Negotiating Power, Contesting Violence, and Assessing Perspectives for Transcultural Approaches:
Gender and Nation State in Muslim Societies

Workshop
Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg
Thursday, December 12, 2:00pm – Saturday, December 14, 4:00pm

The multiple discourses and strategies to negotiate gender relations in Muslim societies are barely noticed in Western academic debates. A widespread assumption is that a distinct pattern of women’s subjugation and subordination exists in the Islamic world. However, the important and lively controversies taking place within academia and the political arena in Asia and Northern Africa demonstrate that gender relations are highly variable and constantly challenged on all levels.

This workshop aims to examine gendered power relations in contemporary postcolonial nation states and national movements within Muslim societies. Fused with power, force and violence on theoretical, structural and institutional levels, the nation state also constitutes notions of masculinity and femininity. Thus, analyses of gender and the nation state must encompass processes of construction and maintenance as well as strategies of subversion, violation and mediation.

At present, researchers and activists inside the region are debating issues like gender (in–)equality and trajectories of nation states, developing strategies against gendered violence within national legal systems, and exploring the tensions and links between gender and class in order to acknowledge and promote women’s agency. Additionally, studies on masculinity and the nation state in the Middle East mark an emerging field of gender research. And furthermore, as a dimension of specific importance to and within national movements, questions of violence, suicide, and martyrdom call not only for political attention and action but theoretical exploration as well.

This workshop will bring together researchers from the Mashreq, the Maghreb, South Asia, Europe, and North America with the overall goal of assessing perspectives for transcultural approaches, discourses, and networks. The workshop provides an opportunity for discussion in the following panels:

- **Frameworks: Gender (In–)Equality and Trajectories of Nation States**

  Although the Asian and North African nation states, on which this workshop focuses, share the characteristic that the majority of their population/populace is Muslim, there exist varied ways in which gender (in)equality is inscribed in their political and societal fabric. Consequently, it is necessary to contextualize the trajectories of each nation state. Major interacting elements are colonial residues, postcolonial strategies and effects of globalization processes, national ideas and nationalistic ideologies, patriarchal policies and feminist agency. While each element is multi–faceted and contradictory within a given society, their analysis is also a prerequisite for comparative approaches.

  The panel provides case studies on Pakistan, Palestine, and Morocco as (emerging) nation states, exploring their interconnections with religion and gender (Pakistan), with gender and language (Morocco), and discourses on gendered nationalism (Palestine).
• Strategies against Violence: Acting within National Legal Systems

Violence comprises many different forms, e.g. physical and sexual, legal and economical, structural and institutional. In the 1990s, in many countries new strategies, agents and agendas to combat violence against women emerged, often in transnational settings. They are theoretically founded while praxis oriented. At the core of many of these strategies are new ways of addressing the gendered nature of legal systems, shari’a or other, that aim at changing the codes. In many countries citizenship laws deny women full rights, but this is now publicly contested. Women also actively engage in shari’a discourses, thus reinterpreting and reasoning religious, philosophical and political regional traditions. Is this an example of a modernity that transgresses the common bipolar perspective? Case studies on Malaysia and Palestine as well as comparative analyses allow to explore commonalities and differences in women’s strategies against gendered oppression and violence.

• Masculinity and the Nation State in the Middle East

To understand gender relations, concepts of masculinity are crucial, albeit still underresearched, especially in Middle Eastern societies. This panel presents case studies that explore the triangle of masculinity, gender relations and the nation state. Underlying is the idea that concepts of masculinity and male dominance are inscribed into nation states and epitomized in the military and in times of war, as will be addressed in a case study on Iraq. As the question of gendered violence is omnipresent not only in wartimes, the panel will move on to look at how male violence against women in the private sphere has been brought to the public agenda in Yemen. The two further papers are case studies on Turkey; one looks at the links between modernity and masculinity and raises, the other addresses the intersections of sexuality, gender, and modernity. Is modernity more than the redefinition of patriarchal gender relations?

• In the Name of the Nation: Between Sacrifice and Agency

While contemporary suicide bombings, self-burnings and various other forms of martyrdom are generally perceived as linked to religious convictions and justifications, they are also inseparable from national movements, ideas and goals (also in the Western World). The male domain of martyrdom and national heroism is complemented by images of women as victims and mothers. Are recent developments contesting these traditional ascriptions? Or are they exclusively expressions of double or multiple victimizations? How is gendered martyrdom linked to the modern nation? What are perspectives to develop women’s agency in armed conflicts? Another key question the panel addresses is that of the gender (in)egalitarian nature of the state’s monopoly on the morally sanctioned use of violence.

Workshop Program

Thursday, Dec. 12

2:00pm Opening
Marion Rieken, Vice President, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany
Lydia Potts, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany

2:30pm–5:00pm Panel 1: Frameworks: Gender (In-)Equality and Trajectories of Nation States
Moderator: Lydia Potts, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany

Feminism, Nationalism and the Search for a Theory: Experiences of Palestinian Women
Nahla Abdo, Carleton University Ottawa, Canada

Gendered Language Use, Hierarchization of Linguistic Space and State Building
Fatima Sadiqi, Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah University, Fes, Morocco
Female Islamists, State, and the Gender Question in Egypt  
Hoda Salah, Free University of Berlin, Germany

‘Now You See Them: Now You Don’t!’ Women in/and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan  
Nighat Said Khan, Asr Resource Centre for Women, Lahore, Pakistan

5:00pm–5:30pm  
**Break**

5:30pm–6:30pm  
**Keynote Address:**  
Beyond Good and Evil, Beyond East and West: What Does Islamic Feminism/s Have to Offer?  
Margot Badran, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., USA

7:00pm  
**Reception**

**Friday, Dec. 13**

9:00am–12:00am  
**Panel 2: Strategies against Violence: Acting within National Legal Systems**  
Moderator: Martina Kamp, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany

Muslim Women and the Law on Domestic Violence against Women in Malaysia  
Noraida Endut, Sains Malaysia University, Penang, Malaysia

Historical Perspectives on Immigration, Gender and Psychiatry in Mandatory Palestine: Between Gender, Ideology and Science  
Rakefet Zalashik, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies  
Pinar Ilkkaracan, Women for Women's Human Rights, Istanbul, Turkey

12:00am–1:30pm  
**Book Presentation**  
Margot Badran and Fatima Sadiqi invite you to celebrate the publication of *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco* with aperitifs and hors d’oeuvres with the compliments of Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden

1:30pm–4:30pm  
**Panel 3: Masculinity and the Nation State in the Middle East**  
Moderator: Amatalrauf Alsharki, University of Sana’a, Yemen

When the Land is Feminine, War is Love, and the Nation is a Family: Iraqi Gender Policies during the Iran-Iraq War  
Achim Rohde, Free University of Berlin and Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany

Masculinity and Gender-based Violence in Yemen  
Mohammed Awadh Baobaid, Changing Ways, London/Ontario, Canada

Images of Masculinities and Failed Masculinities: Current Developments  
Arno Schmitt, Free University of Berlin, Germany

Virginity Surgeries in the Age of Hegemonic Masculinities: Resistance and Negotiations in Sexuality  
Dilek Cindoglu, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey
5:00pm–6:00pm  **Keynote Address:**
Women, Religion and Global Dynamics – Muslim Perspectives
Azza Karam, Women’s Program, World Conference on Religion and Peace, New York, USA

**Saturday, Dec 14**

9:00am–12:00am  **Panel 4: In the Name of the Nation: Between Sacrifice and Agency**
Moderator: Silke Wenk, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany

Martyrdom and the Agony of Motherhood
Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
(paper presented by Azza Basarudin)

Gender in Conflict: Developing Women’s Agency
Eva Dalak, Sorbonne University, Paris, France

Gendered Aspects of the Modern Nation State’s Monopoly on the Use of Force
Gabriele Mordt, Martin Luther University of Halle, Germany

12:00am–1:30pm  **Lunch**

1:30pm–3:30pm  **Roundtable: Assessing Perspectives for Transcultural Approaches – Bridging Theory and Action**
Moderator: Lydia Potts, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany

Amatalrauf Alsharki, University of Sana’a, Yemen
Umut Erel, Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom
Na’eem Jeenah, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa
Beata Kowalska, Jagiellonian University Cracow, Poland

3:30pm–4:00pm  **Further Planning and Closing**

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**PROJEKT**
**Geschlechterkonstruktionen und Gewalt. Ambivalenzen der Moderne im Prozess der Globalisierung**

Dr. Lydia Potts
Prof. Dr. Ilse Dröge-Modelmog
Prof. Dr. Silke Wenk
Martina Kamp M.A.

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