



INVITATION

Single Women in Europe and the Middle East, 1800-2000

University of Bergen, 19-20 March 2009

The Centre for Women's and Gender Research (SKOK) in collaboration with the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and Dept of Archaeology, History, Cultural and Religious Studies, UoB, invites to the conference *Single Women in Europe and in The Middle East, 1800-2000*.

Western Europe and North America stands out as societies where single people made and still make up a considerable minority in the population. In addition to all pre-married single, widowed and divorced people, there was also a considerable minority in the population of adults who never-married. Recent research has, however, shown that the culture of singlehood has a long history also in other regions.

According to well known theories of the history of the family, marriage was (and is) almost obligatory outside The Western world. Permanent singlehood was (and is) not an option, especially not to women. The Middle East is often seen as an area where such a marriage system prevailed and has been supported right up to today. It is therefore of extraordinary interest that recent feminist historic research, dealing with the 20th century, has started to track never married women's biographies in various parts of the Middle East. Can it be that single women in non-Western-European cultures of the past just have been neglected till now, and that they were there and even made an important and unique contribution in society?

This interdisciplinary conference will address how single women were affected by the transition from early modern to the modern social and economic structures. We have chosen to focus on never married women because this group tends to be even more overlooked and neglected in mainstream historical scholarship, than other categories of single women. The focus on The Middle East and Western societies will give an important comparative perspective. Participants will discuss how single women lived their everyday lives, how a single culture operated within "a married world" and what contribution the single made in the family, the economy and in the work force. Ultimately the aim is to develop a fuller understanding of singlehood both in the private and in the public sphere.

Organising committee

Associate Professor **Hanne Marie Johansen**, SKOK, UoB
Researcher II **Inger Marie Okkenhaug**, Unifob Global, UoB
Associate Prof. **Nefissa Naguib**, Unifob Global, UoB

Practical information

The conference is free, but you have to arrange and finance your own travel and lodging. However, we can recommend the following hotels situated in/near the university area in the city centre:

* Hotel Park Pension: booking@parkhotel.no

* The economy hotel Citybox: www.citybox.no/,

* Rica Travel Hotel: www.rica-hotels.com/index.cfm?oa=hotel.display&con=439

To register, contact: Tone.lund-olsen@skok.uib.no

See preliminary programme below.

Programme

Thursday 19 March

- 09:30-10:00 Registration, Coffee & Tea
- 10:00-10:15 Welcome
- 10:15-11:15 Associate Prof. Amy Froide,
University of Maryland, USA
A Comparative History of Single Women: From a European to a Global Perspective
- 11:15-12:15 Dr Katherine Holden,
University of West England, UK
Singleness and Family: Concepts and Examples from mid twentieth century England
- 12:15-13:15 Lunch break
- 13:15-14:15 Associate Prof. Ellen Fleischmann,
University of Dayton, USA
'Window to a World: Single Women in Middle East History.
- 14:15-15:15 PhD Candidate Sara Pursley,
The City University of NY, USA
*"Everything a heart could desire":
The Life and Works of Iraqi Shi`i
Activist Bint al-Huda and the Politics
of Non-Marital Intimacy*
- 15:15-15:30 Break
- 15:30-16:30 Researcher II Inger Marie
Okkenhaug,
Unifob Global, UoB
*Single Women and Transnational
Carriers: Scandinavian Female
Mission Workers in the Middle East,
1900-1940.*
- 19:00 Conference Dinner

Friday 20 March

- 09:15-10:15 Researcher Tone Hellesund,
Rokkan Centre, UoB
*The Passions of the
Norwegian Spinster:
Feminism, Modernity and
Spirituality*
- 10:15-10:45 Coffee & Tea
- 10:45-11:45 Professor Inger Elisabeth
Haavet, AHKR, UoB
*Married to a profession -
single pioneer women in
higher education around
1900*
- 11:45-12:45 Prof. Sigrid Lien, LLE, UoB
*Photography as an
Emancipatory Apron? Single
Women Photographers in
Nineteenth Century Norway.*
- 12:45-13:45 Lunch break
- 13:45-14:15 Librarian Solveig Greve, UoB
- 14:15-15:15 Associate Prof. Hanne Marie
Johansen, SKOK, UoB
*Household, Family and Work:
Single Women in Nineteenth-
Century Norway*
- 15:15-16:00 Concluding remarks