

McGill University

**Institute of
Islamic Studies**

**New Approaches to
World Islamic and
Middle East Studies**

March 14-15, 2014

**Thomson House Ballroom
2nd floor
Thomson House
3650 Rue McTavish
Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1Y2
Canada**



**60
YEARS
1952-2012**



McGill

Institute of Islamic Studies
Institut d'études islamiques

Friday, March 14 Morning

History as Lived Experience: Five Intellectuals Navigate the End of the Ottoman Mashriq

Organizer: Laila Parsons

Historians of the Mashriq are paying increasing attention to the very last years of the Ottoman period and to the “post-Ottoman moment” that saw the imposition of the colonial states of the modern Middle East. The scholarly discussion has revolved around overarching themes such as the establishment of colonial/state institutions, changes in communications and other kinds of technologies, colonial discourse and its appropriation by emerging state nationalisms, cultural and social modernities, new understandings of the “secular” and the “religious”, different ways of organizing gender and sex, Ottoman continuities and so on. By contrast, this panel will explore the very last years of the Ottoman period and the “post-Ottoman moment” by starting the analysis with the lived experience of five individuals. By concentrating on the details of their histories, the panel will address the following questions: how did these labels--Historian, Literary Critic, Journalist, Communist, Feminist--serve as categories through which these individuals understood their worlds and constructed their experiences? How much did the Nation and/or the State matter to the way they lived their lives? How did they relate to the Global? to the Local? to the Political? Uncovering the details of lived experience might also prompt other questions: such open-endedness is one of the main points of starting with individuals.

Laila Parsons (McGill University)
Chair and discussant

Dyala Hamza (UdeM)
Professions and Citizenship in the making of the Post-Ottoman Middle East: The Inter-war journeys of one Pan-Islamic journalist and one Pan-Arab historian

Ilham-Khuri-Makdisi (Northeastern)
Artin Madoyan and the Making of Levantine Communism in a post-Ottoman world.

Salim Tamari (Institute of Palestine Studies, Ramallah)
Muhammad Kurd Ali and his conflicted Ottoman/Arab identity: The Syrian-Palestinian Intelligentsia in WWI

Mary Wilson (U.Mass., Amherst)
Daughter, Scholar, Feminist, and Wife: `Anbara Salam al-Khalidi 1897-1986

Friday, March 14 Afternoon

The Impersonal and the Anthropology of Islam

Organizers: Setrag Manoukian and Naveeda Khan

We are interested in modes of thought and action that cannot be accounted through the focus on personhood that is currently preoccupying much anthropology of Islam. The everyday is full of encounters with, and discourses about, forces beyond humans, be those of nature, technology, government or the market. However current analyses, both within and outside the tradition, both scholarly and vernacular, tend to bring all of these modalities back to the person and its productivity: environment, revolution, media or finance are seen as questions of relationships between selves. We are interested in elaborating other accounts of these modes of existence, forms of life, errant thoughts, forces and events. How to think conceptually and ethnographically about all these dimensions that have been with anthropology all along, but are almost forgotten nowadays? It seems to us very promising to think of these as “the impersonal,” to help us set aside the preoccupation with the person but also questions of will, motivation, and intention, to ask how we might begin instead from the non-being, the animal, the event, or the outside to provide a new vantage point for the anthropology of Islam. The outcomes of our experiment will be undoubtedly varied, a new appreciation of the de-personalizing work of modernity and mass media in contemporary Muslim lives, the theological negotiations with the financial market perceived as an impersonal force, jurisprudential and colonial efforts to encapsulate the natural history of destruction indexed by earthquakes, or an expanded ontology that incorporates the voice of a preacher alongside early warning systems on natural disasters (or vice versa). They enable us to question the presumption of anthropocentrism for all times within the archives of Islam and to produce an anthropology of Islam in a new and generative vein.

Setrag Manoukian (McGill University)
Chair and discussant

Samera Esmeir (University of California, Berkeley)
Reflections on the Natural History of Earthquakes: From the Islamic Tradition to Colonization

Daromir Rudnyckij (University of Victoria)
Remaking Risk: The Market and the Impersonal in Islamic Finance

Naveeda Khan (Johns Hopkins University)
The Call to Islam and Early Warning Systems in Bangladesh: The Mutual Absorption of the Religious, the Political and the Natural

Emilio Spadola (Colgate University)
On Impersonal Practices: Modernity, Abstraction, and Embodiment

Friday, March 14 Schedule

9:00-9:30	Introductory Remarks Rula Abisaab (IIS Director), Setrag Manoukian
9:30-11:00	History as Lived Experience: Five Intellectuals Navigate the End of the Ottoman Mashriq
11:00-11:10	Coffee Break
11:10-12:30	History as Lived Experience: Five Intellectuals Navigate the End of the Ottoman Mashriq
12:30-2:00	Lunch Break - in Thomson House Ballroom
2:00-3:30	The Impersonal and the Anthropology of Islam
3:30-3:40	Coffee Break
3:40-5:00	The Impersonal and the Anthropology of Islam

Saturday, March 15 Schedule

9:00-10:30	Middle Eastern Histories of the Present
10:30-10:40	Coffee Break
10:40-12:00	Middle Eastern Histories of the Present
12:00-1:30	Lunch Break - in Thomson House Ballroom
1:30-3:00	Resisting Islamophobia in Islamic Studies: Local and Transnational Contexts and Feminisms
3:00-3:10	Coffee Break
3:10-4:00	Resisting Islamophobia in Islamic Studies: Local and Transnational Contexts and Feminisms
4:00-5:30	Final Round Table Discussion

Saturday, March 15 Morning

Middle Eastern Histories of the Present

Organizer: Malek Abisaab

The panel brings together four distinct studies, which shed light on developments in postcolonial research and the writing of Islamic/Middle Eastern history. They also explore particular confrontations as well as adaptations, which Muslim thinkers made to secular ideas and Western missionary discourses. Ariel Salzman illuminates the background for environmental inquiries within Ottoman Studies linking these inquiries to post-War studies on Middle Eastern and Balkan historical geography and social history. Elizabeth Thompson underscores Rashid Rida's role in the liberal experiment of constitutionalism in Syria at the turn of the twentieth century. Beth Baron explores the gendered confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood and Protestant Missionaries in Egypt during the 1930s. Finally, Peter Gran investigates the discursive link between capitalism, the Muslim Brotherhood and the recent uprisings in Egypt. His study concludes by stressing the current crisis in postcolonial studies.

Malek Abisaab (McGill University)
Chair and discussant

Ariel Salzmänn (Queen's University)
The 'Environmental Turn' in Ottoman History

Elizabeth Thompson (University of Virginia)
Rashid Rida and the 1920 Syrian Constitution: The Last Stand of Islamic Liberalism

Beth Baron (CUNY)
Women Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood

Peter Gran (Temple University)
The Contribution of Postcolonial Discourse to the Understanding of Arab Spring in Egypt

Saturday, March 15 Afternoon

Resisting Islamophobia in Islamic Studies: Local and Transnational Contexts and Feminisms

Organizer: Michelle Hartman

Our part of the workshop will be run as series of presentations and conversations, finishing with an open discussion. The presentations build upon on each participant's previous work in the field and more specifically on their new project-- all of which critically analyze Islamophobias in a series of local, national and transnational contexts. The participants will prepare brief presentations on their specific topics, in relation to the topics of the other participants. The issues addressed will centre around race, religion and gender in relation to growing Islamophobia/s, how movements and organizing can include "internal" critiques while resisting racist discourses about Islam, what roles different feminisms can play in these contexts, and how thinking through local and transnational contexts can advance strategies of resistance.

Michelle Hartman (McGill University)
Chair and discussant

Nadine Naber (University of Illinois at Chicago)
Anti-Imperialist Arab Feminisms: From San Francisco to Detroit, Cairo to Beirut

Stephen Sheehi (University of South Carolina)
Post-Islamophobia: Islamophobia in "Post-Racism" America

Sunera Thobani (The University of British Columbia)
Feminism and Islamophobia: Making Sense of Race, Religion and Gendered Violence

Final Roundtable

Setrag Manoukian will facilitate a final discussion on the state of Islamic Studies with all workshop organizers and participants, and Anaïs Salamon Head Librarian of the Islamic Studies Library at McGill.

Institute of Islamic Studies

60th Anniversary Workshop

New Approaches to World Islamic and Middle East Studies

March 14-15, 2014

This workshop aims at presenting cutting edge work and opening up a space of debate about conceptual and methodological questions in World Islamic and Middle East Studies. In the last fifteen years or so the multidisciplinary area of Islamic/Middle East Studies has undergone major shifts: texts and archives are being approached from new angles, histories are being rewritten, new comparative perspectives are reconfiguring once familiar landscapes, and a new conceptual vocabulary is emerging. We believe that there is no better way to engage these shifts than to reflect on how they shape our current research, and we decided to do so by inviting some of the most exciting scholars in the field to discuss these questions with us. By engaging specific issues and themes, we also wish the workshop to be a platform for reflections around the possibilities and limits of the field itself.

The workshop presents these thematic, disciplinary and methodological concerns through a set of four panels, each organized by a faculty member of the Institute of Islamic Studies. The panels will be preceded by an introduction to the workshop by Rula Abisaab, director of the Institute, and Setrag Manoukian, caretaker of the workshop. A final roundtable will bring together the workshop participants and Anais Salamon, Head Librarian of the Islamic Studies Library at McGill for a discussion on the current state of the assemblage called Islamic Studies.

The Institute of Islamic Studies gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the State of Qatar for this event.

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