



Nūr ("Light") نور

The Newsletter of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies

مركز الدراسات العربية والإسلامية

From the Director's Desk

It boasts a history as long as that of Egypt and Iraq. It was homeland of the ancient Hittite empire that nearly defeated Egypt's mighty Pharaoh Rameses II. Two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World were built on its soil: the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. It was the center of the Byzantine Empire that ruled the Christian East, and then the center of the Ottoman Empire, that encompassed North Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. This is Turkey – and the focus of this issue of *Nūr*.

Like other countries in the region that are largely Muslim, Turkey is a nation struggling to find a balance between secularism and sectarianism. We begin this issue with a cogent analysis of contemporary Turkish religion and politics by my friend and colleague Dr. Mustafa Gökçek, Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at Niagara University. CAIS intern Amina Golden-Arabaty introduces another Turkish friend and colleague, Dr. Zeyneb Sayligan, a scholar of Christian-Muslim Relations who shares her experiences of cultural diversity and religious pluralism in Europe and the US.

Turning to the historical, I examine the life and works of the ingenious and prolific Ottoman architect, Mimar Sinan – a contemporary of Michelangelo, but little known in the West. Two new books are reviewed: Leslie Peirce's *Empress of the East*, a biography of Hürrem Sultan, one of the most prominent and powerful Ottoman empresses; and Bettany Hughes' *Istanbul: a Tale of Three Cities*, an eclectic history of the city in its classical, Christian and Ottoman periods. Also reviewed in this issue is: *Arts of the East: Highlights of Islamic Art from the Bruschettini Collection*, an exhibit at Toronto's Aga Khan Museum which highlighted cultural and religious diversity in Islamic lands from medieval Spain to South Asia through a variety of artistic media.

In March, CAIS and the Women's Studies Committee at St. Bonaventure were honored to welcome to campus Dr. Ruby Lal, Professor of South Asian Studies at Emory University. At the annual Mary Devereux Lecture

for Women's History Month, Dr. Lal spoke on Nur Jahan, the 17th-century Mughal empress who is the subject of her upcoming book titled *Empress: the Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan* (W.W. Norton, July 2018).

The Sultan and the Saint, Unity Production's docudrama about the encounter between the Egyptian sultan al-Malik al-Kamil and St. Francis of Assisi in 1219, continued to generate much interest when it was aired nationally on PBS stations on December 27, 2017. When WNED/WBFO (serving the Buffalo and Toronto regions) aired the film on March 5 as part of their pledge drive, I was invited to the Buffalo station to speak on air about the film and the enduring relevance of the Sultan-Francis encounter.

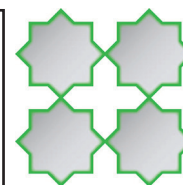
On a recent visit to Mostar, Bosnia, I learned that in the 15th-century, Franciscan friars met with the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II much like Francis had with al-Kamil. The decree issued by Mehmet on their behalf is reproduced in this issue. Today in Mostar, Fr. Iko Skoko, OFM shows the enduring legacy of St. Francis in the friendships he cultivates in the Bosnian Muslim community. That legacy continues, too, with the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies at St. Bonaventure.

Fr. Michael D. Calabria, OFM, PhD
Director, Center for Arab and Islamic Studies

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Turkey and Religion from the Ottomans to Erdoğan

by Mustafa Gökçek

The Ottomans were the longest lasting dynasty in history. Throughout the 600 years of its rule over three continents, this Turkish Muslim empire practiced an exemplary level of tolerance towards its many ethnically and religiously diverse communities. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed in WWI, its successor Turkey engaged in a process of nation building with the goal of creating a homogenous society out of the Ottomans' diverse multicultural legacy. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk envisioned Turkey as a Europeanized land of Turks with a state-controlled religious identity of secularized Sunni Islam. This effort to suppress diversities would lay the ground for Turkey's long term struggle with its nonconforming ethnic (Kurds) and religious (Alevites as well as conservative masses) identities.

Atatürk's governance was later expressed in six revolutionary principles (Hanioglu, 2017). Nationalism emphasized Turkishness as the sole ethnic identity for all the subjects of the new nation. This provided the legitimacy for Turkey under the Wilsonian principle of ethnic self-determination following WWI. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire was a land of immigrants. Especially as a result of a series of wars in early twentieth century, millions had flocked into Anatolia from the lost territories. This created a mosaic of dozens of ethnic groups from the Balkans, Caucasus, and the Middle East. A majority of Turks even today can track down an immigrant in their ancestry. While many of these ethnic communities have assimilated successfully into the Turkish society, Kurds, as the largest ethnic minority, have continued to carry on their language, culture, and distinct identity into the twenty first century. Kurdish identity politics has been championed by PKK, a terrorist organization, since 1980s, and a series of political parties since 1990s. Turkish governments have typically taken a harsh stance suppressing expressions of Kurdish identity and demands for greater rights; there have also been episodes of tolerance and negotiations to allow more rights in education, media, and politics. The Kurdish issue has become more complicated for Turkey when Kurds of N. Iraq gained autonomy after the Iraqi War and more recently Kurds in N. Syria gained territorial control in Syrian Civil War (Gurbuz, 2016). Turkey will continue to search for a medium to accommodate its Kurdish population in social and political life while dealing with the armed conflicts and terrorism in its southern borders.

Another major principle of six arrows of Kemalism was laïcité. Atatürk's secularism was modeled after

the assertive French style, which suppressed public representation of religion (Kuru, 2011). While the powerful cabinet office of the Ottoman şeyhulislam (Chief office of Islam) was reduced to a religious affairs department under the prime ministry, Diyanet, this arrangement, seemingly contrary to secularism, allowed the Turkish government control over the religious rhetoric in all mosques (Gokcek, 2015). To this day all imams in every neighborhood mosque are appointed by the Diyanet and every Friday sermon is written by the Diyanet office to be repeated by imams all across the country.

The strict government control over religion and suppression of public religious expressions pushed the conservative masses into an anti-government, anti-secular position. It also created a greater need and space for various Islamic communities to gain following. Numerous Sufi orders, who were freely operating among the Ottoman populace, were officially banned by the Republican revolutions, but some survived the oppression of the single party regime in the first half of the twentieth century.

Turkey experienced a dramatic rate of urbanization since the 1960s. The population of Istanbul, half a million in 1950s, rose to over twelve million by 2000. Millions of youth flocked to the cities, either for university education or job opportunities. Religious communities' activities in cities particularly appealed to these newly urbanized masses and helped them adapt to modern urban life while finding the opportunity to preserve their religious identity. By 1980s, the conservative neighborhoods in cities, as well as a steady increase in the visibility of headscarf increased the social divide between Kemalist secular elite and the practicing Muslim segments of the society.

At the same time, the political ups and downs fed into the social divide. After his death, Atatürk's authoritarian rule continued in the shape of a single-party regime until Turkey joined NATO in 1952 and was obliged to a multi-party democratic system. While the democratically elected governments gave the masses an opportunity to voice their priorities in the political realm, key bureaucratic institutions, i.e. judiciary, media, and the army, assumed the position of vanguards of Atatürk's revolutions. A series of military coups and interventions (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997) made clear that democratic representation had its limits and the military would assert secularism upon the pious millions. It is in this context of undemocratic interventions of the military, coupled



with political corruption and economic depression of the late 1990s and early 2000s that paved the way for the transformative popular success of Erdoğan's Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP).

In domestic politics, the AKP had started out as a coalition-building group that sent a message of inclusivity to liberals, reformists, democrats, minorities, and Kurdish moderates (Cagaptay, 2017). Throughout its first two terms in government, AKP steadily consolidated its popular base through directing polarizing rhetoric against all domestic or foreign enemies who were constantly depicted as posing an existential threat to the nation (Özbudun, 2014). Every election campaign also meant finding (or creating) and attacking an enemy: military tutelage or the secularists, the Gülen movement or the Kurds, Israel or the US. While this self-victimization proved successful at the ballot box, it deepened polarization domestically and hurt Turkish diplomacy in international relations. Erdoğan declared his third term as the prime minister the "mastery" period and since then Turkey has witnessed an authoritarian turn that increasingly gathered powers under Erdoğan's personal rule.

The Gülen movement, founded by a Muslim preacher, Fethullah Gülen, in 1970s, gained strong following among the university-educated youth, who increasingly filled up bureaucratic ranks. While the Gülen movement's primary activities focused on education and interfaith dialogue, representing a bottom-up revival of Turkish-Islam in a modern context, AKP embodied political Islamism, a top-down pursuit of Islamization of politics and the masses (Esposito & Yilmaz, 2013). AKP's initial democratic reforms, as well as Gülen movement's rising influence brought these two essentially different Islamic movements together in a struggle against the old secularist power houses. Starting in 2007 a series of

judicial cases against the top military leaders exposed and weakened the putschists in the armed forces. However, when a corruption probe in December 2013 targeted four ministers' involvement in bribes and money laundry, Erdoğan turned his entire focus and energy to eliminating



Turkish President Recep Erdogan

Kayhan Ozer—Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[/http://time.com/4759604/recep-tayyip-erdogan-donald-trump-relations](http://time.com/4759604/recep-tayyip-erdogan-donald-trump-relations)

the Gülen movement, which he blamed for a "judicial coup".

After the graft probe, Erdoğan went after every Gülenist in every government institution and beyond. The failed coup in July 2016 was, in Erdoğan's words, "godsend" (but most likely a self-coup, similar to the Reichstag fire, to justify suppression of any dissent), that gave Erdoğan a free hand to shut down hundreds of Gülenist educational institutions, confiscate businesses, and jail over 100,000 people on coup charges. More than six thousand academics as well as over four thousand judges and prosecutors are dismissed and jailed. Since then, Turkey has the world's highest number of journalists in prison. Erdoğan's purges targeted not only the Gülenists, but also the Kurds, Kemalists, and left wing journalists.¹ These purges sealed Erdoğan's dominance over the traditional power houses of secularism as well as

¹ For detailed information on the extent of the purges <http://turkeypurge.com>

all democratic checks and balances.

Erdoğan's authoritarian turn has also affected religious structure of Turkey. All religious communities and Sufi orders, except for the Gülen movement, were obliged to express public support for Erdoğan. The Ministry of Education, as admitted by Erdoğan himself, has proven to be one of the biggest failures of AKP rule in bringing academic advancement; but it has successfully diverted public schools into the religious Imam-Hatip schools. The Directorate of Religious Affairs, Diyanet, has prevented any possible negative reference to Erdoğan's policies in mosques (Dorroll, 2017). Since the graft probe, no Friday sermon has ever addressed corruption or theft. To the contrary, AKP's favorite Islamic scholars have passionately provided Islamic legal rulings justifying Erdoğan's policies including the massive purges which led to the arrest of over 17,000 women, most wearing the headscarf. This extreme politicization of religion will certainly have a long-term impact on how Turkish youth will perceive and practice Islam. It is unfortunately possible to foresee the growth of a more exoteric, superficial, and ritualistic generation of Turkish Muslims, who are more prone to political manipulation, polarization, and radicalization.

Late Ottoman sultans appropriated religious rhetoric as a leverage against European political pressures. One could argue, this led to its antithesis in Atatürk's assertive secularism pushing the conservative masses outside the mainstream social and political engagement. Kemalist laicite in turn created its own antithesis culminating into Erdoğan's authoritarian Islamism. Turkey's ethnically and religiously diverse social structure can only achieve a happy medium for all by developing the institutions for a democratic and pluralistic political structure. We can only hope and pray that the struggle to achieve that happiness may begin sooner than later.

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Mustafa Gökçek from
Niagara University



In honor of Women's History Month, CAIS and the Women's Studies Committee hosted Dr. Ruby Lal, professor of South Asian Studies at Emory University, as the keynote speaker for the 2018 Mary Devereux Lecture





Meet Zeyneb

by Amina Golden-Arabaty

Having studied at several prestigious universities and worked at several Catholic institutions since coming to the United States in 2006, she has undoubtedly touched the lives of many individuals. “I love being in dialogue with people,” she said. From working with students in campus ministry and teaching, to writing books and holding conferences, Dr. Zeyneb Sayilgan is eager to spread her knowledge and experiences. Her passion is inspiring, her enthusiasm is contagious, and her global perspective enlightening.

Her love for interreligious dialogue and intercultural communication was immediately apparent from the start of our conversation earlier this year. Dr. Sayilgan has traveled and lived around the world which has equipped her with a very unique identity and outlook on life. While she was born and raised in Germany, she still identifies with her Turkish and Kurdish roots—her husband also being from Turkey. Together they have a three-year-old daughter who has already been exposed to various languages, cultures, religions and ethnicities.

The family lives in Northern Virginia where there is an ethnically and culturally diverse population living side by side. “It’s a blessing to live where there are so many different types of Muslims of all backgrounds,” she said because it helps to create a religiously pluralistic environment. While exposing her daughter to all that, as well as the many interfaith dinner parties they host, they frequent Turkey in the summer months to expose their daughter to her roots, culture and faith. Dr. Sayilgan believes “it’s important to grow up with faith values” because they are what continue to teach and guide her in embracing people of different backgrounds in the way she is famous for.

Dr. Sayilgan’s current position as Visiting Assistant Professor of Islamic Theology and Religious Pluralism at the Virginia Theological Seminary is an indication of her

promise for scholarship and teaching “I’m aware of the misconceptions and misunderstandings,” she said, and those in the community “very much value me for who I am.” She loves to share her stories which, she told me, is a reason why she pursued the life she lives. Her minority experiences made her sensitive to discrimination and she does her best in her education context to teach on this.

Growing up as a young Muslim girl in Germany exposed her to experiences of discrimination because of the head scarf, or hijab, that she started to wear at age 12. Negative remarks directed towards her on the streets of... and from a secularist Turkish teacher in middle school certainly gave her a sad experience of discrimination as a kid. She shared with me that when she initially took up the hijab, she put little thought into it: “it was an organic process...my sister wore it before me and my mother wears the hijab” she said. “Some tears [were] involved,” she continued, but overall it helped her to become more self-aware. At times she said she would find herself “in an identity crisis,” but the hijab helped her to engage with Islam on a deeper level.

“Every human being should have the opportunity to evolve,” she said, and “it’s important to consider this because as a majority population it can be hard to relate to minority experiences [but] when you enter people’s lives, you open a door for learning.” She sees humanity from a different perspective. “Being exposed to the world is enriching,” she reminisced, but not everyone is granted that pledge. This is why she writes, teaches and tells her stories--“to reach people in different places all over.”

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--this is what she is trying to show the world one meal and one conversation at a time.



Amina Golden-Arabaty is a rising senior working towards a major in Journalism/Mass Communication and minor in Arabic/Islamic Studies. CAIS intern and president of the MSA club at St. Bonaventure University





Master builder: Mimar Sinan (c. 1490-1588)

by Fr. Michael Calabria

When people visit Istanbul for the first time, they generally will go first to visit Hagia Sophia, the magnificent sixth-century Byzantine church that became a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, and finally a museum in 1935. They then walk a short distance to the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (1609-17) – or “Blue Mosque” – directly opposite Hagia Sophia.



Sinan's inspiration: the Byzantine Church of Hagia Sophia-537 CE

While Hagia Sophia indeed deserves primacy of place among Istanbul's must-see's, the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, should not be number two on that list. Although indeed an impressive edifice, it is in many ways a step backwards after the “golden age” of Ottoman architecture, the period dominated by the great architect Sinan. For almost fifty years, from 1539 until his death in 1588 (at about age 90), he served as chief architect for three sultans – Suleyman I (r. 1520-66), Selim II (r. 1566-74) and Murad III (r. 1574-95) – as well as their mothers, wives, children, viziers and other officials. He was responsible for the construction of some 350 structures – mosques, mausoleums, bathhouses, schools, hospitals, hospices, dervish convents, caravanserais, water works, and bridges – many of which can be seen right in Istanbul, but which were also found across the Ottoman empire from Budapest to Basra.

Although few details of his life are certain, his

is a success story extraordinaire. He was not born into the Ottoman elite, but into a Christian family from the village of Ağırnas, near Kayseri in Central Anatolia. Sometime in his teens he was conscripted, and taken to Istanbul where he was converted to Islam, educated and trained to become a Janissary, a soldier in an elite corps of the imperial guard. Due to his natural abilities, he was apprenticed to a master carpenter and excelled in the study of geometry. During military campaigns, his engineering skills were put to use in the construction of fortifications, bridges and mosques. In time, he gained the attention of Lutfi Pasha who became the grand vizier of Suleyman I in 1539, and offered Sinan the position of chief architect.

Among his first royal commissions was a mosque for Suleyman's chief wife, Haseki Hürrem (see review of Empress of the East). Like many Ottoman imperial mosques, it formed the center of a complex that included an elementary school, a madrasa (Qur'anic school), hospice (i.e. “soup kitchen”) and hospital. Sinan built two mosques for Haseki Hürrem's daughter, the princess Mihrimah, the first one located across the Bosphorus in Üsküdar (48-1544), and the second which occupies a prominent position on a hill near the city's western walls at Edirnekapı (70-1563) – a grand structure into which light pours through the numerous windows of four arched walls supporting the dome.

Visiting Sinan's numerous mosques in Istanbul, one is conscious of a genius at work. Each structure differs from its predecessor as he experimented structurally and aesthetically with various ways of supporting the requisite dome that would span a unified worship space like the heavens covering the earth. His inspiration was above all Hagia Sophia, a building that astounded him



Possibly an image of Sinan - from *Tarih-i Sultan Süleyman*, 1566



much as it still does visitors today. While the immensity of the domed-space appealed to him, Sinan sought to correct some of its aesthetic and structural flaws. This he accomplished in the Süleymaniye – the mosque he built for Sultan Süleyman I (1548-59). Sinan’s structural critique of Hagia Sophia may be seen particularly in the way he dealt with the exterior buttresses required to support the Süleymaniye’s central dome. Whereas, Hagia Sophia’s massive buttresses project obtrusively from the exterior walls, Sinan neatly concealed the Süleymaniye’s buttresses by incorporating them into breezy two-storied loggias. On the inside, between the domed space and the side aisles, he reduced the number of columns, and widened and elevated the arches in order to better unify the interior. Within Istanbul, the Süleymaniye is the best of Sinan’s works and the finest Ottoman mosque, and thus deserves to be second on every visitor’s list, well before the “Blue Mosque.”

Sinan’s *pièce de résistance*, however, is not to be found in Istanbul, but in Edirne, located 134 miles northeast of the Ottoman capital. This is the location of the Selimiye, the mosque built for Selim I (1568-74), the son and successor of Süleyman I. Having taken Hagia Sophia’s design to its greatest potential with the Süleymaniye, Sinan returned to a plan with which he had experimented before in much smaller structures: a large central dome (31.22 meters in diameter – as large as that of Hagia Sophia), but not supported by two semi-domes and buttresses (as in Hagia Sophia and the Süleymaniye). Rather, the Selimiye’s dome is carried on eight piers in an octagonal plan such that there is very little space that is not spanned by the central dome. The effect leaves the visitor awestruck. Even the Byzantine Emperor Justinian who built Hagia Sophia would have been envious.



- The Süleymaniye, the mosque of Süleyman I -
built 1548-59

Ironically, while still building the Selimiye in Edirne, he was commissioned to undertake repairs to the very structure that had inspired and challenged him his entire career – Hagia Sophia – that was now in danger of collapse (1573). In addition to constructing new buttresses to shore up the leaning structure, Sinan added two minarets to the existing pair, albeit more massive in their construction ostensibly to help support the building's Byzantine walls.

In contrast to the many grand edifices Sinan designed and built for the royal family and officials, is his own simple tomb located close to the Suleymaniye. It consists of a small, walled enclosure in which was placed a carved, stone sarcophagus under a small domed baldachin, with a water dispenser for the benefit of the neighborhood inhabitants – a humble resting place for the architect of so many architectural masterpieces. His own words inspire as do this works:

I hope that those of pure heart who look upon my works from now until the end of time and Judgment Day will regard me kindly, and when they see the earnestness of my endeavor and dedication remember me in their prayers. May God's will be done.

Recommended Reading

Gülru Necipoğlu. *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*. London: Reaktion, 2011.

This is the most comprehensive study of Sinan's many works and his patrons.

Reha Günay. *A Guide to the Works of Sinan the Architect in Istanbul*. Istanbul: YEM Yayın, 2010.

A handy guide to Sinan's structures in Istanbul; suitable for traveling.

J.M. Rogers. *Sinan (Makers of Islamic Civilization)*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.

This is an accessible introduction to Sinan's life and work.



The mosque of Mihrimah at Edirnekapı - 1563-70



The interior of Mihrimah's mosque



The tomb of Sinan in Istanbul - 1588



From the Bookshelf:

by Fr. Michael Calabria

Empress of the East: How a European Slave Girl Became Queen of the Ottoman Empire,

by Leslie Peirce. Basic Books, 2017.

Although frequently packed with tourists, a visit to the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul is nevertheless *de rigueur* for anyone interested in Turkey's past, especially the Ottoman Empire. One of the highlights of a visit to the palace complex is the *harem* – i.e. the quarters for the royal women and their attendants. It is easy to be distracted by the aesthetics of the labyrinth of beautiful rooms and forget the women who dwelled in this world, many of them quite formidable and influential politically. Among them was Hürrem Sultan (ca. 1504-1558), the wife of the most magnificent of Ottoman emperors, Suleyman I (r. 1520-66).

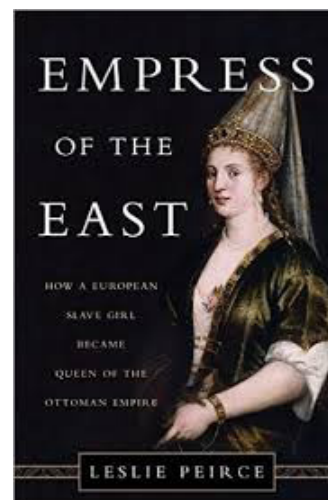
She was not born of a noble Ottoman family, nor was she a princess from one of the many lands that Suleyman had incorporated into the empire but, as the subtitle of the book tells us, she was a slave girl. As such, there is little certain about her origins, although Europeans referred to her as *Roxelana*, and believed her origins to lie somewhere in Ruthenia, today the Ukraine. She was undoubtedly from a Christian family, and at some point was abducted by Tatars and sold to slave dealers who were most likely Jewish, Greek, Armenian or Italian. Having crossed the Black Sea, she arrived in Istanbul in 1520, perhaps already purchased for the palace, or where she was quickly identified as a desirable maiden for the emperor who had recently ascended the throne.

Leslie Peirce does not gloss over the trauma of abduction, but describes the reality of fear, the disorientation and difficulty of fitting into a new culture, learning new customs, a new language and a new religion – Islam, to which she would have been converted, as well as the perils of palace politics into which she would have been thrust. Peirce, in fact, makes an interesting choice by continuing to refer to the subject of her book as *Roxelana* throughout, as if the author wants Hürrem Sultan to retain her original identity, even though she appropriated her new land, position and power quite thoroughly.

In spite of the injustices she suffered as a captive in the Ottoman court, in time she became the most influential woman in the entire empire as the sole companion of Suleyman, earning the title *Haseki*, “the favorite.” Contrary to custom, once she bore him

a son, Suleyman did not move on to produce an heir by another concubine, but he continued to have children with her alone – a total of five – and he elevated her legal status by making her his *wife*. Hers was a remarkable life and certainly not free of political intrigue – although Peirce is reluctant to incriminate her in any nefarious plots, including (spoiler alert!) the precipitous downfall of Suleyman's beloved grand vizier, Ibrahim, and Suleyman's eldest son (by his first concubine), Mustafa, both of whom were executed.

Peirce, a scholar of Ottoman History, particularly as it relates to gender, writes her latest work for general readership in a style that invites the reader to enter into the lives of Hürrem Sultan and her husband in a way most historians are reluctant to – that is, with feeling as well as fact. Perhaps my greatest criticism of the book that there is one person who is largely missing from Hürrem Sultan's story as Peirce tells it, namely the man who helped the empress realize many of her philanthropic enterprises: the chief royal architect Sinan (see “Sinan” in this issue). Peirce correctly notes that the empress endowed numerous mosques, schools, soup kitchens, public baths, hospitals, etc. Sinan was the architectural genius who helped to make her munificence manifest. His first significant project for the royal family was the construction of her mosque complex. The working relationship between Hürrem Sultan and Sinan must be been significant indeed – even with the restricted access to royal women – and yet he is mentioned only marginally in the book. In a sense, Sinan was with her to the very end: when the empress died in April 1558 she was laid to rest in the mausoleum that he had designed for her next to the Suleymaniye mosque, Sinan's masterpiece in Istanbul. Not bad for a slave girl from Ruthenia.



Istanbul: a Tale of Three Cities
by Bettany Hughes. Da Capo Press, 2017.

By any standard, it is a remarkable city. This is due in no small part to its location: its historic center pushed up behind Byzantine walls into the triangular end of a hilly peninsula, bounded by water on three sides: the Golden Horn to the north, to the east by the Bosphorus, and to the south by the Sea of Marmara. Today, Greater Istanbul is a veritable Venice of the eastern Mediterranean, with bridges across the Golden Horn connecting it to Beyoğlu, and ferries shuttling the populous across the Bosphorus to and from Üsküdar and Kadıköy (ancient Chalcedon) on its Asia side. Further up the Bosphorus, two modern bridges sew east and west together with endless threads of traffic in a city with some 14.8 million inhabitants.

Then there is its history, a vast history, not of one but of three cities, as Bettany Hughes tells it: the ancient Greco-Roman city of Byzantium, the Christian city of Constantinople, and the Ottoman city of Istanbul. It is a triad of cities and cultures that rub up against one another on a daily basis, literally serving as a foundation for a fourth incarnation (as I see it) – Istanbul of the Turkish Republic. Hughes begins her book with the astounding discovery of an 8,000-year old wooden coffin and its Stone Age inhabitant, retrieved from the site of a new metro station – that is several thousand years before the ancient Egyptians would go from funerary baskets to funerary boxes. She ends, more or less with a convenient twentieth century historical marker: the birth of the Turkish Republic in 1922. In between, there is a vast amount of information, with over 120 pages of notes and bibliography to support the authors' chronicle of the three cities. Hughes' work, although quite historically reliable, is not your average history-of-a-city book. Rather than a continuous narrative, the book comprises seventy-eight short historical vignettes. While the book is recommended in its six-hundred-page entirety, the reader may dip in and out of the book according to one's interest – whether classical, Christian or Ottoman.

Hughes' Istanbul is just one of the latest works on this historically fascinating city, including Richard Fidler's *Ghost Empire: a Journey to the Legendary Constantinople* (2017), Thomas Madden's *Istanbul: City of Majesty at the Crossroads of the World* (2016), Charles King's *Midnight at the Pera Palace* (2015) or others such as Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2006), Philip Mansel's *Constantinople: City of the World's desire, 1453-1924* (2006), and John Freeley's *Istanbul: the Imperial City* (1998). I must admit that I have a certain standard for assessing books on Istanbul: how the author handles the Ottoman conquest

of Constantinople of 1453. It's very tempting to use that event as evidence of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," as seen in the unfortunate subtitle for the American edition of Roger Crowley's 1453: the Holy War for Constantinople and the Clash of Islam and the West (2005).

Hughes provides a cooler, less incendiary account of Mehmed II's conquest, reminding the reader of a number of things conveniently overlooked in many accounts: the Byzantines had long negotiated with Muslim Turks and Arabs and had drawn allies from among them; Muslim Turks already lived in their own quarter of the Byzantine city complete with a mosque; and Byzantine princesses married sons of Turkish emirs. Thus, Hughes concludes that: "the Ottoman conquest does not feel like a complete cleft – neither the blood-crazed depravity nor the banner-unfurling triumph it is portrayed as being by many medieval and modern-day chroniclers of West and East" (413). To balance the admittedly horrific siege and the three days of looting and the like that followed, the author reminds us that fifty years later Mehmed's son, Bayezid II gave sanctuary to the Jews expelled from Isabella's and Ferdinand's Catholic Spain, and that Leonardo da Vinci sought a position at the Ottoman court, hoping to build a bridge across the Golden Horn for the emperor. Today, several bridges span both the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. They are potent reminders that this great city, with its long and varied history is itself a bridge between continents and cultures.





Arts of the East in the Aga Khan Museum

by Fr. Michael Calabria, OFM

Arts of the East: Highlights of Islamic Art from the Bruschettini Collection. Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, Canada. September 23, 2017 to January 21, 2018.

It is fitting that carpets dominate the galleries displaying the Arts of the East. They provide a useful, although perhaps unintended metaphor, an underlying theme for the exhibit; for regardless of the artistic medium represented – metalwork, ceramics, book bindings, miniature paintings, and textiles as well as carpets – all the objects in the exhibit illustrate how the artists and artisans of the Islamic world wove together creative strands from different geographies, ethnicities, cultures and even religions to produce unique and distinctive works of art. It is an appropriate metaphor for an exhibit in Toronto – a city that wears diversity like a badge of honor – and in a country whose prime minister publicly and sincerely celebrates diversity rather than laments it.

The forty-three objects comprising the exhibit come from the Bruschettini Foundation, a significant private collection of Islamic art, never before seen in North America, or outside Italy for that matter. Ranging in date from 1250 to 1650, and in geography from Spain to China, they brilliantly and beautifully reveal the multicultural fabric of Islamic lands. Three objects, in particular, eloquently and elegantly make the point. From Mamluk Cairo (ca. 1450-75) comes a carpet that, albeit directional in design, is too wide for a typical Islamic prayer rug. The scholarly consensus, based on other examples, is that it was used as a curtain that was hung over the cabinet containing the Torah scrolls in a Cairo synagogue. A silver bowl with gold ornamentation (ca. 1510), inscribed with the name of an Ottoman prince, bears lotus and lily designs that originated with the Mongols who made their forceful entrance into the Middle East in the 13th century. A ram figurine rises from the bowl's center to drink its contents, a symbol found in Serbian churches as a metaphor for the faithful rushing to satisfy their thirst for salvation, like a ram to the water. A Mughal miniature painting (ca. 1605-10) bears the image of a penitent Mary Magdalene praying before a crucifix, inspired by Tintoretto's painting of the same (ca. 1598-1602); and there is the identity of the Mughal artist: perhaps Nadira Banu (1618-59),

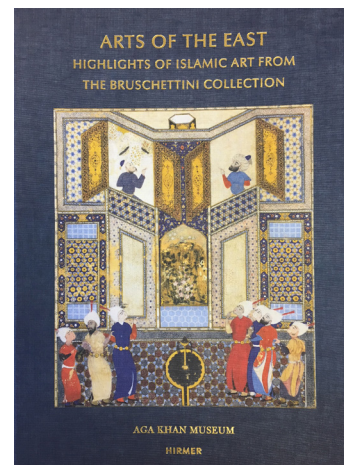
a princess of the Mughal court, and daughter-in-law of the emperor Shah Jahan (of Taj Mahal fame). These are but three objects in a multi-cultural and multi-confessional celebration par excellence.

And let us not forget the carpets – significant not only for their age, but for their excellent state of preservation, their bright colors, the complexity and boldness of their designs, and their sheer size, as well as their influence on European Renaissance painting and design. The largest in the exhibit, the “French and Co. Medallion Carpet” (Cairo or Istanbul, 1585-1600), a beautiful floral carpet of wool, cotton and silk, measures twenty-four feet by nearly sixteen feet. Perhaps the most visually striking, however, is the “Castellani-Stroganoff Medallion Carpet” (Ushak, Turkey, 1477-1525) with its large, deep blue ogival medallion on a bright red field with flowery blue vines.

Whether woven into carpets or textiles, embossed onto a Qur'an cover, painted into a scene, or fired into ceramics, Chinese motifs are ubiquitous in the objects on display as evidenced by the dragons, ducks, lotuses, cloud bands, and the çintemani, originally a Buddhist motif comprising three offset circles, that becomes ubiquitous in Ottoman textiles. In this current age when politicians complain of China's economic reach, and diversity in general is decried, Islamic art reminds us that the more tightly woven the world is, the more creative and beautiful it can be.

Recommended Reading

Arts of the East: Highlights of Islamic Art from the Bruschettini Collection. Edited by Filiz Çakır Phillip. Aga Khan Museum, 2017.





Photos from the Exhibit:



Clockwise from above

Berheimer Trees Carpet - Cairo, Egypt 1450-75

Silver Bowl, gilded - Turkey before 1510

St. Mary of Magdalene Penitent - India, ca1605





Carpets featured in the exhibit. On the left, the Castellani- Stroganoff Madallion carpet (Ushak, Turkey 1475-1525)

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Fatih and the Friars

by Fr. Michael Calabria

Ten years after his conquest of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmet II – called *Fatih*, the Conqueror – added Bosnia to his realm in 1463. Before the Turkish conquest, Bosnia was a land that was divided among Catholics, under the leadership of Franciscan friars, and Serbian Orthodox communities. In order to secure religious freedom for Catholics and stop their exodus from Bosnia, Franciscan friar Anđeo Zvizdović (ca. 1420-1498) sought an audience with the Sultan. The result was the *Ahdname of Milodra*, a decree issued by Mehmed on May 28, 1463, and now preserved in the Franciscan monastery in Fojnica, Bosnia. Like earlier agreements made between Muslim leaders and Christian communities, the *Ahdname* is an important reminder that past eras have not always been as religiously contentious as claimed in more contemporary conflicts.



Fr. Michael and the OFM Commission for Evangelization in Mostar, Bosnia in March 2018



The text reads:

*Mehmet, the son of Murat Khan,
always victorious! The command of the
honorable, sublime Sultan's sign and
shining seal of the conqueror of the world
is as follows:*

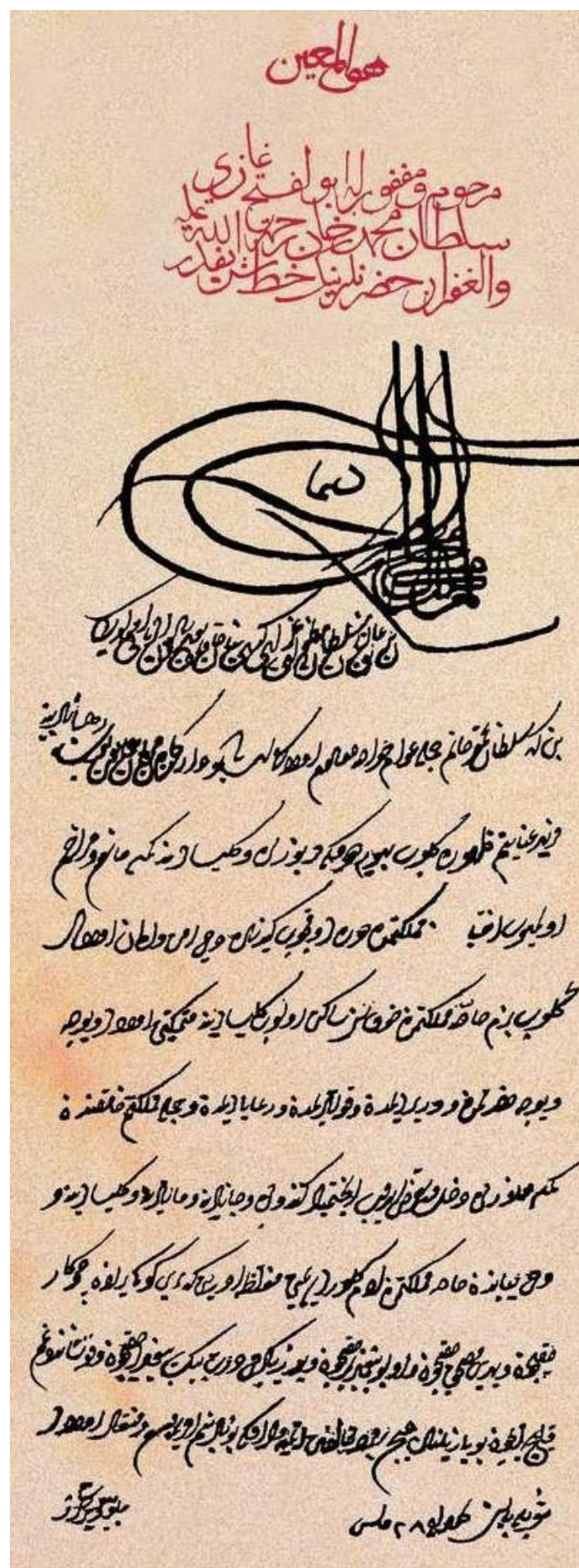
*I, the Sultan Mehmet Khan, inform the
entire world that the ones who possess this
imperial edict, the Bosnian Franciscans,
have got into my good graces, so I
command:*

*Let nobody bother or disturb those who
are mentioned or their churches. Let them
dwell in peace in my empire and let those
who have become refugees be safe. Let
them return and let them settle in their
monasteries without fear in all of the
countries of my empire.*

*Neither my royal highness, nor my viziers
or employees, nor my servants, not any
of the citizens of my empire shall insult or
disturb them. Let nobody attack or insult
or endanger their lives, their property or
the property of their church. Even if they
bring somebody from abroad into my
country, they are allowed to do so.*

*As, thus, I have graciously issued this
imperial edict, hereby take my great
oath. In the name of the Creator of the
Earth and Heaven, the One who feeds all
creatures, and in the name of the seven
Mustaphas, and our great Messenger,
and in the name of the sword that I wear,
nobody shall do contrary to what has been
written as long as they are obedient and
faithful to my command.*

(www.croatianhistory.net/etf/ahd.html)





Ottoman Treasures

In addition to the incomparable Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul, many museums in Europe and North America have significant collections of Ottoman art, comprising carpets, textiles, ceramics, paintings, books and calligraphy. These include: the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum (London), the Louvre (Paris), the David Collection (Copenhagen), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Freer and Sackler Galleries (Washington, DC), and the Aga Museum (Toronto) among many others. Below are a few examples of Ottoman treasures from these collections.



Ceramic tile with Allah (God) in Arabic, 18th-19th century (Louvre)



Ceramic mosque lamp from the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem. Iznik, 1549 (British Museum)



Fritware dish. Iznik, 1570-80 (Aga Khan)



Fritware tile panel. Iznik, c. 1540 (David Collection)





Prince's kaftan, brocaded silk. Istanbul or Bursa, 1575-1625 (V & A)



Prayer rug with niche design, wool. Mucur, early 19th century (Metropolitan Museum)



Prayer rug with niche design, wool. Mucur, early 19th century (Metropolitan Museum)

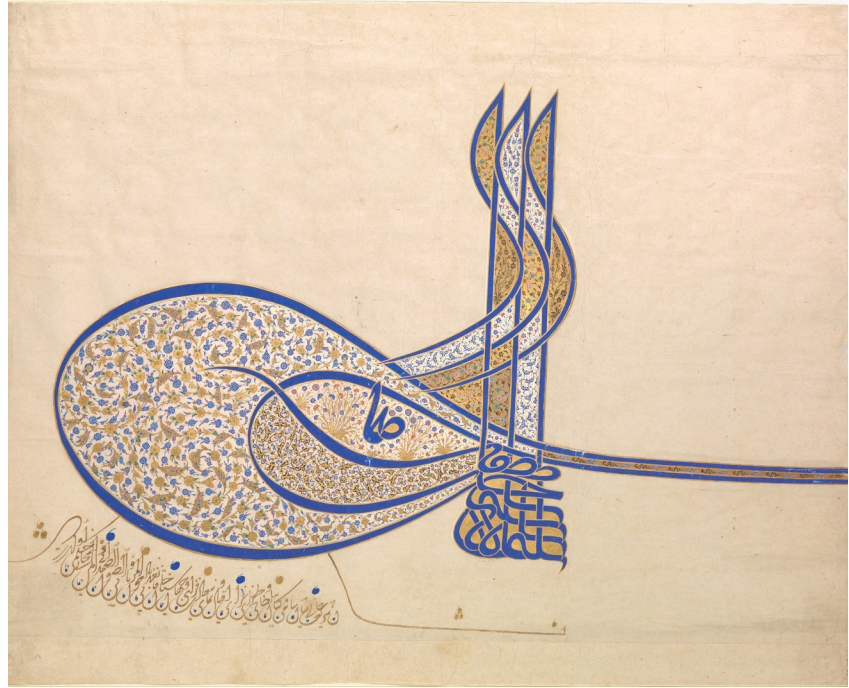


Cenotaph cover with the shahada (profession of faith). Silk-satin, 17th-18th century (Sackler)





Ottoman official. Ink, watercolor and gold on paper. Istanbul, c. 1650 (Aga Khan)



Tughra (seal-signature) of Süleyman I. Ink, watercolor and gold on paper, ca. 60-1555 (Metropolitan Museum)



Qur'an. Surah al-Fatiha and Surah al-Baqara (vv. 1-5). Ink, color and gold on paper. Medina, 1577 (Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts)



Length of fabric. Silk, metal-wrapped thread, ca. 1565-80 (Metropolitan Museum)





On March 5, 2018, WNED, the PBS station serving the Buffalo and Toronto regions, aired: The Sultan and the Saint, a docudrama about the encounter between the sultan al-Malik al-Kamil and St. Francis of Assisi. CAIS director, Fr. Michael Calabria, was one of the consultants for the film, and spoke on camera at WNED's studios about the film and its importance





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
- Community outreach/engagement
- Scholarship



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by Robert Lentz, O.F.M.

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