From 24 to 26 October 2003 an international workshop was held in Cairo under the title ‘What Happened: Telling Stories about Law in Muslim Societies’. Representing the third event in the ISIM programme on the anthropology of Islamic law, the workshop was organized with the Centre d’Études et de Documentation Économique, Juridique et Sociale (CEDEJ), the Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale (IFAO), and the Dutch-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC), all based in Cairo. The convenors were Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, Léon Buskens, Barbara Drieskens, Baudouin Dupret, and Annelies Moors.

The contributions dealing with ‘stories in the law’ focused on the multiple ways texts (whether oral, written, or a combination of both) are produced. Some texts are highly complex, such as ‘translations’ from oral to written forms. There is a need for more scholarly attention to the impact of those involved in the production of particular texts, such as scribes, judges, and professional witnesses, as well as the ways in which these legal specialists allow for or exclude particular voices. In this regard, it is important to not only trace the training trajectories and positioning in the legal system of text producers, but also to understand how the public at large turns to them in order to ‘translate’ their cases in terms that make sense within the legal system. Amalia Zomeño addressed this phenomena through a discussion of the process of fatwa-giving, whereas Brinkley Messick, Khaled Fahmy and Rudolph Peters focused on the production of court records and legal judgments. Baudouin Dupret gave an ethnographer’s report of how the records of the police and the public prosecutor come into being in present-day Egypt. Emad Adly analyzed the letters written to Imam Al-Shafi’i as requests for retribution, formulated as shukwas (‘complaints’).

Annelies Moors (ISIM/University of Amsterdam) & Léon Buskens (Leiden University/Utrecht University) & Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, Léon Buskens, Barbara Drieskens, Baudouin Dupret, and Annelies Moors.

The conveners hope to publish revised versions of the papers as an edited volume. Léon Buskens (Leiden University/Utrecht University) & Annelies Moors (ISIM/University of Amsterdam)

PAPERS PRESENTED

- L. Buskens: ‘Tales According to the Book: Professional Witnesses as Cultural Brokers in Morocco.’
- B. Drieskens: ‘What to do with Djinns in Stories about Law?’
- B. Dupret: ‘The Categories of Morality: Homosexuality between Perversion and Debauchery.’
- K. Fahmy: ‘A Murder Case in upper Egypt.’
- M.C. Foblets And M. Karouni: ‘Mobile Muslims. Judges in Europe Confronted with the Thorny Question ‘Which Law Applies?’
- B. Messick: ‘Legal Narratives from Shari‘a Courts.’
- A. Moors: ‘Marriage Contracts: Registering a Token Dower, Constructing Multiple Modernities.’
- R. Peters: ‘The Violent Schoolmaster: Notes From a Purposeful Observer.’
- D. Schultz: ‘Prosecuting Police Abuse in Egypt.’
- A. Wuerth: ‘Prosecuting Police Abuse in Egypt.’