



# JOURNAL OF LEGAL ANTHROPOLOGY

## Call for Proposals

### The Best of Intentions: Marriage, Women's Rights and Legal Reform in Muslim Societies

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#### Organizers: Geoffrey Hughes and Bruce Whitehouse

Contemporary Islamic activists and their detractors often seem united in their apparent concern for women's rights, with both portraying themselves as defenders of women's interests against the depredations of rival political currents. In doing so, they develop a range of political claims that draw upon

and further elaborate particular notions of vulnerability in gender roles, which have become increasingly central to legal and political struggles over the course of previous centuries. Perhaps nowhere is this trend clearer than in the increased politicization and formalization of the state regulation of marriage, not only in Muslim societies but also in colonial and postcolonial discourses about Muslims and Muslim societies.

This workshop takes up the question of how these repeated attempts to reform marriage laws for the ostensible benefit of vulnerable women are felt by individuals and communities in their everyday lives. We are especially concerned with the unintended consequences that have often accompanied initiatives at least nominally justified in terms of their ability to bolster women's rights.

Topics might include:

- » Minimum marriage ages
- » Initiatives facilitating or restricting polygyny
- » Divorce laws, including the debate around *khula'*
- » The regulation of *mahr* payments
- » Rules of evidence, including witnessing
- » *Nafaqa* (support) and its relationship with *ta'a* (obedience)
- » Domestic violence
- » Initiatives to legislate in favor of arranged marriage and/or companionate marriage
- » Elopement
- » Anti-trafficking activism

Papers will be circulated in advance and most of the workshop will be devoted to discussion, with goal of developing a special issue for publication with the *Journal of Legal Anthropology* in 2022.

Articles will be published Open Access at no cost to the authors as part of the Berghahn Open Anthro subscribe-to-open initiative. Learn more at: [www.berghahnjournals.com/boa](http://www.berghahnjournals.com/boa).

**Proposals due: September 20th**  
**Papers due for circulation: October 28th**  
**Online workshop: November 4th**

You can submit your proposals and any informal queries to the organizers:  
Geoffrey Hughes ([gh248@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:gh248@exeter.ac.uk)) and Bruce Whitehouse ([brw208@lehigh.edu](mailto:brw208@lehigh.edu))

## Recommended Readings:

Abu-Lughod, L., 2013. *Do Muslim women need saving?*. Harvard University Press.

Agnes, F., 1992. "Protecting women against violence? Review of a decade of legislation, 1980-89." *Economic and political weekly*, pp.WS19-WS33.

Badran, M., ed. 2011. *Gender and Islam in Africa: Rights, Sexuality, and Law*. Stanford University Press.

Boyd, L. and Burrill, E., eds. 2020. *Legislating Gender and Sexuality in Africa: Human Rights, Society, and the State*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Burrill, E., Roberts, R., and Thornberry, E., eds. 2010. *Domestic Violence and the Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

Charrad, M., 2001. *States and women's rights: The making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. University of California Press.

Cuno, K.M. and Desai, M. eds. 2009. *Family, gender, and law in a globalizing Middle East and South Asia*. Syracuse University Press.

Farris, S.R., 2017. *In the name of women's rights*. Duke University Press.

Hasso, F., 2010. *Consuming desires: Family crisis and the state in the Middle East*. Stanford University Press.

Kang, A. 2015. *Bargaining for Women's Rights: Activism in an Aspiring Muslim Democracy*. University of Minnesota Press.

Mernissi, F., 1987. *Beyond the veil: Male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society*. Indiana University Press.

Moors, A. 1995. *Women, property and Islam: Palestinian experiences, 1920-1990*. Cambridge University Press.

Schröter, S., ed. 2016. *Gender and Islam in Southeast Asia: Women's Rights Movements, Religious Resurgence and Local Traditions*. Brill.

Sonbol, Amira, ed. 2020. *Women, the family, and divorce laws in Islamic history*. Syracuse University Press.

Tucker, J.E., 2008. *Women, family, and gender in Islamic law*. Cambridge: Cambridge.

Warrick, C., 2016. *Law in the service of legitimacy: Gender and politics in Jordan*. Routledge.