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**Czech modern women and the Orient in the first half of the 20th century: Challenging both gender and colonial dichotomies from the margins of Europe**

**Abstract**

In regards to both Czech and international research context my thesis has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to explore various Czech sources, be them written or visual, in order to examine their potential for cultural history-based research on Czech modern women’s (re)presentations of the Orient in the first half of the 20th century. Secondly, it uses a perspective ‘from the margins of Europe’ in order to challenge traditional dichotomies that prevail in a majority of research on gender and nationalism as well as colonialism worldwide. Therefore, my analyses of Czech modern women’s (re)presentations of the Orient focus mainly on the interplay of three modern discourses - feminism, nationalism and orientalism.

The first part of the thesis *First impressions: Three Czech modern women in the Orient* comprises three case studies on Pavla Dušková, Ludmila Matiegková and Vlasta Káralová Di-Lotti, who travelled to and stayed in the Near East (Egypt, Palestine, Iraq) in the 1920s and 1930s. Their personal papers (e.g. family correspondence, unpublished travelogues) as well as published works (e.g. academic pieces of writing, popular novels) are explored in terms of both typology and development of their ‘first impressions’ of the Orient.

Then, two more complex and detailed case studies are presented in the second part of the thesis. A principle of Othering that underpins also Edward Said’s concept of orientalism is revisited in the chapter *Orient and modern Czech women's magazines*. The analysis of the liberal journal *Women's Horizon* (1900 – 1941) and the catholic journal *Eve* (1904 – 1925) is based on a comparative review of both Egyptian and Czech emancipation processes. In the following chapter the case of Vlasta Káralová Di-Lotti, who established and ran a surgical clinic in Baghdad from 1925 to 1932, is discussed in detail. The issues of both Czech feminism and orientalism are addressed by discursive analysis of her travelogue.

Finally, the third part explores both the limits and horizons of the future research on modern women’s (re)presentations of the Orient that might be based not only on Czech sources, but also enrich an international studies. The last case study focuses on the involvement of Czechoslovak feminists in the international women’s movement in 1930s. Moreover, the theoretical perspective ‘from the margins of Europe’ is discussed in regards to their ways of the East – West positioning.