

Call for Papers: Global Dynamics of Debating and Concluding Shia Marriages

Organizers:

Annelies Moors, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research.
Yafa Shanneik, University of South-Wales.

Venue and date: University of Amsterdam, 25-26 August 2017

Theme: Global Dynamics of Shia Marriages

Particular kinds of ‘Muslim marriages’ have recently been the focus of public debates in Europe and beyond, both in Muslim-majority countries and in settings where Muslims are a minority. Controversies abound about a wide range of marriages, varying from unregistered or polygamous marriages, marriages with parties deemed too young or too old, mixed marriages, to transnational and tourist marriages. While these topics have also been addressed in academic research, most authors have focused on marriages of Sunni Muslims.

Our workshop brings together researchers who are engaged in empirical research about debating and concluding *Shia marriages*, starting from the search for a suitable partner to the celebration of the wedding. Our aim is to gain insight in how and to what extent various strands of Shia Islam— be it in terms of doctrine and religious authority, legal and ethical practices, rituals and everyday life – affect debates about marriages and the ways in which they are concluded. We are, in particular, interested in research about less conventional forms of marriage, including (but not limited to) marriages with Sunni Muslims and non-Muslims and temporary marriages.

We recognize that the boundaries between Sunni and Shia Islam are not self-evident and given, but rather constructed, reproduced and transformed, not least through and in the field of marriage. In a similar vein, whether marriages are deemed more or less conventional is highly contextual, depending on the parties involved, and on whose point of view one adopts. Temporality also matters, as through time new practices become normalized and accepted, while long-existing practices are marginalized and rejected.

For our exploratory workshop, we are interested both in papers that focus on contemporary forms and in those engaging with historical processes, in contributions that deal with Muslim majority countries, with settings where (Shia) Muslims are a minority, as well as with the transnational field. In short, we focus on *the global dynamics of debating and concluding Shia marriages* within the context of economic, political, social, and cultural processes of change.

We invite paper proposals from various academic disciplines (such as anthropology, legal studies, social history, religious studies, media studies) and theoretical perspectives. We intend to bring together researchers whose work is *grounded in solid empirical research* in relation to *broader societal developments*. We prefer papers that engage in-depth with a limited set of questions over papers that present broad overviews or general descriptions.

Papers may include, but are not limited to, the following sets of empirical questions:

* *Debates about marriage*: What kinds of Shia marriages have become problematized ('framed as a problem'), who are the main parties involved (such as religious authorities, state functionaries, lay persons, media practitioners), what lines of argumentation do they present and what media and formats do they use? How do these debates circulate, what audiences are targeted and how do these respond? Do ethnicity, nationality, race, class, education or generation make a difference in how these marriages are evaluated?

* *Concluding a marriage*: What forms of dating/non-dating are emerging? How are marriage contracts concluded, what formats are used, who are present, and who authorize these marriage contracts? How are weddings and other festivities celebrated? At which moment do the various parties concerned consider the couple married?

* *Temporary marriage (zawaj mu'qqat, mut'a or sigheh)*: While we are interested in a wide range of less conventional forms of marriage, temporary marriages are a strong example as one of the most often debated forms. How have 'temporary marriages', as a strong marker of Shia distinction but also presented as a solution to contemporary problems of delayed marriage, travelled as a concept and as a practice beyond Shia circles? How does concluding a temporary marriage relate to other forms of (non-)marriages (permanent marriages, 'white marriages', or cohabitation without marriage)?

We are interested in papers that related these questions to broader societal developments, such as:

- New forms of wealth and precarity that affect gender and generational relations, including those affecting the notion of 'the male provider' or the dower
- Emergent forms of neo-nationalism and the culturalization of citizenship, as well as changing communal relations, both with other Muslims and non-Muslims, that reproduce, solidify or transgress particular kinds of *boundaries*
- Increased *mobility and immobility*, growing transnational networks (including social media) and increased state surveillance, the insecurity of wars and war-like conditions, that enable or impede particular kinds of marriages
- Emergent youth cultures, new aesthetic styles, processes of commodification and (anti-) consumption cultures, that affect the *cultural politics* of marriage, dating practices and the celebration of weddings.

For the participants that are selected we cover a maximum of three hotel nights (if travelling from abroad). For a limited number of scholars without resources we will also cover (part of) the travel costs (you need to indicate this when you send your paper proposal).

Format of the workshop:

This is an exploratory workshop, that aims at a thorough discussion of individual papers. Full draft papers will be circulated well in advance. Please note that participants will *not* present their own paper. Instead, each paper will be presented either by another participant or by an external referent with the author of the paper present to answer questions and make further

comments. We expect this framework to stimulate in-depth discussions of the papers presented. Hence, participation is only possible if the draft paper is submitted in time. The organizers aim to publish (a selection of) the papers either as an edited volume or as a special issue of an academic journal.

Deadline for abstract submission: 1 October 2016

Abstracts of 200-300 words need to specify the empirical research (sources and methods) the paper is based on and the broader questions addressed. We also need a short bio of up to 200 words. The abstract and the bio need to be send as one email attachment in MS Word format to shiamarriageworkshop@gmail.com with ‘abstract and bio’ and your last name in the subject heading.

Researchers without resources who would like to be considered for a travel bursary need to indicate this when submitting the abstract.

Timeline

1 October 2016: Deadline for abstract submission

1 November 2016: Notification of acceptance

1 July 2017: Deadline complete draft paper of between 5000 – 8000 words, including a list of references and footnotes

25-26 August 2017: Workshop

1 October 2017: Selection of paper for publication

1 January 2018: Submission of rewritten papers

The workshop is organized in conjunction with the ERC-funded research project on ‘Problematizing “Muslim Marriages”: Ambiguities and Contestations’ hosted by the University of Amsterdam, see <http://religionresearch.org/musmar2014/>