

FIME Annual Report 2018

The Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME) is an academic institute that focuses on the study of Middle Eastern cultures, religions, societies, and classical and modern languages. The Institute supports Finnish research on the Middle East and offers teaching in this field in cooperation with universities. It also participates in public discourse carried out in Finland on Middle Eastern issues by providing research-based commentary. The Institute's sphere of operations covers the entire Middle East. It is registered in Lebanon and Syria and has a representative in Cairo, Egypt. The foundation that maintains the Institute has an office in Helsinki.

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Message from the chairman

The Finnish Institute in the Middle East and the Foundation maintaining it have had another successful year. The Institute has upheld a high academic profile, and the variety of its academic activities can be seen in its research topics. The Institute has also provided a diverse course offering for students, teachers, and the general public in Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Armenia, Iran, and Finland. Educational trips and courses have dealt with the aftermath of the Arab Spring, migration, and tribal societies and provided a closer look at the societal challenges faced by different regions throughout history and in the present.

The Finnish network of the Anna Lindh Foundation paused its activities during 2018 due to reasons beyond our control, but now the network is active again. The Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East has been granted the responsibility of coordinating the network.

FIME's annual report once again showcases the central position of the Institute and the Foundation in promoting Finnish research in the Middle East and maintaining cooperation between various parties, disseminating information on the history and present of the Middle East, and acting as a platform for public discourse related to this region. We could not have done this without our skilful and committed personnel and active

board members, not to mention our numerous cooperation partners, without whom this annual report would have a lot less to report.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to our board members for their hard work and good ideas. I would also like to thank our personnel in the Middle East: Director Raija Mattila, researcher-coordinator Päivi Miettunen, and director's assistant Manal Chatila, as well as our interns Melisa Yasav and Jarno Välimäki in Beirut and our representative Said Sadek in Cairo. The Foundation's activities in Finland have been in the skilful hands of our executive officer Anu Leinonen. In addition to her, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to administrative assistants Ella Kaplas, Saana Sarpo, and Suvi Laakso.

The war in Syria is coming to an end, but there is still no permanent peace in the Middle East. This year, too, we hope from the bottoms of our hearts that our friends in the Middle East stay strong and endure.

Helsinki, 22 February 2019

Martti Nissinen
Chairman, Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East

Review by the director

According to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, approximately 6.3 million Syrians have had to leave their homes to flee from war and terror. Most of the refugees still live in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. The Institute's researcher-coordinator Dr Päivi Miettunen and Professor Muhammed Shunnaq at Yarmouk University in Jordan have launched a joint project in 2018 to study the significance of tribal networks in the lives of refugees, a subject that has to date aroused little interest.

The comparative study concentrating on tribal networks was chosen as a part of a larger project started by the Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut. This project aims to provide information on the agency of Syrian refugees in Jordan and their unofficial economic, mental, and social adaptive methods in the prevailing situation.

According to Päivi Miettunen, "research focusing on tribal societies shines a light on the structures and networks that easily remain invisible in official contexts but are highly significant politically, economically, and ideologically on the level of communities, nations and entire geographical regions."

Miettunen's fixed two-year term as the Institute's researcher-coordinator in Beirut ended at the end of 2018. I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Päivi for her successful work that has strengthened important elements in the Institute's research activities, namely significant investment in fieldwork and growing cooperation with local researchers and universities.

Beirut, 26 February 2019

Raija Mattila
Director of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East

Finnish Institute in the Middle East

The Institute's academic activities consist of the research carried out by the director and the researcher-coordinator, the visiting researcher programme, and academic cooperation in the form of conferences,

seminars, and research projects, as well as helping Finnish researchers and building academic contact networks in the Middle East. The Institute supports cooperation between researchers and universities and furthers the internationalization of Finnish research and higher education.

The Institute organizes teaching in connection with universities and participates in public discourse on the Middle East in Finland.

Research

Population diversity in Assyria

The director of the Institute, Raija Mattila, launched an international research project consisting of a series of workshops focusing on population diversity and the social, economic, and cultural position of minorities in the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires in the first millennium BC. The first workshop was held in Beirut in April 2018. Mattila's own research concentrates on Egyptians known from cuneiform texts found in the great Assyrian cities of Assur and Nineveh. Mattila's other research interest is animals in ancient Mesopotamia, and in cooperation with Professor Gabriela Kompatscher from the University of Innsbruck, she organized a workshop at an international conference on Assyriology that introduced the research of animals in the humanities to scholars of the ancient Near East.

Tribal networks supporting refugees

Researcher-coordinator Päivi Miettunen's postdoctoral project studied the information practices and the manifestation of information poverty in marginalized communities. Miettunen carried out fieldwork in Lebanon and Jordan among both local Bedouin and those who had come from Syria as refugees. In addition, Miettunen and Professor Muhammed Shunnaq from Yarmouk University launched the joint project *Tribal networks and informal adaptive mechanisms of the refugees – the case of the Bani Khalid tribe in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, which studies the significance of tribal networks in the lives of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. In particular, the project aims to focus on employment, economic circumstances, and the role of women in making a living. Shunnaq and Miettunen collected data in the form of interviews and observations in the tribe's home area in northern Jordan, north-eastern Lebanon, and the Wadi Khaled region, as well as in the surroundings of Tripoli. Bani Khalid is one of the largest tribes in northern Jordan, and tribe members from Syria have often been able to settle in the tribe's villages. Syrian seasonal workers with a tribal background have been working in the fields and vineyards of Lebanon since long before the war, and these connections have been utilized when temporary residence has turned into year-round living as refugees. Syrian refugees have actively founded small businesses, such as shops, restaurants, barber shops, and garages. Informants in both Wadi Khaled in Lebanon and the villages of northern Jordan mentioned that there were hardly any small businesses in these areas before the Syrians came.

Researcher visits to Cairo, Beirut, and Muscat

FIME's visiting researchers in 2018 were Dr Liina Mustonen and Dr Sheraz Ahmed. Mustonen spent three months altogether in Cairo and Beirut to prepare the fieldwork for her upcoming postdoctoral project on the relationship between mobility, social class, and gender performativity between the Middle East and Europe. Ahmed spent three months in Muscat, Oman, working in cooperation with local researchers to carry out empirical studies on the relationship between company administrative cultures, transparency, and profitability in the MENA region.

Academic cooperation

Islamic Law and Citizenship

Helsinki and Tampere, 6 to 9 June

FIME was a partner in cooperation in the conference organized by the International Society for Islamic Legal Studies (ISILS) and hosted by the Universities of Helsinki and Tampere. This year was the first time that the

conference was held outside the United States. In connection with the conference, FIME also organized a meeting for journalists titled "Who's afraid of sharia?" together with the Union of Journalists in Finland. This was a new type of activity for FIME.

Minorities in Mesopotamia Workshop 1

Beirut, 9 to 11 April

Thousands of individuals with foreign names are known from the cuneiform material from Assyria and Babylonia. The workshop concentrated on possible methods of using this material to study population diversity in ancient empires.

Shrines and Sacred Spaces – Creating Pluralism

Beirut, 29 to 31 August

Many sacred places have traditionally been visited by devotees of many religions or religious groups. The workshop focused on contemplating to what extent shared sacred places continue to promote tolerance. FIME organized the workshop in cooperation with Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Creating Pluralities programme, and it was preceded by a two-day trip to sacred places in southern Lebanon.

Digitizing and publishing the scholarly remains of Hilma Granqvist

FIME is a partner in cooperation in the project led by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS) aiming to digitize and publish the scholarly remains of Hilma Granqvist, a pioneer of Finnish anthropological research. On 29 November, the Society published the first part of the archives. The online publication is available at <http://granqvist.sls.fi/> and consists of Granqvist's travel diaries from her second fieldwork trip to Palestine in 1930–31 and her doctoral dissertation *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village I–II*. The digitization and digital publication of Hilma Granqvist's archives are an essential part of FIME's contribution to the Open Research Data project of the Finnish academic institutes.

Cooperation in publication

The Donner Institute published a special issue of the peer-reviewed open access journal *Approaching Religion*. Issue 8/2, titled *Transformations of identity and space in the Middle East and North Africa*, consisted of papers given at the fifth FIME colloquium held in Joensuu in 2017, supplemented with other articles. The issue was edited by Ruth Illman and Raija Mattila.

Turkey and the Kurdish issue

A network coordinated by FIME organized a guest event focusing on Turkey and the Kurdish issue on 27 November together with the Institute of International Affairs. The panellists were İmren Borsuk Eroğlu (Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies), Esin Düzel, Toni Alaranta (FIIA), Juha Jokela (FIIA), and Anu Leinonen (FIME). Eroğlu also gave a guest lecture at the University of Helsinki on "Social Polarization and Communal Violence against Kurds in Turkey".

Herodotus' views on the monuments of the Middle East

Professor Robert Rollinger (Innsbruck) gave a guest lecture on this subject to Lebanese students of archaeology on 15 February, invited by FIME and the American University of Beirut.

Courses

Bedouin culture, tribal society, and identity in Jordan

Jordan, 21 May to 1 June

Finnish university students were introduced to Bedouin culture and the formation of social identity in a tribal society under the leadership of Dr Päivi Miettunen. Tribes are highly significant in Middle Eastern societies and politics, but the issue has aroused little interest in Finland. The course in Jordan was preceded by a week-long series of lectures on tribalism by Miettunen at the University of Helsinki. During the course in Jordan, the participants practiced making participant videos for the first time. The aim was to teach audio-visual

techniques to students of Middle Eastern Studies (<http://www.fime.fi/katso-beduini-identiteettia-etsi-massa-kurssilaisten-videot-jordaniasta/>).

Morocco and the migration across the Mediterranean

Morocco, 5 to 12 March

Nine university students participated in this highly topical course led by lecturer Marko Juntunen from the University of Helsinki and organized in cooperation with the Finnish Association for Students of Middle Eastern and North African Studies.

Shaping of the Post-Arab Spring in the Middle East

Cairo, 21 to 27 October

Master-level students specializing in the modern Middle East and world politics acquainted themselves with international relations in the Middle East under the leadership of Professor Hannu Juusola.

Armenian history through the millennia

Armenia, 5 to 15 June

A group of teachers from the Association for Teachers of History and Social Studies in Finland learned about history and current affairs in Armenia under Wilhelmiina Virolainen, an expert on Armenia.

Religion, society, and culture in Iran

Iran, 1 to 20 October

A group of teachers from the Association for Teachers of Religious Education in Finland explored Iran. This continuing education course was led by Iran expert Joonas Maristo, with Professor Martti Nissinen providing theological expertise.

The heritage of the sultans and the challenges of modern Turkey

Salo, 24 January to 11 April

Together with the parish of Salo and the Salo Adult Education Centre, FIME organized a course consisting of 11 lectures on the history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. A similar course on the 600-year history of the Ottomans has not been held in Finland for a very long time.

Participation in public discourse

President Tarja Halonen visited Lebanon

President Halonen visited Lebanon from 21 to 23 February and gave a presentation at the "Women in Politics" discussion focusing on women's involvement in politics. This was a highly topical subject in Lebanon, as the nomination of candidates for the parliamentary election, which was to be held in May, was underway. In her presentation, President Halonen emphasized that it is not enough to break the glass ceiling once, as equality is an ongoing process. President Halonen underlined the significance of the HeForShe campaign and cooperation between men and women. Improving the self-confidence of girls and women is a task for the entire community. The visit was organized in cooperation between FIME and the Embassy of Finland in Beirut.

Public event on the war in Syria attracted a record audience

On 22 October, a public event on the war in Syria held in Think Corner at the University of Helsinki attracted about 280 participants, a record audience for FIME. The event was organized by FIME and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Helsinki, and it focused on the current situation of the civil war in Syria and its future development. The guests were Airin Bahmani, Bruno Jäntti, and Ari Kerkkänen, and the event was hosted by journalist Tom Kankkonen.

Lähi-itä NYT (Middle East NOW) blog

<http://lahi-itanyt.fi/>

This blog contains articles that clarify and summarize the torrent of news dealing with the Middle East and provide background information on current events. The multivoiced platform straddles fast-moving news broadcasting and analytical academic research, offering various broad, critical perspectives on the Middle East and the region's events. The blog's editor-in-chief is Professor Hannu Juusola, the vice-chairman of the board of the Foundation, and the guest authors are experts in their fields. The Mosaiikki blog, which commented Middle Eastern events on the spot, merged with the Lähi-itä NYT blog under the name *Paikan päältä*. Hannu Juusola's critical review of Atte Kaleva's book on jihadism gave rise to a long and meandering discussion on social media with hundreds of comments.

Lukemista Levantista (in Finnish)

<http://www.fime.fi/category/lukemista-levantista/>

The institute continued to publish Lukemista Levantista ("Readings from the Levant"), a series of articles in Finnish written by experts presenting a broad range of academic research related to the Middle East and aimed at a general readership.

Communication

The Institute communicates actively about its own events and other news on its website, Facebook, and Instagram, as well as in its Finnish-language newsletter, which comes out six times a year.

Cooperation partners and networks

Activities in 2018 were carried out in cooperation with numerous partners in Finland and the Middle East. These partners include the following: The University of Helsinki and its various departments and units (such as the Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions centre of excellence), the University of Tampere, Åbo Akademi University, the American University of Beirut (AUB), the American University in Cairo (AUC), the Issam Fares Institute, Institut français du Proche-Orient IFPO Amman, Salahaddin University – Hawler Department of Archaeology, Yarmouk University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Creating Pluralism programme, UN Women Lebanon, the International Society for Islamic Legal Studies (ISILS), the Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Finland's other academic institutes and cultural institutes with academic activities, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), the Melammu Project, the Finnish National Agency for Education, the Finnish Association for Students of Middle Eastern and North African Studies, the Finnish Oriental Society, the Association for Teachers of History and Social Studies in Finland, the Association for Teachers of Religious Education in Finland, the Salo Adult Education Centre and parish of Salo, the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), the Union of Journalists in Finland, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Embassies of Finland in Algiers, Beirut, Cairo, and Tehran, as well as Zafer Chaoui, Honorary Consul General of Finland in Lebanon, and Dr Rakan Rsheidat, Honorary Consul General of Finland in Jordan.

Finnish Academic Institutes Abroad

FIME was an active participant in the Finnish Academic Institutes Abroad forum. The Institute's director took part in the forum's meeting in Rome in March. In addition, FIME presented its activities at two events organized by the forum under the title "Finnish institutes abroad – opportunities for university staff" at the University of Turku on 28 November and at the University of Tampere on 29 November.

Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes Association (SKTI)

FIME took an active part in the Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes Association. The chairman of the Foundation's board of trustees, Professor Martti Nissinen, acted as a member of the board of the Association until April, and the current chairman of the board is Sakari Karjalainen, who is also a board member of the Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East.

Institute personnel

Director: Adjunct Professor, Dr Raija Mattila, Beirut

Researcher-coordinator: Dr Päivi Miettunen, Beirut
Assistant to the director: Manal Chatila, Beirut (part-time)
Representative: Dr Said Sadek, Cairo (part-time)
Interns funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education:
Melisa Yasav, B.Soc.Sc, Beirut (5 months)
Jarno Välimäki, BA, Beirut (5 months)

Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East

The Foundation's office is in Helsinki, and the Foundation's personnel in Helsinki also participate in operational activities, especially in organizing public events in Finland.

Grants

The Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East awarded grants totalling 19,650 euros to researchers and students for research in countries within the Institute's sphere of operations, for related travel, and for Arabic language studies.

Administration

The Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East is a foundation registered in Finland whose highest power of decision lies with the board of trustees. The board and the managers it appoints are responsible for the administration of the Institute governed by the Foundation. In 2018, the board met four times and consisted of the following experts:

Professor Martti Nissinen (chairman)

Deputy member: Tom Kankkonen, journalist

Professor Hannu Juusola (vice-chairman)

Deputy member: Professor Jutta Jokiranta

Dr Teija Tiilikainen, director

Deputy member: Dr Toni Alaranta

Iiris Kivimäki, director of communications

Deputy member: MA Karita Laisi until 25 September, M.Th. Rolf Steffansson

Adjunct Professor, Dr Sakari Karjalainen, secretary general

Deputy member: Samu Seitsalo, director

Dr Pekka Lindqvist

Deputy member: Professor Antti Laato

Adjunct Professor Risto Jukko until 25 September, Adjunct Professor Jyri Komulainen

Deputy member: Dr Elina Hellqvist

Ambassador Risto Veltheim

Deputy member: Kari Norkonmaa, M.Pol.Sc.

Dr Teuvo Laitila

Deputy member: Professor Serafim Seppälä

Ambassador Maria Serenius

Deputy member: Patrick Lindgren, LL.M.

Associate Professor Saana Svärd

Deputy member: Dr Aini Linjakumpu

Foundation personnel in Finland

Executive officer: Dr Anu Leinonen, Helsinki

Administrative and communications assistant, MA Suvi Laakso (until 11 January and from 1 May to 30 July), MA Ella Kaplas (from 1 August)

Project staff

Hilma Granqvist project, Kira Pihlflyckt (starting from 1 May)

ALF coordination, Saana Sarpo (15 January to 30 April)

All Foundation personnel in Finland are employed part-time.

Funding

The Foundation's total expenditure in 2018 was 432,816 euros. The Foundation's income consisted of an operational subsidy and special subsidy of the Ministry of Education and Culture (81%), as well as other subsidies, own income, and donations (19%). The Foundation's financial situation is stable.

Friends of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East

The Friends of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East organized public events with various cooperative partners and awarded a grant for a Master's thesis on the Middle East.

www.sliy.fi

Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF)

The Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) is a network of networks within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean that has over 4,000 member organizations in 42 countries. It aims to promote understanding between people in EU countries and on the southern side of the Mediterranean, as well as to foster cooperation between the region's non-governmental organizations, cultural networks, and other actors. Each member country has a national network and a network coordinator. In 2018, the international Anna Lindh Foundation underwent an organizational reform due to which there was little international activity. From January to April 2018, FIME coordinated the Finnish national network, which had 102 members at the end of the term. In early 2018, the coordination service had very little resources and its tasks consisted mainly of following the activities of the international network, participating in the reform process, and reporting to its Finnish members.

www.annalindhfinland.fi

Summary in Arabic (full page text)

Key figures in diagrams and pictures

Expenditure 432,816 euros.

Income 441,264 euros:

Operational subsidy and special subsidy of the Ministry of Education and Culture (81%)

Other subsidies, own income, and donations (19%).

2 workshops, 12 participants from 7 countries
2 scholarly articles, 1 monograph, 1 special issue of a peer-reviewed journal, 6 scholarly presentations.
3 intensive courses in the Middle East: 26 students, 4 experts, 78 credits
2 continuing training courses in the Middle East: 28 subject teacher, 3 experts
2 courses in Finland: 54 participants, 50 credits
Grants 17,736 euros: 5 researchers, 3 students, 15 months in the Middle East

Events in Finland: 6 events, 450 people
Events in the Middle East: 2, 45
39 blog posts, 28 writers, 12,418 page views, 9,082 unique visitors starting from 24 April.
Lukemista Levantista 3 articles, 3 writers (can be added to the above)
6 newsletters, 354 subscribers
Facebook: 100 posts, 1,715 likes
Instagram: 67 posts, 1,405 likes (+342 in 2018).
Media coverage: 25 mentions
Work time 5 person-years