
Conference Report

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18th RIMO Conference

The Dutch Association of the Study of Islamic Law and the Law of the Middle East (RIMO Association) held its annual meeting on 26 May 2000, in Leiden, the Netherlands. Approximately 55 individuals from various disciplines, such as law, Middle Eastern Studies, Islamic Studies and Islamic Law, participated in the conference. Five lectures were presented by specialists who attended the conference from different parts of the world. Each lecture was followed by discussion with the audience and was presided over by the conference chairman, Ruud Peters. The morning session began with two lectures devoted to theoretical aspects of Islamic law, while the afternoon sessions were devoted to an exploration of issues of the application and practical relevance of Islamic law.

The conference was opened by Muhammad Khalid Masud, academic director of ISIM, who spoke about the doctrine of *siyasa*

in Islamic law. The second lecture was presented by Wael Hallaq, who spoke about changes in Islamic law: Has it ever been changed? Can it be changed at all? Or can we speak of a structural change? Who is qualified to change Islamic Law? What methods can be used? These and other thought provoking questions were raised and discussed by Hallaq.

The afternoon sessions of the conference opened with a lecture by Maurits Berger, who engaged the audience in his presentation of Egyptians' inter-religious choice of laws on marriage and divorce. According to Berger, if one spouse is Muslim, Islamic law will prevail and the marriage will be governed by it. Christian or Jewish law can only be used in the case of both spouses sharing the same religion. The lecture was enlivened by many illustrative and practical examples.

The second lecture of the afternoon ses-

sion was presented by Jamila Bargach. Her lecture concerned the *kafala* in Morocco. Since adoption is not legally recognized in Moroccan (and Islamic) law, other means had to be devised in order to assist abandoned, orphaned or neglected children. Other individuals can then take over the care of these children by means of *kafala*. In practice, this 'gift of care' is often offered to young girls as they can be of practical use within their new families.

The conference was closed by Frans van der Velden of the Dutch Ministry of Justice who spoke of the cooperation between the Netherlands, the Moroccan Embassy and the Government of Morocco. Specifically, he spoke of the cooperation designed to resolve issues emanating from marriages and divorces of Moroccan citizens residing in the Netherlands. He also mentioned Moroccan proposals to modify Moroccan family law in order to improve the status of Moroc-

can women.

The RIMO Conference 2000 provided stimulating and interesting presentations and discussions about issues related to Islamic law. The texts of the lectures will be published in English and in Dutch by the RIMO Association. ◀

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