

Women's society in Algeria during the Ottoman era

مجتمع النساء في الجزائر خلال العهد العثماني

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Article abstract:

The Ottoman presence in Algeria had an impact on the diversity of Algerian society, as Algerians mixed with other groups. This influence was clearly evident in women's society in terms of the diversity of women's groups. This diversity was reflected in several aspects, including women's clothing, which was characterized by variety and luxury. Although women in Algeria were absent from the political arena during the Ottoman era, their influence was evident at times. In addition, women engaged in various economic activities, and some groups of women monopolizing certain professions that were exclusive to them.

Key words: women's society ; Algeria ; Ottoman era ; Algerian clothing.

ملخص المقال:

كان للوجود العثماني في الجزائر أثر في تنوع تركيبة المجتمع الجزائري، فقد امتزج الجزائريون مع الفئات الوافدة من أتراك وأندلسيين وأوربيين وغيرهم، وبرز هذا التأثير بشكل واضح على المجتمع النسوي خاصة من حيث تعدد الفئات النسوية. وقد انعكس هذا التنوع على عدة جوانب منها تنوع اللباس النسوي، الذي تميز بالتنوع والترف، وقد أدخلت إلى الجزائر أنواع من الألبسة، كما اشتركت بعض الفئات في ألبسة واختصت فئات بألبسة معينة. وعلى الرغم من غياب المرأة في الجزائر خلال العهد العثماني عن الساحة السياسية، فقد ظهر تأثيرها في بعض الأحيان، فالزواج السياسي كان من أهم العوامل التي أتاحت للنساء المشاركة في السياسة، كما قادت المرأة ثورات ضد الحكم العثماني. بالإضافة إلى هذا مارست المرأة عدة نشاطات اقتصادية وزاولت عدة حرف، وقد احتكرت بعض الفئات النسوية مهن وحرف معينة اختصت بها دون الفئات الأخرى.

كلمات مفتاحية: مجتمع النساء، الجزائر، العهد العثماني، الملابس الجزائرية.

Introduction

The Ottoman period in Algeria (1518-1830) was a historical period that contributed profoundly to the formation of the social and cultural structure of Algerian society. Despite the abundance of studies that have addressed the political, military and administrative aspects of this period, the social presence of women in Algeria has received relatively little attention. Algerian women at that time experienced varying social situations, influenced by multiple factors.

The impact of the Ottoman era on women in Algeria was clearly evident in the diversity of women's groups in Algerian society, in terms of dress and the activities in which women engaged. From here, we can raise the following questions: How did the Ottoman presence affect women in Algeria? What were the female groups in Algeria during the Ottoman era? How did the Ottoman presence affect women in terms of dress and economic and political activity?.

1. Women's categories in Ottoman Algeria

The Ottoman presence in Algeria influenced the diversity of the society, which included the following categories of women:

1.1 Urban women:

An important part of the population structure in Algeria during the Ottoman period was the urban class. The local element dominated the rest of the incoming elements, although it sometimes overlapped with other elements. For example, in the city of Constantine, the urban population was the majority, including the old families who settled the city since ancient times, as well as families coming from Andalusia, Bejaia, Tunisia and other cities. (سعد الله، 1998، صفحة 175)

The term by which urban population is known is the term Al-baldya. Al-baldya category includes the original elements and elements from other cities (Constantine, Oran) that settled in Algiers, as well as the Andalusians, Women in this category represent 64 % of all women in Algiers. (خيراني، 2014، صفحة 9)

1.2 Kouloughlis Women:

One of the elements that made up the composition of Algerian society during the Ottoman era was the Kouloughlis, the children of Algerian women from the Turks in general and the Janissaries in particular, Half of them were soldiers, the other half civilians. Women Kouloughlis represent 1.05% of all women in the city of Algiers. (خيراني، 2014، صفحة 10)

1.3 Turkish women:

Turkish women constituted a very small percentage of Algerian society. Ottoman women did not travel to distant states, especially the wives of high-ranking officials, (Pananti, p. 244) and young soldiers necessarily came unmarried, and the percentage of Turkish women in Algeria was estimated at 5.11%. (خيراني، 2014، صفحة 9)

1.4 Expatriate women:

Expatriate women refer to women who trace their origins to areas outside the city of Algiers, whether from within Algeria or from abroad. Women who came to the city from within Algeria mostly came from the regions of Cherchell, Tlemcen, Tens, Jijel, Mazouna, Bejaia, Annaba, Constantine, Collo , Laghouat), while those from outside Algeria came from the Turkey, Tunis, Fes, Bosnia). (حماش، 2006، صفحة 105)

Expatriate women represented some aspects of social and cultural life within the family and society, including intermarriage, which shows the extent of the closure and openness of society. Some expatriate women marry men from the same regions from which they came or to which they belong, which represents a manifestation of closure, while others marry Turks or Algerian men , which represents a manifestation of openness. (حماش، 2006، صفحة 110)

The percentage of expatriate women is estimated at 6.46%, which is a small percentage compared to the percentage of expatriate men. The small percentage of expatriate women compared to men is due to the fact that men travelled more than women in search of work and education. (خيراني، 2014، صفحة 15)

1.5 The Elches women:

The category of Elches appeared in the society of Algiers through the group of Christian captives who converted to Islam. Once they became Muslim, they received many privileges, to the extent that the status of the Elches was better than the non-Turkish Muslim residents of Algiers, as the Turks preferred to marry their daughters, and their children were considered Turks, better than the urban children who were considered Kouloughlis. (خيراني، 2014، صفحة 12)

The converts belonged to two categories: the slave category, which was made up of European captives, known as al-Alajiyat, and African slaves, known as al-Mu'taqat, and free women, mainly Jewish women, known as al-Islamiyat. (حماش، 2006، الصفحات 112-117)

1.6 Handmaids:

In the Ottoman era, slaves were usually brought from Sudan and other areas within the continent, and this category was often owned by the ruler, the administrative authority, and even the general public. Handmaids are responsible for various work in homes, palaces, mosques, and baths, as they are bought and sold, while they exercise their personal lives and their personal conditions are taken into account, and some of them acquire rights and privileges in their personal lives, such as marriage, alimony, divorce, and waqf (endowment).

Handmaids could be married to powerful masters, the ruling class, or free men. The phenomenon of handmaids persisted with the continuation of families and the slave trade, and the use of handmaids as gifts and as part of the dowry components in the marriages of urban notables in Algiers and major cities. (خيراني، 2014، الصفحات 16-17)

Many of them became wives of their masters, and their sons were treated like the sons of free women. Some of the sons of female freedwomen rose to the rank of rulers and presidents, such as Hassan Pasha al-Bundoki and Hassan Agha al-Sardini. The percentage of female slaves is about 18.04% and the percentage of female freedwomen is about 6.41%. (خيراني، 2014، صفحة 17)

2. The impact of the Ottoman presence on women's clothing in Algeria

The clothing of Algerian women during the Ottoman era was characterized by diversity and luxury at times. Types of clothing were introduced to Algeria, some groups shared clothing, and some groups specialized in specific clothing, the most important of which are:

2.1 Durra:

It is a large, wide, thin, white-coloured, straight-shaped shirt, (Marçais, p. 95) worn by both men and women, known as a Jibba, and was first introduced by the Andalusians. Durra is worn by urban women as it was worn by Jewish women, but the shape of the Muslim Durra differs from the Jewish Durra in that the sleeves of the former are long and the latter are short, and the Durra continued to be worn after the occupation by Algerian and Jewish women, especially in Constantine. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 103)

2. Al-Ghalila:

It is a long dress worn by men and women as well, and it was not limited to a specific sect of the population, as it was worn by Turkish, Andalusian, Christian and Jewish women, and was introduced to Algeria by the Andalusians, made of a light purple-coloured fabric imported from the city of Valencia, satin, velvet, brocade and damask, and is described as having a hollow and very wide neck, and along the neck there are large buttons of gold or silver in various shapes, and Al-Ghalila is fastened at the level of the band with a gilded or silk belt. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 104)

2.3 Kaftan:

The kaftan is considered a dress of pomp and luxury that originated in Turkey and was introduced to Algeria by the Ottomans. The kaftan is made of velvet, in addition to other types of fabric in line with the

woman's taste and financial ability, as rich women wear kaftans made of satin, damask, and other types of silk. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 106)

The kaftan has short sleeves, the edge of which is cut in a semicircle to facilitate movement. The kaftan reaches the middle of the legs and sometimes just below the knees. It is open in the front and is usually worn over the Frimla. It is also worn over a light silk shirt with wide sleeves embroidered with gold threads that cover the forearms, as well as a light silk shirt with wide sleeves embroidered with gold threads that cover the forearms. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 106)

The kaftan is embroidered with gold and silver on the shoulders, front and sleeves, and has large buttons of gold or silver thread that extend from the top to the level of the belt. (يوسفي، 2013، صفحة 404) When a woman goes to a wedding, she wears three or four gilded caftans on top of each other, fastened with buttons at the level of the abdomen and a gold-embroidered belt with velvet knotted on the left side, and on her feet she wears a gold-embroidered Babush to match the caftan. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 107) By the 13th century AH/19 AD, the shape of the caftan changed, becoming long and reaching the feet. (Marçais, p. 99)

2.4 Al-Frimla:

Al-Frimla was popularly worn by Kouloughlis women in Algiers, as well as by women from other communities. It is made of silk and consists of a short, tight-fitting sleeveless bodice that opens at the front and fastens with a button at the chest. The neckline is decorated with small gold buttons or buttons made of precious metals and attached to numerous hooks. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 108)

2.5 kraku:

The kraku originated from the men's jacket known as the Jabadoli. The kraku is an open-front jacket that is closed by pins or clasps under the threads. The kraku is made of silk or velvet, embroidered in gold or silver on the front, and decorated with sewn in gold threads, and is a common garment at weddings and parties. (Marçais, pp. 92-93)

2.6 Pants:

There is a type of trousers for weddings and reception days, which is puffy and worn with a kaftan or Ghalila, and is made of silk and embroidered with silk threads. (طيان، 1990، الصفحات 112-111)

2.7 Al-Malhfa:

A type of wide, long, loose-fitting garment that reaches down to the ankles, and is worn over the shirt to cover its transparency, made of silk or woolen fabrics and of many colours. (العثماني، 2013، صفحة 189) It is worn on the back and its upper ends, which are placed on the shoulders, are tightened by two needles, which are usually made of silver, and it is often worn with a Haik. (طيان، 1990، صفحة 113)

2.8 Haik:

It is made of thin wool and silk, and may be called a kesa if it is made of wool or cotton. the color of Haik differs for each sect, as Muslim women are white, Jews are black, and Negroes wear a sky-blue-coloured Haik. As for the face, women used to cover the lower part of the face with a small handkerchief-like piece of cloth tied behind the neck with two strings, known as the Adjar. (طيان، 1990، الصفحات 116-115)

3. Algerian women's participation in politics during the Ottoman era

Women were neither members of the court nor high-ranking officials in the country's administrations, but they were often involved in guiding decisions and influencing their husbands to take certain positions.

Political marriages were one of the most important reasons that allowed women to participate - albeit very little - in politics. These marriages took place between Turkish and Kouloughlis leaders and Algerian leaders with influence and power. Aruj married the wife of Salim al-Toumi after he was killed, and Mustafa Bouchlaghem was married to several women, as he was the son-in-law of some of the sheikhs and leaders of the western districts, which is why he remained in power for thirty years, and Ahmad al-Qoli Bey of Constantine married the family of Bouakkaz (Sheikh of Arabs), and Ahmad Bey married the family of al-Moukrani and other manifestations of political marriages. (سعد الله، 1998، صفحة 163)

One example of women's involvement in politics is Baba Hassan's wife, who influenced him to release French prisoners when they attacked the city of Algiers in 1688, causing the Ouajak to revolt against him and slaughter him. Hassan Pasha's wife was also behind the killing of Saleh Bey, who was responsible for the murder of her father, Khaznadji Muhammad Pasha. After Hassan Pasha took power, his wife demanded that he remove Saleh Bey, so he deposed and imprisoned him, then sent someone to kill him. (الزهار، 1974، الصفحات 64-65)

In addition, Algerian women contributed to the revolutions, including Al-Aledjia bent Bou-Aziz Bouakkaz, who led the Arabs and the Hanancha tribes against the Ottomans in the Ahmed al-Sakhri revolution when the men failed. This revolution was a continuation of the revolution of Ahmed bin al-Sakhri, who revolted in 1048 AH in the city of Constantine and spread to Annaba, Ziban and the Sahara. (A popular poet praised the heroism of Al-Aledjia bent Bou-Aziz, saying: (سعد الله، 1998، صفحة 217)

أهل العلوم يقرأو من الحمد للبقرة	طاحوا اليوم سادات في الحروب أبدان
بنت بوعزيز سيده الرجال	يندهو إلى شياخ القومان
تسبق الغزال تشطنه تزيد في لغواط	ركبا على زرقا تنطمي فرخ الجان

"on that day lords, valorous warriors, perished on the battlefield; there also fell learned men who had read the koran from first to last verset".

"the sheikhs marching at the head of the horsemen were invoked, as well as the daughter of Bou-aziz, the sovereign of men".

"The daughter of Bou-Aziz was mounted on a grey cavale, leaping like a child of the devil; faster than the gazelle, whose fruit she paralyses, she adds even more to her furious race". (Féraud, 1874, pp. 216-217)

4. Algerian women's participation in economic life during the Ottoman era

During the Ottoman era, some women in Algeria possessed various forms of wealth, including real estate such as houses, gardens, shops, and baths. In addition, women possessed a wealth of jewellery, including bracelets, earrings, anklets, rings... Some women also owned slaves and concubines, either through purchase or as part of a dowry. The use of slaves was widespread due to the maritime activities carried out by the Ottomans in Algeria. In addition, women's property included livestock such as cows, sheep, mules, and horses. (يوسفي، 2013، الصفحات 409-400)

Urban women traded in various ways, including hiring sailors to obtain spoils from the sea and sell them in the markets of Algiers, such as goods, captives, and the like. This field was mostly reserved for women who did not have husbands. Andalusian women also practiced the craft of spinning wool, which could be used to make woollen clothing, and Andalusian girls were interested in embroidering lace and velvet. (طبيبي، 2012، صفحة 184)

Women engaged in many professional activities, such as selling outside the home, acting as brokers, and organizing weddings, which were the preserve of the female slaves. in addition to nursing and midwifery, and working in bathhouses, either as supervisors or providing services inside the bathhouses, which were the speciality of the female slaves and female slaves. The profession of baking bread was also considered a profession specific to female slaves. (غطاس، 2000، الصفحات 315-318)

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we find that:

- There were many different categories of women in Algeria during the Ottoman era. Several groups arrived in Algeria, including Turkish women, Elches women, Handmaids, in addition to the emergence of the Kouloughlis Women, which resulted from Algerian women marrying Turkish men. There were also Andalusian women, who were able to integrate with urban women and influence Algerian women's clothing, as well as bringing handicrafts.
- The Ottoman presence played a role in enriching Algerian women's clothing, with a variety of garments for different social classes. Some classes shared certain garments, while others were exclusive to a particular class.
- During the Ottoman era, Algerian women were able to intervene in political affairs and even led revolts against Ottoman rule.
- Women in Algeria engaged in various economic activities and practiced various crafts, with certain groups of women monopolizing certain professions and crafts that were specific to them and not practiced by other groups.

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