



FALL /
WINTER
2018

.....
**The Magazine of The Center for
Arabic & Islamic Studies**
مركز الدراسات العربية والإسلامية





WHAT'S INSIDE?

Scholarly and timely articles from St. Bonaventure faculty and friends and students

Art Exhibit reviews with sneak peeks

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AND MORE...

Nur: The Light Magazine ©

Design and layout by
Amina Golden-Arabaty

Nūr: CAIS magazine — Spring 2018 (Vol. 4, No. 1)



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Crossing the line – the lines of politics, culture, religion, gender and more – this is the theme of this issue of Nūr. Crossing any line can be a positive or negative experience, by which one can delight in diversity or demand uniformity. It can lead to new insights and understanding, or sometimes to greater conflict. These facets of crossing various lines are explored here through the scholarship and experiences of St. Bonaventure faculty, students and friends.

Dr. Ibrahim Zabad, Professor of Political Science at St. Bonaventure, documents the ongoing difficulties experienced by Egypt's Coptic Christian community amid political turmoil in the Middle East. Lutheran pastor Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson offers a different perspective by relating her experiences teaching in Egypt over two decades. Fr. Victor Edwin, an Indian Jesuit father, explores aspects of Shi'ite Islam gleaned from his extensive experience of inter-religious dialogue in India.

Student perspectives on crossing cultural and religious lines are also provided by CAIS students, Emily Palmer and Grace Ferris, who flexed their knowledge of Arabic and Islam recently in Morocco, and by CAIS intern Amina Golden-Arabaty, who spoke about her experience as a Muslim-American at the gathering of the Franciscan Federation in summer 2018.

Books and art exhibits reviewed in this issue continue this theme as demonstrated by *Empress: the Reign of Nur Jahan*, a fascinating study of a Mughal empress by Dr. Ruby Lal (Emory University) who spoke on campus last spring. A review of *The World of the Fatimids* highlights the religious diversity in Egypt's medieval caliphate; and a review of the Aga Khan Museum's latest exhibit – *Emperors and Jewels* – illuminates the intercultural aspects of the Mughal period with dazzling jeweled works of art.

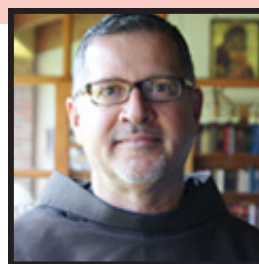
Change is afoot at CAIS! Regular readers of Nūr will notice a new look and format. In the three years since it was first published, Nūr has gone from a slim newsletter into a substantial magazine. This reflects the growth in CAIS as seen also in our new location and expanded facilities on the St. Bonaventure campus which we officially opened in September.

As CAIS begins anew, I would like to reiterate its unique Mission as a foundation for crossing lines peacefully and respectfully:

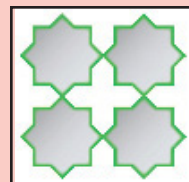
Inspired by the historical encounter between Francis of Assisi and the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219, the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies at St. Bonaventure University seeks to promote an understanding of Arab and Islamic cultures, an appreciation of both their historical and contemporary significance in the global community, and respectful relations between Muslim and Christian people.

Fr. Michael Calabria, O.F.M., PhD

السلام عليكم



Learn more about
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مركز الدراسات العربية والإسلامية



Religious Minorities in Egypt

BY: IBRAHIM ZABAD

Egypt is suffering and its sorrows are multiplying by the day. The political convulsions that the country experienced since the ill-fated Arab Spring have just accentuated and heightened Egypt's troubles and torments. With population exceeding 90 million, Egypt is the most populous Arab country, a solid US ally, and a pillar in the Israeli-American political order in the region. Despite its potential, Egypt nowadays has sadly become an 'absent' or sleeping power. But this has not always been the case. To the contrary, Egypt used to be a giant in Arab politics, an indispensable power, a pivotal state, a trend-setter, a hub of culture and arts. At one point, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the charismatic president, conceived of Egypt as a great regional power that occupies the center of three worlds: the Arab, Islamic and African. Egypt was a major founder and weighty player in the non-alignment movement that sought to chart a neutral option for developing countries that desired to avoid unnecessary entanglement in the cosmic competition between the Soviets and the Americans during the Cold War. However, with the passing of Nasser, Egypt has steadily declined and lost much of its regional power, its stability, and its gravitas. Worse, with the signing of the Camp David Peace Treaty (1978), it dealt its regional role a fatal blow. Egypt as a regional great power has effectively become a memory; the country has now become completely beholden to its constraining peace treaty with Israel and to its obsequious alliance with the U.S. The accords meant the withdrawal of Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict, subservient alliance with the US and acknowledging Israeli hegemony in the region. Egypt never truly recovered from this self-inflicted wound. President Mubarak who assumed authority after the assassination of President Sadat in 1981 sought to maintain the status quo, created a brutal dictatorship, and squarely placed Egypt in the American-Israeli orbit. With Mubarak, Egypt even sank into deeper slumber. Then, the awakening came: the initially promising Arab Spring that overthrew Mubarak's stultified gerontocracy. Egyptians saw what Tunisians accomplished in a couple of weeks and they took to the streets treating audiences throughout the world to unforgettable spectacles in Tahrir Square: a stunning and raw demonstration of people's power. In mere three weeks, the regime that suffocated Egypt was gone and new era of prosperity, freedom and democracy seemed to be within reach. Free elections were held, political parties mushroomed and competed, and civil society prospered. Then

another shock that buried all those rosy expectations struck Egypt: To the dismay of the peaceful protestors, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) won the Presidential elections while the even more fanatical and puritanical, the Salafists won a large number of parliamentary seats, a tragic outcome that cemented "Islamists" as the major political force in Egypt. It was downhill from this moment on. Turmoil gripped the country: very few were happy with this unexpected outcome; some became furious and scared of the oppressive policies of the MB that obviously aimed at Islamizing Egyptian politics and probably transforming Egypt into a Sunni theocracy in the long run. These prospects were horrifying for many Egyptians--the secularists, the leftists, the feminists, the supporters of the fallen regime, the officer corps, the security apparatus, among many others. A broad coalition formed and called upon the military to intervene to rescue Egypt from its dismal fate. The military carried out a coup d'état. The counter-revolution has just won and a new dictatorship emerged. Egypt was once again back where it started. The Arab Spring was a nightmare. The revolution ended. Hopes crashed. Pessimism set in. Some parts of Egypt, especially the Sinai Peninsula, have become a battleground between Salafi-Jihadists and the Egyptian security forces.

The gap between what Egypt could have been/should have been and its current status is indeed vast. Egyptians suffer from wounded pride and slighted nationalism and mournfully lament their country's status as a shy player and a playground for the Saudi Wahhabis, tiny but ambitious Qatar, the colossal USA, and the belligerent Israel. Egypt has not found its place in the sun, a place that befits its history, its potential and the aspirations of its citizens.

Its domestic politics is extremely polarized. Islamists are angry at the current regime for removing the MB president from power and for the brutal treatment of the MB protestors. Liberals are unhappy either with an authoritarian regime that suppressed liberties. Leftists, Nasserists, communists, socialists and a host of other Egyptian nationalists are furious as Egypt has once again become an American Satellite and Israeli ally that stands by idly watching Israeli non-ending oppression of the Palestinians and the relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem. It is not a secret at all that Egypt supports

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Trump's initiative to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, an initiative so unscrupulous that even the domesticated and collaborationist Palestinian Authority (PA) refused to even consider.

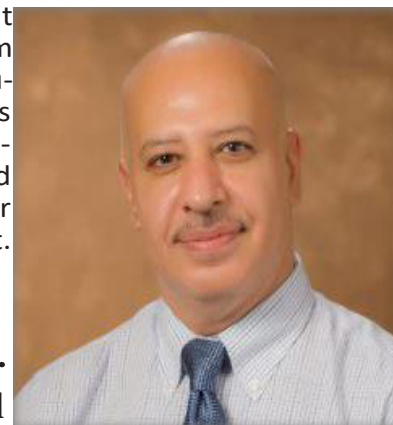
Domestic oppression is at an all-time high. Public criticism of the regime is not a remote option and if done could easily land critics in jail where abuse is rampant. Human Rights Watch reported that security forces in Egypt routinely abuse prisoners and detainees. Corruption, mismanagement, and instability have become a daily routine. The Egyptian economy is crumbling and suffering from inflation, food shortages, and cuts to government subsidies. By borrowing heavily to finance some construction projects, Egypt simply cornered itself into a vicious cycle of debts, interest payments, and more borrowing. Discontent against the government is growing daily and there are serious fears that popular disgruntlement might turn into another revolutionary upheaval that could tear Egypt apart.

Even though oppression is ubiquitous in Egypt, a special treatment is reserved for minorities, particularly the Copts and the Shi'a. The Copts are native Christians who constitute around 10% of the population. Many passionately participated in the January revolution hoping that a new democratic regime will emerge. But with the removal of Mubarak, the Copts began to suffer at the hands of the MB (allegedly) and the Salafists whose strength became undeniable and unavoidable. Vicious attacks on the Copts climaxed with the Sisi military regime as the MB and Salafi-Jihadists accused the Copts of plotting to remove Morsi from power by encouraging and calling for a military coup. In August 2013, MB mob violence damaged 42 churches and tens of Coptic schools and businesses and killed several Copts. Rumors and misinformation about the Copts are legion: they are rich, favored by the regime, wealth-hoarding, among many others supplying Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi-Jihadists, and their many supporters with plenty of material to incite sectarian hatred and to provoke violence against the Copts. Not to be outflanked, ISIS doubled down and downgraded Copts from dhimmis (denigrated but protected status) to 'infidels' and promised to vehemently target them. Although the Sisi regime is friendly to the Copts, attacks against them continued unabated. Worse, as I found out during my fieldwork in Egypt, societal persecution is even more serious and ever-present. Anti-Christian populism is a grave threat to Copts in Egypt as sectarian incitement has become a daily practice that finds some audience among the disgruntled and suspicious public. Dealing with gov-

ernment oppression is way easier than dealing with societal discrimination, which could be subtle and indirect and even unobservable to foreigners.

Egypt has a tiny Shiite minority—the most optimistic estimates put the number at 1%. Yet the Shiite community has experienced tremendous hardships despite the fact that it is tiny, quiet, and utterly non-threatening to the Sunni character of Egypt. My fieldwork clearly showed that the Shi'a are oppressed even in peaceful times and that the constraints against their faith are so deeply enshrined in Egyptian state and religious institutions that a mere recognition of the presence of the Shi'a in Egypt is not even thinkable. No religious ceremonies in public are allowed. Houses of worship are totally banned. Political activities are a taboo. Social gatherings are not tolerated. Passports are confiscated. In Egypt, Shiism itself is suspect, not only the religious or social or political activities of some faithful Shi'a. The Shi'a have endured threats to life, arbitrary detention, torture, and job loss. They are often depicted as apostates, infidels, pagans, dissimulators, fifth column, traitors, fabricators, impure, threats to national security, to the purity of the Islamic faith (Sunnism), to societal coherence and national identity. Rumors abound about the Shi'a engaging in lewd behaviors, spreading moral degeneration, corrupting Egyptian society. This horrifying treatment is not limited to the state but is indeed quite popular among large segments of Egyptians, especially among the fundamentalists, Salafis, Salafi-Jihadists and a large number of laity who are vulnerable to rumors and misinformation spread by clerics and anti-Shiite activists. I heard those rumors myself first hand in Egypt and met with many Shiite citizens who told me horrifying stories about religious persecution.

The aftermath of the January revolution seemed like a race to inferno. Egypt has suffered from so many convulsions and tribulations. Dreams of democracy and freedoms have been forgotten for now. The economy is in shambles. Oppression is at an all-time high. Admittedly, the image depicted above is grim but not hopeless. Indeed, hopes remain high that Egypt will rise from this humiliating situation and resume its natural role as a leader of the Arab world and a great power in the Middle East.



Associate Professor of Political Science, St. Bonaventure University

مركز الدراسات العربية والإسلامية

MOROCCO

WITH EMILY AND GRACE

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A photo Essay By Amina Golden-Arabaty



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Franciscan Ministries Union (FMU) took two Arabic students from the CAIS, Grace Ferris and Emily Palmer, to visit Morocco in June 2018. They toured famous cities like Fez, Casablanca and Marrakesh seeking cultural enrichment.





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**"You can read about
it all you want to but
you can never fully
understand until
you actually go there.
The whole trip was
very fascinating!"**
~Grace Ferris



.....
**"The culture is so easy
to be open to because
it's so easy to love. I find
myself missing their
hospitality, I miss the
food and I miss hearing
the Adhan every day."**
~Emily Palmer





"I'm pushing for everyone in the world to go to Morrocco. It is such an extraordinary place. Traveling to over 5 countries, I have to say that Morrocco was certainly my favorite!"
~Emily Palmer



A special thanks to Emily Palmer for the pictures !

Since 2007, I have spent several weeks most summers teaching at St. Leo's Coptic Catholic Seminary in Cairo. My very presence in this environment crosses lines - an American in Egypt, a woman in a patriarchal culture, a married, Lutheran pastor teaching at a seminary that prepares candidates to be celibate priests in the Coptic Catholic Church. Some encounters and experiences are forever etched in my memory. I share them even as I recognize what they are - my impressions.

Egyptians are hospitable people. The story of welcoming the Holy Family into their land 2000 years ago has left an indelible mark on them. This is true in tourist hotspots, large cities, and small villages. Egyptian English speakers (my Arabic being minimal) are often eager to engage with me. The enduring question that comes up in any conversation that moves beyond essentials remains, "what about Egypt?" As in, "what is your opinion of Egypt?" or "what are your impressions of what you have seen?" or "what will you tell others about us?" After the 2011 Revolution, I noticed the questions changing.

An American in Egypt

In June 2012 I made my third trip to Luxor. 18 months after the Revolution, with Egypt still in political turmoil and preparing for its first democratic presidential election, the city was struggling. The ruins in and around the city were almost empty. At our hotel, the poolside deck chairs sat unused, restaurants hosted few diners. It was June but I had been to Luxor in low season before, the change was noticeable and most obvious among the local businessmen still trying to make their living driving taxis, piloting faluccas, guiding private tours, keeping shops and restaurants.

In the midst of these lean times, we received business cards from nearly every cabdriver we hired. One restaurant owner scrawled out his contact information on a piece of paper so we'd have a way to reach him again. Everyone was offering us something extra - a discount on dinner, additional day tours, anything we needed to make our stay happy.

To be sure, these are the things you do when you're hustling for repeat business. But the difference was apparent in the desperation, born of uncertainty, that bubbled to the surface from time to time. Egyptians in 2012 were full of questions: Who would be elected president? When would some semblance of normalcy return to their beloved homeland? When are the tourists coming back? Sometimes the desperation was directed at us: "Don't Americans realize Luxor is far from Tahrir?"

As of 2016, my most recent time in Luxor, the city was still nearly empty of Western tourists. When asked our country of origin, locals would scroll through every English-speaking country they could imagine and never once asked if I was American. For better or worse, being a foreigner in Egypt remains a line that few Americans are willing to cross.

#MeToo

The veiling of women is a relatively recent phenomenon in Egypt. Pictures of Cairo and Alexandria streets from the 1960s show Egyptians dressed in the latest Western fashions, including short skirts on women.

Today most women in Egypt are veiled, except Christians and foreigners. Veils (hijab) are the predominant choice for most women. Some women wear the full, flowing niqab, though this has become less visible since 2014. (Interestingly, men have also become far less likely to wear clothing or facial hair that signals a particular religious piety or political persuasion in recent years.) Whether they wear a niqab or a hijab, or something in between, most women are dressed with their arms covered to the wrist and wear long skirts or pants.

As an American woman in Egypt, I tend to

dress conservatively. I wear longish skirts or loose fitting pants. I wear t-shirts or tops that are plain and provide cover. I try to dress in ways that don't draw attention or look flashy.

Even so, walking while female in Cairo can be dehumanizing. I've long known and read about the issues with harassment of women in Egypt. Machismo rules the street, not unlike other patriarchal cultures. I've experienced my fair share of stares, inappropriate "bumps" and crude comments over the years. The situation grew worse after 2011. That summer in particular, it was hard to walk down the street without hearing male voices comment on my presence or my appearance. While never in threatening situations, it was, nonetheless, degrading. In recent years I've become much more circumspect when venturing out.

I'm opposed to purity culture, no matter its source, on principle. Women are not responsible for the actions and misbehaviors of men. But when crossing the lines of a dominant patriarchal culture, I begin to understand why a woman would willingly choose to cover herself and signal "off limits" to those around her.

Pastor Amy

While my travel to Egypt includes a variety of experiences, my primary purpose remains teaching English at St. Leo's Coptic Catholic Seminary. Upon first meeting seminarians in 2007, I became acutely aware that how the seminarians and priests at St. Leo's experienced me, would shape how they received others like me in the future. In that moment I decided that I would be as open to their questions and curiosity as I could be, and also open to their doubts about accepting me as a female clergy into their community.

George was one such student who was unafraid to hide his skepticism. The first summer I met George, he asked questions that verged on inappropriate. He was opposed to the idea of a female priest - that is what I am to the seminarians. If that we-

CROSSING LINES

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with

The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson

ren't hard enough to grasp, I am a married, female priest. George could not fathom how I could be a pastor AND take care of my responsibilities at home. When I explained that my husband and I shared responsibilities at home, he was dumbfounded. Our first interaction communicated to me George's discomfort. I asked some of his more open classmates to reach out to him since he was clearly upset.

The second year I taught George, he was in my class several times a week. As he gained confidence with his English, he began to speak a few words from time to time. I began to joke with him in class and he would break a smile or even join in laughing with the others.

About half-way through our third summer together, George and I ended up sitting at the same table for lunch one day. George was desperate for some classmates to join us, but they would not come to his rescue. So George and I sat together for the entire meal. The conversation started slowly but I asked him questions about his family and his home. He eventually asked me again about being a pastor in America. He asked if my husband was a pastor and I explained that he was not and told him about the work he does. He asked again how our home gets taken care of when we are both working. I explained again, "Sometimes I make dinner, sometimes my husband makes dinner. Sometimes I clean the house, sometimes my husband cleans the house. Sometimes I go to the store, sometimes my husband goes to the store. We share these responsibilities."

As I spoke, George listened and nodded. And then he said, "I think maybe this is better in America than in Egypt." Those were the last words I expected to hear from George. I'm sure that George would not really support the idea that sharing household responsibilities is good for Egyptian families and society. But in that conversation and in his comment, I saw the first glimpse of a change of heart. Just one year before, George had been certain of his view of the world. But on that day,

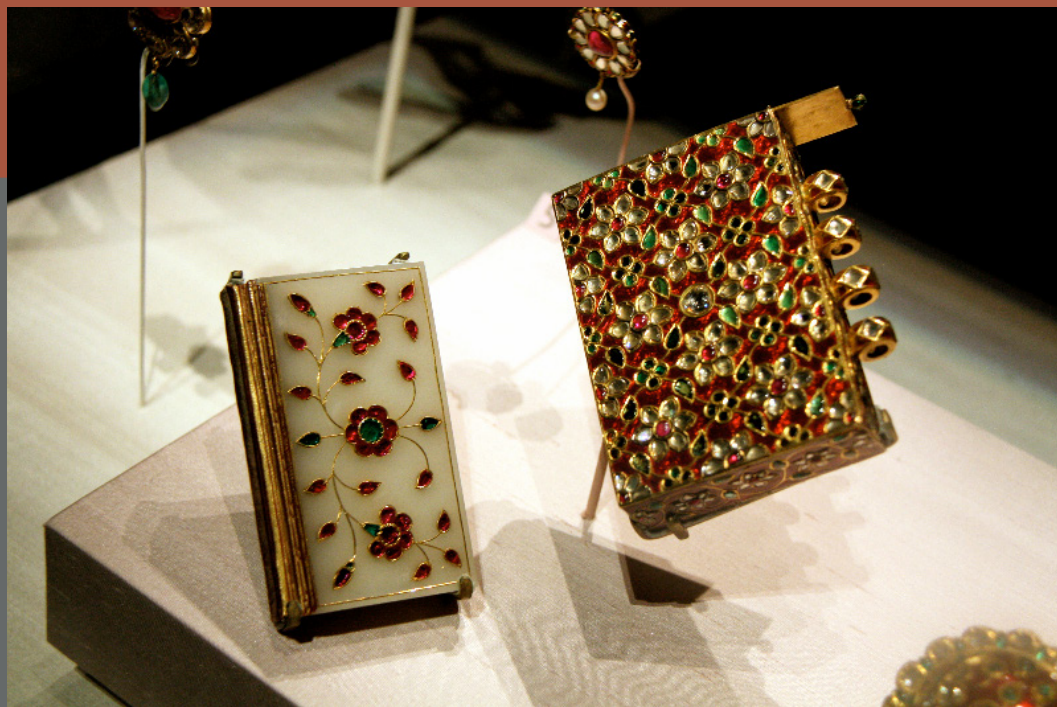
he sat next to me and admitted that maybe there were lines that could be crossed without the world falling apart.

More than 10 years into this relationship with the seminary, being received each year as a trusted pastoral colleague, friend, teacher, and preacher, remains one of the greatest gifts of my ministry. Being Pastor Amy at St. Leo's brings together the various lines I cross whenever I travel to Egypt - a foreigner in a strange land, a woman in a patriarchy, a Lutheran in a Catholic setting.

Crossing lines is exhilarating and exhausting, sometimes simultaneously. I keep at it because after 10 years my colleagues and students have become friends and family. With each passing year, I am aware of the ways I am permitted to cross lines that others still cannot cross. I return because my presence holds up a mirror to the people who encounter me, people like my former student, George, who begin to see their surroundings and culture reflected back in challenging ways. I also return because each year the scales fall off my own eyes and I see the lines that remain to be crossed - the growing line that divides rich and poor in Egypt and around the world, for example. Mostly I return to remind myself that the lines which divide this world are inventions the keep us from recognizing the most important thing we share -- our common humanity.



The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson serves as co-Pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fairport, NY. She shares reflections of her time in Egypt at amy-in-egypt.blogspot.com.



.....EXHIBIT REVIEW.....

by Fr. Michael Calabria O.F.M. PhD

Emperors and Jewels: Treasures of the Indian Courts from the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait

Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, August 18, 2019 – January 27, 2019.

Entering the Aga Khan's latest exhibit is a little like Dorothy's arrival in the land of Oz: one is immediately immersed in a world of vibrant color – from carpets, paintings, and above all, from jewels: rubies, emeralds, diamonds – set in gold or onto the milky white surface of nephrite jade as pendants, rings, bracelets, armbands, turban ornaments, dishes, and cups. It is a dazzling display of jewels, jewelry and jeweled objects from the height of the Mughal Empire in the 17th century, and the neighboring Deccan Sultanates of south India. While jewelry might conjure images of a women's world, it should be noted that many of the treasures on display were worn or used by Mughal emperors and Deccan sultans. Austerity was not a South Asian aesthetic. When Sir Thomas Roe, the English envoy to the Mughal court, attended the birthday celebration of the emperor Jahangir in 1616, he remarked: "He was so rich in jewels that I must confess I never saw together so invaluable wealth," and he noted that the emperor's diamonds and rubies were "as great as walnuts (some greater), and pearls such as mine eyes were amazed at." The jewels the royals wore seem to flow onto everything they touched, including the handles, hilts, and scabbards of daggers and swords that are also on display. While their deftly honed steel blades could easily inflict lethal wounds, these weapons served as luxurious accessories rather than arms for well-dressed kings and courtiers.





Among the dazzling displays: a miniature Qur'an, less than four inches in length, with covers of white nephrite jade into which rubies and emeralds have been inlaid into a floral motif traced in gold wire. The Qur'an fit neatly into a gold case covered with diamond daisies with ruby centers and emerald leaves over a red enamel ground. For the Muslim Mughals and Deccan sultans, the Qur'an was the Word of God, but in this case, it was also an exquisite piece of jewelry to be worn as a jeweled pendant. Particularly pleasing to the eye is the spherical form of a huqqa (water pipe) base. A simple lattice of gold wire envelops the white nephrite jade body into which are inlaid rubies and emeralds in a floral sprig motif. Tobacco, brought from the Americas by the Portuguese to Goa in the late 16th century, found fertile ground in South Asia, and obviously became quite a stylish habit as evidenced by the costly equipment.

All this glitter may appear as an ostentatious indulgence of the Indian royalty, but this breathtaking beauty nevertheless also reveals extensive trade networks in the early modern period that reached across continents and around the world long before the term globalization was coined. Centuries before diamonds were discovered in South Africa, they were mined in Golconda, in the southeastern Deccan, the last of the sultanates to fall to the Mughal Empire in 1687. Rubies came from Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Pearls were fished from the Persian Gulf. The ubiquitous emeralds had a much longer journey to take, however, for they came from the mines of Muzo in colonial Colombia, discovered in the second half of the 16th century. They were dug from the ground by Colombia's indigenous peoples and African slaves for the Spanish and Portuguese, and traded in Europe, Africa and South Asia by clans of Sephardic Jews. Nephrite jade came from western China as did the fine porcelain ewer in the exhibit (from the Aga Khan's own collection) inscribed with the name of emperor Shah Jahan. By the time his name was painted on the handle in 1643, the ewer was over two centuries old.

The al-Sabah Collection, from which most of the jeweled objects in the exhibit come, is one of the most extensive collections of Islamic art in the world, containing some 30,000 items. On long-term loan to the State of Kuwait, the collection is on view in Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (The House of Islamic Antiquities)

in Kuwait City. Last year a different selection of objects from the al-Sabah Collection was exhibited at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts (see my review in: Nur volume 2, no. 1, Fall 2016, pp. 8-10). This current exhibition provides Canadians and Americans with an opportunity to see some of the most dazzling treasures from this outstanding collection. Two Mughal carpets from the collection are also featured in the exhibit: one of them a floral garden carpet with naturalistic lilies, irises, and roses set against a ruby red background; the other, a summer garden carpet with more stylized star rosettes and red lotus blossoms on a white background not unlike the inlaid nephrite jade items displayed nearby. A number of paintings from the Aga Khan's own impressive collection complete the exhibit with images of Mughal emperors looking particularly fine – in their jeweled finery.

Fr. Michael Calabria, O.F.M., PhD



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“While jewelry might conjure images of a women's world, it should be noted that many of the treasures on display were worn or used by Mughal emperors and Decan sultans.”





RE^{COMMEND} ED R READINGS

1. **Manuel Keene and Salam Kaoukji.** *Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts India in the Age of the Mughals.* **New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001.**
2. **Friedrich Spuhler.** *Carpets from Islamic Lands: the al-Sabah Collection.* **New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012.**
- 3 **Kris Lane.** *Colour of Paradise: The Emerald in the Age of Gunpowder Empires.* **New Haven: Yale, 2010.**
- 4 **Salam Kaoukji.** *Precious Indian Weapons and Other Princely Accoutrements: the al-Sabah Collection.* **New York: Thames & Hudson, 2017.**



SPOTLIGHT

The Franciscan Federation Summer 2018

by Amina Golden-Arabaty,

This past summer, I was invited to talk at the annual Franciscan Federation conference in Buffalo, Ny.

My name is Amina Golden-Arabaty. I was born and raised in Western New York and frequented the Middle East, the longest stretch being two years. My parents believed in full emersion in order to truly learn a language and a culture. This was never more evident than when they moved us to Jordan and put me in a fully Arabic school when at the time I could only speak a few words.

No, it wasn't easy, sometimes even scary but I can't thank them enough for giving me that experience because I quickly became fluent in the Arabic language and developed a newfound love for my father and grandfathers culture, religion and heritage. Sink or swim as they say and thankfully my mom didn't come from the desert. My father and his family are Palestinian and my mother, an American from Western New York. After moving to NYC, two weeks later my mom needed ride and my dad just happened to own a car service down the block—that was 22 years ago and five babies later.

It was the unique blending of both my parents that has given me the courage and understanding to see the world in a different way. They have always encouraged and supported my interest in other religions and so my father was nothing but supportive when I made the decision to attend St. Bonaventure.

When I told people from high school that as practicing Muslim, I had confirmed my admission there, their expressions were priceless.

But I was drawn to St. Bonaventure

re, and NOT to the other 9 prestigious universities I applied to.

Truthfully, I couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

The people there practice, throughout their everyday actions, the core values of true Franciscanism—the Values St. Francis himself taught and emulated.

When St. Francis of Assisi travelled to Egypt in 1219 he befriended the Egyptian sultan. Though their friendship, they quickly learned a great deal from each other about the other and about themselves, in a similar way that I have during my time at St. Bonaventure.

Buona ventura: 'the good journey'—well, they weren't kidding.

Change is inevitable and is the very thing that helps mold and shape the people we hope to become. Some feared that my attending would shape me differently and they were right. I would not be the person I am today or the person I hope to be tomorrow without my bona Franciscan family.

I have been very blessed to have not experienced direct and blatant racism as an adult but I know too many within my family and communities who have. Living in a very rural area and being the only diverse and Muslim family within an 80 mile radius, racism did come to our doorstep. It came in the form of hate mail left in our mailbox in addition to sudden police visits from both local and government law officials after the horrible and tragic events of 9/11. It took me 15 years to realize why my friends were distancing themselves and I was longer invited to their houses.

As a society, we have come a long way but like anything there is always room for improvement and the annual conference held by the Franciscan Federation a step in that direction. Fr. Michael Calabria, a pillar in the community, constantly puts forth the effort in spreading his knowledge to bring people together and build bridges between religious and cultural communities all over the world. It has been an honor and a privilege to have been mentored and taught by him.

Following his example, I resurrected the Muslim Students Association club and changed the name to Muslim Students & Allies (MSA). A club at the university that allows students to gather and discuss controversial and current issues. MSA helps to give all students the platform to speak their mind and ask questions without fear of judgment or ridicule.

We also host events such as our annual Wear a Hijab Day to allow students the opportunity to walk in the footsteps (or in this case, the hijab) of Muslims who are singled out every day. Majority of the responses we have get are positive, but it is still an uphill battle. Staff and students give us feedback about their day in a hijab and there is a reoccurring theme of misplaced fear and how that is manifested, sometimes subconsciously. They spoke of how differently they were viewed and treated by others which in turn helped to change their outlook on Islam and the discrimination towards Muslims.

Knowledge rids the fear of uncertainty and engaging in dialogue helps to form a bond that leaves no room for ignorance or fear, but only respect and friendship. There is so much beauty in uniqueness and yet so much of it goes unrecognized.

Just this past summer, while in the process of moving the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies to a more central location on campus, Fr. Michael realized we had to return some things to the new Ministry Center before preparing ourselves for Iftar (breaking of the fast during Ramadan) at the local Mosque.

From right to left: Fr. Michael Calabria O.F.M., Dr. Mustafa Gokcek (Nagara University), Amina Golden-Arabaty, Sister Kathy Warren O.S.F.



مركز الدراسات العربية والإسلامية



Fr. Michael and I both loaded up our arms and I carried the large cross.

While walking across campus on that beautiful day, sun was shining bright making us both thirsty amidst the day of fasting. It dawned on me later how special this moment really was. I, a Muslim, carried the cross while the Friar was parched from Ramadan fasting. I had asked Fr. Michael why he was fasting during Ramadan and his response will always stay with me. "If I intend to break fast with Muslims, I intend on fasting with them." Something you could only witness in a Franciscan environment.

St. Bonaventure is easily my favorite place because our tight, close knit, Franciscan community is constantly supportive, encouraging and influential without regard to religion, race or ethnicity. I have been given the opportunity to grow in my own faith and spirituality while simultaneously acquiring a deeper appreciation for my heritage, culture and language.

As a Muslim American, I have been granted privileges many in the world don't have simply because I hold a United States passport with a blue cover. Being a Muslim American sometimes makes me feel guilty because while I can go back to my ancestral homeland, my grandmother sits in a refugee camp without the right to return. While visiting my mother who worked there as a journalist in Ramallah, my father took the oldest three siblings, myself included, to Jerusalem. We saw not only the historical and religious sites, but we also visited family members whom I had never met and the family in Jordan had not seen since their separation during the 1948 incursions.

During my visit, we had to do some site seeing so we decided to have a picnic in court yard centered between the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. After shopping for food in the market place on our way in, we approached the large wooden door to the Al Aqsa complex. To my surprise we were met by an IDF (Israeli defense force) soldier with a gun that extended from his shoulders to below his knees. As we handed him our pass-

ports, he happened to open mine first. He kept looking from the passport picture to my face and asked me if I was Muslim.

"Yes," I said...even though I wasn't wearing my head scarf.

He looked down at me and then back at my picture and asked again. That was when I grew upset and said it again.

"Yes. I want to see the dome of the rock, please."

He scowled and didn't bother looking at the other passports. He gave them back and did not let us pass. My father asked why when the officer responded

"She doesn't have a scarf anyway," pulling his gun around his chest in plain view.

Undenounced to us, there was a caretaker behind the door who heard the encounter. He rushed out with a spare scarf they had and told the guard to let us in. He did so reluctantly, and my father showed the caretaker our valid passports with confusion. It wasn't until later that we realized that the 'Golden' in my name was the root of his malice.

As a Muslim woman, it can be hard to fit in and feel welcomed within our current societal and political climate but truthfully, I have never felt more welcomed than by the Franciscan community. For that, I am eternally grateful and truly blessed.

Just being asked to speak this past summer at the Franciscan Federation in Buffalo, reaffirms my faith in a better, more peaceful future built on the foundation of mutual respect, love and understanding—the way St. Francis and the Sultan demonstrated it for us years ago.

Thank you and peace be with you.

Amina is majoring in Journalism/ Mass communication and works as an intern in the CAIS. Class of 2019, SBU.



An American in Ajmer

FR. MICHAEL CALABRIA O.F.M. PHD

In July 2009, I made my first visit – or rather, pilgrimage – to the dargah (shrine) of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz, “the Master, the Patron of the Poor,” the Sufi saint Mu’innuddin Chishti (1141-1230). Nine years later, in July 2018, I felt drawn back to the shrine. Why would an American Franciscan friar travel not once, but twice to Ajmer, a six-hour journey by train from Delhi? There is certainly much of historical interest to me as a scholar of the Mughal period. Although devotion to Mu’innuddin’s shrine dates back to the fourteenth century, it was the Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan who expressed particular interest in Ajmer and the Chishti Sufism espoused by Mu’innuddin, as did Shah Jahan’s daughter Jahanara. Akbar made the pilgrimage to Ajmer fourteen times during his reign. Jahangir installed two enormous cauldrons at the shrine from which five thousand needy people were fed and which remain in use. Shah Jahan ordered a mosque to be built on the site, a simple but elegant structure entirely of white marble at the same time the ethereal Taj Mahal was rising in Agra; and his daughter Jahanara added a white marble porch (Begami dalaan) to the eastern entrance of the mausoleum. Royal visits to the dargah were always accompanied by the distribution of alms and food to the needy, thus heeding the words of Mu’innuddin:

Never seek any help, charity or favors from anybody but God. Never go to the courts of kings, and never refuse to bless and help the needy and the poor, the widow, and the orphan, if they come to your door. This is your mission, to serve the people.

Although the history of the dargah continues to draw me to Ajmer, there is something else that brought me there the first time and called me back a second time. You may call it faith or devotion, or perhaps a sacred longing, a desire to be close to the Khwaja himself, a beautiful reflection of holiness revered by Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains as well as by Christians. It is a place where sanctity is sought and celebrated over sectarianism, where religious distinctions and differences vanish. It is a place where the words of Jallaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) resonate:

What can I do my friends, if I do not know? I am neither Christian nor Jew, not Muslim nor Hindu. What can I do? What can I do? ... One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call...

The Chishti Sufism, brought to South Asia by Mu’innuddin in the thirteenth century, embraced the concept of wahdat al-wujud, derived from the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240). Succinctly put, the term signifies that there is only one existence, one wujud that is God. Thus, although humans perceive multiplicity in the phenomenal world – in terms of people, races, class-

es, castes, religions, etc. – true existence belongs to God alone. Thus, every person and thing only reflects the existence of the One, so that everyone and everything is one in the One.

At the dargah, it is this oneness I seek, oneness in a world where politicians in both the East and the West are intent on dividing rather than uniting, where human life is expendable and the natural world exploitable. Here, there are familiar echoes of my own Franciscan charism, a spiritual tradition born in the thirteenth century at the same time Chishti Sufism came to India. Both Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) and Mu’innuddin were ascetics who renounced wealth and status, who wore rough, patched garments, and were particularly concerned with the plight of the poor. Moreover, both holy men transcended religious differences in their day: Francis demonstrated this in his peaceful encounter with the Egyptian Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219; and Mu’innuddin in his referring to a local Hindu as a “saintly man of God.” Yet, their respective communities – Western Christian and Eastern Muslim – seemed reluctant to embrace the tolerance that Francis and Mu’innuddin exemplified, and recast them in hagiographies as zealous evangelists of religious orthodoxy.

But it was neither as a Mughal historian nor as a Franciscan that I returned to Ajmer this year, but as a simple penitent, a creature of God aware of his own brokenness, his own sin that stands in such contrast to the holiness of Mu’innuddin. Before setting out for the dargah, I clothed myself in a white kurta pay-jama, and covered my head with a white taqiyah. Like the ihram of a hajji to Mecca, I wear externally the purity that I seek internally at the dargah. First, I must make my way through the maze of muddy alleys that surround the dargah, a visual reminder of my own messy meanderings in life. Suddenly I stand on the threshold of a white marble gateway, richly decorated with inlaid stone (pietra dura) such as is seen at the Taj Mahal. I’m happy to shed my sandals, to wash my bare feet in the pools of rain water that have collected on the marble pavement of the sacred precinct. I leave the grey mud of Ajmer’s alleyways behind and enter a world of vibrant color: piles of pink rose petals for scattering over Mu’innuddin’s grave, cords of red and orange worn by visitors to the shrine, and chadars – cloths to be draped over the tomb – of green, red and gold. These are the colors I bore and wore in my devotions that morning against the whiteness of my kurta and the marble of the dargah.

Led by my Chishti murshid (“guide”), I carry a round wicker tray piled with rose petals and covered with a chadar into the shrine. I cannot see anything but a mass of bodies surging forward. Covering my head with the chadar, my murshid prays over me in Urdu. I am plunged into darkness like the waters of baptism. I am enshrouded in a spiritual burial like the pros-

.....
**“Never seek any help,
 charity or favors from
 anybody but God.
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 come to your door.
 This is your mission,
 to serve the people.”
 ~Mu’inu d d in Chishti**

tration at my solemn vows as a friar. Out of the whirl of words, I hear my murshid say: baraka – “blessing.” Uncovering me, leading me back into light and life, my murshid and I together throw fistfuls of rose petals onto the grave. Tying a red and orange cord around my neck, he pushes me down into the crowd of devotees so that I might reverence the Khwaja’s tomb. I kiss the marble threshold and then touch it with my forehead repeatedly, praying tearfully over and over a phrase from Muslim prayer rising from my heart: Rabb, ighfir-li: “Lord, forgive me.”

A pilgrimage of penance. That is what a visit to the dargah signifies for me. While others may seek God’s mercy and forgiveness in Mecca, Karbala, Jerusalem, Rome, Varanasi, or in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it is to his dargah in Ajmer that Hazrat Khwaja Mu’inu d d in Chishti calls me as

he has called so many over the centuries regardless of their religious affiliation, both the powerful and the powerless. He calls me to penance and purity of heart, with “love towards all and malice towards none.”

Before leaving the sacred precinct, I go to Shah Jahan’s mosque to pray and complete my pilgrimage. There, above the arches, between al-asma al-husna – the Beautiful Names of God - I find verses in Persian assuring me of God’s forgiveness, and that my journey to Ajmer has not been in vain:

When you rub your fortunate face on the floor of the mosque (in prayer), your book of deeds becomes as white as marble...To the throng of people who come to offer prayers, its gate is always open as is the gate of penitence.

Al-Hamdu li-llah. Thanks be to God.

Below: The domed Dargah of Mu’inu d d in Chishti

Next Page: The Mosque of Shah Jahan







FEATURED BOOK REVIEWS

The World of the Fatimids

Edited by Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani.

Toronto: Aga Khan Museum in association with
The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018. 376 pp.

When one visits Cairo's medieval core, so-called "Islamic Cairo," the smell of spices still scents the air. It is an aromatic reminder that for centuries, Cairo was the international entrepôt, not only for the spice trade between Asia and Europe, but for fine textiles, porcelains, ivory, gold and gemstones. By the 12th century, Cairo was larger than any European city and boasted a university – al-Azhar – older than any educational institution in Europe. Its royal library alone boasted a collection of several hundred thousand volumes. The rulers responsible for creating this metropolis were the Fatimids, a Shi'i caliphate that dominated the Middle East for some two centuries, from the foundation of Cairo in 969 CE until Salah al-Din seized power in 1171.

In March 2018, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto launched *The World of the Fatimids*, an impressive exhibit of Fatimid artwork drawn from collections in Egypt, Tunisia and Kuwait as well as from numerous museums in Europe and the United States. The artefacts demonstrated that the Fatimids not only traded in goods of superior quality, but they produced works of great artistry in stone, ceramics, wood, textiles, ivory, gold, rock crystal, and bronze.

The World of the Fatimids, published in conjunction with the exhibit, is not a catalog of the exhibit per se, but nevertheless draws upon objects in the exhibit to explicate Fatimid history and culture. In many ways, its chapters by leading scholars of the Fatimid Caliphate and Islamic Art and Architecture, comprise a veritable encyclopedia for this remarkable period which may be used to great benefit by non-specialist and specialist alike. The fourteen chapters of this hefty volume, with more than 350 pages of text and photographs, are organized into three principle parts. The first part on Fatimid Egypt includes a helpful historical overview of the caliphate by

renowned Shi'i scholar Farhad Daftary and a survey of Islamic Cairo's Fatimid architecture by Doris Behrens-Abouseif. Additional chapters discuss Fatimid art of the various materials and genres in which Fatimid artists excelled: lively "lustre" ceramics, rock crystal ewers, textiles embroidered with Arabic inscriptions, carved wood panels, ivory plaques, and calligraphy.

Part Two addresses the religious pluralism of Fatimid society that included significant populations of Christians of various confessions, and Jews, who served the Caliphate as administrators, scribes and tradesmen. As the editor states in his preface: "Multiple faiths coexisted in a land with very different communities living side by side. What survives of the art of the period reveals astonishing diversity (7)." In the exhibit, this pluralism was reflected especially by a ceramic bowl from the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (London) depicting a Coptic monk swinging a censer, and a ceramic fragment with a figure of Jesus as the Pantocrator from the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. Fatimid Jewish culture is explored in a chapter on Jewish manuscripts of the period, particularly the Bible and Talmud.

Finally, the third part of the volume explores the international reach of the Fatimids through conquest, commerce, diplomacy and their network of missionaries (da'is) whose goal it was to spread the Isma'ili Shi'ism espoused by the Fatimids. As noted in this section, Muslim scholars and traders travelling by land or sea from Islamic Spain (al-Andalus), North Africa (al-Maghrib and Ifriqiya), and Sicily passed through Fatimid territory on their way to other parts of the Islamic world. Their presence rendered the Fatimid realm rich commercially and culturally. Likewise, pilgrims journeying the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in western Arabia, or Jerusalem in Palestine passed through the Fatimid realm. Although Latin Christendom effectively declared war on the Fatimid Caliphate by attacking and seizing Jerusalem in the First Crusade (1099), the Fatimids established diplomatic relations with the

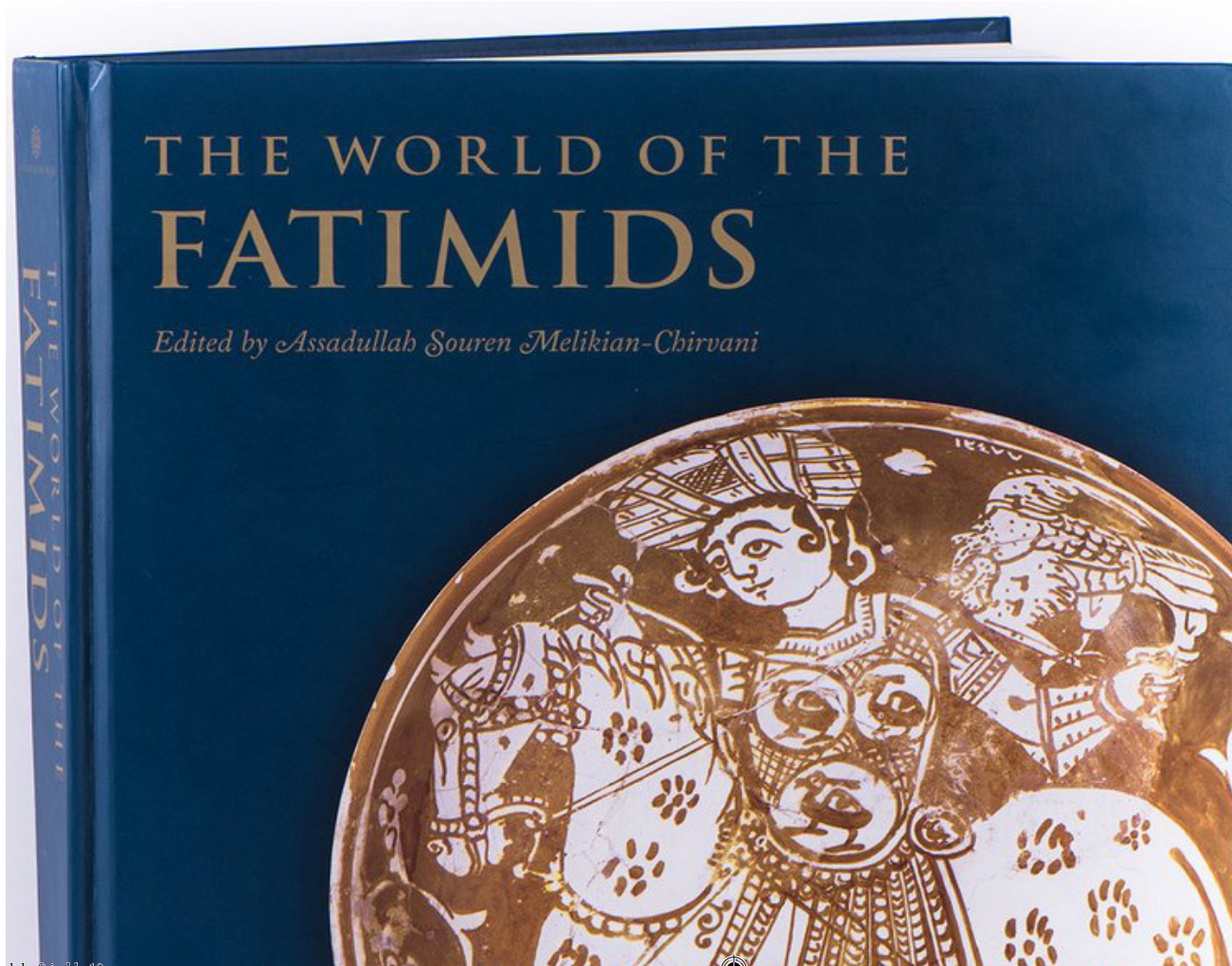
Byzantine Empire. Peace treaties signed between the Fatimid caliphs and Byzantine emperors provided for mutual economic assistance and guaranteed the religious liberties of Christians and Muslims in each other's realms respectively. Moreover, during Fatimid rule of Sicily through their vassals the Kalbids, Islamic artistic and intellectual influences spread into southern Europe. Even after the Norman conquest of Sicily (1061-1091), Islamic influences continued as seen particularly in the art and architecture of from the reign of Roger II (r. 113-1154), most famously in the ceiling of Palermo's Capella Palatina and his coronation mantle.

Readers may also be interested in two additional works on the Fatimids published recently: Shainool Jiwa's *The Fatimids: 1. The Rise of a Muslim Empire* (I.B. Tauris, 2018), the first of two volumes small volumes; and Michael Brett's lengthier *The Fatimid Empire* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017). Although

the Fatimids disappeared from the historical scene over 800 years ago, their contribution to the medieval Islamic art and architecture survives to this day especially in Cairo's cultural treasures. The religious diversity of the Fatimid Caliphate is an important reminder that creativity – intellectual, artistic, etc. – is enhanced through cooperation rather than conflict.

Michael Calabria, OFM, PhD

“Cairo was the international entrepôt, not only for the spice trade between Asia and Europe, but for fine textiles, porcelians, ivory, gold and gemstones”.





Empress: the Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan

by Ruby Lal. W.W. Norton, 2018.

The emergence and growth of Women's and Gender Studies as legitimate academic disciplines in the late 20th century has had its influence on Islamic Studies as well with landmark works since the 1990's such as: Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), Barbara Freyer Stowasser's *Women in the Qur'an, Tradition and Interpretation* (1994), Annemarie Schimmel's *My Soul is a Woman: the Feminine in Islam* (1995), and Amina Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman* (1999) as well as many other scholarly works in more recent decades. In spite of this now large body of scholarship, stereotypes of women in Muslim societies persist at a popular level due in part to geo-political forces, patriarchal institutions, and media biases. Ruby Lal's latest book shatters those stereotypes in her biography of the Mughal Empress Nur

Jahan (1577-1645).

In an earlier study titled *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge, 2005), Lal provided specialists with an erudite work on women in the Mughal Empire. In *Empress*, she brings to life for a wider readership one of the most interesting and influential women of the early modern period – east or west – a book that is sure to challenge and change perceptions of Muslim women in history, but how contemporary women – Muslim, South Asian and others – view themselves. In beautifully-wrought prose, Lal tells the dramatic story of Mihr un-Nisa, the daughter born to an émigré Persian couple, Ghiyas Beg and Asmat Begum during their arduous journey to the Mughal court in what is now India. Through a combination of talent, good timing, intelligence and am-

bition, Ghiyas Beg became the most powerful official during the reign of the emperor Jahangir, and was dubbed 'Itimad ud-Daula' – "the Pillar of the State." Mihr un-Nisa's older brother likewise rose to political prominence at court, as did she when she – spoiler alert! – married Jahangir in 1611. It was then she was dubbed Nur Jahan – "the Light of the World."

This is not the story of an emperor's wife, however; but as suggested by the book's subtitle, it is about a woman who exercised considerable political power for more than a decade and a half as co-sovereign. Indeed, this is a story of a woman at the center of imperial and court politics who first supported and then opposed Shah Jahan – Jahangir's son (from a previous marriage) and husband of her niece Arjuman Banu. The political

history of the period cannot be written without her, nor can the aesthetics of the period be documented without acknowledging her contributions to the arts.

This is not the first book on Nur Jahan. A much denser volume was written by Ellison Banks Findley in 1993; but Lal's book is engagingly written for the non-specialist and specialist alike. Indeed, Lal begins Nur's saga, not with her birth, but with her bagging a tiger from her perch atop an elephant. So much for stereotypes.

.....
"This is a story of a woman at the center of imperial and court politics."

Musings on Muharram at a Shia Madrasa



Fr. Victor Edwin SJ
Vidyajyoti College
of Theology,
New dehli, India

On 7 September, along with 18 graduate students of Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad, I visited the Houzatul Mahdi al-Ilmiah, a well-known Shia Muslim madrasa in Hyderabad's Old City for an interaction. The Principal of the institution, Maulana Raza Abbas, and our friend Muhammad Nagmai Sahib welcomed us. The madrasa has around fifty students on its rolls. Although Maulana Raza Abbas was busy as the month of Muharram was around the corner, he happily received us and spent close to 90 minutes in conversation. Obviously, he related to us the event of Karbala, which took place in the month of Muharram and which is at the heart of Shia Muslim religious practices.¹

As I carefully listened to Maulana Raza Abbas, I was reminded of the same account presented in the work of S. H. M. Jafri (Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam, published in 1979) which I have read a couple of times. Jafri

¹ Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, and is a time when Shi'a Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husain in the Battle of Karbala on the day of Ashoura. It is one of the defining historical moments in the development of a distinct Shi'a identity.

interprets the events of Karbala as momentous efforts to bring about a complete revolution in the religious consciousness of the Muslims. Jafri affirms that Imam Husain was aware that victory brought about by military power would be temporary, whereas victory achieved through suffering and sacrifice would be everlasting. He says that Imam Husain chose the path of suffering and sacrifice to challenge Yazid, who was infamous for his heartless actions against the family of Muhammad. He writes: "he (Imam Husain) realised that mere force of arms would not have saved Islamic action and consciousness. To him it needed a shaking and jolting of hearts and feelings. This, he decided, could only be achieved through sacrifice and suffering. This should not be difficult to understand, especially for those who fully appreciate heroic deeds and sacrifices of above all the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the redemption of mankind."

Listening to Maulana Raza Abbas was a devotional exercise, for Jafri's writings had already made a deep impression on me. There are several theological themes, in addition to the sacrifice of Jesus and of Imam Husain, on which Catholics

theologians and Shia scholars could have fruitful joint theological reflections. Besides martyrdom, one theme that struck me the Shia tradition was the theme of redemption. It is said that the idea of redemption is not absent altogether in Islamic religious thought, especially in dealing with and accepting suffering. Personal suffering could be meaningful for the society and religious life (Qur'an 2:156).

Maulana Raza Abbas explained that the martyrdom of Husain was necessary for fulfilling his role as Imam the Shia tradition. Without his martyrdom, Husain could neither become the paradigm of selfless sacrifice nor the intercessor on the Day of Judgement.

How is Husain's martyrdom believed to be redemptive? In our conversation we were told that the suffering of Husain becomes a source of salvation/redemption for Shia believers primarily through their interiorisation and emulation of that suffering, and secondarily, through Husain's intercession. Husain's status as intercessor is awarded as a divine gift due to his martyrdom. Shia believers understand the redemption of the community of believers in the context of the intercession of Husain. Shia scholars opine that all the Imams of the Shias share in the suffering of Husain and thus participate in the divine gift of intercession. Shias believe that all those who stand with the suffering of Husain through their interiorisation and emulation of it are saved. On the other hand, all those stand with Yazid, the symbol of oppression

and injustice, will be judged.

A Christian would understand the deliverance of God's people from Egypt as redemption (Ex. 6.6; 15.13). An individual could also sometimes be the object of God's redemption, as in the case of Job (Job 19.25).

In the New Testament too, at some places the word "redemption" refers to divine intervention on behalf of people without any specific ransom (Lk. 2.38; 24.21). However, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' life and Ministry come to conclude in an act of self-sacrifice which would serve as a ransom for a sin-stained person (Mk. 10.45). St. Paul develops the theme further and affirms the forgiveness of the sins based on the ransom price of the blood that Christ shed on the Cross (Eph. 1.7). Redemption is thus an important word in the life of a Christian as it reminds him or her that the he/she is delivered from the power of sin by the passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Obviously, there are differences in understanding the idea of redemption in the Shia Muslim and Christian traditions. However, it is also true that our differences enrich our understanding of the mystery of suffering in the lives of all men and women and help us to reach out to the other to listen to their accounts with respect and love.

In meeting Maulana Raza Abbas and his friends at the madrasa, we felt we were meeting fellow believers and co-pilgrims.

NEWS

from

CAIS

.....
**On September 20th,
The Center for Arabic
and Islamic Studies
(CAIS) hosted a grand
're-opening' to
celebrate its move to
Plassmann Hall. On
behalf of the Board
of the Islamic Society
of the Southern Tier,
Dr. Naheed Hilal,
MD presented CAIS
with a donation of
\$10,000-**

**'Alf Shukr," A Thousand
Thanks!"**

Grand Opening



.....
**Dr. Tahir
Chauhdry, MD,
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Islamic Society
of the Sounthern
tier and other
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Islamic Society
with Fr. Michael at
the opening.**



.....
Tapestries from Mecca and Medina, and other works of art decorating the new center--generous donations from Dr. Adil Al-Humadi MD and Doctor Nahid and Ahmad Hilal MD

.....
A Turbah (clay tablet) from Karbala, Iraq--a gift from Dr. Adil al-Humadi



.....
Arabic instructor Wardia Hart cuts the ribbon to open the new Center for Arabic and Islamic Studies

.....
MSA officers enjoying refreshments at the Opening celebration. (from left to right: Noah Pfeiffer, Zoya Rafi, Bilawal Rafi, Jenny Morrell, Mitchell Smith, Jordan Golden-Arabaty and Soquania Henry.





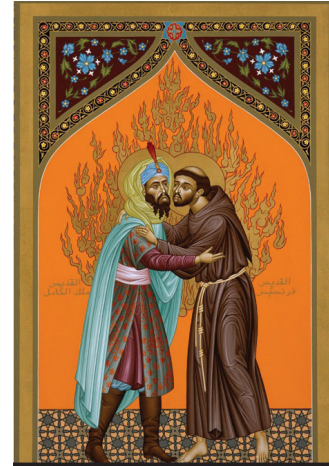
The Center for Arab and Islamic Studies

Our mission:

Inspired by the historical encounter between Francis of Assisi and the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219, the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies at St. Bonaventure University seeks to promote an understanding of Arab and Islamic cultures, an appreciation of both their historical and contemporary significance in the global community, and respectful relations between Muslim and Christian people.

The mission of CAIS comprises four main areas:

- On-campus instruction
- Off-campus instruction
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- Scholarship



"St. Francis and the Sultan"
by Robert Lentz, O.F.M.

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