CALL FOR PAPERS
Unregistered Muslim Marriages – Regulations and Contestations

Organizers:
Dr Rajnaara Akhtar, De Montfort University, Leicester
Prof. Annelies Moors, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research

Venue and date: De Montfort University, Leicester, 24-25 April 2017

Theme: Non-state registered Muslim marriages
Non-state registered Muslim marriages or ‘unregistered marriages’ have increasingly become the focus of public policy debates both in Muslim-majority countries and in settings where Muslims are a minority. While the regulation and registration of marriages have a long history tied up with the emergence of the modern nation-state, during the last decades both state institutions and religious authorities have shown a renewed interest in debates about registration, the validity of non state-registered marriages and the effects of non-registration. An often-simultaneous discourse has also emerged pertaining to the private informal space occupied by couples who choose to circumvent registration, and the manner and form of intervention within this private space by other interested parties, including by parents, kin, community and/or religious bodies.

This two-day multidisciplinary symposium will bring together researchers who have engaged in concrete empirical research on unregistered marriages. We welcome abstracts from across academic disciplines including but not limited to, anthropology, law, social history, Islamic studies, sociology, and any other relevant discipline. We also welcome scholars working on this topic elsewhere in Europe and beyond, for a truly international representation of research in the area.

We encourage papers which address one or more of the following empirical questions:
1. The problematization and politicization of non-state registered Muslim marriages – with a particular focus on the conditions under which these marriages have become an issue of debate, who the central actors are within this discourse and with what effects.
2. How does the notion of non-state registered marriages (in some contexts labelled as ‘urfi) travel and how is the practice affected by growing transnational migration, mobility and immobility?
3. The legal and social interplay between religious and civil marriages, in particular the regulation by nation-states of religious and civil marriages and the tenets of such regulation. Further, the question of how this is affected by the increased culturalization of citizenship?
4. The ceremonial rites and features associated with non-state registered Muslim marriages – with a particular focus on authority and contestations to the performance of such ceremonies from the position of religious authorities and/or activists, potentially leading to the question of polygamy in the context of unregistered marriages.

5. The underlying causes and motivations surrounding non-state registered Muslim marriages – including social/community norms, socio-legal considerations, normative religious influences, ethical dilemmas and pragmatic dimensions.

6. The significance, impact and effect of socio-demographic profiles of the parties concerned – with particular focus on geographic location, professed religiosity, nationality, ethnicity, class, education, age, etc.

7. The impact of non-registration on conflict resolution and divorce proceedings – with particular focus on practice and process for obtaining a religious divorce, and modes and forums for dispute resolution including critical analysis of the role of the mosques, religious institutions and Shariah Councils.

8. The potential human rights implications arising from the lack of state recognition of religious-only marriages – with particular focus on the ECHR Articles 8 right to family life and Article 14 non-discrimination provisions.

**Format:**
During this two-day symposium, each of the selected authors will be allocated 30 minutes to present their papers. Draft papers will be circulated in advance in order for discussants to be able to prepare their comments. The organizers aim to publish a selection of the papers either as an edited volume or as a special issue of an academic journal. Details will follow towards the end of 2016.

**Deadline for abstract submission: 15 October 2016**
We welcome abstracts of 200-300 words detailing which of the empirical questions the paper will address, and specifying the empirical research which the paper is based upon. A short biography of each author (200 words max.) should also be included. Submissions should be made by email attachment in MS Word format with ‘abstract and bio’ and your last name in the subject heading.
Email to: rajnaara.akhtar@dmu.ac.uk; A.C.A.E.Moors@uva.nl

**Costs**
The organisers will cover costs relating to all meals during the two-day event, and up to three nights hotel accommodation in Leicester for each speaker. For a limited number of scholars without resources, we will also cover travel costs. Please indicate availability of resources to fund your travel to the conference during abstract submission.

**Timeline**
15 October 2016: Deadline for abstract submission
15 November 2016: Notification of acceptance
1 April 2017: Deadline draft papers
24-25 April 2017: Workshop
1 June 2017: Selection of paper for publication
1 September 2017: Submission of rewritten papers

The symposium is a collaborative project between Dr Rajnaara Akhtar (Leicester De Montfort University Law School) and Prof. Annelies Moors (University of Amsterdam).

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