

= Maryana Marrash =

Maryana bint Fathallah bin Nasrallah Marrash (Arabic : ?????? ??? ??? ???? ?? ??????? ?????? / ALA @-@ LC : Maryan? bint Fat? All?h bin Na?rall?h Marr?sh ; 1848 ? 1919) , also known as Maryana al @-@ Marrash al @-@ Halabiya , was a Syrian writer and poet of the Nahda movement ? the Arabic renaissance . She revived the tradition of literary salons in the Middle East and was the first Syrian woman to publish a collection of poetry . She may have been the first woman to write in the Arab daily newspapers .

= = Life = =

= = Background and education = = =

Maryana Marrash was born in Aleppo , a city of Ottoman Syria (present @-@ day Syria) , to an old Melkite family of merchants known for their literary interests . Having earned wealth and standing in the 18th century , the family was well established in Aleppo , although they had gone through troubles : a relative of Maryana , Butrus Marrash , was martyred by Greek Orthodox fundamentalists in April 1818 . Other Melkite Catholics were exiled from Aleppo during the persecutions , among them the priest Jibrail Marrash . Maryana 's father , Fathallah , tried to defuse the sectarian conflict by writing a treatise in 1849 , in which he rejected the Filioque . He had built up a large private library to give his three children Francis , Abdallah and Maryana a thorough education , particularly in the field of Arabic language and literature . As quoted by Marilyn Booth , Maryana 's mother was from " the famous al @-@ Antaki family " .

Aleppo was then a major intellectual center of the Ottoman Empire , featuring many thinkers and writers concerned with the future of the Arabs . It was in the French missionary schools that the Marrash family learnt Arabic with French , and other foreign languages (Italian and English) . By providing their daughter with an education , at a time when Middle Eastern women received none , Maryana 's parents challenged the then widespread belief that a girl should not be educated " so she would not sit in the men 's reception room " , as quoted by Marilyn Booth . Thus , Fathallah put his five @-@ year @-@ old daughter in a Maronite school . Later on , Maryana was educated by the nuns of St. Joseph in Aleppo . She finally went to an English school in Beirut . In addition to her formal education in these schools , where she was exposed to French and Anglo @-@ Saxon cultures , she was tutored by her father and brothers , especially on the subject of Arabic literature . The first biographies of Maryana mention that she excelled in French , Arabic and mathematics , and that she played the qanun and sang beautifully .

Aleppine historian Muhammad Raghib al @-@ Tabbakh wrote that she was unique in Aleppo , and that " people looked at her with a different eye " . Although she had many suitors , she initially wished to remain single . However , she was persuaded to marry after her mother 's death , and chose for husband Habib Ghadban , a scion of a local Christian family . They had one son and two daughters .

= = Literary career = = =

As early as 1870 or 1871 , Marrash started contributing articles and poems to journals ? especially Lisan al @-@ hal and al @-@ Jinan , both of Beirut . In her articles , she criticized the condition of Arab women , urging the latter ? regardless of their religious affiliations ? to seek education and express themselves on matters of concern to them . Her collection of poetry Bint fikr (A Daughter of Thought) was published in Beirut in 1893 . Marrash was granted permission by the Ottoman government to print her book after composing a poem exalting Sultan Abdul Hamid II . In some of the several other panegyrics included in the collection , she also praised Ottoman governors of Aleppo . Her poetry was much more traditional in style than her brother Francis ' , as exemplified by the elegy she composed to lament his death ; yet , she was at home with the poetry of French

romantics , especially that of Alphonse de Lamartine and Alfred de Musset . Sami Kayyali said about Marrash :

The emergence of a woman writing in the press and composing poetry in this dark era was a significant event . Our recent history shows that it was rare for even men to read and write ; her appearance in these dark nights was thus like a bright star in the center of the heavens .

Her non @-@ fiction works also include a history of late Ottoman Syria , Tarikh Suriya al @-@ hadith , the first book on the subject .

= = = Marrash 's salon = = =

Marrash was famous for the salon she held in the home she shared with her husband . She had travelled to Europe once , and was impressed by what she saw of life there . As related by Joseph Zeidan :

Upon her return in Aleppo , Maryana Marrash turned her house into a gathering place for a group of celebrated writers who met there on a regular basis to cultivate each other 's friendship and discuss literature , music , and political and social issues .

However , according to Joseph Zeidan , there are no proofs supporting whether or not she created her salon after seeing similar ones in Europe ; in any case , it did not start from scratch , since " most of the participants were regular visitors to her family 's home , where they used to meet with her father and two brothers . " The members of Maryana 's salon included prominent Aleppine intellectuals of both sexes , in addition to politicians and members of the foreign diplomatic corps . Marrash was fully engaged in the intellectual discourse and would also entertain her guests by playing the qanun and singing . Antun Sha 'arawi has described typical evenings spent at Marrash 's salon :

Wearing either all black or all white dresses ordered from Paris , Marrash hosted the mixed evening get @-@ together in which literary topics as varied as the Mu`allaqat ? a cycle of seven pre @-@ Islamic poems ? or the work of Rabelais were discussed . Chess and card games were played , and complicated poetry competitions took place ; wine and ' araq flowed freely ; participants sang , danced , and listened to records played on a phonograph .

However , Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh has presumed Sha 'arawi 's description to be partly apocryphal .