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‘Muslim cultural politics’. What’s Islam got to do with it?

Inaugural Lecture

delivered on the appointment to the chair in
Sociaal-wetenschappelijke studie van hedendaagse moslimsamenlevingen
at the Universiteit van Amsterdam
on Thursday 13 March 2003

by

Annelies Moors

Vossiuspers UvA

Mijnheer de rector magnificus, mevrouw de decaan, geachte aanwezigen, dear guests,

A chair in 'the social science study of contemporary Muslim societies', that is the official title of my chair, is both a dream and a nightmare. So, let me start with the nightmarish side of things in order to leave that quickly behind us. Whereas the description of this chair clearly refers to the social sciences, the fact that it also includes the notion 'Muslim societies' produces a certain ambiguity. For doing work on Muslim societies is easily equated with working in the field of 'Islamic studies', a strongly text-oriented field. Of course, 'Islamic studies' has been and still is an important and productive field of study. It is, however, not in this field that I position my academic endeavors and engagements. The more troublesome dimension then comes in when working on 'Muslim societies' is automatically located in the field of 'Islamic studies'. This can easily result in misunderstandings, both with respect to the topics that are seen as legitimate topics of research and concerning the ways in which one goes about doing research.

Having said this, we can now move on to the dreamlike side of things. The description of my chair opens up great possibilities for engaging in research projects that I feel highly committed to. These can be brought together under the overarching theme 'Muslim cultural politics', the research program I have initiated at ISIM. Before elaborating on the three research fields that I am developing within this program, together with colleagues at ISIM, in the Netherlands and abroad, let me first briefly return to the notion 'Muslim societies'.

From Islam to 'Muslim cultural politics'

It is a tricky thing to define societies as Muslim societies. Employing such a notion may easily contribute to homogenizing both the people and the societies involved. It

fits well with a construction of Islam as an all-encompassing system, which easily slips into seeing Islam as determining the actions of the members of such societies. Such a culturalist approach downplays the impact of economic and political structures, it overlooks other axes of differentiation such as class, locality, and ethnicity, and it leaves little space for agency. If such a perspective, coined by Edward Said as Orientalist, has become somewhat less popular in academia, it is still going strong in the mainstream media and in politics.[1]

In contrast, and partially in reaction to such an Orientalist concept, we have witnessed the development of a modernist perspective. This is an approach that universalizes a distinctively modernist understanding of religion as a personal and private belief system, firmly separated from politics and other spheres of life. Such a notion of Islam has gained popularity not only amongst some progressive Muslim intellectuals but it is also a notion that policy makers in Europe like to propagate.[2]

Rather than opting for either an Orientalist or a modernist notion of Islam, this program starts from the multiple ways in which Muslims themselves define Islam both in terms of the ideas they present and the practices they engage in. I do not consider it the task of a social scientist to be prescriptive, but rather to investigate the various perspectives and truth claims that the protagonists of particular positions put forward. This includes, but is not limited to, the two perspectives I just mentioned, the Orientalist and the modernist perspectives that both academic authors and popular writers, both Muslims and non-Muslims may employ. Still, recognizing such a plurality of ideas and practices is not enough. As social scientists we need to understand the contexts within which these are produced and to analyze how some ideas, practices and participants become authoritative while others are increasingly marginalized. In other words, we need to question the politics involved.[3]

This program then focuses on 'Muslim cultural politics', that is shorthand for the politics of culture that Muslims engage in and that they themselves consider in some sense as related to Islam or Muslim culture. In doing so we move away from an essentialist notion of Islam as a thing or an object that shapes people's lives to a more processual approach, that includes how people produce, reproduce and transform culture.

In the following I will discuss three fields of research we are currently working on: that is family law and everyday life, covered dress and fashion, and migrant domestic labor. In all three cases, family dynamics and gender have turned out to be

particularly productive as a prism to work through. This is so, both because the family and gender have a particular symbolic salience and because starting from the family and gender further broadens the notions of 'the political'. It shifts the attention from politics at the level of the state to the daily-lived micro-politics of family relations and the ways in which family ties and the family as an institution, are employed in politics.[4]

In all fields of investigation we link public debates to people's daily lives, focusing on emergent forms of cultural production and performance.[5] This includes how various actors engage in the production of cultural styles and in the reproduction of class and status in everyday life. Such a turn to the everyday is an argument for inclusiveness, for linking the public to the private in terms of how these spheres are produced and constitutive of each other, how they overlap and intertwine. Still it is not the intention here to argue that the daily practices of ordinary people can be seen as flexible and fluid performances and creative productions, while participants in public debates employ essentialist notions of Islam. It is true that participants in public debates often work with contrast schemes such as modern versus traditional, civilized versus ignorant, and westernized versus culturally authentic. Yet, the argument here is that in both cases - in public debates and in everyday life - we need to investigate the various and possibly competing notions of Islam and Muslim culture employed. Let me start with the first field of research within this program on Muslim cultural politics: family law and everyday life.

Family law and everyday life

If conventional accounts of Muslim family law have often concentrated on an analysis of texts, such as those of the founders of the legal schools or the newly codified laws, this project starts from a different angle. It focuses on how people deal with such texts and, more generally, how they engage with legal institutions. [6]

In the 1990s family law was once more hotly contested throughout the Muslim world.[7] In many Muslim majority countries family law is the last stronghold of the religious establishment and the only field of law still based on Islamic notions of morality. Dealing with marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance, family law is central to the reproduction of the social and cultural order. If this in itself makes it a

sensitive field of debate, this is the more so, as gender relations are a central element.

Debates about Palestinian family law are a strong example.[8] After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1994, one pressing issue was how to unify the legal systems of both areas and what sort of legal system to adopt. Prominent members of the shari'a judiciary rapidly took the initiative to ensure separate communal jurisdiction of the shari'a courts; to them it was self-evident that family law fell within their field of expertise and hence under their responsibility. Simultaneously women's groups and NGOs entered the debate, and engaged in projects to identify legal provisions discriminating against women and to propose reforms. With a long history of nationalist engagement and a tradition of secularist cultural politics, they argued on the basis of an equality platform and presented these issues within the framework of human rights and UN conventions. This had been acceptable in other fields of legal reform, such as labor law, but it turned out to be a bone of contention with respect to family law. When they started a series of public discussions on family law, this drew the Islamists into the debate. The Islamists sharply criticized the women's groups for receiving financial support from international organizations, labeled the women involved as 'westernized', and accused them of conspiring to weaken Palestinian society by undermining its most central institution, the family. Their bottom line was that these women had no right to take part in a debate on family law, as they lacked the prerequisite training in and knowledge of Islamic family law.

This then provoked a counter-mobilization of those defending the legitimacy of holding such debates. Not only human rights organizations, women's groups and some political parties defended the organizers of these debates, but also the Palestinian Authority. The latter did so less because it was concerned about the Islamist vision on family relations than because it worried about the mobilizing power of the Islamist rhetoric. Especially the issue of dependence on the West was a charge that could equally well be directed to the Palestinian Authority itself. The net result was that the focus shifted from the substance of family law to freedom of expression.

It would, however, be too simple to present the main contestants as, on the one hand, the men of religion, and, on the other, the women activists. The 'men of religion' include both the religious establishment and the Islamists. Once it became clear that the Islamists were bent on politicizing the issue of family law, the religious establishment distanced itself from such an oppositional Islamist position. Some re-

ligious authorities, especially the judges, were in fact willing to discuss issues women activists had raised, such as early marriage.

Neither were women united on the issue of family law. Among the initiators of the debates on family law, some had argued for an optional civil law, whereas others were more intend on substantial reforms within an Islamic framework. Also, women activists increasingly came to acknowledge that women from different class backgrounds may have different interests with respect to family law. Whereas women professionals have often been the most vocal in arguing for gender equality and hence criticized the notion of the male breadwinner, lower class women may well argue for a better implementation of the maintenance obligations of men towards them. Furthermore, contrasting men of religion and women activists, easily overlooks how Islamist women were implicated in these debates. As said before, the women activists were by and large part of a secularist national tradition. Islamist women considered themselves as part of the Islamist opposition and by and large tended to support their male counterparts.[9]

An analysis of such debates in the 1990s indicates that a greater variety in participants and publics have become involved in debates about family law. If previously family law reform had often been worked on by religious authorities and state officials behind closed doors, more recently such varied actors as women's organizations, the Islamists, and reformist intellectuals have also become actively involved in public debate. But this still begs the question of how people in their daily lives engage with the legal system, that is, how relevant debates about legal reform are for people's everyday lives. A lot can be said about this, and some of our PhD students work on such issues. Here, however, I would like to focus on women's strategies with respect to one particular aspect of family law, that is marriage payments or the dower.[10]

One of the arrangements that need to be made when concluding a Muslim marriage is the registration of a dower, the sum of money the groom has to pay the bride and that is to remain her own property, with which she is free to act. Much of it is usually spent on buying gold jewelry. While the dower has not been a topic of discussion in the public debates on family law reform, the perceived rapid increase in dower payments has often been a topic of discussion in society at large. Both male secularists and Islamists argue against high dower payments, especially when engaging in such discussions in the position of husband-to-be. Amongst women there are different points of view. The better-off, especially women professionals, also often

argue against a high dower, some considering it an archaic practice that is degrading for women. Women in the rural areas, however, consider the dower as their right, underlining its importance as a source of economic security. This difference between women expresses itself materially in the particular forms of jewelry women wear. For rural women, and generally women in poorer households, one major issue is how much they will lose when selling their gold again. Hence, they generally buy locally-produced 21 carat gold jewelry, the type of gold where labor and other costs only make up a small percentage of the price. Women professionals, and generally the better-off, tend to buy a very different style of gold jewelry, often Italian made 18 carat gold, with import dues, labor and design costs taking up a considerable part of the price. For them such forms of gold jewelry are less a source of security, but rather a means to make a statement about class, status and modernity. The greater accessibility of higher education and the professional labor market for women has led to the development of new notions of marriage and the dower, that become visible in the gold they wear.[11]

This means that the dividing lines drawn with respect to dower practices do not coincide with the political positions taken up in the debates about law reform. In the latter case secularists and Islamists hold different points of view about the content of Muslim family law and on who are legitimate participants in public debates. If, however, we focus on how people in their daily lives engage with legal institutions, such as the dower, and start from a 'cultural practice', such as wearing gold, lines of demarcation, pertaining to class, status and life style, become visible, that only in part intersect with party-politics.

Covered dress and fashion

Not only wearing gold but also wearing particular styles of dress can be seen as part and parcel of Muslim cultural politics.[12] This then brings me to the second field of investigation within this program, that is 'dressing styles'. Both gold and clothing function as a medium of communication, a way of making a statement in the public sphere, yet they occupy different positions in the field of cultural politics. In the case of gold jewellery women employ a quintessentially Islamic institution, the dower, and are backed by both the legal system and public opinion if they claim their rights; if they refrain from claiming a dower or agree with selling their gold for the sake of

their families, this is widely recognized as a sacrifice. Gold jewellery is not only a medium to construct a certain identity, but for many women and their families it is also a major source of economic security. In the case of Islamic dress, key concepts are not so much rights and sacrifices, but rather religious obligations and fashion, external appearance and inner states of being, and notions of individual and collective responsibility.

In the following I discuss dressing styles amongst educated women in San`a, the capital of the Republic of Yemen. Last year, when I engaged in fieldwork there, it had become fashionable to wear loosely-cut over-garments of two layers of thin material. These had started to replace the heavier *balto* made of thicker material, that was shaped more similar to a European overcoat, yet wider and longer. The *balto* in turn had some decades earlier started to replace the two-piece *sharshaf*, consisting of a long pleaded skirt and a cape, a Turkish style of dress that had reached Yemen when it was part of the Ottoman Empire. These various styles of dress covered women from head to toe. Yet, also within these different styles of covering there were other forms of distinction. Even if the colour was usually black, the material used and the quality of the cut could be quite different, varying from cheap, course, plain, mass-produced coverings to individually tailored, expensive pieces of high quality material. The most striking difference was, however, that from the 1970s on, a small number of women started to discard the face veil.

Women's dress has been a popular topic of debate, especially amongst the more conservative Islamists. For the textually oriented, the colourful booklets, sold at a bookstore opposite the university, are a great source of information. Available in large numbers and often published in Saudi-Arabia, they are written in a clear and simply language, using such formats as questions and answers, that include references to particular Quranic verses and fatwa's. Discussing the pros and cons of various forms of dress, these booklets call for women to stick to the strictest forms of Islamic dress. They do not simply warn women against uncovering the face, but also condemn those who wear a face-veil that leaves the eyes too visible. They condemn outer-garments made of material that is too thin or that have cuts that show the contoures of the body. They also argue against material with decorations, such as embroidery and designs. These booklets indicate at least two things. First, whereas modernist concepts of religion tend to see dressing styles as a personal and trivial issue, an issue that only relates to outward appearances rather than to inner states of being (the real stuff of religion), the authors and publishers of these booklets obvi-

ously hold a different opinion. Secondly, they also indicate that wearing fashionable dress is a source of unease for some conservative religious authorities. Fashion, including Islamic fashion, is not only about conformity but also about distinction, and as such about drawing the attention of others, including men.

Yemeni debates on dress are not new; they have their historical roots. By the later 1960s, some years after the absolute rule of the imams was broken and the Yemen Arab Republic had been established, wearing *hijab* (covered dress) became a major topic of debate in the local Yemeni press.[13] Especially the work of Mohammad al-Sharafi aroused a great deal of controversy. His first collection of poetry, called 'the tears of the *sharashif*', used the genre of poetry to take a stance against this dressing style that most San`ani women were wearing in those days. More generally, he argued in his work for lifting the *hijab*. This evoked strong reactions. Whereas some supported his point of view, he was also sharply criticized. Differences of opinion were, in part, caused by the ambiguity in the term *hijab*. According to the majority opinion amongst Islamic scholars, the term 'wearing *hijab*' refers to wearing some loose, opaque style of dress that covers the body except for the face and the hands. A minority opinion, in contrast, holds that women ought to cover completely, that is including the face. Hence, misunderstandings can easily arise. But the women who responded to Mohammad al-Sharafi brought up another aspect as well. Some of those who would agree with lifting the face-veil, censured Mohammed al-Sharafi for his motivations. His poetry highlighted the theme of women's beauty and the *sharshaf* was rejected for hiding this beauty. Some women respondents then saw his stance against the *sharshaf* and the *hijab* simply as a matter of male self-interest. They also criticized him for drawing attention away from issues that really mattered, that is women's very limited access to education and employment.

In the next decades dressing styles did change. The early 1970s saw the beginning of a limited trend amongst high school girls and students to stop wearing the face-veil. They often employed the ambiguities in the meaning of wearing *hijab*. In fact, they and others used the term '*hijab islami*', Islamic *hijab*, for arguing for a style of dress that allows for showing the face and the hands. Whereas elsewhere starting to wear *hijab islami* usually meant wearing more covered dress, in San`a it referred to uncovering, that is uncovering the face. Amongst the first girls to do so were members of the more progressive families amongst the religious elite. Often members of their families had studied abroad, in countries such as Egypt, where dressing styles were considerably more revealing than in Yemen. Yet, uncovering the face did

not only need to be defended in religious terms, something else was also at stake. Covering completely provides some measure of anonymity to the wearer, especially in larger public gatherings, such as markets. As a San`ani friend and colleague explained, the main concern of her father who had encouraged her not to cover her face was whether she understood the consequences. As he said: 'If you go outside, remember, everyone will know who you are, and you will be held responsible for all your actions in the world at large.' Still, covering the face in public is also situational. Women who only wear a large light-coloured scarf when going to the university to teach, may well cover completely in black when visiting the market, as they feel much freer then to go around and bargain with the shopkeepers. In a similar vein, when using public transportation or when going out to women's gatherings, wearing make-up and jewellery, they also tend to cover completely.

Many women, however, cover their faces in all public places. Quite a number of them do so, as they themselves say, in order to stay within San`ani customs and traditions. They are well aware of the fact that there are interpretations in Islam that allow for showing the face. Still, they do not wish to go against the styles of dress commonly adhered to in their social circles. Yet, the ways in which they cover is strongly influenced by fashion. Few younger women still wear the *sharshaf* and many of them turn to styles of dress that are slightly risqué, the very styles of dress the conservative religious authorities warn against in their booklets. And this includes new styles of covering the face; for also face veils have their own fashions.

Another category of women, often, but not always, close to the Islamist movement, strongly argue that it is better to cover completely, using religious arguments based on particular textual interpretations. This does, however, not necessarily mean that they impose such styles of dress on others. In fact, they often emphasize that it only makes sense to wear *hijab* when one does so out of conviction, for only then is wearing *hijab* a sign of obedience to God. They also refer to the notion of responsibility, but in a different way. In covering completely, they argue that they actively engage in protecting society against social disorder, implying not only that the female body is a source of temptation, but also that self-discipline amongst men is weakly developed. On a more individual level they consider covering as part of a particular religious discipline. It is not simply a reflection of an inner state of being, but a means to reach such a state of being.[14]

In the 1960s most women in San`a covered completely. In the 1990s this is still the case for the majority of women, even if their styles of dress have changed. Yet,

such a statement hides more than it reveals. In the 1960s most women who covered did so because this was part and parcel of San`ani traditions; in the 1990s women argue that they have a far greater choice in what to wear. They also point out that if in the 1960s covering went together with women being excluded from education and employment, this no longer is the case. The large majority of university students cover their faces and it is not uncommon for women speakers at public events to wear a face veil.

Changes in the meanings of wearing covered dress may well come to the fore most visibly when San`ani women travel abroad. Photographs in the family albums of the higher classes from the 1960s include those of San`ani women abroad publicly wearing short-sleeved blouses, dresses just below the knee and minimal headscarves. For them covering was a manner of staying within the San`ani tradition that was necessary to adhere to in San`a, but not abroad. In the 1990s women traveling abroad refer more often to religious arguments. Still the outcome may vary. Some would not cover at all, either because they do not consider this a religious duty or do not find this issue sufficiently important, others wear a large scarf over a great variety of more or less covering dress. A few also cover their faces when they are abroad, with the argument that their relation to God does not change when they cross international borders. Others, in contrast, would point out that if the principle of covering the face is not to attract attention to one's appearance, covering the face in Europe goes against that very principle; hence wearing only a headscarf is better.

If dichotomies such as traditional versus modern, culturally authentic versus westernized and subordinated versus emancipated have commonly been employed in academic debates about covered dress and even more so in the media, women's narratives about dressing styles points to the problems involved in employing such categories. Such dichotomies do not serve much analytical purpose. Considering these women as subordinate overlooks that most San`ani women do what people do everywhere, that is to accommodate to the styles of dress appropriate in their social circles, while there are also those that go against the mainstream, by either uncovering the face, or covering more strictly. Calling such styles of dress traditional or culturally authentic overlooks both the long-term influences on dressing styles, be it from Istanbul or Europe or Saudi Arabia, and the aspect of fashion.

Migrant domestic workers

Turning to the third project, that is the project on the cultural politics of migrant domestic labor, I will be much briefer. For while recent fieldwork enabled me to elaborate on San`ani dress, this project is a collaborative effort and has only recently been initiated.[15]

During the last decades paid domestic labour has not only become a growth sector on a global scale, but the number of *migrants* employed as domestic workers has increased even faster. As the large majority of these migrant domestic workers are women, this has resulted in the feminisation of international migration from such countries as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Obviously, such a particular form of transnational migration is in itself an interesting fields of research, especially as it consists by and large of female migrants. This said, I will, however, in the following restrict myself to how this project intersects with 'Muslim cultural politics'. If research on migrant domestic work may, at first, seem far removed from dealing with 'Muslim cultural politics', this is only so if one starts from a narrow modernist definition of religion. If we start from the notions that people themselves employ, the links become easy to recognize.

Paid domestic labour is a highly specific form of employment where the private space of the employer is the workspace of the domestic worker and where the lines between labour and personhood are easily blurred. Migrant domestic work brings together people from very different backgrounds in a highly personalized relation. Employing a domestic worker is not simply a strategy that enables female employers to engage in formal employment; it produces a particular life-style.[16] In other words, it is a field of investigation that invites a focus on the politics of culture involved. This is evident both when analysing public debates about migrant domestic labour and when dealing with the micro-politics of the domestic and family relations involved. Overt forms of 'political religion' are very present in public debates about migrant domestic work. More covert cultural and religious notions are submerged in normative ideas about the family, labour, and domesticity.

Let me start with the public debates. References to Islam or Muslim culture are central in the often virulent political debates about women's migration as domestic workers, such as from Indonesia to the Gulf States. Whereas sending states encourage women's migration for economic reasons and are often reluctant to offend the employer states, political-religious oppositional movements may well use this issue

to criticize the state. Some have argued that if no protection is guaranteed for the personal safety of domestic workers at the place of work, women should be prevented from working abroad, or alternatively, that women are only allowed to do so if accompanied by a *mahram* (a husband or male relative that they are not allowed to marry, such as a father or brother).[17] In receiving states debates have been no less heated, especially in Gulf States such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, where migrant workers far outnumber the small national population. Mothers are often blamed for leaving the task of socializing the new generation in the hands of migrant women. Some have warned of 'national disaster scenarios' wherein children are insufficiently socialized as citizens of the nation-state in terms of such crucial markers as language and religion.[18]

Turning to the micro-politics of domestic relations, religious-cultural notions about family relations, kinship, and domesticity are also at stake. As said, domestic work brings together people from very different backgrounds. If the literature tends to focus on differences between women from different nationalities, this project argues for including differences of religion. This does not only refer to differences between major traditions (such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism); also the diversity of doctrines, practices and institutions within one such major tradition needs to be taken into account, such as, for instance between the strict Wahhabi forms of Islam in Saudi Arabia and the more devotional forms of Islam in rural Java, the place of origin of many domestic workers in Saudi Arabia. Religious and cultural concepts are implicated in notions about privacy and domestic space. Particular Islamic institutions, such as penal law, family law, and the history of domestic slavery, influence the relations between domestic workers and their male and female employers. In the daily interactions between employers and domestic workers forms of 'body politics', such as styles of dress and comportment, the use of language and silence, and access to space and regulations of time, are often also religiously inspired. The experiences of domestic workers at the site of employment may, in turn, also bring about changes in religious notions and practices in their communities of belonging back home.

Because of its focus on domestic workers, this project contributes to debates about transnational migration and religion in an unconventional way. Much work on this topic has dealt with the engagements of mainly male migrants in transnational political-religious movements. This project, in contrast, does not only focus on how migrant domestic workers take part in, and are objects of debates about religious-

cultural identities. It also deals with how they are involved in the embodied expressions of religion that are embedded in the micro politics of domestic relations and investigates its wider effects.

What's Islam got to do with it?

After addressing these three fields of research, let me end with a few comments. Currently much research focuses on Muslim political movements and on Muslim intellectuals and their engagements with civil society, their contributions to the development of a new Muslim public sphere, and their involvement in the production of Islamic knowledge. This is a worthy and well-recognized prestige zone of investigation, that also has a strong presence in the ISIM research outline. The program I discussed here further broadens the field of investigation by focusing on 'Muslim cultural politics', and more specifically by linking public debates to everyday practices. In doing so, we include not only textual analyses but also embodied and material practices. We do not only focus on political and intellectual leaders, but also deal with subaltern women as agents. And we do not focus on the public sphere in and of itself, but on how the public and the private are constructed. Hence, we deal with such topics as acquiring gold through the dower, the multiple meanings of wearing covered dress, and the cultural politics of migrant domestic labour - all fields where the lines between the public and the private are blurred. That such topics are not yet a prestige zone in academia relates at least in part to the cultural politics of Dutch academia that still is ill at ease with women academics doing research on such apparently trivial activities of ordinary women.

The subtitle of this lecture, *What's Islam got to do with it*, alludes to the unease some may feel about linking such mundane topics with Islam. This then brings me back to the perspective we work from. The point is that those who do not consider these topics worthy of inquiry, often work with a modernist concept of Islam as a religion in a narrow sense. Yet, at least some of those involved in these cultural practices and performances consider these as linked in one way or another to Islam or Muslim culture. Taking their point of view seriously does not mean a return to an Orientalist perspective that sees Islam as an all-encompassing system that determines people's lives. Rather we argue for an actor's point of view and a thorough contextualization of particular cultural practices, focussing on how specific actors

engage in, produce, reproduce and transform forms of Muslim cultural politics. There are many ways to do so. I have highlighted here, by means of example, women's dower strategies embodied in gold jewelry, shifting meanings of covered dress and fashion, and transforming religious-cultural notions and practices through interactions in domestic space. Much has, of course, been left out. The emphasis has been more on performances and consumption than on material production. Yet, focusing on cultural products also necessitates the inclusion of the somewhat less exotic element of the organization of production, circulation and exchange. This refers to such topics as the development of Islamic dress as a specific sector in the garment industry with fashions travelling globally, including places such as Paris, Teheran, Istanbul, and Dubai. It also refers to the changing position of gold in the monetary system, its implications for the price of gold on the world market, and the consequences of such price fluctuations for the economic security of millions of households. And it refers to the production of a wide variety of highly accessible publications, and of radio and television programs on family law for ordinary people. In fact, the mass and new media are crucially important for our investigations of the relations between public debates and everyday life, and hence are central to our programme.

Dankwoord

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Notes

1. Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (New York: Random Books, 1978) has been a source of inspiration for scholars working in a great variety of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. One strong example of the popularity of an Orientalist approach beyond the humanities is Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilisations', *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (1993) 3: 22-49.
2. As Talal Asad has pointed out in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 27-54, interpretative approaches that define religion in terms of belief systems, start from and reproduce a particular modern Protestant notion of religion.
3. In *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Occasional Paper Series, Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1986) Talal Asad makes this point when rejecting both essentialist and nominalist perspectives. In his words, 'orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy. The way in which these powers are exercised, the conditions that make them possible (social, political, economic, etc.) and the resistances they encounter (from Muslims and non-Muslims) are equally the concern of an anthropology of Islam' (pp. 15-16).
4. Important references can be found in Beshara Doumani, ed., *Family History in the Middle East. Household, Property, and Gender* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), and Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
5. See, for instance, Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayse Saktanber, eds., *Fragments of Culture. The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
6. For an overview see Annelies Moors, 'Debating Islamic Family Law: Legal Texts and Social Practices', in Marlee Meriwether and Judith Tucker, eds., *The Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), pp. 141-177.
7. See, for instance, the various contributions to the special issue of *Islamic Law and Society* 10 (2003), 1 on 'Public Debates on Family Law Reform. Participants, Positions, and Styles of Argumentation in the 1990s'.
8. The following account is largely based on Rema Hammami and Penny Johnson, 'Equality with a Difference', *Social Politics* 6 (1999), 315-342; Islah Jad, Penny Johnson, and Rita Giacaman, 'Gender and Citizenship under the Palestinian Authority', in Suad Joseph, ed., *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 137-158; Fadwa Labadi et al., 'Islamic Family law and the Transition to Palestinian Statehood: Constraints and Opportunities for Legal Reform', in Lynn

Welchman, ed., *Islamic Family Law in Comparative Perspective* (London: Zed Books, forthcoming); Lynn Welchman, 'In the Intermim: Civil Society, the *Shar'i* Judiciary and Palestinian Personal Status Law in the Transitional Period', *Islamic Law and Society* 10 (2003) 1: 34-70.

9. This in contrast to the case of Iran, where after the Islamic revolution had abrogated earlier family law reforms, it did not take long for women to critically engage in debates about family law reform from within an Islamic tradition; see Mehranguiz Kar and Homa Hoodfar, 'Personal Status Law As Defined by the Islamic Republic of Iran: An Appraisal', in Homa Hoodfar, ed., *Shifting Boundaries in Marriage and Divorce in Muslim Communities* (Montpellier, France: Women Living Under Muslim Laws, 1996), pp. 7-37. One reason may be that in the case of Palestine, the Islamist movement is an oppositional movement, which makes it more problematic to present dissenting voices.
10. Historical trends in dower payments (both in dower registrations and social practices) have been discussed extensively in Annelies Moors, *Women, Property, and Islam. Palestinian Experiences 1920-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
11. See Annelies Moors, 'Wearing Gold', in Patricia Spyer, ed., *Borderfetishisms* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 208-223, and 'Women's gold: shifting styles in embodying family relations', in Beshara Doumani, ed., *Family History in Middle Eastern Studies. Household, Property, and Gender* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 101-119.
12. For a small selection of the large literature on veiling, that gives an impression of the diversity of perspectives, see: Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil. Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxord and New York: Berg Publishers, 1999); Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Rema Hammami, 'Women, the *Hijab* and the Intifada', *Middle East Report, 1990*: 24-28; Arlene MacLeod, *Accomodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Donald Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire 1720-1829', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997) 3: 403-426; Susan Brenner, 'Reconstructing self and society: Javanese Muslim women and "the veil"', *American Ethnologist* 23 (1996), 4: 673-697; Linda Herrera, 'Downveiling: Shifting Socio-Religious Practices in Egypt', *ISIM-Newsletter* 6 (2000) 1: 1.
13. Debates about the *hijab* can be found in Yemeni newspapers such as *Al-Sab' (1959-61)*, *Al-Thawra (1969)* and *Al-Jumhuriyya (1968-70).*
14. See Saba Mahmood, 'Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival', *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (2001) 2: 202-236.
15. For a literature review that also addresses the central issues of this research project, see Annelies Moors, 'Migrant Domestic Labour: Transnationalism, Identity Politics and

Family Relations. A Review Essay', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003) 2: 386-395.

16. For literature dealing with these issues, see, for example, Kathleen Adams and Sara Dickey, eds., 2000, *Home and Hegemony. Domestic Service and Identity Politics in South and Southeast Asia* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000); Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politcs of Domestic Labour* (London: Zed Books, 2000); Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong. Stories of Filipina Workers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1997); Gul Ozyegin, *Untidy Gender: Domestic Service in Turkey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).
17. For debates in Indonesia, see Kathryn Robinson, 'Gender, Islam, and Nationality. Indonesian Domestic Servants in the Middle East', in Adams and Dickey.
18. For Kuwait, see Anh Nga Longva, 'Kuwaiti Women at a Crossroads. Privileged Development and the Constraints of Ethnic Stratification', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 443-456; for Jordan: UNIFEM, 'Migrant Workers in Jordan. A Concept Paper on the Situation of Female Domestic Migrant Workers in Jordan'. UNIFEM Western Asia Regional Office, August 2000.