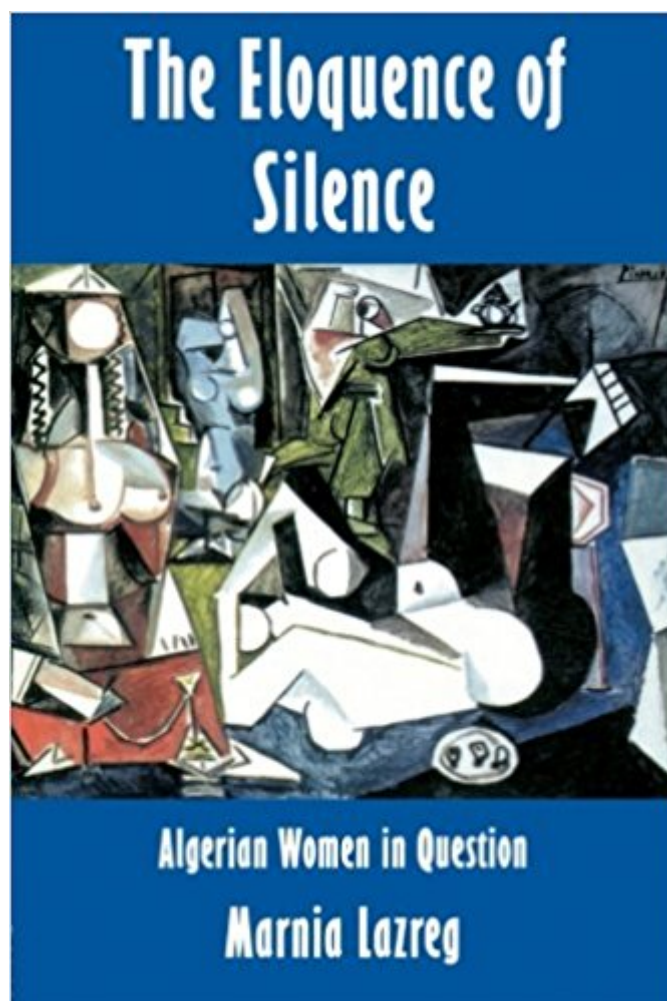


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The Eloquence Of Silence: Algerian Women In Question



Synopsis

The Eloquent Silence makes a critical departure from more traditional studies of Algerian women--which usually examine female roles in relation to Islam--and instead takes an interdisciplinary look at the subject, arguing that Algerian women's roles are shaped by a variety of structural and symbolic factors. These elements include colonial domination, demographic change, nationalism, socialist development policy of the 1960s and 70s, family formation and the progressive shift to a capitalist economy. Covering both pre-colonial and colonial eras as well as the independence period, this book focuses on the changes that took place in family structure and law, customs, education, and the war of decolonization as they affected gender relations. Marnia Lazreg approaches the post-colonial era through an examination of how Algeria's model of economic development, structural adjustment policies, and the rise of religious-political opposition affected women's lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Professor Lazreg's book is an important corrective to other studies of women in the Middle East published in recent years. She makes many insightful and original points about Algerian women and the question of why Algerian society has produced traditional concepts of femininity despite women's full participation in the revolution. The success of the book lies in her solid analysis of the modern historical background--in its social, economic and political dimensions."-Jeanette Wakin, Columbia University "Only Marnia Lazreg could have written this valuable book. Her ability for original thinking and incisive analysis is already well documented in her earlier works. In this work,

however, she combines these abilities with a unique perspective. This perspective is rooted in her experience as a feminist who actually endured the colonialization of her homeland by a Western power and then lived in the United States through the second wave of feminism and interacted with it. This book articulates in an authentic voice some of the major concerns of Third World women who, while committed to feminism, are deeply troubled by the Western, middle-class face of the movement. It is a book everyone should read."-Azizah al-Hibri, University of Richmond "Spanning more than a century of history, from precolonial times to the present, Lazreg's examination of the political and cultural processes that have shaped gender relations in Algeria is both thorough and bold."-Ms.

The Eloquence of Silence provides the most comprehensive analysis to date of gender relations in Algeria from the pre-colonial era to the present.

Lazreg (Lazraq) first guides the reader in situating women's social place on a global level providing the reader with a comparative approach to the place of women in history and society, then exemplifies as she tests her case with the specific historical role of women in Algerian society over time, taking her analysis and discussion to the present.

This work is flawed: the author presents life before French colonialism as authentically Algerian and doesn't even reference the history of the country as a product of Islamic/Arab and Ottoman conquest. She has a tendency to overuse phrases such as: 'Algerians thought that...' as if they were homogeneous. Worst of all she refers to Berberism as 'anti-Muslim and anti-Arab' -- twice, without even a variation of phraseology -- and that this phrase is the quite literally the only mention of the Berber people she makes within the whole post-colonial section of the book. For someone who claims to be filling the 'silence' this omission of the concerns of one third of the population is very telling. However, the sections dealing with post-independence legal changes are informative and useful.

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