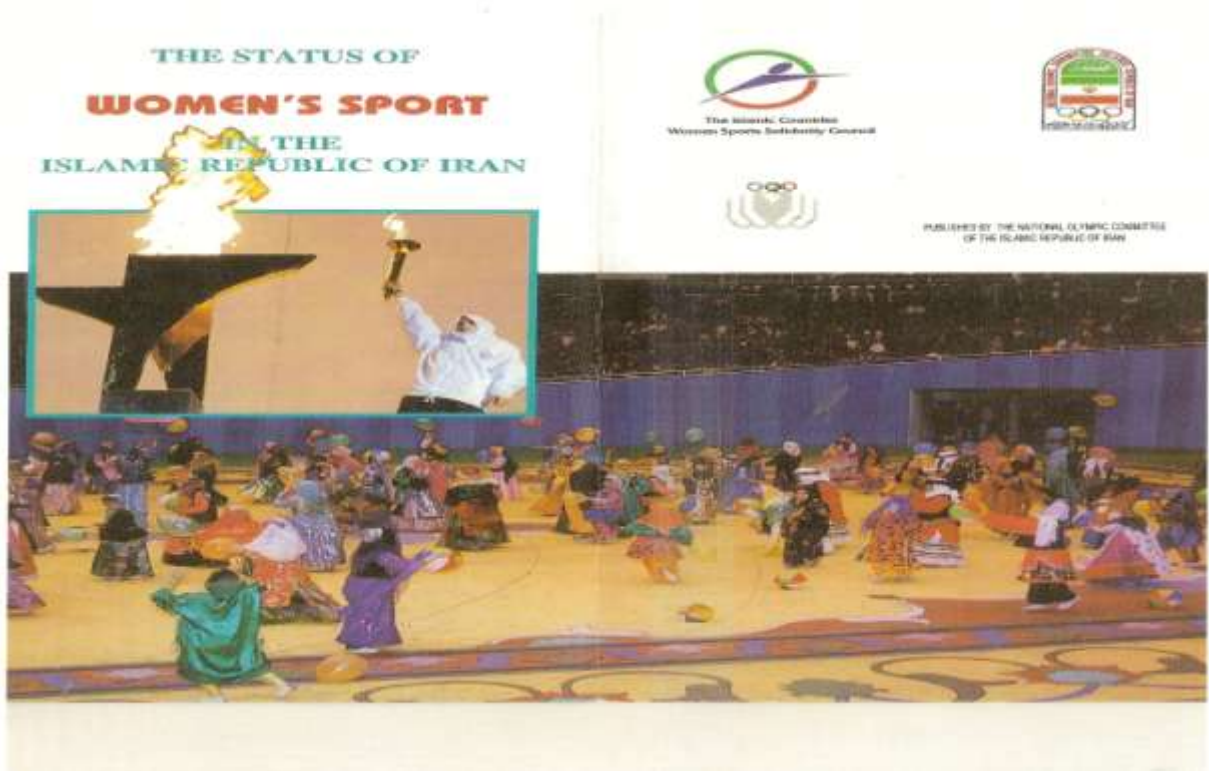


حوائیڻن زڀر اشر مسالم قوانین
Women Living Under Muslim Laws
النساء فی ظل قوانین المسلمین
Femmes sous lois musulmanes



Symposium Report:

“The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women”

28 March 2008, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

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of symposium**
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عَوَائِدُ زِيَارَةِ مُسْلِمِ قَوَائِدِ
Women Living Under Muslim Laws
النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

Symposium Report:

“The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women”

28 March 2008, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

Introduction:

The rise of political Islam in the Middle East has transformed the public sphere and women's participation in it in complex and often contradictory ways. As the political tide continues to turn toward religion as a governing norm of public life, women have been pushed out of the public spaces that they had previously inhabited as citizens of a modernizing world. The proponents of these religious norms advocate a variety of "traditional" (seen in opposition to “modern”) roles for women, many of which include some degree of physical segregation, a dress code oriented toward modesty, and valorization of silent, domestic, and private activities. This should not be seen as simply a male imposition, however, as many women welcome their societies' burgeoning religiosity and adopt its mores, redefining “modernity” and what it means to be a modern Muslim woman.

This act of redefinition has produced both acceptance and resistance of certain conservative values regarding gender. Women have energetically participated in the propagation of political Islam while simultaneously making their voices heard and claiming agency to change and shape their lives. Across the spectrum of resistance and acceptance, they have developed various strategies different from the Western feminist strategy of overt, group-oriented activism. In many social contexts Muslim women's activism has emerged as more subtle and pervasive, focused more on a mundane resistance rather than outspoken demonstrations and governmental lobbying.

In the 20th century, sport has emerged as a site in which socio-cultural meanings of body and gender are developed and often hotly contested. Some Muslim women athletes have used sport to inscribe resistant meanings that challenge social norms, while others have used it to express and reinforce these norms. Sport is used by some women as a method of accessing the public sphere, albeit a method that is less antagonistic to

prevailing hegemony than more overt political strategies. On the other hand, being an athlete presents a dilemma to more conservative, religious women, who may feel they have to choose between pursuing their preferred sport and transgressing the dominant concept of a modest Muslim dress code, or choosing a different sport. Some women give up being an athlete altogether.

Many scholars of women's movement have argued, What it means to be a woman activist in an Islamic State such as Iran of necessity and under extreme repressive religious state with an exclusionary gender vision may not have produced large, organized lobbying feminist groups. However, have found other means and channels to express their resistance and engaged in subversion of the exclusionary ideology. They have broken boundaries in daily life by entering public space and by complaining and making their voices heard in public. Sport has proved one of those major avenues where Muslim women are challenging the masculinist ideology.

Recently, an Iranian woman refereed a soccer game while fully veiled in modest Islamic dress. She and the players who regularly play in long pants, long sleeves and a headscarf were projecting their presence into the Islamic public sphere and the world public sphere. Their presence as women, as Muslims, and as high-level athletic competitors represents the intense intersubjectivity that is possible in modern and postmodern times. It also represents the evolving face of transnational feminism and opens up possibilities for multiple paths of resistance and activism.

It is clear that sport is now more than ever a politicized activity and must be read and interpreted to reveal the wide range of cultural meanings, mores, and power dynamics at play. These readings will form an important body of knowledge about relationships between culture, gender, religion, and politics in the Muslim public sphere. These have important implication for our understanding of forms of resistance and challenges to ideologies that had excluded women from public life. The implication of these strategies for gender equality and women's empowerment in the Muslim context needs further investigation and analysis. It was with the idea of better understanding the complex matrix of element that have politicized sport in Muslim contexts conditions that in March 2008 Women Living under Muslim Laws and Concordia University, department of sociology and Anthropology organized a symposium that brought together some of the eminent scholars from Canada and the world who are writing on the subject. Although little has been written in the field, it is clearly a large and fertile ground for exploration in the fields of feminist theory, sociology, exercise science, the public sphere, media studies, and Islamic law. This symposium was one of the first attempts to bring the issues into the academic spotlight and raise interest and awareness of the complexity of the intersections between religion, sport, and woman's public body. . It was to the creation of a scholarly attention to the diverse strategies that women in Muslim majority and Minority countries have adopted to empower themselves to break new grounds, while also marked their identity as Muslim women and with it change the Muslim imagination of what is possible for women forever.

The program:

The Symposium took place on 28th of March, 2008, between 14.00 and 18.00 at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada (For Conference poster: please see **Appendix 1**).

The choice of participants:

The symposium brought together six scholars and activists from Canada, USA, and Iran, to discuss various aspects of Muslim women's involvement in sports (for the list of participants, please see **Appendix 2**). Given our limited resources and our policy of smaller symposiums more conducive to dialogue and frank discussion, much thought was invested in how to choose participants who would best achieve the goal of the symposium. First and foremost, the care and attention was given to selecting researchers who have published interesting and rigorous articles and research on Muslim women and their involvement in sports, such as Dr. Martha Saavedra who carried out research on women and sport in Senegal. Second, we wanted to include both theoretical perspectives and practitioner perspectives, and invited women who are themselves involved in sports, such as PhD candidate Hana Askren. Third, we wanted to include voices of women civil activists working on women issues to start positive change in their countries, such as Nasrin Afzali.

There were some 100 participants who followed the symposium. Participants included media representatives, Canadian women activists, NGO representatives, experts on Middle East, anthropologists, social scientists working on women's concerns, researchers in Montreal universities, and Concordia graduate as well as undergraduate students and interested public including those from diverse Muslim communities, Muslim women sport teams, and women from Canadian Council of Muslim women.

The Program: (Please see Appendix 3: the program)

Appendix 7: Photos



The symposium was opened by Dr. Wilson Chacko Jacob, a historian of gender and sexuality in the Middle East, welcoming the participants, setting the tone for the symposium, and outlining the importance of such a symposium where experts and concerned civil society members could share their research and perspectives and promote dialogue on promoting Muslim women’s involvement in sports worldwide as a means of women’s empowerment. Homa Hoodfar spoke on behalf of Women Living Under Muslim Laws by providing a short background on the goals of the symposium.

Hana Askren, an award-winning wrestler and a Concordia PhD candidate, reminded the audience that not so long ago, football was closed to women in the West. In many European countries and for members of the national women’s baseball team in the United States, players were required to wear makeup on the field, presumably to reassure spectators that they were real women. Sociologists call this “feminine apologetics”. While paying attention to the progress taken in Middle East, particularly in Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan and Palestine, Askren stated that the situation deserves attention and support as it is also reversible.

Dr. Martha Saavedra, of the University of California at Berkeley, has compiled data on women and sport in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Senegal, Sudan and Nigeria. She based her presentation on published article, “Women, Gender, Sports and the Female Body: Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Culture*. She began her presentation by clearing the fact that Islam is *not* an obstacle to the participation of women in sport, although in some cases, the restrictions justified by religion and culture vary in these countries, and even in the regions within them. She

stressed the importance of distinguishing Islam from other factors (such as effects of traditions and customs, colonial experience, living standards, leisure time, poverty, etc). She explained her claims via certain other examples, following her trilogy on Islam, Gender and Sport.

Homa Hoodfar presented a paper on the Muslim Women's Olympics, which was held in Tehran in 1993, 1997, 2001 and 2005 with enthusiastic participation; in the most recent edition, the women came from nearly 40 countries. The alternative games were launched by a combination of athletes and those we would call feminists, women determined to regain a presence in public life that was lost in the 1979 revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. When Iran's soccer team beat the U.S. team in the 1998 World Cup series, the nation was ecstatic. Football, always a passion, became a focus of fierce national pride. Yet in Iran's theocratic regime, women can't even attend men's games.

Nasrin Afzali, independent researcher, journalist and women's rights activist from Iran, presented her paper on Iranian Women's Campaign to be Football Spectators. She said that as far as the mullahs are concerned, the gaze of women on men's bodies appears to be just as dangerous as the reverse. She described some of the subterfuges young women use to get into the ironically named Freedom Stadium to watch their brothers play and contest their exclusion from a major public venue. Girls have dressed as boys, a ploy so notorious that it became the plot of an Iranian movie.

Dr. Yoav Di-Capua, a scholar at the University of Texas at Austin, was unable to get to Concordia in person, but his paper, read on his behalf, told an entertaining story about an Egyptian aviatrix, as they used to be called. Lutifa al-Nadi was the daughter of an effendi (upper-class) family in the 1930s. Egypt was run by the British then, and throughout Europe and the Americas, flying was all the rage. In fact, aviation was the pinnacle of technology, and embodied all that was dashing, modern, European and male - all that symbolically justified the colonization of Egypt. Fascinated by the new sport, Lutifa hung out at Cairo's elite aviation club, taking flying lessons on the sly and volunteering on the club's telephone switchboard to disguise her real intentions. When an intercity race between Cairo and Alexandria took place, guess who came first? Lutifa emerged from the cockpit, her face wreathed in smiles, and was mobbed by adoring fans of both sexes.

Each presentation was followed by a period of discussion and comments. Some of the important questions raised were: What makes a person a feminist? What makes a Muslim feminist? Are women in sport automatically feminists? What are the barriers to their participation? What effect does women's participation in sport have on their status in other social domains especially in the public sphere? Should Muslim women have a different sport model than non-Muslims? What conflicts and problems do women athletes in a Muslim context face that men do not, and what conflicts and problems do Muslim women athletes face that non-Muslims do not? What are the issues raised by Muslim dress, especially that required of women? How do women mediate their relationship with a Muslim state and the public sphere through sport? How do women use sport to transform or reinforce their status? How is the concept of the "proper" Muslim woman being modified by the large numbers of Iranian, Jordanian, Egyptian, etc.

women taking part in national soccer competitions, for example? How do Muslim women athletes conceive of their life histories, the trajectories of their lives, and how their identities as athletes fit into their larger identities as Muslim women?

One key conclusion of the symposium “The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women” was the following statement: Muslim women who are keen on sports may exercise their passion as freely as other athletes, or they may not even be able to watch men play. It has more to do with which country they live in than their religion.

Bringing together leading experts and practitioners from different parts of the world, the conference proved an excellent opportunity for networking and sharing experiences on sports and women. Many of the participants were very excited about and deeply interested in the symposium. Others commented that this symposium has been the most stimulating and one that could increase dialog between Muslim and non-Muslim women. Some participants commented on the significance of sports as a means of women empowerment in various contexts. In general, comments indicated that the topics and speakers were found quite inspiring and thought-provoking.

As such a symposium was one of the rare occasions that such a subject was presented and discussed in North America, it attracted considerable lot of media attention and publicity. Among the media that were present on that day were: CBC, CTV, The Gazette, and Concordia Journal. (For selected reports and publications in media, please see **Appendix 4**).

The symposium was a successful and generated much discussion and we hope to be able to organized larger conference where we can bring together scholars of Muslim women sport, interested member of civil society from diverse contexts and Muslim women athletics themselves for further discussion on implication of Sport as avenues of public participation and challenge both patriarchy and the lingering assumption about Muslim women.

Appendix 1

SYMPOSIUM POSTER

A Symposium:

The poster features a central graphic with the Olympic rings and a book cover titled 'WOMEN'S SPORT' with the subtitle 'RELIGION AND THE OLYMPIC IDEAL'. Three smaller images show athletes in action: a runner, a soccer player, and a fencer. The background is a light tan color with a faint silhouette of a person in a hijab.

A SYMPOSIUM

"The Role of Sport in Resisting, Accommodating And in Remaking Muslim Women"

DATE:
28 March 2008
Friday
14:00 - 18:00

PLACE:
Concordia University
Hall Building
Room: 763
1455 de Maisonneuve
Ouest
Montréal
H3G 1M8

SPEAKERS:

Dr. Yoav Di-Capua, University of Texas at Austin
"First Among Equals? The Unacceptable Triumph of the Egyptian Pilot Lutifa al-Nadi"

Dr. Martha Saavedra, University of California at Berkeley
"Women and Sport in Senegal, Sudan and Nigeria"

Dr. Homa Hoodfar, Concordia University
"The Launching of Muslim Women's Olympics: New Spheres for Feminism in Iran"

Nasrin Afzali, University of Tehran
"Gaze Reversed: Iranian Women's Campaign to be Football Spectators"

Hana Askren, Concordia University
"Muslim Women Soccer Teams: An overview of controversies"

CHAIR AND DISCUSSANT:
Dr. Wilson Chacko Jacob, Concordia University

SPONSORED BY:

Concordia
UNIVERSITY

Department of Sociology
And Anthropology

Women living under muslim laws
المرأة في ظل قوانين المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

Appendix 2

“The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women”

Speakers list:

#	Name	Personal Information	Telephone/ Email	Position
1 USA	Dr. Yoav Di-Capua	<p>Dr. Di-Capua is working as an assistant professor at University of Texas at Austin. He got his Ph.D. from Princeton University History Department. He is interested in Modern Arab Intellectual History. He taught on Modern Egypt, Arab Renaissance: an Inquiry; Reading in Modern Arab and Islamic Texts; and Re-Forming the Twentieth Century Arab East. He published on aviation, class and modernity in early twentieth century Egypt. His forthcoming book is, Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in 20th Century Egypt (Berkeley: University Press of California, July 2009).</p> <p>Among his publications: “Women, Gender, Sports and the Female Body: Arab States,” in Suad Joseph, Afsaneh Najmabadi et.al (eds.), Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Cultures (Leiden: Brill), Vol. III. pp. 440-441.</p>	512-475-7259 ydi@mail.utexas.edu	Assistant Professor
2 USA	Dr. Martha Saavedra	<p>Dr. Martha Saavedra is the Associate Director of the Center for African Studies an interdisciplinary research center supporting basic research and training of scholars as well as providing resources on Africa to the greater community. With a doctorate in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley (1991), her research has included agrarian politics and ethnic conflict in Sudan, and gender and sports in Senegal and elsewhere in Africa. She has taught at St. Mary's College of California and at UC Berkeley, and her courses have covered a range of topics, including political economy in the third world, women in Africa, women and international development, and gender and sports. Her publications include articles and chapters on various aspects of gender and sport and on ethnic politics in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. She is currently working on the question of Islam, sport and gender in Africa. She is on the editorial boards of Soccer and Society; Sport in Society; and The Interdisciplinary Journal of Sports in Africa. She serves on the executive board of the West African Research Association. A veteran of Title IX battles, she has played soccer for 30 years and now coaches her son's team. Dr. Saavedra has published extensively on Muslim women and sports.</p> <p>Among her recent publications: "Dilemmas and Opportunities in Gender and Sport-in-development." Chapter 6 in Sport and International</p>	http://ias.berkeley.edu/africa/ Tel: 510.642.8338 Fax: 510.642.0721 Email: martha@berkeley.edu	Assoc. Professor

		<p>Development: <i>Opportunities and Limitations for Enhancing the Human Condition</i>, ed. Roger Levermore and Aaron Beacom, Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.</p> <p>“Women, Islam, Gender, Sports and the Female Body: Sub-Saharan Africa” (long version) <i>A Mulher em África: Vozes de uma Margem sempre Presente</i>, Editors: Inocência Mata & Laura Padilha, Lisboa: Edições Colibri / CEA-FLUL (Centro de Estudos Africanos da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa.), 2007.</p> <p>“Women, Gender, Sports and the Female Body: Sub-Saharan Africa,” in <i>The Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures, Volume 3: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health</i>. Editor: Suad Joseph. Brill Academic Publishers, 2006.</p> <p>“Football Feminine: The Development of the African Game,” in <i>Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation: Kicking off a New Era</i>, Editors: F. Hong and J.A Mangan, Frank Cass: London/Portland OR, 2004. First published as a special edition of <i>Soccer and Society</i>, Vol. 4, Nos 2/3. Autumn/Fall 2003.</p>		
3 Canada/ Iran	Dr. Homa Hoodfar	<p>Homa Hoodfar has her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of Kent at Canterbury. She is working as Anthropology professor at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Dr. Hoodfar has conducted field research on development and social change issues in Egypt and Iran, with an emphasis on gender, households, work and international migration in the Middle East. Further key research areas are women and Islam, and codification of Muslim family laws in the Middle East, Muslim dress code in diaspora, and the impact of long term forced migration on family structure and gender relations on Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan. Hoodfar was a Research Fellow in Anthropology at the American University in Cairo, Egypt from 1983-84. She received her M.A. in Development Studies (interdisciplinary) from the University of Manchester, UK (1979-81) and her B.A. in Economics and Business Studies from the University of Tehran, Iran (1974-76).</p> <p>She has authored or edited, and co-edited a series of books:</p> <p>2003. <i>The Muslim veil in North America: Issues and debates</i>. Sajida Alvi, Homa Hoodfar and Sheila McDonough (edited). Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press.</p> <p>2000. <i>Building Civil Societies: A Guide for Social and Political Participation</i>. France: Women Living Under Muslim Laws. (With Nelofer Pazira)</p> <p>1999,1998,1997. <i>Between marriage and the market: Intimate politics and survival in Cairo</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press.</p> <p>1996. Special dossier: <i>Shifting boundaries in marriage and divorce in Muslim communities, Women and Law in the Muslim World Program, Women Living Under Muslim Laws</i>. (Guest Editor).</p>	<p>Tel: 514-848-24 ext. 21</p> <p>Email: hoodfar@alcor.concordia.ca</p> <p>Website: http://socioanth.concordia.ca/hoodfar.htm</p>	Professor

		1996. Development, Change, and Gender in Cairo: A View from the Household. ed. Diane Singerman and Homa Hoodfar. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.		
4 Iran	Nasrin Afzali	Nasrin Afzali is a leading women's movement activist and journalist in Iran. She has acted as organizer of peaceful demonstrations, and organizations of women activism in Iran. She is interested in women, women rights, and women's engagement in sports in Iran.		Activist
5 Canada/US	Hana Askren	<p>Hana Askren is a writer and a wrestler. Los Angeles native Hana Askren decided to move to Montreal and enroll in Italian Studies at McGill University. Her writings have appeared in several publications, including the McGill Reporter, Hour and Montreal Magazine.</p> <p>Hana Askren works out with the Montreal Wrestling Club. She set up a blog called Hana Askren - reading, writing, wrestling.</p> <p>She won a gold medal in the 48-kilogram class at the CIS championships in London, Ont., competing for Concordia University. With a BA in Italian Studies and an MA in Arabic Literature from McGill, Askren switched last fall to Concordia, where she is studying for a Ph.D. in humanities. She plans to write her thesis on Arab women athletes in Egypt.</p> <p>In Beachwood, Ohio, Askren won her 50-kilo weight division at the U.S. Maccabiah trials - a competition held every four years, the World Maccabiah Games are the third largest international sporting competition, after the Olympics and the Pan American Games, supported by FILA and USA-sanctioned wrestling.</p>		Sportswoman and writer
6 Canada	Dr. Wilson Chacko Jacob	Dr. Wilson Chacko Jacob is an assistant professor at Department of History at Concordia University. He obtained his Ph.D. from the departments of History and Middle East and Islamic Studies at New York University in 2005. He completed a B.S. in Foreign Service and an M.A. in Arab Studies at Georgetown University. His dissertation is entitled, "Working Out Egypt: Masculinity and Subject Formation between Colonial Modernity and Nationalism, 1870-1940.	Department of History Concordia University Phone: (514) 848-2424 x2403 Email: wcjacob@alcor.concordia.ca	Assistant Professor

Appendix 3

Women living under muslim laws النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين Femmes sous lois musulmanes

A Symposium:

“The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women”

28 March 2008, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

- 14.00 Welcome and opening
Dr. Wilson Chacko Jacob
- 14.10 Dr. Yoav Di-Capua,
Assistant Professor, University of Texas at Austin
(His paper is read by Dr. Wilson Chacko Jacob)
- 14.35 Dr. Martha Saavedra
University of California at Berkeley
Associate Director of the Center for African Studies
- 15.00 Dr. Homa Hoodfar
Concordia University
Professor, Anthropology
- 15.25 Nasrin Afzali
Journalist and Independent Researcher, Iran
- 15.50 Hana Askren
Ph.D. Candidate, Sportswomen
- 16.15 Questions and discussions
- 16.40 Film Screening “Offside”
Director: Jafar Panahi
- 18.15 Concluding comments



Appendix 4

“The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women”

28 March 2008, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

Appendix 4: Selected Media Coverage

Coverage of “The Gazette”

Across the Muslim world, activists and sportswomen are reclaiming the right to be both spectators of, and participants in their national sports. Whereas some Muslim countries see no conflict between women and sport – either as spectators or participants – in Iran, women are forbidden to enter public stadiums to watch sporting events. Ironically, the main football stadium in Iran is named ‘Azadi’...which means ‘freedom’.

Iranian journalist, WLUML networker and feminist activist, **Nasrin Afzali** is part of the campaign to overturn this prohibition.

What is the reason? "The authorities say that it is not good for Muslims to see men's bodies", the journalist – blogger and human rights activist of 28 years old - explains with a wry smile.

Is all this for the love of soccer? "No, I hate football!" The Iranian journalist retorts. But the segregation of the sexes is one of the core policies of the Islamic regime. We thought that one of the best symbols to represent our opposition is the stadium. It has also allowed us to rally adolescents, who are not particularly interested in women's rights but who love soccer."

The politicized sport

“Iran is not the only Muslim country where sport has become a political issue”, the sociologist **Homa Hoodfar** says. She is one of the organizers of the conference held at Concordia yesterday afternoon.

"Many Muslim countries are also dictatorships. The sport gives women a new democratic space" she states. This is the case in Egypt, Nigeria, and Sudan among others. In addition, the academic recalls how the ball bounced into the Quebec court last year, when a young footballer was expelled from a match because she was wearing the hijab. "When young women wear the hijab while they are playing football, they put forward their Muslim identity, but they also oppose the tradition that takes a jaundiced view of women doing sport."

By Laura-Julie Perreault (Montreal Gazette)

Coverage of “Concordia Journal”

Muslim women in sport

Monday, May 5, 2008

Muslim women who are keen on sports may exercise their passion as freely as other athletes, or they may not even be able to watch men play. It has more to do with which country they live in than their religion.

That was the conclusion left by a symposium called *The Role of Sport in Resisting and Accommodating and in Remaking Muslim Women*, which drew a small audience to the Hall Building’s seventh-floor dining room on March 28.

Concordia anthropologist Homa Hoodfar presented a paper on the Muslim Women's Olympics, which was held in Tehran in 1993, 1997, 2001 and 2005 with enthusiastic participation; in the most recent edition, the women came from nearly 40 countries. The alternative games were launched by a combination of athletes and those we would call feminists, women determined to regain a presence in public life that was lost in the 1979 revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

When Iran’s soccer team beat the U.S. team in the 1998 World Cup series, the nation was ecstatic. Football, always a passion, became a focus of fierce national pride. Yet in Iran’s theocratic regime, women can’t even attend men’s games.

Nasrin Afzali, from the University of Tehran, said that as far as the mullahs are concerned, the gaze of women on men’s bodies appears to be just as dangerous as the reverse. She described some of the subterfuges young women use to get into the ironically named Freedom Stadium to watch their brothers play and contest their exclusion from a major public venue. Girls have dressed as boys, a ploy so notorious that it became the plot of an Iranian movie.

Yoav Di-Capua, a scholar at the University of Texas at Austin, was unable to get to Concordia in person, but his paper, read on his behalf, told an entertaining story about an Egyptian aviatrix, as they used to be called.

Lutifa al-Nadi was the daughter of an effendi (upper-class) family in the 1930s. Egypt was run by the British then, and throughout Europe and the Americas, flying was all the rage. In fact, aviation was the pinnacle of technology, and embodied all that was dashing, modern, European and male — all that symbolically justified the colonization of Egypt. Fascinated by the new sport, Lutifa hung out at Cairo’s elite aviation club, taking flying lessons on the sly and volunteering on the club’s telephone switchboard to disguise her real intentions. When an intercity race between Cairo and Alexandria took place, guess who came first? Lutifa emerged from the cockpit, her face wreathed in smiles, and was mobbed by adoring fans of both sexes.

Two other papers presented at the symposium looked at Muslim women and sport. Hana Askren is an award-winning wrestler and a Concordia PhD candidate. She reminded the audience that not so long ago, football was closed to women in the West. In many European countries and for members of the national women's baseball team in the United States, players were required to wear makeup on the field, presumably to reassure spectators that they were real women. Sociologists call this "feminine apologetics". Martha Saavedra, of the University of California at Berkeley, has compiled data on women and sport in Senegal, Sudan and Nigeria.

She found that the restrictions justified by religion and culture vary in these countries, and even in the regions within them. They appear to have more to do with the political and ideological context than with the way people understand their religion.

Barbara Black, Concordia Journal

Coverage of "The Concordian"

Symposium on women, Islam and sports

Series to examine the influence of sports on Muslim women

Adam Steiss & Richard Tardif

Issue date: 3/25/08 Section: Sports

Concordia's department of sociology and anthropology is inviting students this Friday to take part in a symposium on the role of sports in the lives of Muslim women. "The Role of Sport in Resisting, Accommodating And in Remaking Muslim Women" will be chaired by Wilson Chacko Jacob, from Concordia University. The speaker series is sponsored by Concordia and Women Living Under Muslim Laws, an international network promoting solidarity for women living in both secular and religious countries. This includes both Muslim and non-Muslim women who are affected or governed by laws and customs pertaining to Islam. The network spans over 70 countries and aims to strengthen women's equality and rights.

Speakers will include Yoav Di-Capua, from the University of Texas at Austin; Martha Saavedra, University of California at Berkeley; Nasrin Afzali: University of Tehran, and Hana Askren, from Concordia University.

Another featured speaker from Concordia is Homa Hoodfar. She has conducted field research on development and social change issues in Egypt and Iran, with an emphasis on gender, households, work and international migration in the Middle East. Hoodfar will present "The Launching of Muslim Women's Olympics: New Spheres for Feminism in Iran."

The rest of the panel will focus on topics ranging from the relation between women and sport in African countries to the campaign of Iranian women to gain the right to attend soccer matches in Iran.

The conference takes place Fri., March 28, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m. at Concordia University Hall Building, Rm 763, 1455 de Maisonneuve W.

For more info: Sertach Sehlikoglu at s_shelik@alcor.concordia.ca, or the department of Sociology and Anthropology at 514.848.2424 ext. 2140

Iran: Pour des féministes iraniennes, la liberté, c'est un match de soccer

3/04/2008: Des féministes iraniennes réclament le droit d'être spectatrices de leur sport national. (La Presse)

Le principal stade de soccer d'Iran, le stade Azadi («liberté» en français), à Téhéran, porte mal son nom. Les adeptes féminines du célèbre jeu de ballon ne sont pas libres d'y entrer pour voir des matchs. Mais ce n'est pas faute d'avoir essayé.

Depuis 2005, la jeune féministe Nasrin Afzali se bat aux côtés de plus de 300 femmes iraniennes pour faire tomber la règle qui, depuis la révolution islamique de 1979, leur interdit de voir leurs joueurs de soccer préférés en muscles et en os.



La raison? «Les autorités disent que ce n'est pas bon pour des musulmanes de voir le corps des hommes», explique avec un sourire moqueur la journaliste, blogueuse et militante des droits des femmes âgée de 28 ans.

De passage à l'Université Concordia hier pour assister à une conférence sur le rôle du sport dans les luttes des femmes musulmanes, Nasrin Afzali, qui vit à Téhéran, a pu expliquer comment le voile islamique a servi la cause qui lui tient à cœur en se transformant en objet de militantisme.

Lorsqu'elles ont essayé pour la première fois d'entrer dans le stade Azadi, en 2006, les militantes ont appris à leurs dépens que les gardes du stade n'entendaient pas à rire. Elles ont été encerclées, battues à coups de bâtons, et leurs pancartes ont été détruites.

La deuxième fois, les gardes ont demandé aux protestataires de monter à bord d'un autobus qui devait les conduire à l'intérieur du stade Azadi. Elles se sont cependant vite rendu compte que c'est vers la place Azadi, à des kilomètres de là, que le véhicule les menait.

La troisième fois, les manifestantes ont eu l'idée de faire du voile islamique, qu'elles sont obligées de porter, des pancartes. En rouge, elles ont écrit sur les foulards blancs: «La

moitié du stade Azadi est à moi.» Elles ont encore eu droit à une bonne bastonnade, mais les gardes n'ont pu leur enlever leur voile et leur message a été entendu. La société iranienne a été saisie du débat.

Nasrin Afzali et ses comparses ont d'ailleurs connu leur heure de gloire quand le cinéaste iranien Jafar Panahi leur a dédié le prix qu'il a remporté au festival de Berlin pour le film *Offside*, racontant l'histoire d'une jeune femme qui se déguise en garçon pour assister au match entre l'équipe nationale de soccer de l'Iran et celle de Bahreïn.

Les revendications des femmes aux foulards blancs ont même réussi à ébranler le président iranien Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Ce dernier, connu pour ses positions ultraconservatrices sur la place des femmes dans la société (il a déjà suggéré de rendre les trottoirs unisexes), était prêt à ouvrir les portes du stade aux femmes. Mais il a été rappelé à l'ordre. Des ayatollahs, qui ont un droit de veto sur les décisions du président, ont invoqué la loi islamique.

Nasrat Afzali ne baisse pas les bras pour autant. Le combat se poursuit sur des sites web, à la radio et sur les chaînes de télévision satellite de Los Angeles, auxquelles les Iraniens ont accès.

Tout ça pour l'amour du soccer? «Non, je déteste le soccer! Laisse tomber la journaliste iranienne. Mais la ségrégation des sexes est une des politiques centrales du régime islamique. Nous avons pensé qu'un des meilleurs symboles pour représenter notre opposition est le stade. Ça nous a permis aussi de rallier les adolescentes, qui ne s'intéressent pas particulièrement aux droits des femmes, mais adorent le soccer.»

Le sport politisé

L'Iran n'est pas le seul pays musulman où le sport est devenu une question politique, signale une des organisatrices de la conférence qui a eu lieu à Concordia hier après-midi, la sociologue Homa Hoodfar. «Plusieurs pays musulmans sont aussi des dictatures. Le sport ouvre aux femmes un nouvel espace démocratique», précise-t-elle. C'est le cas en Égypte, au Nigeria et au Soudan, notamment.

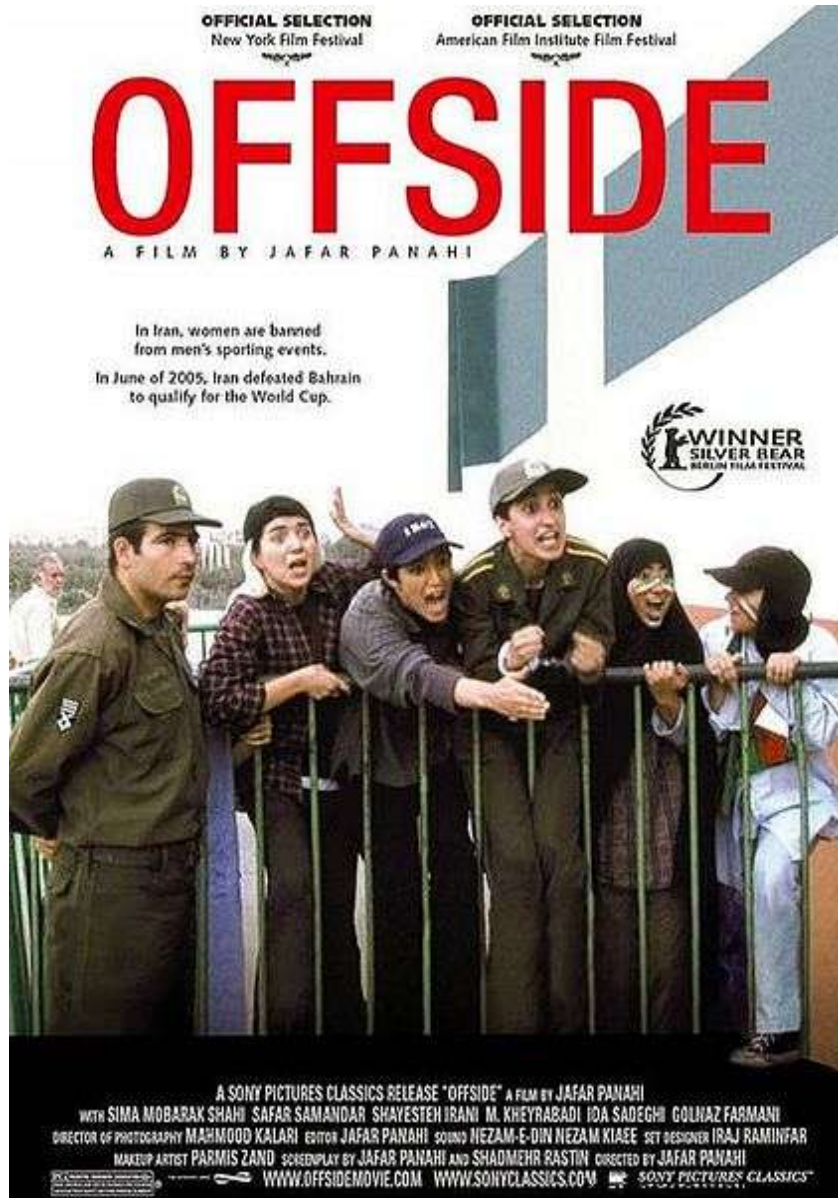
Par ailleurs, l'universitaire rappelle comment le ballon a rebondi jusque dans la cour du Québec l'an dernier lorsqu'une jeune joueuse de soccer a été expulsée d'un match parce qu'elle portait le hijab. «Quand de jeunes femmes portent le hijab au soccer, elles mettent de l'avant leur identité de musulmane, certes, mais elles s'opposent aussi à la tradition qui voit d'un mauvais œil les femmes qui font du sport.»

Par: Laura-Julie Perreault

29 mars 2008

Appendix: 5

Offside



Directed by	Jafar Panahi
Written by	Jafar Panahi Shadmehr Rastin
Starring	Shima Mobarak-Shahi Safar Samandar Shayesteh Irani Ayda Sadeqi Golnaz Farmani
Distributed by	Sony Pictures Classics
Release date(s)	February 17, 2006

Offside (Persian: افساید) is a [2006 Iranian film](#) about girls who try to watch a [World Cup](#) qualifying match but are forbidden by law because of their gender. Female fans are not allowed to enter football stadiums in Iran on the grounds that there will be a high risk of violence or verbal abuse against them. The film was inspired by director [Jafar Panahi](#)'s daughter, who decided to attend a game anyway. The film was shot in [Iran](#)^[1] but its screening was banned there.^[2]

Synopsis

None of the characters in the film are named, except Samandar the lieutenant in charge.

A girl disguises herself as a boy to go attend the 2005 World Cup qualifying match between [Iran](#) and [Bahrain](#). She travels by bus with a group of male fans, some of whom notice her gender, but do not tell anyone. At the stadium, she persuades a reluctant ticket tout to sell her a ticket; he only agrees to do so at an inflated price. The girl tries to slip through security, but she is spotted and arrested. She is put in a holding pen on the stadium roof with several other women who have also been caught; the pen is frustratingly close to a window onto the match, but the women are at the wrong angle to see it.

The women are guarded by several soldiers, all of whom are just doing their [national service](#); one in particular is a country boy from [Tabriz](#) who just wants to return to his farm. The soldiers are bored and do not particularly care whether women should be allowed to attend football matches; however, they guard the women carefully for fear of their "chief", who could come by at any moment. They occasionally give commentary on the match to the women.

One of the younger girls needs to go to the toilet, but of course there is no women's toilet in the stadium. A soldier is deputed to escort her to the men's toilet, which he does by an increasingly farcical process: first disguising her face with a poster of a football star, then throwing a number of angry men out of the toilet and blockading any more from entering. During the chaos, the girl escapes into the stadium, although she returns to the holding pen shortly after as she is worried about the soldier from Tabriz getting into trouble.

Part of the way through the second half of the game, the women are bundled into a bus, along with a boy arrested for carrying [fireworks](#), and the soldiers ordered to drive them to the Vice Squad headquarters. As the bus travels through Tehran, the soldier from Tabriz plays the radio commentary on the match as it concludes. Iran defeats Bahrain 1-0 with a goal from Nosrati just after half time and wild celebrations erupt within the bus as the women and the soldiers cheer and sing with joy. The girl whose story began the film is the only one not happy. When asked why, she explains that she is not really interested in football; she wanted to attend the match because a friend of hers was one of seven people killed in a scuffle during the recent Iran-Japan match, and she wanted to see the match in his memory.

The city of Tehran explodes with festivity, and the bus becomes caught in a traffic jam as a spontaneous street party begins. Borrowing seven [sparklers](#) from the boy with the

fireworks, the women leave the bus and march into the crowd, holding the sparklers above them.

Cast

- Sima Mobarak-Shahi — First girl
- Shayesteh Irani — Smoking girl
- Ayda Sadeqi — Soccer girl
- Golnaz Farmani — Girl with tchador
- Mahnaz Zabihi — Female soldier
- Nazanin Sediq-zadeh — Young girl

Critical reception

The film received very positive reviews from critics. The review aggregator [Rotten Tomatoes](#) reported that 97% of critics gave the film positive reviews, based on 76 reviews.^[3] [Metacritic](#) reported the film had an average score of 85 out of 100, based on 25 reviews.^[4]

Top ten lists

The film appeared on several critics' top ten lists of the best films of 2007.^[5]

- 2nd - Noel Murray, [The A.V. Club](#)
- 6th - J. Hoberman, [The Village Voice](#)
- 9th - Peter Rainer, [The Christian Science Monitor](#)
- 9th - Tasha Robinson, [The A.V. Club](#)

Awards

The film won the [Silver Bear](#) at the Berlin International Film Festival Grand Jury Prize in 2006^[6], and was in the official selection for the 2006 [New York](#) and [Toronto Film Festivals](#).

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offside_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offside_(film))

Appendix 6: Muslim Women in Sports Blog



<http://muslimwomeninsports.blogspot.com/>

The collection of news and articles on Muslim women and sports around the world. I decided to create the blog after I started doing research on the subject and recognized the lacuna of a resource of collected materials on the subject. – Sertac Sehlukoglu

Blog Archive

2009 (25)

- ▼ March (4)
 - Shirzanan's Interview with Persepolis Futsal team ...
 - Shirzanan: The First Iranian Women Sports Magazine...
 - New WSI member designs sportswear for active Musli...
 - The First Palestinian Women's Soccer Team
- ▼ February (15)
 - The political artist on Iraqi football, Ahmad Shah...
 - A recent survey by Charity Commission in Britain h...
 - UK mosque survey highlights community role
 - Muslim Women Are Taking Part In Aqua-Aerobic And S...
 - Softball returns completed questionnaire to IOC
 - Netherlands: Burkini good for integration
 - Netherlands: Proposed ban on burkas in schools
 - Sport helps young Gazans escape reality - 06 Feb 0...

- North Kensington's women and girls are being urge...
- Iran: Men vs. women soccer game draws punishment
- EU urged to support women's role in sport
- An Interesting Article, from a Forum on Islam: "Sp...
- Verhüllt ins Schwimmbad
- Muslima verhüllt ins Hallenbad
- A Muslim schoolgirl from St. Maaz high school prac...
- ▼ January (6)
 - Qatar Launches Women's Tour Event
 - Sports for Peace Case - 2
 - Sports for Peace Case
 - Netherlands: Muslim sues gym for headscarf ban
 - Muslim Women in the World of Sport
 - 2010 WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND SPORT, SYDNEY
- ▼ 2008 (24)
 - ▼ December (5)
 - Allow youth to mingle
 - Muslim Women are Taking Part in Aqua-aerobic and S...
 - Daughters of Islam: Family Influences on Muslim Yo...
 - I'm no role model, declares Muslim Amla
 - Report: Voted Overwhelmingly by Athletes!
 - ▼ November (14)
 - The No 1 Muslim Ladies' Cycling Club
 - Malaysia clerics issue yoga fatwa
 - Making peace through basketball
 - Challenging the Stereotype with Hijab
 - WTA founder King promotes gender equality in Qatar...
 - Muslim Women in Sport
 - For Venus, it's tennis only in Middle East
 - Venus focused on tennis
 - Beach Volleyball in Iran?
 - International: "Foul Ball: Muslim Women Banned fro...
 - Islam's View on Physical Activity and Sport: Egypt...
 - Christian, Muslim youth compete in peace
 - Muslim Women in Sports: Lida Fariman and Manije Ka...
 - Growing the game in the world's most populous Musl...
 - ▼ October (3)
 - The Status of Muslim Women in Sport: Conflict betw...
 - Daughters of Islam
 - Fatwa on football?
 - ▼ August (1)
 - Iran's First Female to Win Olympic Spot
 - ▼ May (1)
 - Muslim women in sport

Appendix 7: Photos



Photo 1: (From left to right) Prof Homa Hoodfar, Dr Martha Saavedra, PhD Candidate Hana Askren and Dr. Wilson Jacko Jacob



Photo 2: Prof Homa Hoodfar and Dr Martha Saavedra



Photo 3: Prof Homa Hoodfar



Photo 4: Nasrin Afzali



Photo 5: Dr Martha Saavedra, PhD Candidate Hana Askren and Dr. Wilson Jacko Jacob