1 *Between State Feminism and Global Sisterhood*

"Electrician, conductor, or pig farmer (*porchère*), women have conquered every profession," announced the Tunisian women's magazine *Faiza*. "From now on, we will devote a space to the marvelous diversity of careers that women have conquered in major modern nations. May this rubric help our young girls expand their outlook (*voir plus loin*). To no longer be content with a degree in English or pharmacy like everyone else."[1] Over subsequent issues, the accomplishments of an agronomist, archeologist, and geologist from the Soviet Union and women artists and acrobats in Shanghai and Peking were presented as role models for a new generation of Tunisian schoolgirls.[2] By drawing examples from contemporary global locations the magazine imagined a feminist future distinct from Tunisian realities by introducing such possibilities to local audiences. To be sure, the women's press celebrated professional women at home, from teachers to social workers to those breaking new ground; firsts in higher education, the first high school principal, and women in broadcasting.[3] These women were consciously upheld to represent the face of the nation to "our sisters and our friends around the world."[4] They kept tabs on the political and diplomatic activities of the UNFT leadership and the First Lady as they hosted international guests, attended conferences around the world, and traveled in the presidential entourage, normalizing women's

[1] "Les carrières et elles," *Faiza*, April 1963, 8.
[2] "Les carrières et elles," *Faiza*, December 1963, 12. *Al-Mar'a* included a profile of the French physicist Marie Curie, May 1964.
[3] "Femmes de la RTT: Alia Babbou ce 'phénomène dévorant,'" *Faiza*, June 1960, 32; Safia Farhat and Josette Ben Brahem, "Deux jeunes filles tunisiennes peu ordinaires," *Faiza*, September 1961, 32–33, 54; "Le premier lycée de jeunes filles," *Faiza*, November 1962, 34–39; "Une grande militante: Mme Cherifa Messadi," *Femme*, August 13, 1964, 19; *Al-Mar'a*, March 1966; "Mathématiques: le premier docteur est une jeune fille," *Faiza*, February–March 1966, 54; "Femmes a l'heure de la télévision," *Femme*, February–April 1966, 36–39.
[4] *Femme*, August 13, 1964.

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participation in the civic life of the nation. Even as the state enabled women's public roles presenting successful women as representative of national modernity and its regime of progressive gender politics, it could not control these interactions or their meaning.

The women's press shaped popular narratives about women's place in society by situating Tunisian feminism in relation to the experiences of women elsewhere. In fact, women in Tunisia had participated in anticolonial women's networks for decades following calls from Egyptian feminist Saiza Nabarawi to unite Asian and "Eastern" women, and Lebanese feminist Nour Hamada's First Eastern Women's Congress in Damascus in 1930. Habiba Menshari, a Tunisian nationalist active with the socialist party, attended the Second Eastern Women's Congress in Tehran in 1932.[5] The pan-Arab Feminist conference in Cairo in 1944 and the 1949 Conference of the Women of Asia – including countries in Southwest Asia and North Africa – continued this tradition of placing anticolonial nationalism in conversation with a vision of women's rights.[6] Explicitly anti-imperial agendas that foregrounded leftist, mass-based feminisms allowed for collaborations with women in China and India building on women's legal rights, revolutionary feminist nationalism, reproductive rights, and organizing peasants and the working class.[7] Over the following decades, Asian and African women continued to connect on platforms distinct from that presented by Western feminists at events such as the Asian-African Conference of Women in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1958, and the Afro-Asian Women's Conference in Cairo in 1961. Participating in such conferences, Tunisian activists were exposed to a range of feminisms that transcended and sometimes challenged the state feminist canon.[8]

[5] Souad Bakalti, *La femme tunisienne au temps de la colonisation, 1881–1956* (Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1996), 36, 72.

[6] Charlotte Weber, "Between Nationalism and Feminism: The Eastern Women's Congresses of 1930 and 1932," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008). Egyptian and Turkish women activists were featured in the earlier Tunisian women's magazine *Leila*. Nadia Nadja Mamelouk, "Anxiety in the Border Zone: Transgressing Boundaries in *Leïla: Revue illustrée de la femme* (Tunis, 1936–1940) and in *Leïla: Hebdomadaire Tunisien Indépendant* (Tunis, 1940–1941)" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 2008).

[7] Elisabeth Armstrong, "Before Bandung: The Anti-Imperialist Women's Movement in Asia and the Women's International Democratic Federation," *Signs* 41, no. 2 (2016).

[8] With women status garnering international legitimacy for their respective regimes, Iranian and Turkish women sought to utilize international conferences and the hosting of feminist events to pressure their respective government.

Women's alliances constitute an underrecognized component of American and Soviet rivalries for political influence, access to raw materials, and ideological hegemony that made the Third World central to international affairs.[9] Women's organizations and women activists contributed to maintaining the Cold War status quo and resisting such forms of Western dominance through their participation in anticolonial uprisings and transregional alliances that "inaugurated vital discursive and political pathways that informed the emerging pan-Asian and Afro-Asian movement for anti-imperialist regional cooperation symbolized by Bandung."[10] As Judy Tzu-Chun Wu notes, they also invite caution regarding the transformative potential of such alliances. Interactions between US-based women activists and Vietnamese feminists were complicated by the former's idealized and romanticized perceptions of the decolonizing Third World. Depicting Vietnamese women as mentors of revolutionary activism reversed the racial hierarchies inherent to Orientalism without dismantling them. Still, Wu's work draws attention to the political stakes of transnational solidarity and its use as a diplomatic tool by Third World and radical movements.[11]

This chapter delineates how the liberal contours of Tunisian state feminism contributed to domestic and global politics. It begins with official representations of women's liberation as grounded in the legal rights guaranteed by the state, to illustrate the linkage between state policies of feminism, centralization, and authoritarianism. By regulating marriage and divorce, the state became involved in family life in complex and often precarious ways. Careful not to destabilize the family, the modern woman became an element of its transformation into a conjugal household that rejected the extended family model as a repressive vestige of the past. The

Camron Michael Amin, "Globalizing Iranian Feminism, 1910–1950," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008); Kathryn Libal, "Staging Turkish Women's Emancipation: Istanbul, 1935," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008).

[9] Odd Arne Westad. The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[10] Armstrong, "Before Bandung," 308.

[11] The Vietnam National Liberation Front invited representatives of the New Left, antiwar movement, and Black Panthers on "revolutionary pilgrimages," knowing that their reports in the leftist press contributed to greater understanding and sympathy for their cause. For some activists, their travels served as inspiration and the reformulations of their political agendas back in the United States. Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 5–9, 217–18, 34, 58–59.

women's press and the UNFT echoed the outlines of a liberal rights–based feminism as they often shared the socioeconomic privileges and largely francophone cultural orientation of the national elite. But they departed from hegemonic iterations of feminism in subtle ways. Traveling across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, visiting the United States, attending feminist conferences, and engaging with Western women's groups as well as those from the socialist bloc, the experiences of Tunisian women were not contained within the nation's borders. In their reports, presentations of women's lives, and coverage of contemporary events, periodicals depicted multiple models of modern womanhood as relevant to the young Tunisian nation, carefully transcending the parameters of liberal emancipation. Evoking forms of international solidarity encountered in their travels, references to women's collaboration and visions of Third World sisterhood hinted at such alternate feminisms.

The Liberal Ethos of State Feminism

State rhetoric about women under Bourguiba iterated a set of interconnected themes. First, it centered on Bourguiba as an individual responsible for women's emancipation. Second, it equated womanhood with a specific vision of the family where rights – in terms of marriage, divorce, custody, or inheritance – were attached to their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters (with such purportedly personal matters subject to state regulation). Family was "the basic unit of the Nation"; emancipation was immersed in a social project of civic responsibility where the best way for a woman to exercise her rights was to "make herself useful to the nation."[12] For literary scholar Lamia Ben Youssef, the emphasis on "Tunisian women's roles as wives, mothers, and guardians of Islamic tradition" resembled nationalist rhetoric prior to independence.[13] However, the third component of postcolonial discourse relied on linear constructions of national time where women embodied independence and progressive modernity. Colonial occupation allowed "traditions" to subjugate women, whereas the independent state liberated them. Bourguiba blamed "so-called religion and bad traditions" for women's

[12] Bourguiba, "Décoloniser la femme" (Nouakchott, November 15, 1965), in *Discours*, ed. Secrétariat d'Etat à l'information, 128–36 (Tunis: Publications du Secrétariat d'Etat à l'information, 1975) vol. 15, 19.

[13] Lamia Ben Youssef Zayzafoon, *The Production of the Muslim Woman: Negotiating Text, History and Ideology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 95.

seclusion and polygamy to distinguish such practices from true faith.[14] Yet the focus on family life as the location of "old tradition" echoed Orientalist clichés and colonial-era denigrations of Muslim, Arab, or Middle Eastern women.[15] In practice, women's extensive involvement in diplomacy, as representatives of the UNFT or as spouses of political figures, was facilitated and encouraged by the regime. As UNFT president Radhia Haddad described the continuous ceremonies, dinners, and tours of UNFT projects, the UNFT was the "vitrine of the political regime" for foreign audiences.[16] Women's suffrage was also a symbol of their participation in the nation as seen in photographs of women at the ballot box illustrating official publications about "women in Tunisia" (see Figure 1.1). In these respects, postcolonial womanhood combined women's roles as wives and mothers with women's public presence as citizens of the nation.

Figure 1.1 The modern woman as citizen, from the title page of *Women of Tunisia*, Secretariat of State for Information and Tourism, 1961.

[14] Habib Bourguiba, *Mobilisation générale pour le travail: Allocution hebdomadaire du président Habib Bourguiba: 26 février 1960* ([Tunis]: Secrétariat d'Etat à l'information, 1960), 4–5.

[15] There is an extensive literature on Orientalism and the representation of women, beginning with Malek Alloula, *Le harem colonial (images d'un sous-érotisme)* (Paris: Editions Slotkine, 1981); Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient*; Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[16] Haddad, *Parole de femme*, 139, 77, 80.

Though women contributed to nationalist mobilization under the colonial regime, the Dustur had distanced itself from reformist calls for women's liberation, viewing the latter as an assimilationist threat to Tunisian identity.[17] Bourguiba's elevation of women's rights to a crucial aspect of anticolonial nationalism was retrospective and discursive: "I placed women's rehabilitation at the top of national priorities at a moment where French troops still occupied the country."[18] These singular claims required frequent reiteration, with Bourguiba reminding his audience at UNFT congresses how "once independence was gained, even before the evacuation of our territory by French forces, one of our first efforts was in the interests of women."[19] As he described on another occasion:

> At the dawn of independence, as soon as Tunisia's destiny was in my hands, and four short months after the formation of my government, I promulgated the law that liberates women making them equal to men. This is the law of August 13, 1956, reforming personal status. Since last summer [1964] August 13th has become the day where we celebrate women's emancipation.[20]

Even when women's participation in anticolonial protests was acknowledged, Bourguiba crafted a legacy of personal commitment to women's rights, explaining, "In taking the initiative of emancipation, I assumed a heavy responsibility."[21] He positioned himself as the ultimate arbiter of legal affairs pertaining to women, informing members of the judiciary that he would personally intervene when a woman's rights were not respected, and "If necessary, she could write to me directly."[22] Nationalist texts placed women in a position of grateful appreciation but not agency: "the women of Tunisia regard Habib Bourguiba not only as the creator of Tunisia, but as the man who gave them back their dignity."[23]

The personal status code not only was "the instrument of emancipation of Tunisian women" and the cornerstone of women's rights

[17] Bakalti, *La femme tunisienne au temps de la colonisation*, 62–67.
[18] Bourguiba, "La femme, élément de progrès dans la société" (Monastir, August 13, 1965), 158 in *Discours*, 156–73.
[19] Habib Bourguiba, *The State Carries On* (Le Kef: Secretariat of State for Cultural Affairs and Information, 1962), 3.
[20] Bourguiba, "Décoloniser la femme," 18.
[21] Bourguiba, "La justice et l'évolution de la société," 11.
[22] Bourguiba, "Edifier une société saine et équilibrée," 20.
[23] *Women of Tunisia*, 16

legislation, but according to Bourguiba, cemented his personal role, secured women's position within the family, and created a temporal marker of national progress dating to 1956.[24] State intervention in familial matters was rare in "ancient societies" but was the foundation of "modern law." As Bourguiba explicated, the Majalla was a component of this legal evolution because "jurists estimated that relations between individuals have collective relevance and that it is the obligation of the state to intervene in these relations."[25] Instruments of governmentality such as record-keeping and the registration of marriages as well as divorce were presented as protecting the rights of the national collective. In Bourguiba's estimation, these laws also protected the family as "the fundamental unit of society."[26] Hence, establishing a minimum age at marriage (of fifteen for girls and eighteen for boys) was intended to prevent child marriage, encourage companionate relationships, and solidify the foundations of the nuclear family. A woman's legal rights did not grant her permission to "reject a father's or a husband's authority."[27] The family remained a microcosm of and metaphor for the nation, as all citizens were "members of one family."[28]

Divorce as a Gendered Process

Connecting marital reform to family harmony and national stability politicized divorce as a public affair. Again according to Bourguiba, state supervision of divorce as a civil procedure was intended to restrict the husband's ability to divorce at whim, thus preserving the family from dissolution and sparing society from its dangerous repercussions.[29] Both husbands and wives could end marriages, granting women a new visibility in the process (though scholars have intuited that even while unilateral divorce was the husband's prerogative within Islamic courts, their wives were nonetheless involved in

[24] Bourguiba, "Birth Control," 3.
[25] Habib Bourguiba, "Deux fondements du statut personnel: Dignité et cohésion nationale (Tunis, le 10 août 1956)," in *Discours*, ed. Secrétariat d'Etat à l'information, 128–36.
[26] Bourguiba, "Deux fondements," *Discours*, 131.
[27] Bourguiba, *The State Carries On*, 13.
[28] Bourguiba, "La femme, élément de progrès," 170–71.
[29] Bourguiba, "Deux fondements."

initiating divorce).[30] While permissible, divorce was condoned in moralistic terms, as Bourguiba warned: "If we have authorized divorce, we consider it the lesser of two evils when conjugal life has become impossible. Didn't the Prophet say that 'of all that is licit, nothing in the eyes of God is more reprehensible than divorce'?"[31] This reference to the *sunna*, to Islamic traditions, serves to justify legality of divorce while appearing paradoxically dissuasive about its use. The responsibility for maintaining moral standards fell upon women, as Bourguiba elaborated: "Sometimes a wife reproaches her husband with being given to joking with other women or being a bit of a charmer.... Rather than indulging in recriminations she would do better to remember that she has a husband, and also children to bring up."[32] He urged their patient acceptance of men's philandering and adultery as "little sacrifices." It followed that a wife who initiated divorce was faulted with "excessive independence" from her husband, which risked ruining the country through "licentiousness and moral vacuity."[33] By sexualizing women's access to divorce as a national calamity, Bourguiba exposed the gendered nature of concerns about divorce as a critique of women's agentive role in ways that reverberated beyond presidential speeches:

"'I want this chair, or I'm divorcing you ... I want this dress ... I want the same ring as my sister ...' I want, I want, and continued menacing. This is my life," complained an artist who bemoaned his wife's insatiable materialism and singular focus on money. "I have decided to divorce," he confessed.

But one thing breaks my heart: must our child be sacrificed to the thoughtless frivolity of his mother? I beg you, tell women that these are not true values. A loving husband, beautiful children are worth more than jewels and are a more reliable measure of happiness than piles of new belongings.[34]

[30] Judith Tucker, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 78–112. Though Tucker does not focus on the cities of Tunisia, her conclusions about women's awareness of their legal rights and recourse to the judicial system are consistent with findings on Tunis by David Stephan Powers, *The Development of Islamic Law and Society in the Maghrib: Qadis, Muftis and Family Law* (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2011).

[31] Bourguiba, "Edifier une société saine et équilibrée," 15.

[32] Habib Bourguiba, *Women and Social Evolution* (Tunis: Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs, 1966).

[33] Bourguiba, "La femme, élément de progress," 162–63.

[34] "Le courrier des lectrices," *Faiza*, April 1960, 6.

In these evocative terms, a male reader of *Faiza* drew connections between the gendering of divorce (attributed to his wife's apparent greed) and the potential social and familial consequences. The editors printed it in full, urging readers to pay attention. While the letter coincided with another discursive thread critiquing women's materialism, its resonance with official constructions of modern womanhood is striking.

Whether concerns about divorce were spurned by increasing divorce rates is difficult to ascertain due to a lack of data prior to 1956. According to the National Institute for Statistics, the number of divorces increased over the 1960s, but less than 23 percent were initiated by the wife.[35] To what extent these numbers are linked to demographic patterns or previously unregistered divorcees seeking documentation matters less than the consensus that wives were responsible for sustaining marriages regardless of their husbands' behavior and that their liberation posed a threat to the family. Divorce and remarriage had been common in the first half of the twentieth century and was presumably socially acceptable, as Frances Hasso writes in the case of Egypt and the Emirates. Its stigmatization followed the postcolonial state's construction of divorce as inimical to the modern family and akin to "male polygamy, and marital seriality as threatening to the well-being of the nation-state."[36]

In Tunisia, concerns about the impact of women's emancipation on family life occurred in a context of juridical constraints on men's patriarchal authority as husbands and fathers, bringing marital matters under the purview of a centralized state and its judicial apparatus. Along with restrictions on male polygamy, judges (as representatives of the state) held the authority to grant divorce and approve the marriages of minors. Tunisian apprehension about divorce rates are reminiscent of the family crises that Hasso details in Egypt and the Emirates, or what Hanan Kholoussy describes as a marriage crisis in

[35] There were 826 divorces in 1957 and 3,719 in 1969. Of the latter, 1,538 were initiated by the husband, 837 were requested by the wife, and 1,147 were described as mutual. Yet over the same decade marriage remained almost universal; only 3 percent of men and 1.5 percent of women in the 50–54 age group had never been married. *Tunisia Moves Ahead*, 216 and 226. Other data indicates regional variation with higher rates of divorce in the capital, and a decrease in Sousse between 1962 and 1966. Rockefeller Archives, Ford Foundation, Tunisia Field office VII, 17, 63-207A.

[36] Hasso, *Consuming Desires*, 6.

Egypt, driven less by statistical changes and more as "a metaphor to critique larger socioeconomic and political turmoil."[37] While women's rights in marriage and divorce were portrayed as an element of Tunisia's secularism and the privatization of faith, women's responsibilities toward the family took precedence over individualism or autonomy, locating their contributions to the new nation within specific spheres that accommodated the state's patriarchal and authoritarian structures.

The "liberal" attributes of Tunisia's state feminism need qualification. It was liberal in the sense that official discourses on women's liberation extended some of men's rights to women, particularly in marital matters (and was concomitant with its liberal economic orientation despite nominal references to socialism). However, the regime encoded hierarchies as indicated by the patriarchal nature of family law and the family ideology expressed in concerns that through divorce women posed a threat to the family and society. Despite its claims of political inclusion, as Uday Mehta argues, liberalism coexisted with hierarchies, colonial domination, and exclusion attributable to the "thicker set of social credentials that constitute the real bases of political inclusion," whether defined by race, civilization, or otherwise.[38] In Tunisia, maturity and adulthood were associated with marriage, so that women who were not yet married or who had ended their marriages (via divorce) were not recognized as benefiting from the rights conferred by the state. Presidential discourse and the women's press contributed to the articulation of nationalist ideals delineating such cultural and social parameters of women's inclusion.

Nationalist Women and the Women's Press

Official depictions of state feminism as the personal project of the president explain his frequent appearance on the covers of *Faiza* and *Al-Mar'a*, the detailing of his appearances at UNFT events, and frequenting quoting of his speeches in the women's press.[39] *Faiza*'s

[37] Hanan Kholoussy, *For Better, for Worse: The Marriage Crisis That Made Modern Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 2.

[38] Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 61.

[39] See, for instance, "Khitab al-mujahid al-akbar fi 'aid al-mara'a," *Al-Mar'a* September 1966, 6–13; and the column "Qal al-ra'is," *Al-Mar'a*, January 1964, September 1966, and August 1967.

inaugural issue included Arabic and French dedications to President Bourguiba, "the liberator of Tunisian women, the man who opened to her the door of progress, who renewed her dignity and her responsibility within the nation." Presidential activities were regularly featured, and national holidays commemorated. The central place of the UNFT in regime narratives about women's emancipation and women's responsibilities toward the nation was embraced by *Al-Mar'a* and *Femme*. In the words of *Femme*, its mission was to mirror "the action of the Tunisian woman in the life of the nation, and to help her become conscientious of the role that she must fulfill in a society in the midst of transformation, and for a better future."[40] Readers too referenced the contours of official discourse quoting presidential speeches and equated the state's commitment to women as "the modern and revolutionary project that is the Personal Status Code."[41]

In addition to technical difficulties and prohibitive costs, the women's press published in a context of censorship where sanctions and official pressure led to the closing of newspapers. With little independent journalism by the mid-1960s, even "the nonparty papers learned to echo the political line of the government's Information Department."[42] This state monitoring of information was integral to ensuring the lack of meaningful political participation available to the average citizen.[43] Thus the explicit nationalism within the women's press should be treated as a prerequisite to publishing and not necessarily a comprehensive reflection of their editorial visions since despite their nationalist credentials, the space from which to question official feminist imperatives was limited.

Women active in civil society organizations or public life were close with Bourguiba, his wife Wassila Bourguiba, the Dustur party, and inner circles of political authority. The women's cultural group, the 'Aziza Uthmana Club, founded in 1957, was led by the wife of

[40] *Femme*, August 13, 1964.
[41] Mahmoud Ben Hassine suggested that the Code be discussed in each issue; see his letter in *Faiza*, August–September 1967, 82–83.
[42] Moore, *Tunisia since Independence*, 78.
[43] Larbi Chouikha, "Autoritarisme étatique et débrouillardise individuelle: Arts de faire, paraboles, Internet, comme formes de résistance, voire de contestation," in *La Tunisie de Ben Ali: La société contre le régime*, ed. Olfa Lamloum and Bernard Ravenel (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).

Abdelaziz Lasram (later minister of economic affairs) and Habiba Zaouche, whose husband Ahmad Zaouche was the first governor of Tunis after independence. Prominent charitable projects targeting women or matters deemed of concern to women, such as the orphanage Al-Radhe'a/Le Nourrison (The Nursling) and the Vestiaire Nationale (The Nation's Closet), which provided clothing sewn by women to the needy, were run by the president's wife and niece, respectively. Both were also supported by the UNFT. Neila bin 'Ammar, presidential sister-in-law and a prominent UNFT figure, was part of the growing number of women elected to municipal councils in the first decade after independence (there were ten in 1957 and forty-four by 1966). These connections facilitated women's activism and public service while cultivating dependence that restrained them within state-sanctioned parameters.

The women's press was also tied to the palace. Jelila Daghfous, a longtime UNFT activist and its general secretary from 1962 to 1966, was responsible for *Femme*, whereas *Al-Mar'a* was directed by UNFT president Radhia Haddad. Haddad was not only from the prominent Bin 'Ammar family and a cousin of the First Lady, but her husband and father in law were nationalists, and her brother served as director of the Dustur party and minister of defense. *Faiza*'s founder, the artist Safia Farhat, was married to the artist Abdallah Farhat, a member of the Dustur political bureau in the 1950s who served as director of the presidential cabinet immediately following independence. Dorra Bouzid, who joined the editorial committee in 1960, becoming editor-in-chief in 1963 and director in 1965, was a journalist and militant nationalist, whose activism dated to her student days in Paris in the 1950s where she studied pharmacy and penned a women's column in the nationalist *L'Action*. Her stepfather and "spiritual father," the writer Mahmud al-Mas'adi, with whom she was quite close, was minister of education from 1958 to 1968, and later minister of cultural affairs.[44] Other members of the editorial staff were Josette

[44] She used the pseudonym Leila in *L'Action*, and later also Dorra ben Ayed, Ferial, and Cactus. Julia Clancy-Smith, "From Household to Schoolroom: Women, Transnational Networks and Education in North Africa and Beyond," in *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories*, ed. Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016). See also her extensive interview in Ben Ouanes, "Femmes Journalistes."

ben Brahem, a French woman who wrote for *Jeune Afrique* and for *Le Monde* under the pseudonym Josette Alia whose husband Raouf Ben Brahem was close with Bourguiba, and Samia bin 'Ammar, the co-director of *Faiza*, who was the wife of another prominent member of the Dustur party, Mundher bin 'Ammar, who held ministerial portfolios in public health, and later youth, sports, and social affairs and who was also the First Lady's younger brother.[45]

For all its personal connections to the regime, shared class, and educational backgrounds, the women's press was more than a mouthpiece for state feminism as it drew conversations about modern womanhood in new directions. For instancre, UNFT president Haddad, who became the first woman in parliament in 1959, and was the only woman with an official position within the Dustur party, was frequently featured in the women's press. Along with coverage of legislation and congressional debates relevant to women, Haddad's visibility normalized women's political participation. With only an imperfect potential for advocacy that stemmed from women's proximity to the state and restrictions on the press, women's magazines presented subtle deviations from important components of the state feminist narrative, stretching the boundaries of accepted gender roles.

Women's Place in the New Nation

References to Bourguiba's personal initiative in liberating women were plentiful in the women's press. As Karima Medjoub described for readers of *Femme*: "Since our nation became independent, Bourguiba has never failed to support and encourage the cause of women's emancipation. A true revolutionary, he was the first Arab and African head of state to have always advocated that 'without first women's evolution, no progress is possible.'"[46] The canonization of Bourguiba's biography within nationalist history offered occasions for similar commentary.

[45] Ben Brahem was denied the ability to continue in her role as a professional journalist after criticizing state violence against student protests in late 1966; see *Jeune Afrique*, January 8 and 29, 1967.

[46] Karima Medjoub, "En dix ans d'indépendance, la femme tunisienne a accompli une révolution authentique," *Femme*, February–April 1966, 12–13.

On June 1, celebrating Bourguiba's 1955 return to Tunisia from exile and imprisonment on the eve of independence, *Faiza* declared that

> June 1st consecrates not only the definitive victory of the Tunisian people over its conquerors, but also the triumph of woman after her long resignation and her most valiant struggle. The Tunisian woman, fully conscious of the victories won by the people thanks to the leadership of the president, the providential man that Tunisia awaited for centuries, expresses her filial gratitude.[47]

By inserting women's "valiant struggle" within the story of national liberation, women's agency quietly accompanies her "filial gratitude" to the national leader. By reminding readers of presidential advocacy for women, these comments reinforced their proximity to the paternal state and held it accountable.

Women's claim to national history appears in a small UNFT book commemorating a decade of independence and women's rights, *Union Nationale des Femmes de Tunisie, dix ans: 1956–1966*.[48] Including photographs of the president and lengthy excerpts from his speeches, this twin birthing of the nation and women's organization justified the existence of the UNFT. Yet alongside references to Bourguiba's struggle is a narrative of women's engagement, resuscitating legendary figures of the pre-national past, the seventh-century Amazigh warrior Kahena, and the medieval saint and philanthropist 'Aziza 'Uthmana, both of whom represented women's public engagement. Their lives chronologically preceded the reformist politicians of the nineteenth century and the largely male conversations about feminism cited in nationalist histories, pointing toward women's actions as shaping such narratives. The text describes women's involvement at every step of the anticolonial struggle and effectively decenters Bourguiba's role. Even the description of UNFT structures and foundational statutes depicting the organization as independent may stem less from a denial of their subordination to the state and more as a resistance to it. Internalizing the hegemonic norms of the national project as a bourgeois modernity,

[47] Dina, "Premier juin," *Faiza*, June 1960, 9. Appreciation of Bourguiba is similarly the focus of Radhia al-Haddad's women's day piece "'Aid al-mar'a,'" *Al-Mar'a*, June 1964, 18, 62.

[48] The forty-five-page text includes no author or publication information; Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes.

the organization articulated its own vision of women's place within the nationalist canon stemming from collective agency.

The agentive positioning of women within the national future also appears in surprising ways. When the president visited the town of Touza (just south of Monastir), women welcomed him by donating their jewelry to the national treasury. Their sacrifice was lauded and featured on the cover of *Femme* as a major event. In the accompanying article, one participant proclaimed, "This is nothing compared to the sacrifices of those who have given their life [for the nation]. Bourguiba has given us our rights, our responsibility is to help him in his quest to build," and "we no longer need gold, our dignity has been restored by the personal status code."[49] These statements could be performative, but they nevertheless indicate the influence of official discourse about Bourguiba's role in women's liberation as they shaped women's engagement with the state. However, *Femme* shifted the emphasis back to the women, whose "bracelets, pins, pearl necklaces, gold pieces" were an important source of women's wealth and access to capital that became an "investment" in the nation's "fight against underdevelopment." This framing underscored women's financial contributions and participation in national initiatives. Even when women's agency coincides with national interest, reinforcing hegemonic narratives, it cannot be entirely ignored.

Similar logics of reiterating and contradicting state discourse are evident in *Faiza*. A report on divorce in its second issue chided women readers in the closing lines: "let's merit the freedoms we have acquired, don't take advantage of them," capturing the spirit of national polemics and perpetuating the politicization of matrimonial affairs as a topic of public interest.[50] To shed light on rumors about increasing divorce

[49] Anissa, "Femmes de Touza ou les prémices d'une maturité," October–December 1965, 21. Women in nearby Mahdia and Machrouha as well as Bou Arkoub near Cap Bon followed suit. Anissa, "A la pointe de progrès 'nos rurales' continuent à investir. Après, Touza, MACHROUHA donne le ton," *Femme* February–April 1966, 5.

[50] According to Marzouki, the UNFT press emphasized women's centrality to the family as wife and mother, and "divorce was equated with a real failure, an aberration in social and emotional life to be avoided," citing articles in *Al-Mar'a* on family happiness, maternal responsibility, and spousal advice in 1961–64, and a critique of divorce in December 1970. Marzouki, *Le mouvement des femmes en Tunisie*, 179–81.

rates and better understand its causes, an unnamed judge was interviewed who specialized in matters of marriage and divorce. To exemplify the problem, the judge described the case of Mrs. S., who had filed for divorce after eleven years of marriage and three years of attempted reconciliation. The judge was incredulous that Mrs. S. failed to specify her rationale and worried about the ramifications on the couple's four children. To this *Faiza* wondered if perhaps "the true reason is her marriage at a very young age – fourteen or fifteen years old – which is currently prohibited," and an age at which she may not have consented to the marriage in the first place.[51] Pressing the judge to opine on women's requests for divorce more generally, the article cited additional factors such as male unemployment and alcoholism. By ending the article with an emphasis on rights and responsibilities, *Faiza* did not challenge the gendered understanding of divorce. Yet highlighting Mrs. S.'s young age and presenting divorce as a social problem that intersected with socioeconomic factors or public health transgressed official framings of divorce in important ways.

Working Women and Working-Class Women

The modern Tunisian woman was expected to work. "The wealth of this underdeveloped country of Tunisia is not so much a matter of present resources, which are insufficient," Bourguiba proclaimed in his explanation of the nation's socialist path. "Our wealth lies especially in the resources that our men and women must create with an enthusiastic sustained and organized effort under the guidance, encouragement and supervision of the State."[52] Women were photographed in official publications as a telephone operator, hair stylist, secretary, and artist to illustrate that "women have the choice of many different careers," and according to another text women were "actresses . . . dressmakers . . . typists . . . laboratory assistants . . . and even soldiers or members of parliament."[53] Yet descriptions of labor were often

[51] "Et le divorce?," *Faiza*, 1959, 17. [52] Bourguiba, *Our Road to Socialism*, 11.
[53] Kitabat al-Dawlah lil-Akhbar wa-al-Irshad Tunisia, *Tunisia Works* (Tunis: Secretariat of State for Information, 1960), 70–71; Tunisia, *Women of Tunisia*, 18–20.

masculine, whether in militaristic terms as "the ultimate battle" or references to "the ordinary worker" who toiled the land.[54] The imperative to work, to build the nation, was repeated in presidential speeches warning against complacency, but how women's labor balanced with their domestic responsibilities were subjects on which the president did not dwell.

In stark divergence from official narratives, the women's press devoted considerable space to women's employment. "Our young girls want to work. They are right, because for a woman there is no true independence without the security of an occupation," explained *Faiza* in 1959. "Instead of offering laconic encouragement, we thought that the best way to help these young girls – and their parents – would be to provide a comprehensive documentation of the professions that are open to them, and where they can aspire to fulfill a useful social role."[55] Women's labor was concentrated in agriculture, and to a lesser extent in childcare, domestic service, and textile production, and while fields such as sales, law, or medicine were seen as appropriate for women, young girls had few models beyond the classroom for women's formal employment.[56] *Faiza*'s attention to prominent contemporary personalities, including women in arts and politics such as the South African star Miriam Makeba, Algerian Amazigh writer Marguerite Taos Amrouche, the Moroccan representative to the UN Halima Warzazi, and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, challenged this status quo. They urged young girls to contribute to society or "be useful," by explaining how to "become" nurse assistants, teaching assistants, rural healthcare workers, and telex operators.[57] While many career paths respected gendered understandings of women's role in the family and society, women's careerism was modern in its association with industrial machinery, technology, and communications.

[54] "Le travail, voilà le combat suprême," in Bourguiba, *Mobilisation générale pour le travail*, 12–13.

[55] "L'orientation professionnelle des jeunes filles," *Faiza*, 1959, 73.

[56] Hochschild, "Women at Work in Modernizing Tunisia." About half of women professionals (who constituted roughly 1 per cent of working women) were teachers, and very few women civil servants held high-ranking administrative positions. Tunisia, *Tunisia Moves Ahead*, 228.

[57] "Femme au travail," *Faiza*, December 1959, 14; "Jeunes filles au travail," *Faiza*, January 1961, 16; "Najet et le Telex," *Faiza*, April 1966, 36–37.

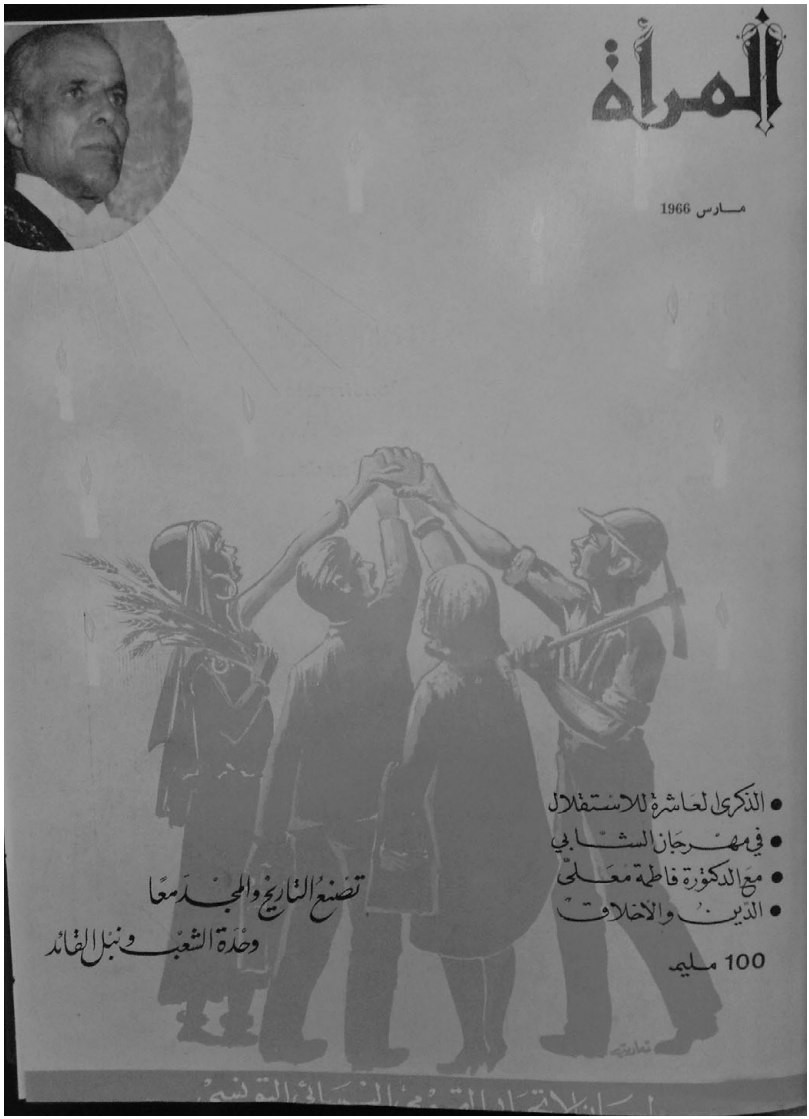

Figure 1.2 The women's press, cover of *Al-Mar'a*, March 1966.

The UNFT approach featured women active in the organization and interviews with women in arts and culture, while arguing for the significance of women's labor in industry and agriculture within ideals of national progress and modern womanhood. This included cover

photographs of a smiling young woman picking oranges described as "a true social revolution" that made labor joyful, and a young woman at a loom in its second and third issues. A cover illustration of *Al-Mar'a* depicted two women and two men joining their hands in the air as a portrait of Bourguiba imposed over the sun hovers in the upper left corner. Whereas one woman carries stalks of wheat, her hair covering, long clothing, ankle bracelets, and bare feet identify her as a peasant, the other woman's high-heeled shoes, short bobbed haircut, knee-length skirt, and handbag signal her position as an urbanite and perhaps an office worker (see Figure 1.2). In the editorial of its third issue headlined "In the Era of the Plan," *Femme* proposed an intersection between the goals of the national four-year plan and the participation of the UNFT. Artisanal and professional training for women, *Femme* argued, supported "the modernization of economic sectors" and allowed women to participate in the civil life of the nation alongside men in the "economic and social battle."[58] This platform countered the exclusion of the UNFT from the drafting of such plans or economic decisions more broadly.[59] Another editorial that was focused on women's "advancement and dignity through work" combined references to Bourguiba and the importance of women's "feminine" career paths, while hinting that any path open to men must also be open to women. It was essential to "combat anachronistic traditions," so that women continued to contribute to the nation's evolution and a regime of progress.[60] Similar language about the nation's "new battle" was sprinkled across features on "women in industry," projecting how "women in industry will be the reflection of this new battle."[61] Textile factories and smaller clothing workshops were seamlessly integrated alongside women weaving in their homes in reports about women across the nation presenting industrial labor in continuity with women's domestic role.[62] This framing reinforced yet diverged from

[58] *Femme*, April–June 1965, 5.
[59] The lack of women in positions of authority within the labor sector was acerbically noted following an international labor conference hosted in Tunis: "the participation of 412 members and numerous observers from all corners of the world. Not one woman." *Faiza*, April 1960, 12.
[60] *Femme*, February–April 1966, 7.
[61] Sonia Maarouf, "Femme dans l'industrie," *Femme*, April–June 1965, 25–27.
[62] Souhaiba Rached, "La kairouanaise," *Femme*, April–June 1965, 10–11; Sonia Maarouf, "La femme du centre tunisien a concretisé son émancipation," *Femme*,

the gender roles of nationalist mantras about the "struggle against underdevelopment."

Questions about hiring women in a spinning factory in the face of male unemployment hinted at concerns about women's labor, financial autonomy, and their impact on men and masculinity. For *Faiza*, women's earning power was a way for women to "contribute to household finances," as illustrated by a sketch of a couple flexing their biceps to hold up a block labeled "household." The wife in a dress and the husband in a suit depicted the complementarity of their distinct gender identities as a partnership of shared economic burdens.[63] When an older man revealed his fear about his wife's recent employment (even though it was prompted by his illness), *Al-Mar'a* reassured him that working outside the home was part of the modern woman's commitment to her family.[64] The women's press strove to assuage male fears over the security of their employment and financial roles as head of household by couching women's labor within presidential discourse, party directives, and familial framings.

In the end, the presentation of work as liberating still rested on the middle-class experiences of the educated women writing for the press. This divergence was noted in an interview with Mbarka bent Abdallah, a young female employee at a state dairy processing facility, who described work as a necessity. With an unemployed mother, no father, and only a fifth-grade education, she had few options: "If I had money, I would have continued my studies. I would have been a nurse. Sometimes I tell myself, 'if only I could be a secretary.'"[65] As Tunisian feminist Ilhem Marzouki explains, the economic projects initiated by the UNFT (and the working women featured in its publications) exacerbated economic and regional divides. Coordinated with the "needs of the state," providing military uniforms and souvenirs for the tourist market, this focus on textiles and handicrafts perpetuated rural underdevelopment and marginalization in the market economy where women "far from being able to achieve economic independence, were subjected to a double subservience: exploitation on the level of

February–April 1966, 23–24; A. Razgallah, "La révolution continue . . . Tunisie an X," *Femme*, February–April 1966, 16–18.

[63] Dorra ben Ayed, "Le code et le mariage," *Faiza*, October 1961, 34–35.

[64] "Li-kol mushkila . . . hal," *Al-Mar'a*, October 1966.

[65] "Mahbouba et M'barka à l'usine," *Faiza*, April 1–May 15, 1966, 34–35.

their salaries, and economic dependency."[66] In her work on Turkey, Deniz Kandiyoti similarly found no direct causal link between women's labor, their status within the family, and their ability to transform patriarchal norms in urban, rural, or nomadic communities.[67]

The status of the UNFT as an official body representing women's interests granted legitimacy to women's legal rights as a matter of policy considered at the highest levels of the state. But the authoritarian political climate limited the oppositional possibilities of the women's press. When Bouzid spoke out against sex discrimination, it was to criticize the ambassador of Yugoslavia.[68] With the powerful labor union caught between advocating on behalf of its constituencies through collaboration with the ruling party or forming an opposition, it is little surprise that feminists operated within similar constraints, choosing to work within party lines.[69] In the implementation of rights that the state had already granted, the women's press expanded the hegemonic reach of official narratives, but from within this position, the contours of women's role in the new nation could be continually explicated, elaborated, and debated.

Cultural Mobilization and Transnational Alliances

From theater to cinema to dance to amateur poetry, the Tunisian women's press devoted much space to local and contemporary cultural production. Poetry was an important political tool of the era, with Palestinians organizing poetry festivals in the 1950s to rally "a sense of collective spirit" that situated Palestinian liberation within "the overlapping Palestinian, Arab, and Third World anticolonial discourses and struggles."[70] Culture was part of intellectual calls for radical change, of demonstrations of transnational solidarity; it was mobilized by newly independent states to showcase national identity,

[66] Marzouki, *Le Mouvement des femmes en Tunisie*, 188–89.
[67] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Sex Roles and Social Change: A Comparative Appraisal of Turkey's Women," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (1977).
[68] Cactus "Et des femmes: Chronique d'OEK," *Faiza*, January–February 1967, 73.
[69] Ahmad, "Politics and labor in Tunisia,"; Abdesselem Ben Hamida, *Le syndicalisme Tunisien de la deuxième guerre mondiale à l'autonomie interne* (Tunis: Publications de l'Université de Tunis, 1989); Ben Hamida, "Pouvoir syndical et édification d'un état nation en Tunisie."
[70] Nassar, *Brothers Apart*, 79–87.

and manipulated by the superpowers as a facet of Cold War competition. In 1996, the Tunisia state began hosting the most important film festival on the African continent of the era, the Carthage Film Festival (Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage).[71] Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and organized by the director of its cinema department Tahar Cheriaa, film was a decidedly modern genre through which to demarcate Tunisia's position in the region. Its competition included only films produced by Arab and African directors, promoting an anti-imperial agenda and socially engaged cinema.[72] From the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Senegal in 1966 and Algeria's hosting of the first Pan-African Cultural Festival in 1969, regional festivities celebrated African heritage and political independence, inspiring calls to incorporate culture into state-building projects of Third World nations. As the Moroccan novelist Mohammed Berra argued in a 1968 essay in *Souffles*, "The problem at hand is to see literature, and the arts in general, become one of the tools that will form the society that we aspire to become."[73]

Following Bandung, Arab nations such as Egypt and Algeria held a prominent place in visions of Afro-Asian solidarity, including within the African diaspora in the United States. Between coverage of the Algerian revolution in newspapers such as the Nation of Islam's *Muhammad Speaks* (the most widely circulated African American paper of the 1960s), President Ahmad Ben Bella's meetings with Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and Black Panther Party teach-ins on Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Algeria became a powerful symbol of the parallels between anticolonial struggles and the civil rights movement. These connections were fostered by the National Liberation Front's (FLN) brief support of the Black Panthers and African liberation movements, particularly in Portuguese colonies, and epitomized by the Pan-African Cultural

[71] Cheriaa, "Le cinema en tunisie," 433; Armes, *Postcolonial Images*, 20–21. See *Faiza*'s coverage of the festival in November 1966.

[72] The first Tunisian films presented a collective national identity focusing on the struggle for independence. Morgan Courriou. "Les Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage et la "Guerre de libération cinématographique" (1966–1975)." Africultures 101–102 (2015): 294–317; Florence Martin, "Cinema and State in Tunisia," in *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence*, ed. Josef Gugler (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

[73] "Generation Drive," in Harrison and Villa-Ignacio, *Souffles-Anfas*, 140.

Festival.[74] Despite tensions between Afrocentrism and broader visions of blackness and African identity in which Arabs were included, such international events articulated an intellectual and cultural platform for anticolonial struggles, national revolutions, and economic development based on the revolutionary potential of African culture.[75]

International conferences, global travel, and rhetorics of transnational solidarity were politicized components of the shifting constellations of Cold War rivalries and alliances, with vast resources invested in personal encounters and cultural programming. In 1955, President Eisenhower received congressional approval to use emergency funds for a State Department program that sent African American and racially integrated jazz ensembles on global tours. Concerned that reports detailing the prevalence of segregation and frequent instances of racist violence would limit potential alliances with newly independent nations, their itineraries adhered closely to areas of CIA interest, with frequent stops across the Middle East.[76] Scholars have concluded that the jazz tours failed as a form of American propaganda, but even as the revolutionary credentials of Algeria and Egypt waned by the early 1970s, cultural connections were transformational on the individual level.[77]

[74] Negotiating with the United States for investments in the energy sector, the FLN quieted its radical internationalism by 1970 to focus more on industrialization and national development, whereas the defeat in Palestine, Nasser's death, and Sadat's open-door economic policy marked a similar move in Egypt. Radical alliances were limited by economic and political constraints faced by the Algerian FLN and a mutual lack of understanding. Justin Jackson, "Kissinger's Kidnapper: Eqbal Ahmad, the U.S. New Left, and the Transnational Romance of Revolutionary War," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4, no. 1 (2010); Samir Meghelli, "From Harlem to Algiers: Transnational Solidarities between the African American Freedom Movement and Algeria, 1962–1978," in *Black Routes to Islam*, ed. Manning Marable and Hisham Aidi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[75] Samuel D. Anderson, "'Negritude Is Dead': Performing the African Revolution at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival (Algiers, 1969)," in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966: Contexts and Legacies*, ed. David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Andrew Apter, "Beyond Negritude: Black Cultural Citizenship and the Arab Question in FESTAC '77," in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966*.

[76] The personal motivations of the musicians were more complex. Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[77] This was probably true for African American musicians such as Randy Weston and Ahmed AbdulMalik engaged with stylistic fusion and experimentation in part to counter Orientalist stereotypes of the Middle East and Arab world,

As a small nation explicitly aligned with the West – as Bourguiba described it, "We do not need … Khrushchev or Tito" – Tunisia is often left out of transnational narratives.[78] Yet access to domestic markets, natural resources, and votes within the UN awarded importance to otherwise minor players in global politics. As Ghodsee demonstrates, cultural promotion to appeal to hearts and minds extended to women who were courted by international alliances and subjected to superpower propaganda featuring distinct models of women's emancipation.[79] The politicization of gender within international affairs was explicit at the 1975 UN International Women's Year conference in Mexico where government delegations focused on conversations regarding women's legal, social, economic, and political roles, but began much earlier, and in the case of Tunisia, targeted nations already located within the Western bloc. Attention toward Tunisian women's approach to Cold War alliances and global references in their vision of modern womanhood underscores the significance of women's organizing and the broader import of gender to international politics.

Cold War Feminisms

While connections among and between women in the global south were fostered early in the early twentieth century, they coalesced under a few umbrella organizations in the Cold War era. On the one hand was the liberal feminist International Alliance for Women (IAW) led by American and Western European women. Broadening to include women from across the globe, it was less effective in regions such as the Middle East, thanks to its espousal of American foreign policy and firm belief in Western superiority in definitions of women's liberation based on suffrage and legal rights.[80] On the other hand,

which were often reduced to belly-dancing clichés. Weston collaborated with gnawa musicians in Morocco, and AbdulMalik studied under a Sudanese oud master. Kelley, *Africa Speaks, America Answers*.

[78] Bourguiba, *Our Road to Socialism*, 31.

[79] Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 130, 46.

[80] Though they diverged from popular stereotypes of the Middle East and Islam in their publications and interactions with women during travels to Egypt and Syria, they ignored political problems caused by American-led war and American-backed coups. Charlotte Weber, "Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911–1950," *Feminist studies* 27, no. 1 (2001).

anti-imperialist collaborations brought together women from across Asia and Africa under the aegis of the Non-Aligned Movement. Finally, the Soviet-affiliated Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), built on socialist feminism to frame women's issues around the intersections of gender and class. The small Tunisian women's group affiliated with the national branch of the Communist party had worked alongside the WIDF prior to independence, celebrating Labor Day on May 1 and International Women's Day on March 8 and drawing parallels between Tunisia's anticolonial struggle and those of women across the globe.[81]

While the Tunisian government declared itself squarely within the US-led bloc, defining state feminism along largely liberal models, Tunisian women participated in Afro-Asian, European, and WIDF circles and attended conferences in a dizzying array of locations, exposing them to multiple iterations of women's rights and definitions of identity or belonging. They attended major events affiliated with the Non-Aligned Movement such as the 1958 Asian-African Conference of Women in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the Afro-Asian women's conference Cairo in 1961. From 1960, the UNFT was affiliated with the North American– and Western European–based International Council of Women (attending meetings in Istanbul in 1960 and London in 1967, with Haddad serving on its executive committee). Tunisian delegates participated in WIDF events, from the World Gathering of Women for Disarmament in Vienna in 1962 to the WIDF's World Congress of Women in Helsinki in 1969, and undertook a study voyage to Yugoslavia in October 1962. Tunisian women traveled across the African continent, attending a conference of West African Women in Conakry, Guinea, in July 1961, the Pan-African Women's Congress in Algiers in 1968, and one on women and development in Addis Ababa in 1969. The UNFT was also grounded in the Middle East, participating in the work of the Union of Arab Women in

[81] The UFT had nominated a delegation including Nabiha ben Miled and Tewhida ben Sheikh to attend the Cairo Conference for Peace in 1952, but were prevented from traveling by the French colonial authorities. Marzouki, *Le mouvement des femmes en Tunisie*, 108–29. They also voiced their support for and solidarity with women in Korea, China, India and Egypt; see, for instance, "8 mars 1951 journée de lutte des femmes de Tunisie et du monde entier," *L'Avenir de la Tunisie*, February 23–March 9, 1951, no. 321. For more on the UFT prior to independence, see the interview with Nabiha ben Miled in CREDIF, ed., *Memoire de femmes/Nisa' wa-dhakirah*, 33–42.

Jerusalem and Beirut, and meeting with delegations of Iraqi women.[82] Travels to Tanganyika, Mauritania, China, Moscow, London, and Montreal were recorded, tallied, and presented in annual reports and announced at anniversaries showcasing the breadth and scope of the UNFT's activities and Tunisia's acknowledged place within international feminist circles through "fruitful exchanges and amicable relations" with women across the globe.[83] International women's conferences provided a broader platform for solidarity and non-Eurocentric imaginaries where global sisterhood created a space for debate, for the consideration of intersectionality, as opposed to insisting on "a rigid universal theory for understanding women's oppression" to replace liberal feminism.[84]

Guests such as England's Queen Mother, the First Lady of Turkey, the wives of the American vice president, and the Romanian minister of foreign affairs were feted by prominent female figures such as Haddad, Saida Sassi, and Neila bin 'Ammar. They were taken on tours of the UNFT's charitable projects, visited its main office, or welcomed for teas and dinners, just as UNFT representatives accompanied Bourguiba on state visits to China and his tour of the Middle East.[85] Comparable to the wives of foreign service officers described by Cynthia Enloe as essential to their husbands' careers, Tunisian women's contributions to diplomacy fostered the conditions of trust

[82] *Al-Mar'a* covered the General Union of Arab Women (April 1964), the Arab Women's Congress in Jerusalem and Jordan (May 1964), and a voyage to Turkey in early 1967.

[83] See, for instance, *Union National des Femmes de Tunisie, dix ans: 1956–1966*, 30; *Al-Ittihad Al-Watani Lil-Mar'a Al-Tunisiya, Manara Bin Ahdin*, vol. 1: 1956–86; Haddad, *Parole de femme*, 181; Dorra ben Ayed, "Rendez-vous à Conakry," *Afrique Action*, August 7, 1961, 18–19; "L'UNFT à 8 ans," *Femme*, August 1964, 4–9; "L'année 1968 en bref . . .," *Femme*, February 1969, 8–9. Some of the same women attended multiple conferences regardless of their Cold War positionality; for instance, Aisha Bellagha, a founding member of the UNFT, participated in women's conferences in Guinee and Yugoslavia in 1961, while traveling to France and Tanzania in 1962. Tewhida ben Sheikh, who had been involved with the UFT prior to independence, represented Tunisia at an international conference on family planning held in Pakistan in 1962, and UNFT President Haddad spent time in the United States, represented Tunisia at an exposition in Montreal, and accompanied Bourguiba on a delegation to China.

[84] Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 5–9, 218.

[85] *Union National des Femmes de Tunisie, dix ans: 1956–1966*; "Visite de Mme Sunay à l'UNFT," *Femme*, November 1966, 10–13; "L'année 1968 en bref," 8–9.

and confidence required within international affairs.[86] Fluent in international contexts, they represented the success of state feminism and the modernity of the nation.[87] Tunisian women embodied the gendered legitimacy of the state to global audiences, but more than a charade of state feminism, they also contributed to international postcolonial feminist organizing and found inspiration in these exchanges.

The women's press reflected an internationalism built through travels across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East that contributed to the decentering of Western feminism and its universalist claims. As Haddad curtly noted during one visit to the United States, Tunisian women were there to find not "things to copy, but ideas to work with."[88] She later elaborated that despite America's long-established independence and decades of women's enfranchisement in the West, American women were not role models in every sphere. "Take the US congress, or that of England, how many women are representatives?" Even if women exercised indirect influence, she added, "Why don't they have the same positions of responsibility as men do?"[89] Her rejection of American leadership and its implicit superiority to Tunisian, Muslim, or other Middle Eastern women resonates with the strategies of Turkish feminists who intentionally crafted a self-image to contrast persistent stereotypes of Middle Eastern backwardness.[90] Despite the shared class background of women activists in diplomatic circles, Tunisian women critically engaged with Western feminist models, instead of merely translating or adopting them.

[86] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 93–123.

[87] Reports on Tunisia translated from the international press indicate the awareness of the nation's global standing and feminist reputation. Ali Mansour, "La femme tunisienne, du voile au bikini (un article du *New York Herald Tribune* du 14 juillet 1965)," *Faiza*, December 1965, 6–7. A column entitled "La femme tunisienne à travers la presse étrangère" was regularly included in *Femme*; see February–April and September–October issues in 1966.

[88] William McPherson, "She Proves Women Are Citizens in Tunisia," *Washington Post*, May 11, 1962.

[89] "L'action de l'Union National des Femmes Tunisienne," *Confluent*, 689.

[90] Turkish women activists in 1940–70 were not passively supporting state mandates but shaping them to their own ends. Umut Azak and Henk de Smaele, "National and Transnational Dynamics of Women's Activism in Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s: The Story of the ICW Branch in Ankara," *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 3 (2016).

Culture and Identity

The ability to articulate a Tunisian feminism that differed from Western models was directly related to the cultural content of the women's press, with its eclectic attention toward everything from Ma'luf music to ballet to Arab cinema. Recipe sections included French cuisine, stuffed grape leaves, Algerian couscous, Turkish dining, and Tunisian classics such as *brik*, *tajine*, and dishes of the nation's Jewish community.[91] Theoretical engagement included major texts on the anticolonial struggle such Fanon's *L'an V de la Révolution Algérienne* and the works of French feminist Simone de Beauvoir.[92] *Faiza* was committed to celebrating art and culture across North Africa and women's contributions therein as seen in reports on "Maghrebi literature," the Algerian national theater troupe, a Moroccan sculptor, Moroccan poets, and Moroccan actor Fatma Rezguigi.[93] A running poetry section, "Jeunesse maghrebine" (Maghrebi Youth), printed work submitted by young readers from across North Africa, namely, amateur poets in their teens and early twenties. Cultural conversations across the Middle East were represented through the writings of the Ottoman-Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, Palestinian novelist Samira Azzam, and a translation of the provocative *Ayyam ma'ahu* (Days with Him) by Syrian feminist Colette Khuri. Prefacing an excerpt of Leila Ba'albaki debut novel *Ana Ahya* (I Live!), as a story of a young woman "who exposes her soul, her state of revolt," *Faiza* emphasized the relevance to Tunisian women readers: "this young woman is Muslim and Arab. Her problems are our problems."[94]

[91] *Femme* often included a weekly menu "Cuisine: *Femme* a choisi pour vous" or "Cuisine: Recettes de par le monde," including dishes from England, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. *Faiza*'s cooking column "Cuisine/Fi al-matam" began bilingually with a focus on simple Tunisian meals.

[92] *Faiza*, December 1959. Having lived in Tunisia where he wrote *Les damnes de la terre*, Fanon was memorialized in December 1961. De Beauvoir's works feature in February 1961 and January–February 1967

[93] The record of *Al-Mar'a* was also mixed, with features on Saudi women (March 1964) and the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani (May 1964) as well as reviews of films starring Dean Martin (January 1964) and Brigit Bardot (March 1966).

[94] Radhia Hanachi, "'Je vis!' Ou l'échec de la femme prix de sa liberté," *Faiza*, October 1961, 13 and 16. Women writers such as Ba'albaki and Khuri were among the first to assert a distinctly female voice in the realm of fiction, and their works were widely discussed across the Arab world. Roger Allen, "The Arabic Short Story and the Status of Women," in *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic*

Positioning themselves within multiple intellectual traditions, *Faiza* discussed the works of the preeminent French scholar Jacques Berque, giving ample coverage to the writings of the Tunisian historian Paul Sebag. Placing Tunisian or Algerian writers alongside their French counterparts acknowledged French scholarship but resisted its predominance. Both French historian Charles-Andre Julien and Algerian writer Leila Hacene responded to Germaine Tillon's work. Under the heading "The Oriental Woman, Is She Subjugated?" the magazine questioned French scholarly interest in its former colonies and its conclusions about Middle Eastern or Muslim women.[95] Interviews with European and North American scholars conducting research in Tunisia became a platform to deliberate their work and disseminate the results among Tunisians. A conversation about girls education hosted by Farhat, Bouzid, and ben Brahem included Tunisian professionals Samira Benghazi and Daghfous; Clémence Sugier, a French professor teaching in Tunisia; and Ruth Ruelle, a Dutch anthropologist pursuing a thesis on women's "evolution" in Tunis. While Ruelle was interested in European influences over behaviors and gender roles, Benghazi criticized Western models of femininity that pushed young women "to abandon tradition for westernization." "Western women's acquisition of liberty is understood by young girls as the liberalization of male-female relations … she truly wants to accept this aspect of Western civilization that seems to her a real advance, but she is worried about those aspects that appear to her as licentious, immoral, and too much freedom (*liberté trop grande*)."[96] Through such conversations, the insights of foreign researchers were brought into conversation with Tunisian priorities, reversing the scrutinizing gaze of the ethnographer upon a passive subject and questioning the applicability of Western definitions of women's liberation.

Literature, ed. Roger Allen, Hilary Kilpatrick, and Ed De Moor (London: Saqi, 1995), 86–90.

[95] *Faiza*, August and May 1961. *Jeune Afrique* covered the publication of Germaine Tillon's *Le harem et ses cousins* throughout July and August 1966, including discussion of American sociologist Arlie Hochschild's work on Tunisian women in January and March 1967. See also Sebag's review of Berque in *Faiza*, October 1959, and his contributions on questions of public health and literacy in 1960.

[96] "La jeune fille tunisienne au bord de l'évolution" and Ruth Ruelle, "Ma jeune tunisienne vit dans deux mondes," *Faiza*, March 1961, 44–45, 50–54.

Faiza's inclusion of art and literature communicated sophistication, national progress, and a sense of solidarity with women's struggles across the Middle East and to a lesser extent the global south. El Shakry poignantly argues in her analysis of literary magazines of the early postcolonial era that writing was central to the formation of identity, whether national, regional, or otherwise. In *Souffles/Anfas*, culture and poetry were a forum for discussions of progressive politics. The inspiration of Moroccan intellectual Abdellatif Laabi, *Souffles* was grounded in Morocco and Algeria, in conversation with anti-colonial intellectuals more broadly.[97] *Faiza* fostered a similar sense of shared culture through its coverage of and support for writers across Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, recognizing the social and political value of their work. Readers praised what the journal represented for a young nation, showing "that Tunisia has achieved in ten years, in literary and cultural domains, what other nations have not accomplished in a century or even more."[98] However, considering Bourguiba's rejection of pan-Arabism and Western geo-strategic alliances, cultural publications such as *al-Fikr* adopted a cautious approach as El Shakry notes, it was "operating within certain state structures of power that it simultaneously seeks to undermine."[99] These conclusions are instructive for understanding how the women's press positioned European culture and knowledge as particularistic but not universal, as informative but not authoritative, with a pan-Arab perspective implicit in celebrations of Arab and North African success. As a result of its alliance with the regime, Tunisian women approached the United States with similar circumspection, navigating the boundaries between proximity and friendship while dismissing American pretenses of feminist leadership.

Tunisian Women and US Friendships

The politicization of Cold War–era models of womanhood is captured in relations between Tunisian women and women in the United States, though considering the resources invested by the latter in soft power diplomacy, these did not exist on an even playing field. When Tunisian

[97] Between 1966 and its final issue in 1972 there was only one poem by a woman, and one essay on works by North African women (by French contributor Jeanne-Paule Febre). Harrison and Villa-Ignacio, *Souffles-Anfas*.
[98] Ayed Benghazi, "Votre rôle culturel," *Faiza*, August–September 1967, 83.
[99] El Shakry, "Printed Matter(s)," 161.

women traveled to the United States on official sojourns under the aegis of the State Department, they were welcomed by a CIA-funded women's organization. These women were mobilized to discreetly build Cold War alliances, though unlike the jazz ambassadors they appear to have followed segregated lines and did not include African Americans. Participants in a student delegation in 1959 requested "to attend a negro church service," hinting at their awareness of the racially circumscribed nature of their engagement with the United States.[100] A group of upper-class New York women hoping to promote their vision of the American democratic way of life by building friendships among women formed the Committee of Correspondence. They organized conferences, published a newsletter, and engaged in epistolary diplomacy.[101] Relations with Tunisia appear to begin with Neila Bin 'Ammar, a longtime nationalist close to Bourguiba and the younger sister of Tunisia's First Lady. (The Committee otherwise relied on diplomatic or consular channels for introductions to well-placed, educated women.) Bin 'Ammar met Committee member Mrs. D'Estournelles and founder Rose Parsons in Colombo, after which she was recruited to a workshop for "Moslem women." "Women leaders" from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey were brought together for a two-week program to learn about "The Role of Women in the Community and Home." The program purported to exchange "ideas and experiences among a group of women leaders working towards citizen responsibility in a free society," through lectures by American organizers on the home (education, nutrition, health, legal rights of women), community (women's role in, and volunteering), and

[100] Smith College, Committee of Correspondence Collection (hereafter CoC), Box 22, Folder 50.

[101] Helen Laville, "The Committee of Correspondence: CIA Funding of Women's Groups 1952–1967," *Intelligence and National Security* 12, no. 1 (1997). CIA financing was first revealed in 1967, leading to the folding of the group by 1969. Neil Sheehan, "Foundations Linked to C.I.A. Are Found to Subsidize 4 Other Youth Organizations: Funds Identified as Go-Betweens," *New York Times*, February 16, 1967, 26. Committee members were instructed not to mention politics in their letters to women in the Middle East. Events such as the July 1958 coup against the British-backed monarchy in Iraq were referred to obliquely with expressions of concern for "our friends from Iraq"; see Alison Raymond's letter from July 17, 1958, CoC Box 22, Folder 53, and Box 5, Folder 11. Armstrong describes the Committee as "explicitly anticommunist"; Armstrong, "Before Bandung," 317.

women in public life (suffrage and public office).[102] The Committee covered airfare and accommodations in New York, a visit to Washington, DC, and at least one excursion outside the city (usually a meal with a Committee member in her home). Following the visit, members of the Committee sent invitees form letters asking for feedback, personal updates to include in their newsletter, and names and addresses of friends to whom they could write, and encouraged them to share their positive experiences with women in their home nations.

Almost every Tunisian woman traveling to the United States was received by the Committee, even if only for a hasty reception as was the case during Saida Sassi's 1961 stop.[103] When the International Cooperation Administration's Education Office brought an all-female group of Tunisian university students for a three-month teacher-training program at Ohio State University, in 1959, they were hosted by the Committee in New York before returning to Tunisia. When the US Agency for International Development (USAID) invited ten Tunisian women from the UNFT for a series of workshops on community development in the summer of 1962, their itinerary included a stop in Manhattan, with the Committee of Correspondence chaperoning field trips to a settlement house, a department store, and a Broadway performance of *My Fair Lady*.[104] Though CIA financing may have been concealed from some members of the Committee and their guests, their extensive diplomatic networking and outreach to the wives of ambassadors and UN representatives, and other collaboration with the State Department, made clear their political alignment, as did the celebration of such friendships by USAID (see Figure 1.3). Despite Tunisia's official location in the US orbit, the efforts of the Committee of Correspondence to cultivate relationships with Tunisian women indicates concerns about the political import of

[102] "Report on the Moslem East Workshop, 1958," CoC Collection, Box 12, Folder 9.

[103] Sassi was participating in "Foreign Leaders Program of the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs" run by the US Department of State, from January to March 16, 1961. CoC Collection, Box 23, Folder 2.

[104] Between 1951 and 1961 when it was replaced by AID, the ICA was part of the State Department responsible for foreign cooperation and nonmilitary security. CoC Collection, Box 22, Folder 50; "Program for Tunisian Women, Community Development Project," CoC Collection, Box 22, Folder 51.

women's multiple allegiances; it is little coincidence that Bin 'Ammar was brought into Committee circles after meeting one of its members at the Asian-African Conference of Women.[105]

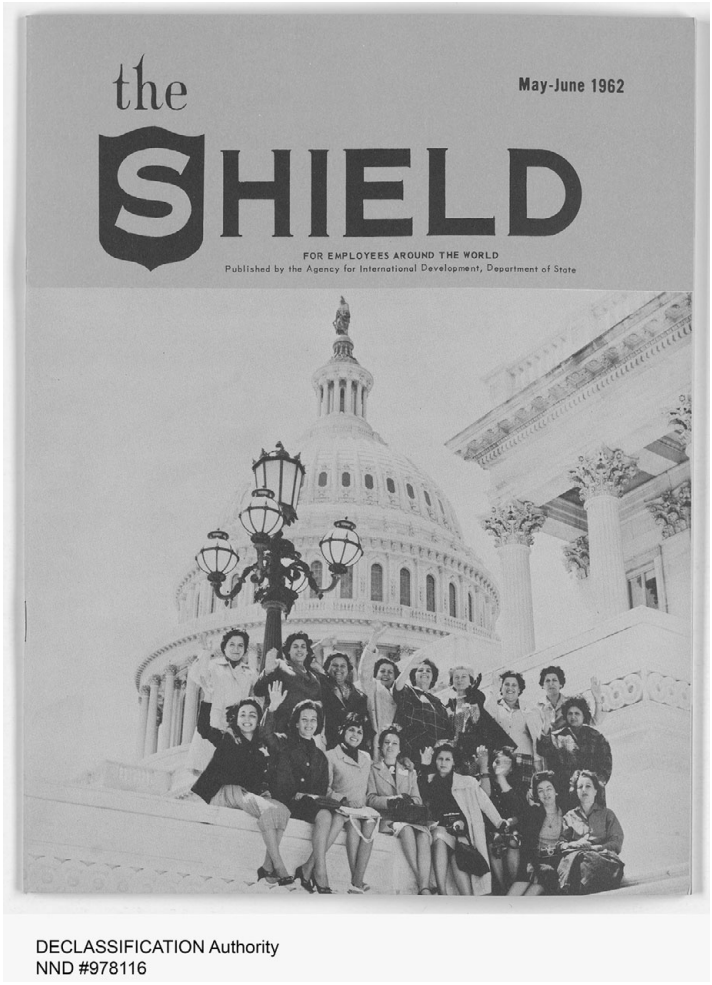

Figure 1.3 Cover of the May–June 1962 issue of *The Shield: For Employees around the World*, a publication of USAID, including "Tunisian Women See Capital."

[105] Bin 'Ammar, similar to Haddad and Sassi traveled widely in her official capacity. Women appear to have been selected for their proximity to Bourguiba, their position within the UNFT, and perhaps professional qualifications, irregardless of ideological orientation.

These voyages were noted in the women's press and UNFT materials, contributing to amicable relations with their American hosts but not the adherence to the US model for the "free world."[106] Bin 'Ammar retained the lengthiest correspondence with the Committee and appeared to be one of their primary contacts in Tunisia, and her comments following the 1958 workshop give pause to the notion of friendship as a political platform. On the one hand, Bin 'Ammar appreciated the moral support represented by the Americans she encountered (and perhaps the other seminar participants): "It is with this sort of contact that women all around the word can be informed of what is happening in one another's country and strengthen the solidarity among them."[107] Yet on the other hand, she couched this acknowledgment in an implicit questioning of the United States as a global leader noting with some surprise: "I found out that a highly developed country has no fewer problems to face than a poor and less developed one." In other words, if poverty and inequality persisted despite the wealth of the United States, to what extent could it claim to offer solutions to Tunisian or "Muslim" women? Appreciating the kindness of her hosts, she saw this as an exception to American ignorance: "I know from many reliable sources that the average American people are not well-informed about foreign countries, and that our area especially is not well understood," adding, "my dearest hope is that your circle of 'happy few' will widen."[108] Embedded in her polite synopsis and generous praise is an awareness that American women did not hold the answers but struggled with social and economic inequities of their own. Bin 'Ammar's statement pushed back against the pretense of superiority within the workshop

[106] For instance, *Faiza* reprinted an article from the *New York Herald Tribune* on the 1962 delegation – "Journalisme à la mode américaine," *Faiza*, November 1962, 8 – but devoting more space to Bouzid's subsequent voyage to Morocco. *Femme* included reports on a colloquium in Lome on women in Africa in all three of its issues in 1965, and *Al-Mar'a* listed UNFT events and travels and the presence of foreign delegations at UNFT events (June 1966). Haddad's trip to the United States is summarized within a list of events in 1962 in *Al-ittihad al-watani li-lmara'a al-tunisiyya: Manara bin 'ahdin*, 127.

[107] CoC Collection, Box 22, Folder 53.

[108] Neila ben Ammar, "The Workshop as I Saw It," 1958, CoC Collection, Box 12, Folder 10.

format whereby Western, white, American liberal feminists offered solutions and insights for situations about which they knew relatively little.[109]

The hierarchical relationship enacted by the Committee in its detailed planning and financing of expenses was negotiated if not rejected by Tunisian women. For starters, the prominence of the UNFT among women visiting the United States was not merely the result of the UNFT's reputation as "the semi-official women's federation responsible for much of the social welfare work in Tunisia," but also because the UNFT, and Haddad in particular, inserted itself into the decision-making process.[110] When the Committee's invitation to UNFT Secretary General Fethia Mzali was declined because she was unable to get leave from her teaching obligations, the UNFT selected Dourdana Masmoudi as her replacement. An activist with the women's union since her student days in Paris, Masmoudi was a younger member then employed at the national museum of antiquities in Bardo and was Mzali's younger sister. Though the Committee had already reached out to the US Information Agency and the Foreign Office for suggestions inviting an alternate candidate, they were forced to concede to Haddad's wishes.[111] Haddad also deployed her American friendships toward political goals. In the immediate aftermath of the French bombing of Binzart in July 1961, Haddad telegrammed the Committee requesting messages of support and their condemnation of French brutality, to which they replied with a cable expressing their "deepest sympathies." Finally, she inverted the hierarchies between first and third-world feminists by inviting the former to participate in, and observe, UNFT congresses, placing Tunisian women as a model to be followed.[112]

[109] See also Sassi's advice on tailoring their news bulletins to better serve their audience. CoC Collection, Box 23, Folder 2.

[110] In the assessment of the Committee, likely based on information they received from USIS. "Program for Tunisian Women, Community Development Project," CoC Collection, Box 22, Folder 51.

[111] CoC Collection, Box 23, Folders 1 and 5.

[112] Dr. Laura Bornholdt, dean of Women at Wellesley, represented the Committee at the 1960 Congress. CoC Collection, Box 23, Folder 5. The Committee struggled to find an envoy with similar international status thereafter. See Haddad's letter of invitation to Allison Raymond, June 1962, and a response to Haddad's 1966 invitation; CoC Collection, Box 22, Folder 57.

Radical Sisterhood

The UNFT appreciated the symbolism of hosting international conferences with prominent diplomats as guests. The ambassador of Vietnam and Lalla 'Aisha, daughter of the Moroccan King Muhammad V, attended their national congress in August 1960, and guests from Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Turkey, France, the United States, the USSR, and Yugoslavia were present at its fourth congress in 1966, as was a WIDF representative.[113] Haddad alluded to the political relevance of these events, describing a workshop organized for social workers from Algeria as an act of "solidarity" in favor of Algerian independence.[114] The UNFT supported the Tangiers congress with a resolution toward similar goals in 1957, serving as the inspiration for the League of Maghrebi Women and reiterating a commitment to the Arab Maghreb at its 1966 congress.[115] Frequent contacts with women in Algeria and Morocco performed a vision of unity, even though efforts toward political unity between the three never materialized.[116] Conferences created opportunities to promote national accomplishments while building regional and transnational ties. By placing Tunisian women's successes at the center, they reversed global hierarchies that denied women from a postcolonial nation positions of leadership.

Tunisian women's engagement with radical ideologies and transnational feminist solidarity was particularly evident in their advocacy on behalf of Algerian independence. The Afro-Asian women's conference in Sri Lanka, hosted by women's groups from Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia, and Pakistan, fostered conversations about social development as it intersected with nationalist and state feminist demands for independence.[117] The Tunisian delegation, including Bin 'Ammar and Sassi, brought international attention to the Algerian struggle (contra

[113] Lalla 'Aisha was an important symbol of women's emancipation for the Moroccan monarchy who spoke publicly in favor of women's education. Jonathan *Wyrtzen, Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 239–240.

[114] Leila, "Cette semaine à Tunis," *Afrique Action*, June 12, 1961, 19. See, for instance, *Faiza*, February 1960; Khodja Sfaxia, "Youth and Development," *Femme*, January–March 1965, 32.

[115] Marzouki, *Le mouvement des femmes en Tunisie*, 194–95; "Motions adoptées au IVème Congres," *Femme*, September–October 1966.

[116] Haddad, *Parole de femme*, 181.

[117] Armstrong, "Before Bandung," 316.

the French strategy of insisting that it remain a domestic matter) as relevant to anticolonial feminism by requesting a moment of silence in solidarity with women in Algeria.[118] At the WIDF Congress in Vienna also in 1958, the UNFT delegate Mrs. Bou Attour explained at the plenary session:

> First of all, we feel linked to the Algerian people, because it is fighting our greatest enemy, colonialism. We suffered it for 72 years and we still suffer from the consequences. Besides, the war in Algeria is a threat to our independence, it is waged along our borders and quite often on our territory. We Tunisian women cannot remain indifferent to that situation; this is why, for two and a half years now, the activity of women in Tunisia has been determined by the question of solidarity towards the Algerian women.[119]

Continuing imperialism in Tunisia (in the form of a US airbase) and the French extension of the war on Algeria through the bombing of Sakiet Sidi Yusuf in 1958 were also discussed at the Afro-Asian women's conference in Cairo, in January 1961, which included a Tunisian delegation.[120]

The women's press raised awareness by disseminating information about the Algerian cause. From *Faiza*'s debut in late 1958, it provided regular coverage of the war between Algerian nationalists led by the FLN and the French colonial government. Covers featuring Algerian women and children depicted the brutality of war through a maternal-feminist lens. A running feature on Algeria throughout 1962 and 1963 highlighted the human costs of war in pieces on orphaned children and women refugees (many of whom sought shelter in Tunisia), but refused the dehumanization of Algerians with writings by Assia Djebar and Mohammed Dib. Reports on the struggle were followed by celebrations of independence in 1962 (which Bouzid attended) and women voting, coverage that insisted on Algerian agency and self-determination.[121]

[118] Natalya Vince, "Looking for 'the Women Question' in Algeria and Tunisia: Ideas, Political Language and Female Actors before and after Independence," in *Arabic Thought against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[119] Countries Collection, Sophia Smith Archives, Smith College, Box 44, Folder 25.

[120] Afro-Asian Women's Conference, "The First Afro-Asian Women's Conference, Cairo, 12–14 January 1961: Reports, Messages, Speeches, Resolutions" (Cairo, 1961).

[121] *Femme* tended to focus on political events such as the arrival of Algerian ministers or delegates at a meeting of municipal councilors and in the Ministry of Sports.

Participation in the Afro-Asian movement fostered additional solidarities. The Women's Conference in Cairo in 1961 resonated deeply with the Tunisian women who attended, Safia Zouiten and Fatima Ben Slimane. Speeches and events centered the experiences of colonized and formerly colonized women, and the conference "stressed solidarity based on a common experience of subjugation created and perpetuated by Western imperialism."[122] Zouiten, who had been active with the Tunisian Communist party and their women's group prior to independence, contrasted her experiences in Cairo to Vienna. Though both feminist meetings were ostensibly global in scope, she found that the discussion about disarmament in Vienna had focused primarily on Europe, to the detriment of armed conflicts elsewhere in the world. This imbalance had infuriated feminists across Asia, living with the militarization of conflicts in Burma, Korea, and Vietnam perpetrated by Britain, France, and the United States, which were marginalized by the focus on Europe and Japan.[123] At the Cairo conference, Tunisian women felt empowered to provide an example for women from other Arab countries who asked them about the application of personal status laws. On their return, Zouiten summarized: "this is our place, their preoccupations are also our preoccupations." They were also inspired noting that "women at home have extensive political and social rights, but these remain theoretical as long as the cultural competency of women is not higher."[124]

As anti-imperialist activism shifted to the Vietnamese struggle against the United States and Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, the UNFT declared its solidarity with the people of Vietnam (while passing a carefully worded resolution that avoided explicit condemnation of Bourguiba's alignment with the United States).[125] Compared with extensive coverage of the Algerian war, expressions of feminist solidarity with the women of Vietnam and Palestine, with occasional reference to political events, a short story, or editorial in

[122] Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood*, 161–63.
[123] Armstrong, "Before Bandung," 306.
[124] "Cette semaine à Tunis: arrivées," *Jeune Afrique*, February 13, 1961, 16. On Zouiten, see also Bakalti, *La femme tunisienne au temps de la colonisation*, 84.
[125] "Les travaux du Congrès," *Femme*, September–October 1966, 10–11. Haddad viewed this as a sign of support for Vietnam and insisted that the UNFT was free to adopt its own positions and not subordinate to Dustur party dictates. *Dhakariyat al-nissa/Memoire des femmes*, 86.

Faiza, were tepid at best. One of the most explicit critiques of American imperialism came in a call for African resistance, by Bouzid, writing under the pseudonym Donia. She demanded an end to the practice of testing the atomic bomb in Africa, proclaiming that "we are not your guinea pigs."[126] Her statement, which coincided with the brief visit of Barbara Eisenhower, daughter-in-law of US President Dwight Eisenhower, was a tacit critique of Tunisia's alliance with and subordination to the United States. Considering Bourguiba's unequivocal public support of the US war in Vietnam, and a response to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip following the 1967 war widely considered more sympathetic to Israel, advocacy on behalf of Palestine and Vietnam posed a considerable political risk.[127]

Sara Salem views the period between 1950 and the 1970s as a particularly opportune moment for transnational feminist solidarity that embraced difference and acknowledged power, combining feminist insights with class analysis in an anti-imperial militancy allowing collaboration between Egyptian and African American feminists.[128] Yet in both Turkey and Iran, women activists were limited by authoritarian regimes that viewed class analysis as a threat to national unity, insisted on homogeneity, denied racial or ethnic difference, and discouraged collaboration with international women's organizations.[129] While they were all secular, single-party states promoting women's rights, as was Tunisia, radical transnational feminist alliances were

[126] Donia, "Nous ne sommes pas de cobayes," *Faiza*, February 1960.

[127] Bourguiba informed US Ambassador Francis Russell that even if the two nations did not always agree on details, he disapproved of Communism and would always side with the United States on "major issues" (*les cas durs*) such as Vietnam. Bourguiba "was the only leader of a small underdeveloped state that spoke out publicly in support of what we were doing in Vietnam." Francis H. Russell, oral history interview, November 1972, JFK Presidential Library, JFKOH-FHR-01. Bourguiba publicly rejected the notion of a Palestinian armed liberation struggle, urging instead for negotiation based on the UN Partition Plan of 1947, including most famously at a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp near Jericho in 1965. His calls for normalization with Israel after the June 1967 war and after Palestinian concessions earned the approval of the United States and contributed to protests at the Tunisian Embassy in Cairo. C. A. Micaud, "Tunisia's Foreign Policy: Independence and Development," *Africa Today* 15, no. 6 (1968).

[128] Sara Salem, "On Transnational Feminist Solidarity: The Case of Angela Davis in Egypt," *Signs* 43, no. 2 (2018).

[129] Amin, "Globalizing Iranian Feminism"; Libal, "Staging Turkish Women's Emancipation."

possible in Egypt because Nasser strove to make Cairo a hub of Arab, African, and Afro-Asian activism, embracing socialist modernization for most of the 1950s and 1960s.[130] Bourguiba situated himself squarely within the Western bloc, remained economically dependent on France, banned the Communist women's organizations, and was hostile to Nasser's pan-Arabism.[131] *Faiza* covered the Non-Aligned Movement during state visits as part of its current events focus, locating Chinese cinema, a Czech woman of letters, or a Bulgarian folktale in the arts section. Conversations about women's sexuality drawing from Lebanese novelist Leila Ba'albaki allowed *Faiza* to indicate new directions for Tunisian women not explicitly condoned by the state. Alluding to the breadth and complexity of international possibilities, this tactic avoided direct conflict with the regime, offering an example of cultural connections centered on women's creativity.

Conclusion

In 1970, Haddad began a UNFT campaign to improve the personal status code.[132] In June of the same year an elite circle of political figures including the Minister of the Interior Ahmed Mestiri, the Minister of Defense Hassib Bin 'Ammar, and Abdallah Farhat were tasked with proposing constitutional amendments. Though their pluralistic leanings were rejected by Bourguiba, Mestiri reopened the conversation at the October 1971 Dustur party congress. Haddad, then a deputy in the National Assembly and the only woman on the Dustur's Central

[130] Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "Building Egypt's Afro-Asian Hub: Infrastructures of Solidarity and the 1957 Cairo Conference," *Journal of World History* 30, nos. 1–2 (2019): 157–92. Though Nasser had advocated on behalf of Tunisian independence, his support for Tunisian (and Moroccan) nationalists waned given his preference for armed struggle over diplomacy. David Stenner, *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 59, 67–77.

[131] Nasser too persecuted leftist and Communist women critical of the regime such as Duriyya Shafiq and Inji Aflatun. As Ben Miled later recalled, "The Dustur did not want a feminist organization close to the Communist party." She declined to join the UNFT in 1960, despite their invitation, finding it too bureaucratic. CREDIF, ed., *Memoire de femmes/Nisa' wa-dhakirah*, 38–39. On the relation between the UFT and UNFT, see Marzouki, *Le mouvement des femmes en Tunisie*, 130–41.

[132] Brand describes the proposed reforms as moderate. Brand, *Women, the State and Political Liberalization*, 206.

Committee, was close with Mestiri and Bin 'Ammar (her younger brother) and supported their program of internal reform, signing a letter to that effect in 1972. Bourguiba viewed the critiques as a challenge to his authority; Mestiri was disciplined and Haddad publicly criticized. Earlier in the year, leftist protests at the university had resumed, leading to a months-long student strike. Bourguiba called a February rally of all national groups to symbolize their continued support for his leadership, blaming political dissent on foreign interference, pan-Arab socialist parties, the Ba'ath, and a euphemistic "wind from the east." Haddad sympathized with the students (one of her sons was among those arrested) and did not attend the nationalist rally, nor did the UNFT send a representative. Reports to this effect in the daily *Al-Sabah* began her political descent, including her resignation as UNFT president. Haddad was then excluded from the party and pursued on charges of corruption. The state confiscated her passport, revoked her legal immunity as a member of parliament, and fueled a defamation campaign in the press to accompany her prosecution and sentencing. Despite her ties to the president, her foundational role in the UNFT, and diplomatic and political status as an emblem of the nation's feminist reputation, Haddad's political downfall serves as a poignant reminder of the nature of Tunisian authoritarianism.[133]

As Ghodsee argues in the case of socialist Bulgaria, the accomplishments of women aligned with the state should not be discounted merely as a result of that alliance or of their foregrounding socialism over feminism.[134] Algerian women who had fought in the war of independence became diplomats participating in international affairs, challenging the male-dominated public sphere, even when they did not articulate a platform of women's rights. As Natalya Vince argues in reference to Jamila Bouhired and Jamila Boupacha, their anti-imperial

[133] Sadri Khiari, "Bourguiba et les bourgeois: La crise de 1970–1971," in *Habib Bourguiba, la trace et l'héritage*, 357–70. These events were widely discussed; for contemporary coverage, see Taoufik Monastiri, "Chronique sociale et culturelle Tunisie 1972," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 11 (1973); Béatrice de Saenger, "Chronique politique Tunisie (1971)," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 10 (1972); Béatrice de Saenger, "Chronique politique Tunisie (1972)," *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 11 (1973). Haddad's memoir is framed in defense of her reputation beginning with Mestiri's preface and her coverage of "Les années de plomb." Haddad, *Parole de femme*.

[134] Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 53–75.

solidarity was a political act.[135] The Tunisian militant Gladys Adda, who had been active with the Communist-affiliated women's group prior to independence, later voiced a comparable position: "women's struggle was part of the men's struggle . . . the day that men would be free of their oppression, colonial as well as capitalist, women would be [free] automatically."[136] Tunisian women were not armed militants and adhered closely to the terms of national political discourse. Yet their political visibility and transnational presence often challenged the boundaries of these discourses. In the press, *Faiza*'s cultural activism enacted implicit feminist solidarities not bound by nation-state borders or foreign policy.

Women's nationalism, their centering of family welfare or communal advance as spaces within which women prosper, is a form of feminist advocacy. Working within the confines of Tunisian state feminism, women found subtle ways to alter its meaning. By rewriting national history as a story of women's participation, they challenged the official origins story that presented women's rights as the sole creation of Bourguiba. Resisting the terms of American friendship and hosting and attending international events, Tunisian women decentered the hegemony of the nation's Western alliance and bourgeois feminist models. Quietly recognizing the shared experiences of Arab women and postcolonial societies, they provided alternate imaginings of the feminist modern.

[135] Vince, *Our Fighting Sisters*, 158–64.
[136] CREDIF, ed., *Memoire de femmes/Nisa' wa-dhakirah*, 71.