

I U A E S

International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences

Commission on the Middle East

in cooperation with Orient-Institut Istanbul

Online via Zoom, August 7-9, 2021

(Zoom link and password will be sent in late July)

The Re-invention of Traditions in the Middle East

Chair of the Commission: Dr Soheila Shahshahani

Executive Secretary of the Commission: Dr Farniyaz Zaker

Technical Hosting: Dr. Katja Rieck

Panels:

1. Is Patriarchy in Crisis in the Middle East? (chair: Soraya Tremayne)
2. Educational Perspective on Immigration in the Middle East (chair: Esther Hertzog)
3. Is there a Middle Eastern Body? (chair: Claudia Liebelt, Melike Sahinol)
4. Economic Anthropology (chair: Husain Ilahian)
5. Religious Rituals' Reflection of Current Social Conditions in the Middle East (chair: Ingvild Flaskerud)
6. Eyebrows and Eyelashes in the Middle East (chair: Christian Bromberger)
7. NGO's or another face of nations in the Middle East
8. Research in Progress (chair: Soheila Shahshahani)
9. Ethno-History of the Middle East: Accounts of Pandemic (chair: Fakhri Haghani)
10. Visual Anthropology and Film Projection (chair: Mina Rad)
11. Re-articulation of Tradition: Discourse Shift, Cultural Change and Politics (chair: Mehrdad Arabestani)
12. Environment including animals in the area

1. Is Patriarchy in Crisis in the Middle East? (chair: Soraya Tremayne)

Is Patriarchy in crisis in the Middle East?

The Muslim Middle Eastern cultures are generally portrayed as patriarchal with men, as heads of family, resorting to violence and aggression, especially against women, to maintain maximum control over the family. A considerable body of contemporary work on patriarchy in the Middle East exists, which challenges these stereotypes and provides a more comprehensive picture. These studies have made major contributions to a more nuanced understanding of patriarchal systems. Among these, Deniz Kandiyoti's seminal work, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' (1988), provides a more "culturally and temporally grounded understanding of patriarchal systems than the unqualified, abstract notions of patriarchy encountered in contemporary feminist theory". Or, Suad Joseph's 'Patriarchal Connectivity' (1993) and Marcia Inhorn's 'Reconceiving Muslim Men' (2018) clearly demonstrate that patriarchal systems are as much about other forms of relating to the family such as love and emotions and not just limited to control and violence.

The impact of the rapid spread of globalisation during the past few decades has meant that patriarchy appears to be more under the threat of vanishing than at any other time in history. Demographic changes, transformations in the structure of the family, changes in gender and generational relations, the rise in literacy, especially in female literacy, and the increase in women's participation in public life, are some of the factors responsible for this weakening of patriarchal power. In self-defence, and to survive, patriarchy has had to change guise and appear under various forms to ensure some degree of control and prevent a total disruption of the family connections. However, alongside of the weakening or the transformation of the patriarchal systems, the Middle East has also witnessed a revival of fundamentalist movements, including an attempt at restoring patriarchal values and men regaining control of the family and their threatened masculinity.

This panel calls for papers on any range of the issues reflecting the change, persistence, disappearance, or revival of patriarchy in the Middle Eastern and North African cultures, and in the diaspora.

Proposals could include, but are not limited to, any of the following topics:

- Has patriarchy vanished in the Middle East or is disguised under other forms?
- What are the determining factors behind the weakening, or disguised forms of patriarchy: class, gender, generational, ideological, others?
- Has the weakening of patriarchal systems, and an increase in the participation of women in the public sphere, meant a shift from a patriarchal to matriarchal based structures of power?
- Whether and to what extent the attempt to revive the traditional patriarchal systems are succeeding?

Please send an abstract of about 300 words, with a short bio to:

Email: soraya.tremayne@anthro.ox.ac.uk

2. Educational Perspective on Immigration in the Middle East (chair: Esther Hertzog)

Educational perspectives on immigration in the Middle East

Immigration is a prominent global social phenomenon in the last century. In 2015 more million people around the world, who consisted about 3.3% of the world's 243than population, left their home countries to live in other countries, either willingly or unwillingly. This growing trend emerges from divergent backgrounds and involves economic, political,

cultural and other characteristics. The Middle East has also witnessed some crucial waves of immigration, on the background of wars, political and religious executions, economic hardships, and so on.

The panel will discuss this phenomenon from various educational perspectives that are connected to emigrating from one country to another in the Middle East but also from one region to another in the same country. It will relate to educational issues that are relevant mainly to immigration in the context of schools. Issues that are of interest can be, for instance: the hardships of children who have to face new, unfamiliar social surroundings and often have to deal with hostility and suspicion; in many cases they need to learn a new language and to experience unfamiliar learning methods. State (or regional) policies and mechanisms of allocating resources to schools that handle the absorption of migrants/refugees/displaced people's children is another topic of interest for this panel. Also, ethnic, gender, national, religious angles that represent a significant role in studying the connection between immigration and education are welcome.

We invite presentations that will discuss the connection between immigration/displaced people/ refugees and education in the Middle East. Relevant subjects can include: immigration policies with regard to educational rhetoric and practices. Thus, for instance, segregating practices employed towards children of immigrants, labor migrants or refugees can bring up some interesting insights; gender perspectives that are involved in integration processes are relevant to many contexts where migrant children are struggling to be accepted; social tensions among veteran children and new comers in schools provide another important subject of exploration; language issues present another considerable barrier on immigrants' children path to integrate in their new schools; The role of cultural differences among the "native" children and the foreign children, who are often perceived as "outsiders", contain some significant implications.

Please send an abstract of about 300 words, with a short bio to:

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3. Is there a Middle Eastern Body? (chair: Claudia Liebelt, Melike Sahinol)

Is there a Middle Eastern Body?

The human body can be explored as both a product and an active producer of society. On the one hand, media images, public discourses and social norms affect the ways in which we perceive, shape and enact our bodily existence. On the other, human bodies are a major tool for world-making, fundamental to our understanding not only of our selves, but also of the ways we conceptualize our material interrelatedness and more-than-human being in the world. Ever since the bodily turn in the social sciences, a plethora of concepts have theorized the human body at the junction between individual and society, self and other. For example, in concepts such as the "flexible body" (Martin 1994), the "bugged body" (Lachmund 1997), or the "body multiple" (Mol 2002) scholars have reflected on the plasticity, materiality and relationality of the human body. Within Middle Eastern studies, the body has been studied in relation to ethical formation (Mahmood 2005), sensorial cultivation (Hirschkin 2006) and more recently, as a site and source of leisure (Deeb and Harb 2014) and desire (Sehlikoğlu 2021). Drawing on anthropological research on aesthetic body modification (Liebelt 2019) and neuroscientific cyborg studies (Şahinol 2016), in this panel we wish to reflect on the role of cultural, historical and political constellations and peculiarities for bodily practices and beings from an interdisciplinary perspective. Critical of earlier orientalist assumptions, we wish to provocatively ask: Is there a Middle Eastern body?

We are particularly interested in contributions that highlight the materiality and aesthetics of socio-culturally produced bodies, their public infrastructures and interconnections with other

living and non-living beings. We welcome studies that reflect on body practices in different social and cultural settings, shedding light on heterogeneous ways of embodied being and doing in different localities in and across the Middle East. We especially welcome studies that draw on recent empirical or ethnographic research in the region.

We invite papers dealing with but not limited to the following questions:

- Are there overarching body politics that affect persons of different genders, social positions, physical capabilities, ethnic identities and religious denominations across the region?
- What kind of bodily practices are conceptualized as “Middle Eastern” and how do various social actors deal with racialized images of Middle Eastern bodies and bodily capabilities?
- What kind of body images, trends and fashions circulate among different social groups in the region and how are they publicly debated, enacted and presented?
- How are bodies cared for or neglected?
- What are the public infrastructures in support of bodily being and what kind of bodies are supported or excluded from these?

Please send an abstract of about 300 words, with a short bio to:

sahinol@oiist.org

claudia.liebelt@uni-bayreuth.de

4. Ethno-History of the Middle East: Accounts of Pandemic (chair: Fakhri Haghani)

Ethno-History of the Middle East: Accounts of Pandemic

As the growing global spread of the COVID-19 contagious disease took place during 2019-2020, numerous scholars turned their attention to the study and accounts of other global pandemics that ravaged many societies throughout the different historical moments. From the Plague of Justinian of the sixth century in Byzantine Empire, the Black Death of the fourteenth century in Europe, Africa, and Asia, and the Flu Pandemic of the nineteenth century in Central Asian Region, to the Sixth Cholera Pandemic of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in India, Middle East, and North African, the Cholera Outbreaks during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Iran, the HIV/Aids Pandemic of the twentieth century, and the Middle East respiratory Syndrome (MERS) of 2012 in Saudi Arabia, ethnographic narratives of the way societies, people, and the governments approached this deadly matter can raise both pedagogical and ethical questions.

We welcome ethno-historical topics and accounts researched and explored that include but are not limited to the political and cultural debates about the causes of the disease, scientific and medical protocols on care, cure, and different methods of containment, socio-economic impacts on mobility of the people, commerce, and trade, rituals of healing and grieve, eating, food, and body infrastructure, hygiene and sanitary approaches, population decrease or increase, social interactions/distancing in relation to gender, class, ethnicity, and race, psychological and traumatic disorders, as well as artistic and imaginative reflections.

Please send an abstract of about 300 words, with a short bio to:

Email: the.fakhrih@gmail.com

5. Re-articulation of Tradition: Discourse Shift, Cultural Change and Politics (Chair: Mehrdad Arabestani)

Re-articulation of Tradition: Discourse Shift, Cultural Change and Politics

"Change" is a key concept for understanding Iran and Middle Eastern societies in general. Changes are constantly happening in cultural norms, lifestyle, economic relations, identification policies, population, and the people's subjectivity or how they interpret their world and behave accordingly. The dialectic relations between waves of globalization, a feeling of being left behind, and desire for modernization and development from one hand, and another the conservative resistance to alteration of the familiar values and ways of life that led to a feeling of identity loss, can be considered as the stimulator of the changes.

However, the procedure of change isn't always straightforward, particularly where the status quo is deeply rooted in time-honored cultural heritages or backed by ideological power that cannot be ignored. Any impulse toward change, in a way or another, has to deal with these inertial forces. Usual strategies of dealing with heritage and traditions include re-articulating them in the new discursive field or excluding them, which inevitably leads to antagonism and competition over meaning.

This panel is intended to look at the concrete cases of traditions in a changing situation by considering the subjects' reception of the changes, re-articulating the traditions, and the antagonisms that emerged as a result.

Please send your **panel proposals** to the chair of the commission, Dr Soheila Shahshahani and Dr. Farniyaz Zaker no later than **May 15th**.

Please send an **abstract** of a maximum of 300 words by **15th of June** with your name, email address, university/institutional affiliation, and a short biography to the corresponding panel organiser(s) and c.c:

Dr. Soheila Shahshahani (Chair of the Commission):

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