

XIV Convegno SeSaMO

PERCORSI DI RESISTENZA IN MEDIO ORIENTE E NORD AFRICA

Università degli Studi di Torino

31 gennaio – 2 febbraio 2019



SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO: *What happened to Arab nationalism?*

PROPONENTE/I:

- Marzia Casolari
- Giuseppe Acconcia

ABSTRACT:

(max 250 parole, font: calibri 10)

In 1993 Martin Kramer pointed out the end of the belief in the Arab nation and the wane of Arab nationalism (Martin Kramer, *Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity*, "Dedalus", 1993).

Unlike other kinds of Asian and African nationalism, Arab nationalism did not rise as a reaction to the West, but as a reaction to the Ottoman empire, when in the 19th century the empire declined and the symbiotic relationship between Arab and Ottomans ceased. However, in the same period, Arabs and Muslims became increasingly concerned about the European colonial expansion and the first anti-colonial reactions took place. The Great Arab Revolt of 1916-1918 betrays the ambivalence of Arab nationalism: it was an anti-Ottoman revolt, but it can be considered as the beginning of a complex process of resistance against Western influence and colonization.

After hundred years from the fall of the Ottoman empire and the Treaty of Versailles a rereading of Arab nationalism from the 1916 revolt onwards is required. It is necessary to reconstruct all the streams, aspirations and contradictions of Arab nationalism and to overcome the cliché that, since the 1990s, dominated the narration of the anti-Ottoman and anti-Western resistance. A new analysis of Arab nationalism is required, beyond the limits of the recent historiography, that emphasises tribalism and sectarianism as the main causes of the failure of an alleged pan-Arab project.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I:

Marzia Casolari teaches Asian History at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Modern Cultures at the University of Turin.



Arab Nationalism in Egypt and Syria: Institutions, Practices, Ideas, and Fields of Social Struggle

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Amir Faysal governed Syria for two years (1918-1920), between the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the French mandate. In a context of economic, administrative and urban transformation, new relations of power were about to emerge. In other words, the domain of formal politics expanded when the state and the market were providing new functions. For these reasons, an increased number of citizens, mobilized by the state, began to contest a growing number of public issues. Doing so, new “subcultures” started to be institutionalized. Through the analysis of specific cases of social movements and contentious politics in Egypt and Syria (e.g. 1919 uprisings and the rise of Popular Committees), tools and strategies for the building-up of a pan-Arab political discourse, inspired by Gamal Abdel Nasser, will be addressed.

In this paper, will be argued that, nevertheless there are relevant overlaps with the Arab government and the official political parties, the Popular Committees in Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt partially challenged the traditional urban notability system of power. In other words, mass politics begun to be paramount in the modern formation of a Syrian and an Egyptian nationalism, alternative to the state, enforcing new mean of popular mobilization (e.g. electoral procedures, social services, self-defence, public gatherings, etc.). For example in Egypt in the interwar period, in a context of foreign encroachment and economic transformation, a number of alternative popular movements emerged. However, the Muslim Brothers, protagonist of this new political landscape, supported the Islamic discourse with the aim to foster the Egyptian integration in the Arab nationalism. The final section broadens the perspective and addresses the implications of the findings on the rise of those alternative movements in reference to the formation and dismantle of the Arab United Republic (AUR).

14th SeSaMO Conference
PATHS OF RESISTANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
University of Turin (Italy)
31 January–2 February 2019



TITLE AND NUMBER OF THE PANEL: 19. What happened to Arab nationalism?

TITLE OF THE PAPER: THE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST FROM OUTDATED PARADIGMS TO NEW INPUTS

ABSTRACT:

After hundred years from the Great Arab revolt of 1916-1918 and the following events until the Great Syrian revolt of 1925-27, the few studies on the subject tend to examine these two events through the lens of factionalism and tribalism. Many studies of the Great Arab Revolt continue to emphasize Lawrence's role in militarily organising and leading the revolt and tend to underestimate the role and military know-how of the former Arab officers in the Ottoman army, who in fact were the main players in Sharif Husayn's army. The factionalism, sectarianism and tribalism paradigm which is used today to analyse present political processes in the Middle East is applied to the study of the Middle Eastern past as well. Present fractures and conflicts in the Middle East are used by most scholars as keys to the interpretation of the past. The Middle East is therefore described as intrinsically divided, sectarian and tribal and this view overshadows some meaningful unitary experiences, like the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-27, where participated Sunni and Shia Muslims, Alawites, Druze and tribes. Tribalism is emphasised while the role of the notables and the urban elites in forging the nationalist experience is almost neglected, in spite of the important studies on the subject, carried out in the early 1990s.

Less known aspects, like the relation between Ottomanism and Arabism in the first two decades of the Nineteenth century or the history and role of the Arab secret societies have not been properly explored ever since.

This study aims at initiating a new research field in the history of the Middle East, following in the footsteps of Rashid Khalidi.

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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO E NUMERO DEL PANEL: Che fine ha fatto il nazionalismo arabo?/What happened to Arab nationalism/19

TITOLO DEL PAPER: La crisi di Alessandretta tra il nazionalismo arabo siriano e il kemalismo turco/The crisis of Alexandretta between Syrian Arab Nationalism and Turkish Kemalism

ABSTRACT:

Il paper approfondisce la crisi di Alessandretta con la lente di ingrandimento sulle vicende che coinvolsero le minoranze e il settarismo nella regione.

Sul finire degli anni Trenta, Ankara aveva raggiunto una stabilità tale da potersi lanciare in una politica estera ambiziosa, mentre nei territori arabi dell'ex Impero ottomano, il nazionalismo arabo siriano cresceva con toni anti-mandatari. Il Sangiaccato divenne luogo di incontro e scontro tra i due elementi, con in mezzo le diverse minoranze e gli interessi internazionali.

Nella regione l'elemento turco era la maggioranza relativa, ma non assoluta della popolazione, perché era quello arabo ad essere predominante. L'Islam era la netta religione maggioritaria, ma la forma alauita era la più importante. Fin dal 1921 i francesi concessero ai turchi della regione uno status speciale; esso fu il pomo della discordia. Quando gli accordi franco-siriani sancirono il passaggio del Sangiaccato alla Repubblica siriana, i turchi insorsero.

Le popolazioni multiethniche della regione, come i clan alauiti, non avevano un'identità fissa nei termini di nazionalismo, nazione e patria. Ancora meno la loro "identità liquida" determinava la scelta di una parte politica da seguire in maniera unica e irreversibilmente. D'altra parte, l'identità nazionale, culturale e linguistica erano i pilastri fondanti del kemalismo turco e del nazionalismo arabo siriano.

Le minoranze come quella alauita si trovarono nel mezzo di una disputa che le obbligava a scegliere da che parte stare, ma né il kemalismo, né il partito siriano attecchirono. Fu l'uso della forza a consegnare la regione ad Ankara.

The subject of this paper is the crisis of Alexandretta, with particular reference to the role of minorities and sectarianism processes in the region.

At the end of the 1930s, Ankara reached such stability that it could launch itself into an ambitious foreign policy, while in the Arab territories of the former Ottoman Empire, the Syrian Arab Nationalism strengthened its anti-Mandate attitude.

The Sandjak became an area at the same time of encounter and conflict between the two elements. In the middle there were other minorities and international interests.

In the region the Turkish element was only the relative majority of the population, because Arabs were predominant. Muslims were the majority, but the Alawite sect was the most influent. Since 1921 the French guaranteed the Turks of the region a special status, that became the bone of contention with other groups. Turks rose up when the Franco-Syrian agreements sanctioned the transition of the Sanjak to the Syrian Republic.

The multiethnic populations of the region, like the Alawite clans, did not have a defined identity in terms of nationalism, 'nation' and 'fatherland'. Moreover, their 'liquid identity' hindered clear and permanent party affiliations. On the other hand, national, cultural and linguistic identities were the founding pillars of Turkish Kemalism and Syrian Arab nationalism.

The minorities, such as the Alawite, were in the middle of a dispute that forced them to choose sides, but neither Kemalism, nor the Syrian party were able to thrive. The region was handed over to Ankara by the use of force.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA PROPONENTE:

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