



Centre d'études et de documentation économiques, juridiques et sociales

On Tuesday October 8th, 2024 **Malak Rouchdy** will be presenting her research: Memories from the alleys of Cairo. Childhood and adolescent years of Umm Badriyya, 1940s-1950s.

Abstract

For a long time, Egyptian women received little attention in the official writing of contemporary history. Only a few were endorsed as pioneers in professional fields, or as exceptional public figures for their roles in the making of history. While these figures were promoted to become icons in the official historical narratives, the non-conformists, the controversial, and the marginals were absent from these accounts. In response to this lacuna, this presentation will present segments of the life history of an Egyptian woman: Umm Badriyya, whose narrative on her childhood and adolescence elucidates detailed aspects of life in Cairo between 1940s and 1950's. Through the lens of a marginalised poor woman who struggled to survive, I wish to show how a rural migrant young girl experienced her early years in the city, and how she was integrated into the social and cultural fabric of her new environment in Cairo. By looking at aspects of her everyday life, as a child and an adolescent, I will show how a young girl's life within specific historical contexts illustrates the various forms of the dispossession of the vulnerable, and how in turn women navigate through and negotiate their marginality. My objective in examining the childhood and adolescent years of Umm Badriyya as a biography is to put it in conversation with the historical period and in the context of the social structures of the time, mainly the family, kinship relations, the social networks around her family, the state, and the city at large. In other words, reconstituting the life of Umm Badriyya through her narratives requires the constant connection with the larger structures and the processes of socio-political and economic change at the time.

Malak S. Rouchdy is currently an independent scholar in sociology. She was an Assistant Professor of Sociology, SEA department, AUC, from 1991-2018, and the Director of the Middle East Studies Center (MESOC), AUC, from 2008-2010. She is a co-founder and member of an open seminar in social sciences, Seket El-Ma'arif, since 2013. She is a board member of Cairo Papers since 2006. She earned her PhD from Durham University, UK, in the field of rural sociology. Her research revolves poverty alleviation, development, oral history and memory, gender, the Egyptian middle class, food politics and culture.

Selected publications :

Mélanges offerts à Madiha Doss. La linguistique comme engagement, eds. Aziza Boucherit, Héba Machhour, Malak Rouchdy, IFAO, Le Caire, 2018.

"Reflection on the Concept of Hunger: The Case of Egypt between 2008-2011", in The Food Question in the Middle East, Eds. Malak Rouchdy and Iman Hamdy, Cairo Papers in Social Science, Volume 34, Number 4, AUC Press, 2017.

The Food Question in the Middle East, Eds. Malak Rouchdy and Iman Hamdy, Cairo Papers in Social Science, Volume 34, Number 4, AUC Press, 2017.

"Food Recipes and the Kitchen Space. The Construction of Social Identities and New Frontiers", in Abdel-Rahman, Hamdy, Rouchdy and Saad in Cultural Dynamics in Egypt, Vol. 27, No. 1-2, The American University in Cairo Press, summer 2006.

Poverty and Poverty Alleviation Strategies in Egypt, Ragui Assaad and Malak S. Rouchdy, *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, Volume 22, Number 1, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 1999.