the specifically Arab aspects of the gendering of citizenship. While de-essentializing the analytical categories of the Arab state, nation, religion, kinship, women, citizen, and the self, we need to also locate similarities (Joseph 1996b). Clarifying what is specifically Islamic and Christian and what is common to these religions is crucial. We need to shed light on the category of Arab. What is attributable to general processes of patriarchy and the specific characteristics of patriarchy in the Arab world is important. How family is privileged and enmeshed in religion and the interweaving of family, religion, nation and state are critical to the gendering of citizenship. The complex intersections of citizenship and gender (as well as class, race, ethnicity, religion) are fundamental to the lived realities of women in the region. Women in the Arab world live and struggle through these issues, day-by-day, issue-by-issue.

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