

TANGIER,  
MOROCCO

FEB. 28 -  
MARCH 2,  
2023

# Centers AND Peripheries

## In Morocco and the Social Sciences

THE APRIL SEMINAR AT THE

TANGIER AMERICAN LEGATION



The Khalifa Mawlay Hasan. Tetouan, 1949  
Courtesy of the Archivo Municipal de Cádiz, Fondo Varela

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Like other core ideas in social sciences, “center and periphery” has profound links to the historical times in which it was created. This seminar-workshop explores how this concept, modified a plural usage, facilitates understanding the many forces that contribute to contemporary Morocco and other modern societies. Some have seen Morocco’s peripheries—regional and economic, Spanish and French colonial heritages, multiple languages, and competing ideas of Morocco’s past and present as potential weak points pulling against state sovereignty. Yet “peripheries” can also be places of innovation, where new ideas and practices can emerge. We explore the ways in which centers and peripheries are necessarily in flux, supervising, pleading, and negotiating. The workshop highlights Tangier and northern Morocco in the context of Morocco-wide and regional developments.

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### BACKGROUND

Even before the concept of center and periphery became common in the first decades of the 20th century, the emergence of the nation-state in the early 19th century prompted serious efforts to homogenize societies. For example, Émile Durkheim's powerful distinction between "elementary" and complex societies is better understood by his influence on educational and language reform in late 19th century France. The Parisian dialect was chosen as the privileged spoken and written form of French, marginalizing all other variants and furthering the development of a highly centralized, secular state.

A core concept in the prevailing orthodoxy of the social sciences from the late 1940s through the last decade of the 20th century, was "modernization" theory. The variants of this theory presupposed that a prerequisite of political and social development was the integration of outlying regions to central and international political and economic networks through common educational, economic, and communications systems.

In this view, the notion of the sacred had shifted to a focus on and mastery of the technological, organizational, and political skills most useful in forging a "modern" state. The present thus belongs to the secularizing liberals and technocrats. Religious intellectuals attracted a diminishing share of the creative capacities of the oncoming intellectual elite. According to modernization theorists, only intellectuals attached to these "modern" values had the vision to rise above parochial identities and to attach themselves to a "modern" nation state. Religious intellectuals and religious practices were thus effectively marginalized. For the Muslim world, in the words of one scholar in the late 1950s, the Middle East faced the stark choice between "Mecca or mechanization."

In its heyday, modernization theory appeared easy to understand, allowing international aid specialists, bankers, and government planners to work on a global scale, disregarding local and transnational understandings of hierarchy and value. The disregard of such values obscured the impact of developments such as liberation theology in Latin America, Poland's Solidarity movement, and the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979.

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### "MODERNITY" REVISITED

We suggest an alternative to thinking about modernity as a single, unilineal process, one that is more suitable to the 21st century societies in which we live. Salient alternative characteristics include:

- Acknowledging forms of social integration that do not presuppose a single hierarchical center, but instead multiple linkages among various ethnic, kinship-based, regional, and religious communities that do not arrange themselves into an agreed ranking or that do not allow for the emergence of one. Moreover, relations shift, often in ways that thwart bureaucracies and hierarchies. Many societies and religious organizations are too large and differentiated for those at the supposed center to have adequate knowledge about the rest of society. There is also a tension between the centers to dominate the periphery, and for the struggle of multiple centers to retain their autonomy.
- Not all transnational movements require an organizational or hierarchical center.
- Finally, in understanding changing notions of centers and peripheries, we need not rely on the almost unquestioned assumption that written texts or documents are more central than oral traditions or other cultural forms of authority. The significance of texts derives not from their inherent centrality but from the contingent political, social, and economic circumstances.

Although the presentations in this seminar-workshop explore these ideas in the context of Moroccan history and society, we argue that developing these ideas in a Moroccan context can provide a promising template to explore these ideas elsewhere in North Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere. At various times in the past, the Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa, and selected Pacific islands have been the locus for creative disciplinary work. Historians and anthropologists working on Morocco can contribute to making it to emerge as a similar disciplinary locus.

*Co-Director:*  
**DR. DALE F. EICKELMAN**



DALE F. EICKELMAN is Ralph and Richard Lazarus Professor of Anthropology and Human Relations Emeritus at Dartmouth College, USA.

His publications include Moroccan Islam (1976, Arabic, 1989), Muslim Politics (co-authored, 2003), The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach, 4th ed. (2002), Knowledge and Power in Morocco (1985, Arabic, 2009), Higher Education Investment in the Arab States of the Gulf (co-edited, 2017) and, most recently, his co-edited Islam, Christianity, and Secularism in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe: The Last Half Century (2022).

In 2022 he received an honorary doctorate from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. A former President of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, Professor Eickelman currently serves as senior advisor to Kuwait's first private liberal arts university, the American University of Kuwait. He is also President of the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies (TALIM, [www.legation.org](http://www.legation.org)).

*Co-Director:*  
**DR. FADMA AIT MOUS**



DR. FADMA AIT MOUS is a tenured Professor of Sociology (Professeur Habilité) at the Aïn Chock Faculty of Letters and Humanities (Hassan II University of Casablanca), Head of the Sociology Department at the same faculty, and researcher at the Laboratoire de Recherche sur les Différenciations Socio- Anthropologiques et les Identités Sociales (LADSIS). She is the General Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Council for Social Sciences (Beyrouth, since 2019), Member of the Executive Committee of the Merian Center for Advanced Study in the Maghreb (MECAM, Tunis) and Member of the Scientific Commission n°4 (CSS4) of the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD).

Her research is mainly focused on issues related to nationalism and social movements; women, gender and socio-political transformations; history and memory; youth cultures, urban dynamics; social media; and migration.

Among her recent publications are: "Sub-Saharan and Syrian women's embodying migration experiences in Casablanca" (with Sanae Benbelli & Sara Ettallab), in *The Elgar Companion to Gender and Global Migration: Beyond Western Research*, edited by Natalia Ribas-Mateos and Saskia Sassen (2022); « L'instruction des filles dans le Maghreb colonial », in *Entanglements of the Maghreb Cultural and Political Aspects of a Region in Motion*, ed. Julius Dihstelhoff, Charlotte Pardey, Rachid Ouassa, and Friederike Pannewick (2021); *Les jeunes du Maroc. Comprendre les dynamiques pour un nouveau contrat social*, edited by Fadma Aït Mous et Z. Kadiri (2021); « La place des femmes dans des textes nationalistes de la période coloniale: Une présence manquante », *Hespéris- Tamuda / Université Mohammed V., Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines LVI-1(2021):171-188* ; - « Etudier les nationalismes au/du Maghreb: Perspectives historiques et anthropologiques », *Hespéris-Tamuda* 50 (4) (2020): 103-129; "Women in Northern African History" (with N. Vince & K. Bendana), in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, African History* (2020).

Presenter:

**DR. JOSEP LLUÍS MATEO DIESTE**



DR. JOSEP MATEO DIESTE'S research has focused on the anthropology and history of North Africa and the relations between the Maghreb and Europe in the contemporary world. He has conducted ethnographic and archival research on Moroccan communities in Catalonia and northern Morocco, developing the method of historical anthropology around the following themes: the construction of stereotypes between Moroccans and Spaniards; the political relations between colonizers and colonized during the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956) and the transformations of the Moroccan religious field, especially the Islamic confraternities; mixed Spanish-

Moroccan relations throughout the 20th century; conceptions of the body, illness and healing rituals in the Maghreb and the diaspora; contemporary domestic slavery in Morocco; social and political upheavals in the Maghreb before and after the Arab Spring.

Dr. Mateo Dieste has a PhD in History from the European University Institute (Florence, 2002), a Master's degree in Anthropology (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1997) and a degree in Sociology (UAB, 1991).

Recent publications include:

- (L. Feliu, J.L. Mateo, F. Izquierdo, N. Ribas, eds.), *Social Mobilisation in Morocco. Lessons learned from a historical informed activism*. Ibidem Press, 2022.
- *Recordando a las tatas. Mujeres domésticas y esclavitud en Tetuán (siglos XIX-XX)*, Granada, Editorial Comares, 2021.
- Coello, A., Mateo, J.L. *In Praise of Historical Anthropology. Perspectives, Methods, and Applications to the Study of Power and Colonialism*, Routledge Approaches to History, New York/London, Routledge, 2020.
- Mateo, J.L., Muriel, N. "A mi querido Abdelaziz, de tu Conchita". *Cartas entre españolas y marroquíes en el Marruecos colonial*. Barcelona, Icaria, 2020.

Presenter:

**DR. JOSEP LLUÍS MATEO DIESTE**

**ABSTRACT:**

A periphery that becomes a center. The Khalifian wedding of 1949 and the tensions between the Spanish and French zones of the Protectorate.

Spanish colonialism in Morocco was peripheral in relation to the great European colonial powers. In Morocco itself, the division of the Protectorate into two zones generated effects on the perception that the northern zone is marginal space, a perception maintained until the post-colonial period and also in historiography and in the social sciences.

In this presentation, I present an incident that challenges these assumptions. In 1949, the Khalifa of the northern zone, Moulay Hasan, married Lalla Fatima Zohra, daughter of the former Sultan Muley Abdelaziz, in Tetouan. The celebrations were so lavish that the Khalifa's court generated the distrust of the Sultan and the nationalists. They criticized the event, prompting the Spanish authorities to turn the northern zone into a periphery that became a center.

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*Presenter:*  
**DR. DAVID STENNER**



DR. DAVID STENNER is an associate professor in the Department of History at Christopher Newport University with a research focus on the decolonization of the Arab world. He is currently writing a people's history of World War II in North Africa, which has been supported by a John W. Kluge Fellowship from the Library of Congress. He is the author of *Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Postcolonial State* (2019). He has also published articles in the *Journal of Global History*, *The Journal of North African Studies*, *Cold War History*, the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*.

Presenter:  
**DR. DAVID STENNER**

**ABSTRACT:**

Peripheral nationalisms and the Egyptian press in the Interwar Arab World.

The emergence of nationalist movements in interwar North Africa took place within a regional context as Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian activists took inspiration from the emergence of mass politics in the Middle East. Many contemporaries considered Egypt the regional center of anticolonialism, but the struggle over the future of Palestine quickly evolved as the most salient issue among the public. Seeking to connect their local struggles to those of their “brothers” in the East, many North Africans turned the newspapers of the Cairo-based Palestinian journalist Muhammad Ali al-Tahir (1896-1974) into forums of regional debate. Prominent leaders and others interested in politics wrote letters to the editor, submitted reports about local developments, and provided near-instantaneous updates about more dramatic events via telegraph. Al-Tahir, in turn, covered North Africa in detail even though his main concern remained the fight against the Zionist settlements in his homeland.

By analyzing al-Shura, al-'Alam al-Misri, and al-Shabab, my presentation demonstrates how North Africans read about their countries in these Middle Eastern publications and thereby facilitated the creation of distinct territorial identities within the context of a wider Arabo-Islamic community. Although the Maghrib remained peripheral to Arab politics until the outbreak of the Algerian revolution in 1954, the development of its anticolonial movements depended on the earlier increased engagement with the media located in Cairo and other Eastern “centers” of the Arab world.

Presenter:  
**DR. LEILA MEZIANE**



DR. LEILA MEZIANE est professeure d'histoire moderne à l'Université Hassan II de Casablanca. Elle est membre du Réseau International « Gouvernance des Ports Atlantiques (XIVe-XXIe siècles) ». Elle a publié en 2020 *l'Oriental et la Méditerranée, au-delà des frontières, Casablanca, Croisée des Chemins*. Outre l'histoire et le patrimoine maritime et portuaire, ses thèmes de recherche sont les mobilités, la Négociation et les représentations. Elle vient de coordonner avec Anna Baldinetti et Lorella Tosone, *L'image de l'Europe et de l'U.E. au Maghreb. Historique, perception, discours, Casablanca, La Croisée des Chemins, 2022*. Elle a coédité avec Khalid Benshir, un dossier de la Revue *Hespéris-Tamuda* sur la Mobilité individuelle et collective en Méditerranée et en Méditerranée Atlantique : bilan et perspectives , *LIII, 3, 2018*, et avec Hayet Amamou et Mehdi Jerad, *La Négociation entre le Maghreb et l'Europe méditerranéenne du Moyen Age au XXe siècle, Tunis, 2022*.

Elle a participé à de nombreux ouvrages collectifs, dont *Pour une maison de l'Histoire du Maroc*, coord. par Mohammed Kenbib, publication de l'Académie du Royaume du Maroc, Casablanca, *La Croisée des Chemins, 2020* ; *Cautivas y esclavas: el tráfico humano en el Mediterráneo*, Granada, Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2016 ; *La Gobernanza de los Puertos Atlánticos. Siglos XIV-XX*, Madrid, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez, n°. 155, 2016; *Atlantic ports and the first Globalisation c.1850-1930*, Londres, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014 ; *La loge et le Fonduk, les dimensions spatiales des pratiques marchandes en Méditerranée*, éd. W. Kaiser, Paris, Karthala, 2014. Elle est coéditrice de *Captifs et captivité en Méditerranée à l'époque moderne*, avec M. Ghazali et S. Boubaker, *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, n° 87, décembre 2013. Elle a reçu le Prix Corderie Royale-Hermione 2008 attribué par le Centre international de la mer (France) pour son livre *Salé et ses corsaires 1666-1727, un port de course marocain au XVIIe siècle*.

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Presenter:  
**DR. LEILA MEZIANE**

**ABSTRAIT:**

Les ports du Détroit, interfaces historiques de l'intégration du Maroc aux dynamiques économiques mondiales

Dans ce texte nous nous arrêterons sur la vie et le destin des villes maritimes du Détroit de Gibraltar qui ont toujours été, de par leur positionnement géographique et leurs activités maritimes polyvalentes, étroitement liées au concept que Fernand Braudel et Emmanuel Wallerstein approchaient en termes de « Système-monde ». Situés en marge du monde capitaliste, au sein du territoire appelé Sud global, leur ouverture sur la Méditerranée-Atlantique revêt des formes qui lui sont propres, si bien qu'elle impacte durablement les structures sociales, institutionnelles et urbaines de ces interfaces singulières.

Presenter:  
**DR. SIMEON EVSTATIEV**



DR. SIMEON EVSTATIEV is Professor of Middle Eastern History and Islamic Studies at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. He heads the Department of Arabic and Semitic Studies, and is also Chair of the Center for the Study of Religions, and Director of Graduate Middle East Studies. He was a 2013–2014 Shelby Cullom Davis Visiting Professor at Princeton University.

As a Gerda Henkel Fellow (2016–2019), his work was focused on Salafism and he was a 2016–2017 Research Associate at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Berlin. Evstatiev's research has been supported by institutions including the European Commission (Horizon 2020), the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the U.S. National Science Foundation, the Central European University, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Science Fund of Bulgaria, and the Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia. Evstatiev's scientific memberships include the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA); Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants (UEAI); the European Association for Middle Eastern Studies (EURAMES); Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (DMG); and Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Vorderer Orient für gegenwartsbezogene Forschung und Dokumentation (DAVO). His publications include the books *Christianity, Islam and Eastern Religions: Normative Text and Sociocultural Context* (editor, 2011); *Religion and Politics in the Arab World: Islam in Society* (2012); *Salafism in the Middle East and the Boundaries of Faith* (2018); and *Islam, Christianity, and Secularism in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe* (co-edited with Dale F. Eickelman, 2022).

Presenter:

**DR. SIMEON EVSTATIEV**

**ABSTRACT:**

From the Balkans to the Maghrib:  
Centers in the Periphery, Peripheries in the Center

We often think of “one center” and a “loose periphery.” In social reality, we regularly face situations where multiple centers interact with various peripheries. The fact that a phenomenon looks peripheral at a certain point does not necessarily mean that it is insignificant, and its potential to become central should not remain outside of our attention. This presentation, within the broad framework of centers and peripheries, blends several historical and contemporary aspects of religion and Islamic studies. It inter-relates them via exemplars along three major tracks that would have otherwise be the subject of separate academic audiences and disciplines.

The first track is spatial. It deals with regionalization where phrases such as “the central Arab zone of Islam” have proliferated Islamic studies in Europe to categorize the vast area between the Balkans and the Maghrib. However, if we look at Islam and its spread, not only in Asian and North African regions conventionally included in “the Orient”, but also in sub-Saharan Africa, we see that “centers” constantly shift, and the boundaries between them and their “peripheries” often blur. An historical example of this are the observations of Ibn Battuta on Islam in Mali. The second track is historical and relates to conceptualizing the seventeenth-century Qāḍīzādeli movement in Istanbul, shaped in the very periphery of the Ottoman ‘ulamā’ hierarchy by formerly marginal Friday mosque preachers. However, based on religious legitimacy, the Qāḍīzādelis quickly gripped the Ottoman center, making a difference with significant consequences for religious, political, and social life far beyond Istanbul, i.e., in the then “periphery” of the Arab world and the Balkans. The third track is contemporary and examines how multiple centers compete for influence over a given periphery. For example, during the revival of Islam among some groups in the Balkans after the Cold War, there are at least three competing alien centers, in themselves non-homogenous – the Arab world, Turkey, and even Iran, not to mention some major transnational Muslim movements such as Salafism.

Presenter:

**DR. GALINA EVSTATIEVA**



DR. GALINA EVSTATIEVA holds a Ph.D. in Arabic Studies from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria, where she is currently an Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Culture at the Department of Arabic and Semitic Studies. She teaches under- and post-graduate courses on Anthropology of the Middle East and Islam, Modern Arabic Culture, and Islamic Art. Her publications include the monographs *Prosody and Metrics of Arabic Poetry* (2011) and *Islam and the Veiling of Women in the Arab World* (2016). Her research interests lie primarily in the fields of Arabic Literature and Culture, Women and Gender Issues in Islam, Muslim Veiling in Medieval and Modern Times. Galina Evstatieva is editor of the Bulgarian translation of Dale F. Eickelman's book *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach* (2019).

Presenter:

**DR. GALINA EVSTATIEVA**

**ABSTRACT:**

When Two Peripheries Meet:  
Mainstreaming Hijab in a Balkan Context

With the rise of nationalism and national states in the 19th-century Balkans, the Muslim communities in this Orthodox Christian-majority region found themselves on the margins of emerging modern societies. At the same time, the life in a region which is defined by its "peripheral" situation against the backdrop of the "central" Islamic lands, made them share what might be termed the situation of a double periphery. In the processes of nation-building, religion was taken out of the hands of the believers and their traditional institutions, superseded by new state ideologies and modern political projects – secularism, national unity and centralized state authority. After the mid-20th century, the Communist version of modernization sought to marginalize religion, displacing it from the public arena. This led to a decrease in public religious practice despite occasional Muslim resistance to the new ideological center.

After the fall of Communism, an observed Islamic revival in the Balkans fostered the shaping of a new type of Islamic resistance to the modern secular state. Furthermore, the transnationalization of religious experience, religious education, the ease of travel, the internet and the emerging of faith communities that rely upon alternative sources of knowledge and authority, fostered a level of belonging to the global Muslim community – the umma. More "mainstream," observant Muslims are increasingly abandoning local "syncretic" practices. They seek to share what they consider the universal, core beliefs and rituals with their coreligionists in Turkey and throughout the Arab world. This presentation focuses on the Muslim veil as a public expression of a woman's piety and a visible expression of religious identity. We analyze the position of those in multiple former peripheries that seek to get a more mainstream standing that connect them with multiple centers. Heightened attention to the norms of the "great" Islamic tradition by mainstreaming hijab and the Islamic dress code for women is justified as a fundamental human right in a modern secular situation.

Presenter:  
**DR. YOUNESS LOUKILI**



DR. YOUNESS LOUKILI is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at University of Mohammed V, Rabat, Morocco. He writes about the Anthropology of Health and disease. His other ongoing interest is in the Anthropology of Islam, religious movements and social change in Morocco. His recent books: "Anthropology of Healing : *Ar-rukya ash-shar'iyya* and the Struggle of Religiosity Patterns"(2021), "Anthropology of Islamic Societies: Translating Dale F. Eickelman's Articles on Public Islam, Modernity, knowledge, Education and New Media"(2022).

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Presenter:  
**DR. YOUNESS LOUKILI**

**ABSTRACT:**

Moving a peripheral subject, *al-ruqiyya achar'iyya* (spiritual protection), to the center of social sciences in Morocco.

In this presentation, I explain my experience of bringing a peripheral subject (*al-ruqiyya achar'iyya*) into the center of Moroccan social science research in recent years. The first step concerned integrating the topic into the social sciences on two levels. First, I combined my past personal experience with my current academic interests. Second, in order to make this topic a social science one, I used my sociological imagination to combine medical anthropology with the sociology of religious movements. After many years, I discovered that my subject had profound intellectual dimensions, such as tradition versus modernity and extremism versus tolerance, particularly when I consider *Arruqiya Achar'iya* as a field of struggle between Moroccan and Wahhabi Islam. Of course, we are fully conscious of historical conflict, but my research has revealed this conflict as revitalized by new subjects and actors. Third, I have shared my results, as a book, articles, interviews, conferences, and social media discussions. Between 2015 and 2022, I presented my research findings to a variety of audiences nearly forty times. As a result, the topic has become more visible in the field of Moroccan social science research.