

Appointments

Annelies Moors’ interest in the Middle East dates from the 1970s when she travelled extensively in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Having spent time with Arabic-speaking people in southern Iran, she decided to study Arabic. Initially she did so through an Arabic language programme at the University of Damascus. After returning to the Netherlands, she continued studying Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Amsterdam, but soon decided to make a disciplinary move to anthropology in order to be able to work not only with texts, but also with people. Her first fieldwork brought her to the Nablus region (West Bank) where she conducted research on transformations in family relations and the division of labour in the rural areas. After graduation, she was appointed as part-time lecturer at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam.

In 1987, she received a PhD research grant and returned to the Nablus region to begin her doctoral research on women and property. This project set out to investigate under what circumstances women claim property rights, when they are prevented from doing so, and in which contexts they give up property in order to gain other advantages. While ethnographic fieldwork, including the collection of topical life stories of women from very different walks of life, is central to this study, her use of court records has enabled her to address major historical changes in women’s ability to ne-

ISIM Chair at the University of Amsterdam Annelies Moors

gotiate their rights to property. In 1992, she obtained her PhD from the University of Amsterdam; a revised version of her dissertation was published under the title: *Women, Property and Islam. Palestinian Experiences 1920-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

The following years, Annelies Moors also held appointments at the Department of Anthropology at Leiden University and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her work on women and property led her to further develop two lines of research. As gold jewellery turned out to be a major form of property that a large number of women have access to, she further investigated the material and emotional meanings of gold jewellery to its wearers. Shifting notions about the value of different types of gold have not only implications for women’s economic security, but are also central to processes of identity formation and negotiations of status. Next to this, her work on the Nablus *shari’a* court led her to continue

work on gender and family law, and, more specifically, to address the relations between processes of state formation, the nature of legal texts and women’s individual and collective strategies.

In 1995 Annelies Moors obtained a research grant to work on ‘the body politics of photography’. Dealing with a great variety of published photographs, such as early 20th-century picture postcards, Israeli and Palestinian postcards from the 1970s-1990s, illustrations in *National Geographic* magazine, and photo-histories published by various interested parties, this project investigates how such imagery represents Palestinian women as emblems of national, religious, class and local identities. In many, sometimes ambiguous and even contradictory, ways these pictures are implicated in debates about modernity and cultural authenticity.

Starting in 1998 Annelies Moors was invited to teach at the Women’s Studies Centre of the University of Sana’a. She designed and taught three intensive courses (in Ara-

bic) on qualitative social science methods and on analysing gender in text and images. Advising students about issues of methodology for a wide variety of research projects was a great opportunity for her to be engaged in Yemeni society. It also enabled her to conduct research on women’s narratives about covering or uncovering the face, and to analyse how these changing styles of dress relate to notions of modernity and women’s involvement in the public sphere.

Apart from her publication on *Women, Property and Islam*, Annelies Moors is the co-editor of *Discourse and Palestine: Power, Text and Context* (1995). She has also published numerous articles on Islamic family law, visual representation, cultural politics, and the biographic method. Her appointment to the ISIM Chair at the University of Amsterdam commenced on 1 January 2001. ◆

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

Human Rights and Islam

Workshop Report
KITTY HEMMER

Every orthodoxy starts as a heresy’, as Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im pointed out at the workshop ‘Human Rights and Islam’, organized by the ISIM on 22 January 2001. With this remark, addressed to an audience of Dutch ambassadors residing in the Asian and Middle-Eastern Islamic countries, An-Na’im wished to stress that the acknowledgement of universal human rights by Islamic countries is a process, and that Western diplomats should be attentive to, and create spaces for, dissenting voices from within. This stance was shared by the other two speakers at the workshop: Cassandra Balchin, Deputy Office coordinator of the NGO Women Living Under Muslim Laws, and Karim Ghezaoui, coordinator of regional projects for the Arab and Asia-Pacific regions at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva.

The workshop was part of the annual Ambassadors Conference in which all Dutch ambassadors convene at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. Given that human rights are important to Dutch foreign policy, the Ministry and the ISIM decided to devote a morning session to the tension between universal rights and local cultures, with particular reference to the Islamic Middle East and Asia.

An-Na’im opened the workshop with a strong argument on the necessity of the legitimization of human rights in Islamic societies, because without strong political support governments are unlikely to accept these rights as legally binding. Moreover, forcing human rights on other societies is considered a violation of the basic right to self-determination. According to An-Na’im, reconciliation between the Islamic and human rights perspectives is possible: the problem is not so much theological, but political. Those who challenge the prevailing notions of Islam need human rights to protect them. An-Na’im, as did the other speakers, also pointed out the disproportionate attention given by the West to political and civil rights, with disregard of the equally important economic, social and cultural rights (see p. 6 of this issue).

Karim Ghezaoui explained the lines of policy of the UN concerning human rights in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Arab world. The OHCHR believes in national capacity-building for promotion and protection of human rights, but also fosters regional exchanges of experiences between national human rights institutions, and cooperation with regional partners.

‘Human rights and domestic violence’ was the theme of the last speaker, Cassandra Balchin. Balchin offered significant examples of how the West tends to view the Islamic world from a ‘liberal-relativist’ position, and often simplistically targets a particular culture or religion as the cause for certain human rights violations. For instance, a Netherlands-sponsored UN draft resolution on the obligation of states to prevent honour crimes was introduced to the delegations in such a way that it pit some Arab and other Muslim countries against industrialized countries, which consequently led to the abstention of their votes. ‘Try to work out a consensus instead of pushing governments against the wall’, Balchin argued. Another general misconception, she continued, is that secular laws are viewed as less discriminating than Islamic or Islamicized laws. Turkey, a secular state, acknowledges *mitigating* circumstances for the perpetrator of an honour crime, whereas in Pakistan, an Islamic state, the law attaches a harsher punishment for the same crime due to *aggravating* circumstances. It may be evident that violations of human rights have nothing to do with religion or culture, but everything with power.

The session was concluded with a forum discussion which revolved around, among other issues, how to build consensus while allowing for the expression of a critical voice, and how to develop consistent policies. To all participants it was clear that the acceptance of human rights as *really* universal is a time-consuming process. ◆

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The Local Production of Islamic Knowledge

Summer Academy

Seventy-five doctoral and postdoctoral researchers from 33 countries have applied (the deadline having been on January 15) to this year’s international Summer Academy, co-organized by the Working Group Modernity and Islam and the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World. The Summer Academy will be held in cooperation with several European research institutes in Istanbul and the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the Yildiz Technical University, also in Istanbul.

The Summer Academy, which will take place from 3-14 September 2001, will offer the opportunity to 24 young researchers to meet and discuss their research for two weeks in an international and interdisciplinary setting. Martin van Bruinessen (ISIM), Altan Gokalp (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin) and several faculty members of the host University, including Professor Kemali Saybasili, Dr Fulya Atacan and Dr Gencer Özcan, will be joined by the following tutors:

- Professor John Bowen (Center for the Study of Islamic Societies and Civilizations, Washington University in St. Louis)
- Dr Ayşe Caglar (Institut für Ethnologie, Freie Universität Berlin)
- Professor Dale Eickelman (Dartmouth College/ currently a fellow at the - Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin)
- Professor Anke von Kügelgen (Institut für Islamwissenschaft und Neuere Orientalische Philologie, Universität Bern)
- Professor Joergen S. Nielsen (Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations; Selly Oak Colleges; Birmingham)
- Dr Günter Seufert (Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft in Istanbul).

The Academy will be mostly devoted to discussions within working groups, of five to seven participants and two tutors, where the projects of the participants and the general themes are debated. As the Academy should have the character of a workshop, the major challenge for every participant will be to present and rethink his or her work, which in most cases is highly specialized, relating it not only to the overall topic of the academy but also making it relevant to the other participants. The discussions will be based on the projects of the participants and a collection of essential readings. The project descriptions of the participants will be made available in a volume of the journal *Istanbul Almanach*, edited by Orient Institute of the DMG (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft), and on the ISIM website.

A number of guest lectures by Turkish scholars will familiarize the participants with ongoing debates in the host country on the theme of the Academy. The cooperation with the Orient Institute of the DMG, the Institut Français d’Etudes Anatoliennes, the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, and the Netherlands Historical-Archaeological Institute will be an opportunity to become acquainted with their researchers, research facilities, and programmes. Tutors will be asked to give one lecture related to the theme of the Academy. These lectures will be open to the public. ◆

Requests for a programme of the Summer Academy may be requested, no earlier than July 2001, from either Georges Khalil (khalil@wiko-berlin.de) or Dick Douwes (douwes@rullet.leidenuniv.nl).