

Alla ricerca dell'assoluto. Vita e pensiero di Doria Shafik, femminista egiziana.

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This thesis deals with the political development in the Middle East from a gender perspective. Several researchers have found a lack of investigation of women's emancipation movements in Egypt after the Second World War and in particular on the figure of Doria Shafik, an activist who played a very important role for the feminist cause in recent years.

With this thesis I want to give voice to this feminist through research about her life and her writings and interviews with intellectuals who have studied her activism. Few texts, historical or dedicated specifically to the issue of women's emancipation in the Middle East, make only a brief mention of her name, framing it as a great persecutor of Huda Sha'rawi. These few lines cannot really explain her contribution to the cause of women's rights. They bring out the complexity of her person.

The story of Egyptian feminism is the story of feminism in a nationalist context within the dichotomy western versus indigenous. Doria Shafik breaks through these dichotomies. She struggled throughout to synthesize her French and Egyptian cultural backgrounds. Her political activism as well as her poetry bears witness to the creative and innovative potentials of what only too often has been described as a clash of opposites. Her thinking and her being heard perfectly reflect the time of identity crisis besetting Egypt at the time of so-called modernization, which began in the reign of Muhammad 'Ali in the late eighteenth century and heightened in this period of direct confrontation between East and West.

Doria tried to synthesize these two cultures at a time when feminism was nationalized and the activists were often blame-especially by Islamists and

conservatives, but also by left-nationalists to cooperate with Western imperialism and import alien ideas to the company.

The exclusion of Shafik among the Middle East feminist can be in part explained by the historical-political context of Egypt. The first half of the century was characterized by a harsh anti-colonial struggle, the second half by the construction of a new independent nation. The reluctance of many Egyptian women to identify themselves as feminists is related both to the negative image of feminism in society, and the belief that their battle diverts the people from more important issues such as imperialism, Zionism and the class struggle. Feminism was seen as a phenomenon that divided the men and women from what was to be the battle against these forces.

Many activists have been engaged in the production of works and attitudes that deviate their minds from the idea of another Western infiltration. For this reason, many women have tried to claim the authenticity of their movements. Unlike Shafik, a few activists were able to get out of the combination of authenticity-Westernization.