

GUEST EDITORS' INTRODUCTION: RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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This special issue brings together six articles focused on the broad topic of religious marriages in the Mediterranean. The idea of convening scholars to consider this topic emerged through conversations among the three of us several years back, and resulted in a two-day, interdisciplinary conference held in Malta in March 2018.¹ The articles in this special issue were originally presented at the conference, where we came to appreciate the rich diversity of current scholarship on religious marriages in Mediterranean settings and took particular note of the wide range of disciplines from which it emerged — including history, anthropology, law, religious studies and cultural studies, among others. It was immediately evident that the papers resonated with one another, and strong themes emerged. In this editorial introduction we focus first on two themes that run through the papers. Next, we briefly introduce each paper and highlight its connection to the themes and its other specific contributions to burgeoning scholarship on religious marriages. Finally, we conclude by considering where the study of religious marriages in the Mediterranean may be headed in the future.

Beginning with our initial interest in the topic of religious marriages in the Mediterranean, we have been relatively unconcerned with questions of definition. Specifically, the project of defining what is meant by ‘religious marriages’ is not one taken up directly by us or by our authors. Rather, we have preferred to endorse a plural sense of religious marriages that emerges through, and is illustrated by, the examples provided by our authors. Undeniably, at certain moments the category ‘religious marriage’ attains a discursive clarity, particularly through the lens of the state and/or religious institutions that recognise certain marriages as legitimate, as against other relationships. There can be significant consequences to this selective (non-) recognition; some of which were addressed by Prof. Annelies Moors, in delivering the conference’s keynote speech, titled ‘Problems with Regularising Religious Marriages’. While discussing the rise of public policy debates on unregistered, religious marriages, she observed how state institutions’ efforts to define, regularise, restrict or mandate official registration of ‘religious marriages’, often produce contradictory results (Moors 2018).

As an analytic category to be wielded by scholars across different contexts, religious marriage has not proven to be especially useful. At the same time, as the articles published here demonstrate, exploring the diverse ways in which religious marriages are understood, constituted, defended, or delegitimised reveals both the normative role of multiple legal and religious institutions and also the complex politics surrounding marriage. Also consequential in shaping religious marriages are the agentic choices

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made by individuals and groups, which themselves respond tactically and dialogically to the normative spectrum called into being by the political strategies adopted by both state

and religious institutions. The paragraphs below touch briefly on the themes of plural normative orders and of agency, as they relate to religious marriages.

Religious Marriages, Plural Normative Orders and Agency

By broadly considering the topic of religious marriages in the Mediterranean, the articles in this issue address contexts in which a wide variety of legal and religious systems have operated for centuries. Religious marriage is configured by multiple regimes of law and religious practice that structure it as an effect of institutions of governance and of religious faith. In many Mediterranean jurisdictions, civil law governs marriages on the basis of state-endorsed understandings of rights and contracts; with multifarious connections to religious institutions for their conceptualisation, celebration and recognition. Historically and in the contemporary Mediterranean, laws governing marriage recognition have played a critical role in the governance of religious and cultural diversity. Religious marriage laws are, in some circumstances, the substantive source of ‘secular’ matrimonial law and are applied by secular courts. In others they operate separately from state law, are applied by religious courts and may or may not be recognised by the state. Religious marriages are also configured more obliquely through other legal regimes, such as those of citizenship status and migration, given their key role in determining who can enter and reside in a national space through contracting a legally valid marriage. For instance, law sets out whose marriage, conducted outside national jurisdictions, will be recognised through state law or private international law applied locally.

Given unpredictable patterns of migration and sometimes clandestine unregistered marriages, state law does not fully determine when, how, and to what extent religious marriages occur in its jurisdiction; although it can deny in its own terms the validity of any that fail to satisfy particular conditions. Social and cultural practices also shape religious marriage and may generate their own norms, which may exist independently from both state and (official) religious rules. While state law is without question a key factor in shaping marriage generally and also many aspects of religious marriage, the expression ‘state law’ is itself a misnomer. The expression can obscure the legal hybridity that characterises formal law itself; whether this hybridity be identified in the continual diffusion and mixing of legal traditions within any particular jurisdiction (Donlan, Andò and Zammit 2015), or in the interaction between the ‘law in books’ of state legislation and the ‘law in action’ of court jurisprudence (Pound 1910).

The literature on legal and normative pluralism provides some helpful categories with which to orientate this discussion. In his 1986 article ‘What is Legal Pluralism’, the legal anthropologist John Griffiths made a seminal distinction between ‘weak’ or ‘state’ and ‘strong’ legal pluralism (Griffiths 1986). By the former expression he meant to refer to situations where ‘the sovereign (implicitly) commands different bodies of law for different groups in the population’ (Griffiths 1986: 5). Weak legal pluralism is thus pluralism that is recognised by the state and its laws. It forms a technique of governance that seems to accompany all colonial and postcolonial situations. Applied to the regulation of the religious marriages discussed in this issue, the legal systems of Ottoman *Guest Editors’ Introduction: Religious Marriages in the Mediterranean*

Syria, contemporary Lebanon and Israel seemingly reflect precisely such a weak legal pluralism. This develops via the incorporation within the state legal system of different

bodies of religious marriage law, applied by different religious tribunals, as a means of governance of distinct groups in the population.

In contrast to the above, strong legal pluralism is not a system of governance reflected in a particular legal ideology, but rather a description of a particular empirical state of affairs: ‘the coexistence within a social group of legal orders which do not belong to a single system’ (Griffiths 1986: 8). This definition was subsequently drawn upon by William Twining who conceives of legal pluralism as ‘the coexistence of two or more autonomous or semi-autonomous legal orders in the same time–space context’ (Twining 2010: 476; see also Merry 1988). Such strong legal pluralism draws our attention to scenarios in which couples seek to contract marriages which obey the rules of an autonomous religious tradition even if these marriages are not recognised by — and may even contradict key tenets of — state law. Such a scenario is documented in this issue in regard to Italy. Elsewhere, Ibtisam Sadegh and David Zammit have highlighted how, in regard to unregistered Muslim marriages in Malta, spousal agency is directed towards forming marriages which can be socially perceived as legitimate even if these are unrecognised by official Maltese law (Sadegh and Zammit 2018).

There is thus a critical connection between a strong version of normative pluralism, religious law and the agency of spouses. Agency can be expressed through the tactics of spouses who are ‘inter-legal subjects’ (de Sousa Santos 1996) and who develop particular patterns of conduct in regard to marriage which can come to acquire a normative force independently of *both* state and religious law. What was originally an extra-legal moral norm can come to be ‘juridified’ through the development of an appropriate legal consciousness. Agency can equally be expressed through selective obedience to particular sets of norms; as also through finding and exploiting gaps between different normative orders.

The papers we publish in this issue document how legal agency (Hirsch 2006) is expressed in a variety of differing socio-political contexts. Those by Shifra Kisch, Benedetta Panchetti and Christine Lindner document the working of the Ottoman *millet* system and how it continues to leave its mark on jurisdictions like Lebanon or Israel, where only religious marriage is allowed. Here the recognition of minority religious identities by the state through incorporating separate religious marriage laws/tribunals for different communities, functions as a control system which nudges spouses away from conducting mixed interfaith marriages. In this context spouses deploy their agency in order to contract interfaith marriages — either via the promotion of civil marriage or via the creation of marriages which are formally homologous and substantially interfaith zones of ecumenical inter-religious dialogue and cross-fertilization.

By contrast, Italy and the post-Reconquista Spanish state — documented by Federica Sona and Paul Sant-Cassia respectively — do not easily recognise different religious identities through state marriage law. Sona makes clear that while on paper the form of an Islamic marriage is allowed in Italy, in practice bureaucratic hurdles ensure that Islamic marriages may not be easily celebrated and registered in Italy. Thus here unrecognised religious marriages acquire new importance as spouses use their agency to contract religious marriages that validate their religious identities and use them partly to enable unions which would not be recognised by state law and partly to find ways to legitimise marriages which would be recognised both by their state of origin (in the case of migrant spouses from the Maghreb) and in Italy. In the process they creatively engage with, apply and to some extent re-interpret both state and Islamic laws.

Themes and Subthemes in Specific Articles

Paul Sant-Cassia's paper focuses on interfaith marriages in the Ottoman Balkans and in Muslim and post-Reconquista Spain. It seeks to question the concept of a 'mixed marriage' by exploring and relativising the concept of 'mixedness' itself. Sant-Cassia proposes that we re-conceive the significance of mixed marriages as relative and shifting according to a number of variables; including the overarching political and social organisation of the polity in which they take place, the patterned social relationships that develop between different groupings, and the relationship between the different religious rules that govern marriage and the tactics of the spouses. Sant-Cassia's views on tactics draw upon De Certeau, who contrasted institutional strategies with the tactics by which individuals navigate through and resist these strategies (De Certeau and Rendall 1984). In the case of the interfaith marriages he is considering, tactics 'emerge as subversive flashes of adjustment of individuals to dominant power structures'. This approach, which paradoxically identifies subversive agency in the particular manner in which individuals *obey* external normative structures, is then further developed by Sant-Cassia, who argues that tactics can transform into strategies and even what Pierre Bourdieu called habitus (Bourdieu 1990). Over time these tactics can build into a structurally patterned response shared by people who, through their offspring, succeed in re-producing themselves as groups which possess a consciously ambivalent and interstitial camouflaged socioreligious identity. Through a process of ethnogenesis, these groups may retrospectively re-member themselves as 'intentionally distinct'.

Sant-Cassia proceeds to situate his analytical framework on interfaith marriages and their results within an early modern Mediterranean setting marked by two contrasting forms of overarching political/social organisation: the Spanish 'pressure cooker' which seeks to homogenise diverse ethno-religious identities and the 'Macedonian Salad' which preserves the differences and puts them to use via a hierarchical ethno-religious division of labour (Gellner 1983). Furthermore, the normative background against which Mediterranean mixed marriages are contracted is composed of the religious rules relating to marriage and to the re-production of religious identities of the three Prophetic religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Sant Cassia is careful to present these different religious rules in a way which highlights the overlaps and intersections between them and which shows how they cannot simply be presented as mirror images of one another. He demonstrates how the tactical application of these rules by particular couples yields four different 'ideal types' of traditional interfaith marriages: 'conversive', 'predatory', 'restorative' and 'dissolutive'. In particular, he explores how the conversion of a single man to Christianity in the 'pressure cooker' model or to Islam in the 'Macedonian salad' polity could precede a mixed marriage with a woman from the group the man had left behind. This kind of marriage would be a covert mixed marriage in the 'pressure cooker model' while it would be an overtly mixed and religiously acceptable marriage in the

‘Macedonian salad’ polity. Thus, as Sant-Cassia shows, obedience to official religious norms can also simultaneously be subversive tactical conduct and the understanding of whether a marriage is mixed or not can vary depending not only on the overarching political organisation, but also on the way the spouses themselves construe identity and affinity. Sant-Cassia’s examples lead to the provocative conclusion that certain forms of patterned interfaith marriages had a profound impact on the socio-religious landscape with the result, depending on the context, of possible ethnogenesis via the creation of a crypto-Christian or crypto-Jewish identity.

Christine Lindner also explores the possibility of ethnogenesis. Her paper focuses on Syrian Protestant marriages in the early to mid-nineteenth century and is structured around the central question of whether these marriages succeeded in introducing new kinds of marriage and family models, underpinning the development of a distinct Syrian Protestant community identity. The early Protestant marriages she describes are linked to conversions to Protestantism; which can also form part of spouses’ tactics to distance themselves from their ethno-religious communities of origin and/or to effectively dissolve a previous marriage with an Orthodox or Catholic co-religionist. While the Protestant marriages these spouses concluded were not interfaith unions; they were nonetheless mixed in the sense that the partners were often converts to Protestantism from diverse Christian ethno-religious backgrounds. Furthermore, Lindner is clear that the Protestant marriages themselves were understood and presented as an opportunity to experience a modern companionate union unlike the traditional arranged marriage.

Unlike Sant-Cassia’s broad-brush depiction of overarching systems for governing cultural and religious diversity, Lindner provides a more nuanced analysis of the specific Ottoman-Syrian political/normative context within which these Protestant marriages were concluded. This is because: (1) she documents a period of transition coinciding with the onset of the Tanzimat reforms and: (2) she looks at the way in which spouses creatively navigate and juggle the ‘official legal pluralism’ composed not only of normative diversity, but also of different religious courts; each with the authority to decide marriage and other ‘personal status’ issues for a distinct ethno-religious community. She thus shows how one of the Protestant converts successfully appealed to the Ottoman court in order to free herself from the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Bishop’s court and to be allowed to finalise a Protestant marriage.

Within this context, where religious diversity was expressly acknowledged in the official communal *millet* system, spouses’ efforts to tactically exploit the resulting ‘weak legal pluralism’ to facilitate Protestant conversions/marriages did eventually result in the creation of a new Protestant *millet* with its own separate marriage laws and jurisdictional authorities. Yet while this might appear to be an explicit example of ethnogenesis enabled by a new form of ‘companionate’ religious marriage, Lindner shows how this new marriage model quickly lost its religious distinctiveness by coming to be subsumed within the broader Syrian cultural movement in favour of ‘modern companionate marriage’ and because the persistence of extended family links to non-Protestant family members enabled new forms of ‘interfaith relationships’ which blurred the boundaries of the new Protestant millet.

While the relationships between Protestant and non-Protestant family members that

Lindner explores may have been officially regarded as interfaith relationships cutting across the boundaries of the millet system; it is likely that they were internally regarded as relationships between individuals who belonged to the same clan. By contrast, Shifra Kisch focuses on marriages which are officially regarded as homologous and internally regarded as interfaith. She explores the strong link between marriage and conversion in the trajectories of Palestinian Bedouins and their Romanian wives. In her case studies, the Romanian brides accompany their grooms back to their hometowns in the Naqab; where they are requested to formally convert to Islam and marry their partners before the Qadi at the local Sharia courts. Kisch's contribution analyses the implications of religious marriages and conversions of these (religiously, ethnically, and by nationality) mixed couples and investigates how the conversion is understood and validated by the parties involved as well as the Qadi who requests non-Muslim brides' conversion. These 'marriage conversions', explains Kisch, are not religiously motivated and cannot be understood outside the context of marriage. They should nevertheless not be set aside, as Kisch demonstrates their importance lies in establishing religiously, socially and state recognized relationships while creating unique spaces for interreligious practices involving the production and reproduction of religious categories and interfaith relations by both the institutions and participants.

The couples' decision to marry in religious ceremonies is partly dictated by the Israeli legal system which does not facilitate civil marriage and submits couples to the policy of religious courts; a construction inherited from the Ottoman millet system. The Qadi proudly asserts the state recognition of the Sharia court and even acknowledges his (religious) jurisdiction to marry a Muslim man and a Christian woman; however, he paradoxically asserts the importance that the bride convert to Islam with the very purpose of avoiding these mixed marriages. By applying the notion of judicial policy, the Qadi argues the necessity to 'consider civil law' and avoid possible complications and ambiguities that an openly interfaith marriage may create (such as in the case of divorce). These courts acknowledge the diversity of the legally hybrid system they are embedded in; but in practice deploy this normative hybridity to serve social and political frameworks committed to keeping religious communities apart.

On the other hand, the Romanian brides do not understand the conversion as imposed upon them. On the contrary, they consider the religious conversion as intrinsic to the marriage process and in fact, despite the existence of certain alternatives, such as marrying abroad, very few inquired any further and only two couples employed such alternatives. Kisch demonstrates how the active conformity of the Romanian brides with the established rules of conversion and marriage, creates a need for a counter gift of love and tolerance from their husbands and in-laws. Marriage conversions therefore establish an accessible vehicle for the Christian brides' incorporation into the Bedouin community. While conversion seems to confirm religious divides, Kisch's contribution provides an excellent example of how at grassroots level, marriage conversions form a privileged site of encounter, mixing and cross-fertilization of (Muslim and Christian) religious practices.

Gianluca Parolin's contribution continues our consideration of religious marriage as situated within intersecting legal, religious, social, political, and cultural discourses. His article focuses on popular culture as a site for exploring sensitive areas of religious

marriage and family life in Egypt. Enormously popular television dramas depict the negotiation of familial relationships by ordinary people acting in the midst of broader debates over class aspirations, gender norms, and interfaith relations. Parolin's analysis of a controversial drama highlights two issues that raise legal, moral, political, and faith concerns: interfaith romantic (potentially marital) relationships and single motherhood as a choice. The issues are certainly counter-normative in Egypt, yet, as depicted in the drama, the characters are not forced to cross lines into illegality. Instead, these subtle and intriguing examples serve as a lens on the limits and equivocations of contemporary law. Also illuminated is the legal consciousness of characters — that is, their ideas about what the law is and how they might use it (or not), as they craft strategies that aim to fulfil their own interests while not running (too far) afoul of law or social mores.

The depiction of religious marriage through television drama affords the opportunity to consider agency differently and more deeply in comparison to other forms of analysis. In these dramas motivation and other elements of the thought process behind actions related to religious marriage are depicted over time and in specific contexts where their meaning can be imbued with multiple and variegated interpretations. Relatedly, individuals' actions can be viewed through the corresponding reactions of family members, neighbours, and others in the community. These dynamic interchanges make clear the ways in which broader normative discourses (e.g., law, religion, and culture) shape individual strategies and outcomes. Parolin's contribution allows for a complex consideration of what is at stake for people when they take a position on religious marriage — family honor? Class aspirations? Communal purity? Reformist politics? State ideology? In 'testing the boundaries ... of marriage taboos', characters in fictional dramas can take risks that provide inspiration or caution to viewers who might be considering similar courses of action. As Parolin hints, the cancellation of the drama before its final episodes aired makes clear that public negotiation of the norms of religious marriage is a high-stakes, highly politicised endeavour in Egypt and likely other contexts as well.

The theme of negotiating religious and legal plurality is also taken up by Federica Sona, whose article focuses on how Italy-based couples and families negotiate marriages across state and religious barriers in ways that have an impact on compliance with *shari'ah*. Thus Sona contributes to our understanding of interfaith marriage while also exploring the intermarriage that results when partners who seek to marry have crossed national borders. Sona's research is based on over 200 interviews conducted in Italy. After describing Islamic textual approaches to interfaith and other forms of intermarriage, Sona advances the argument that couples display considerable flexibility and innovation, as they navigate between state law and *shari'ah*. The analysis presented highlights the cases of five couples whose partnerships span a diverse array of configurations (of religion and nationality), strategies, and outcomes, including one couple who are married under state and Islamic law and another who live together with neither legal nor religious recognition of their partnership.

Sona's examples demonstrate the need for broadening our consideration of the normative frames that shape religious marriages, including their formal and informal

institutional instantiations and practices. Specifically, obtaining the papers and permissions necessary to conduct a state- and *shari'ah*-compliant marriage might require engaging Italian civil authorities, consular officials, religio-legal officials in a partner's home country, and immigration authorities, among others. Even then a clear path to intermarriage is not always possible. Sona identifies formal barriers, such as an Italian law (now defunct) that required proof of residency for couples to marry with civil effects. Barriers can also be an artifact of practice rather than an element of system design. Similarly, loopholes can emerge whereby impediments to state- or *shari'ah*-compliance (e.g., the polygamous past of a Muslim husband-to-be) are ignored or evaded. Such intricacies highlight the powerful shaping role of legal frameworks in controlling access to religious marriage for some couples. This also makes these frameworks targets of politicisation, such as far-right efforts to use them to discriminate against non-Christians and migrants generally.

Notwithstanding the formidable barriers to achieving a marriage that meets both state and religious requirements, couples gamely attempt to do just that and thereby display extraordinary agentive capacity in the face of an increasingly complex plurality of normative orders. Their strategies include ignoring certain legal or religious provisions, engaging in prevarication (including false conversion), and traveling outside Italy to obtain the necessary marriage permission or celebration (e.g., to San Marino or an Islamic country, depending on the need). Sona's findings raise the interesting question of why some couples go to such lengths when others are willing to give up on marriage entirely.

Similar to Sona, Panchetti is also concerned with formal law in her contribution. Predominantly, she focuses on the intersections between law, religion, politics, and identity in Lebanon. Panchetti demonstrates how marriage laws serve as a site for contestation in a broader, politicised struggle over identity in Lebanon. She discusses how several failed attempts have been made to legislate for civil marriages in Lebanon; in the belief that it would reinforce national identity, over religious sectarianism. Lebanese religious authorities have, however, strongly opposed civil marriages, arguing that this would establish a threat to endogamous marriage practices and the existing sectarian, multi-confessional system.

Panchetti's paper demonstrates that civil marriages in the Lebanese context are strongly linked to secular and interfaith couples; often these couples would go abroad, generally to Cyprus, to celebrate civil marriages and subsequently register these marriages in Lebanon. The couples consider their civil marriages as an act of political activism to pressure state authorities to pass civil marriage legislation and strengthen the national Lebanese identity over religious affiliation. While the Lebanese state embraces the discourse of religious diversity and legally embedded communities, Panchetti demonstrates how it nevertheless expressly prohibits civil marriages. Due to their close link to secular and mixed marriages; the existence of such marriages is perceived by the Lebanese state and religious authorities as threatening to the status quo of multiconfessional coexistence, rather than encouraged for the same purposes. The legal recognition of religious diversity through separate religious marriage regimes is therefore, as in the political context of the Israeli 'post-millet' legal system (Kisch, this contribution), observed as a hostile impediment towards interreligious relations and

marriages. However once again this paper demonstrates that at grassroots level, secular and mixed couples continue to strategise and find ways to create vacuums of non/interreligious relations.

Next Directions in Religious Marriages in the Mediterranean

We end this introduction with a brief reflection on where scholarship on religious marriages might be headed, noting that it will be shaped by three sociolegal and sociopolitical trends, each of which has gained strength over the last two decades. The first of these trends is the secularisation of marriage and other elements of family and social life that is occurring in many parts of the world. Evidence of this trend can be found in the increase in the number of people who, in marrying, seek no connection with any religious tradition or institution. Their unions are effected through civil marriage, domestic partnerships, co-habitation, and civil unions. While prominent in Europe, this trend continues to create commentary and anxiety in some national jurisdictions, and, as several of our articles show, is the subject of fierce politics in contexts where a state religion is recognised, where the state engages in governance through religious communities and institutions, or where a majority religion remains demographically and institutionally significant.

The second trend emerges from the increasing movement of people across the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean region has always been a site for migration in all directions; however, current migration is taking new forms, with new consequences, such as the presence of newly-arrived populations in European states, many of them migrants from the global South, Middle East, and Eastern Europe, who seek to marry in religious traditions (most notably Islam) other than the majority religion of the nation, which is generally a version of Christianity. Marriages among these new migrants can have the effect of increasing the diversity of forms of religious marriage, while in some instances bolstering the connection between marriage and religious faith with the effect of reinvigorating the concept of religious marriage, even in contexts where secularism is also gaining ground. In and around the Mediterranean these days, is it possible to talk about religious and civil laws of marriage without invoking the parallel national, regional, and international legal frameworks governing the status of people on the move across borders? New scholarship on religious marriage will need to take account of how the scrutiny of all aspects of migrants' personal lives, as an entailment of the securitisation of migration, casts doubt on the validity of the marriages and marital intentions of particular migrants, depending on their migration status.

Finally, the third trend is the emphasis on reform as understood through a human rights lens. Four of the articles in this issue are situated in the Middle East, a particularly important venue for appreciating the durability of religious marriage in the Mediterranean region, given the first trend mentioned above. In light of the volatile political shifts across the Middle East and North Africa since 2011, scholarship will continue to explore how the effects of reform efforts have influenced religious marriage. Recent reforms in Tunisia are a significant case in point that might be replicated elsewhere. Another type of reformist trend is reflected in the movement toward marriage equality, which, in guaranteeing same sex couples the right to marry, comes with the rationale of recognising

the human rights and equality of all persons. Malta — the site for the interdisciplinary conference that resulted in this issue — is among the nations leading the way with a Marriage Equality Act, bolstered by related policy measures such as Malta’s groundbreaking Gender Identity Act and earlier statutory recognition of civil unions (2014) and cohabitation (2017). Marriage equality appears to be on the rise globally, although it faces opposition, not least of which comes from religious institutions seeking to retain control over the definition of marriage. How the politics of marriage equality plays out across the Mediterranean will certainly be of interest to scholars in the coming years.

These three trends, which come about for different reasons and have global, regional, national and local dimensions, form the conceptual and political context in which contemporary religious marriage is understood and practiced and will undoubtedly shape emerging scholarship on religious marriages. This issue offers conceptual and theoretical tools to frame the approaches of scholars interested in explicating the past, present, or future of religious marriages in the Mediterranean. As the summaries above make clear, the Mediterranean has long been characterised by a complex landscape of normative pluralisms of varying degrees of strength and also varying interrelations with religious traditions. This complex interweaving of state and religious normative orders gives rise to the wide range of marital strategies undertaken by couples (and their families), whose choices are shaped by the politics surrounding religious marriage in any particular time and place.

Note

1. The conference was convened by the Civil Law Department of the University of Malta and the Mediterranean Institute research group on Belief, Identity and Exchange in conjunction with the European Research Council project ‘Problematizing “Muslim Marriages”: Ambiguities and Contestations’ hosted by the University of Amsterdam, (ERC Project 2013-AdG-324180).

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