

The masculine transition in Morocco

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Despite the breakthrough of feminist action in Morocco and despite the institutionalization of the gender approach, the struggle for gender equality has not yet produced a frank critique of the hegemonic masculinity. State feminism and associative feminism have remained focused on the victims of patriarchy, in this case women by neglecting men, those who detain powers and privileges from patriarchy. Hence is it legitimate to ask to what extent are these men willing to change? And to what extent do laws and public policies contribute to the change of men in Morocco?

Some indicators of masculine change

One of the first studies¹ focusing specifically on masculinity in Morocco was done four years before the implementation of the "Family Code" in 2004. It recorded the emergence of Moroccan fathers who recognize their daughters' right to a sexual life before marriage. And in the same sense, the emergence of men who do not give any importance to the virginity of their wives. Thus, a third of men recognize the right of young girls to use contraceptives and 29% recognize their right to abortion in order to avoid being socially stigmatized and excluded as single mothers. In marriage, 42% of men say that the task of contraception is not the sole responsibility of the wife and that husbands should also participate thanks to condom and withdrawal. Some of these men see this as a way of helping the wife, for others, it is a duty to share the contraceptive task. Some men also find it normal to share domestic and educational tasks in the home.

Moreover, 15% of men dissociate between masculinity and matrimonial guardianship in the sense that these men cease to hold to their (Islamic) right to represent the young girl when the marriage contract is drawn up. In other words, masculinity tends to no longer control the marriage market. These men no longer perceive the right and freedom of young girls to choose their spouse as a threat to their masculinity. A more significant percentage of men (42%) renounce to polygamy. For these men, the monogamous man is the real man. Another right « granted" is the repudiating power. Indeed, this right give the power to the men of just saying to the wife "you are repudiated" and by just saying that the repudiation is immediately effective, de jure and de facto. In other words, 43% of the men interviewed believe that any dissolution of marriage should be a court decision.

Gradually, for a minority of Moroccan men, violence against women is seen less and less as a proof of virility and masculinity. On the contrary, it is doomed. The man who is violent towards women is defined as a muzzle (*chmata*), which is an insult, to say a false-man, a second-degree man.

What about the laws?

The attack on patriarchal masculinity in law and public policy

In 2001, the first national strategy to combat violence against women was adopted. In 2002, the mother acquired the right to register a birth and a quota was reserved for women in parliament. In 2004, women were appointed to the "Superior Council of *Oulema*". In 2006, the strategy for gender equity and equality was adopted by integrating the gender approach into development policies and approaches. In 2007, for the first time 7 women were appointed

¹ A. Dialmy: « *Masculine identity and reproductive health in Morocco* » (in French), (LCPS/MERC, December 1999-September 2000), published under the title "Vers une nouvelle masculinité au Maroc, Dakar, CODESRIA, 2009. This study was the sole work on masculinity in Morocco until 2017.

in government. In the same year, a woman had the right to transmit her nationality to her child from a foreign spouse. Finally in 2018, a specific law against violence against women was promulgated, a law which criminalizes sexual harassment in the street (among others), a first.

However, it is at the family level that the attack on hegemonic masculinity, as constructed by the dominant interpretations of Muslim Family law, has reached its highest level. In fact, the “Family Code” (FC) begins by placing the family under the joint responsibility of both spouses. Hence the elimination of two terms which undermined the dignity of women. The terms *ta'a* (obedience of the wife to her husband) and *nikah* (term which designates the coitus of the wife by the husband) have been erased. Another feminist conquest, the woman no longer needs a matrimonial guardian to get married. Likewise, if the husband's right to polygamy is not abolished, it is subject to conditions which make it difficult to obtain. The husband now needs the judge's permission to take a second wife. In that case, the first wife has the right to obtain a divorce. In the same sense, verbal repudiation becomes illegal, the wife is no longer being repudiated by the mere pronouncement by the husband of the expression "you are repudiated". The husband must go to court to confirm the repudiation. The husband also loses the right to take back his wife without her consent during the “period of emptiness”, which refers to the three menstrual cycles after repudiation in order to be sure that the uterus is empty of any pregnancy. As for divorce, the conditions for obtaining by the woman become very flexible. A simple incompatibility of character enables a woman to obtain it. However, the FC states that a divorce request formulated by the wife for lack of support by the husband can be rejected if it is proved that the wife has sufficient means to provide for the needs of the family and that the husband is without resources. Another right obtained by a single woman and for the benefit for a new father, the biological father has the right to recognize his child conceived out of marriage.

All these legal provisions affirm the will of state (legislative) feminism (under the pressure of enlightened associative feminism) to give birth to a new husband, a new father, a new man, stripped of his ancestral privileges obtained simply because 'he was born male and then assigned the privileged status of man'.

Despite these legal advances, many heavy obstacles and strong resistance are still actual.

Masculine resistance to gender equality

The Constitution of 2011 is the first resistance, it states that gender equality is recognized in all areas if and only it does not contradict the constants and laws of the kingdom. This disposition implies that some Islamic laws which are unequal remain in force. For this reason, Morocco has not yet lifted its reservations to CEDAW despite its adoption in 1993.

More generally, Morocco lacks affirmative recovery measures in favor of women in the 4 areas / indicators adopted to make the classification: participation and economic opportunities, level of education, political participation and health. This ranks Morocco in 133rd place out of a total of 135 countries according to the classification of the “Global Gender Gap Index” of the World Economic Forum (WEF 2014). As a result, the "equity masculinity score in Morocco" remains low according to the "Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM). This score varies from 0 points (total rejection of equality) to 3 (total acceptance of equality). The Moroccan score is only 1.2 points for men against 1.7 points for women². While indicating the very low general egalitarian conviction, these scores reveal that women are relatively more inclined to reach equality. And according to WEF 2019, Morocco ranks 143e out of 149 countries. It will reach gender equality at 2119.

² *Understanding Masculinities: International Men gender equality survey (Images). MENA (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine), UN Women and Promundo-US, 2017, p. 97.*

All this stem from the weakness of public policies in the establishment of the credo of gender equality, i.e. in the involvement of boys and men in the fight against “Gender Based Violence” and in empowerment of women. It is therefore normal that the emergence of egalitarian masculinity remains a nascent minority and marginal trend in Morocco. Indeed, the majority of men feel threatened by the "rise" of women and therefore tend to cling to harsh masculinity. High youth unemployment, along with growing weakness in male maintenance power, is causing men to lose the economic foundation of their systemic patriarchal power. Faced with this loss, “ordinary” / lambda men seek compensatory shelters.

Islam is the first refuge of popular Moroccan masculinity: men turn to Islam and take the literal phallocratic meaning of some of its founding texts as the ultimate and indisputable justification for their superiority and domination. This is particularly true among the illiterate and vulnerable masses of men who are more sensitive to the prominence of these texts by some Islamic jurisconsults (*foqaha*). These masses are not very sensitive to an Islamic feminism which, despite its interpretive efforts, struggles to integrate gender equality into the Islamic belief.

Sexual harassment in the streets is a second refuge for Moroccan masculinity. In public space which for men is a space traditionally reserved for them, the street harassment serves the purpose to reaffirm their masculinity against the presence of women. The challenge is then to remind woman to (patriarchal) order, to tell her that she is, in this space, first and foremost a female, a disturbing body to be veiled. The woman is then objectified while the man is erected as the sole actor of power and freedom (to circulate in public space). "I reclaim ownership of public space and reign on it, therefore I am a man," such is the cogito of a masculinity forced into defending itself through the use of sexual violence. And violence in general. In 2010, 64% of women were abused and 54% were abused in 2018 (according to official surveys).

Aphrodisiacs are a third refuge for Moroccan masculinity. Their consumption by young people allows men to have an intense and powerful sexual activity which make up for their economic impotence. These young people want to control women through the sexual pleasure they give them, so they erect their penises as an instrument of domination rather than pleasure, or even as a proof of existence. Some other men thank Viagra because it allows them to find their power again, their “*makhzania*” which means the supreme and absolute power in Morocco.

What can we conclude from all this data and analysis?

Milestones of an egalitarian public policy

One can conclude that the Moroccan man is in transition, tossed between the desire to maintain his supremacy within a shaken patriarchal system and between the ambiguous state imperative to question the patriarchal definition of masculinity. This split in masculinity means that men can neither remain purely patriarchal nor become completely egalitarian. This is a transitional in-between that symbolizes a masculinity in crisis, wandering. To work on the accomplishment of the male transition, the following recommendations should be taken into account in feminist public policies and associative activities.

First, rigorously diagnose (through studies) the predisposition of Moroccan men to change by precisely measuring the indicators of their resistance to gender equality. Founding the field of masculine studies as action-research is the primary basis for adequate public policies in the service of egalitarian masculinity.

Then provide education and training on masculinity and femininity in schools, universities and among social workers. And more broadly, to produce and distribute written and audio-visual documents serving to change the social outlook on masculinity and femininity.

Third, achieve parity in the domestic space: if Moroccan feminism is to strategically claim the outsourcing of domestic work and educational tasks in order to free women from the "kitchen", it must for the moment work towards participation of men in all activities of the domestic space. Hence the state should and has to offer the same incentives to men and women to share domestic work. Reconciling family and professional life is a challenge that must also be taken up by men. It's about defeminizing that challenge. For this, a revolution in gender norms must be accomplished.

In short, the stake in criticizing Moroccan masculinity lies in three major acts: an act of knowledge which describes masculinity as a social history, a militant act which fights against hegemonic masculinity, an educational act which socializes to gender equality and which leads to the following credo: "I believe in gender equality, therefore I am a man".