



# Nūr نور

*The Newsletter of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies*

**St. Bonaventure University**  
**Winter 2016 – Volume 1, No. 2**





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## *The Newsletter of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies*

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Spring 2016 – Volume 1, No. 2**

I am happy to present to you the second issue of *Nūr*. As mentioned in the previous issue, within a few decades India's Muslim population will be the largest in the world, exceeding that of Indonesia. Since the Islamic history and heritage of South Asia are still unknown to many, this issue is devoted to these topics. The article ("From Morocco to the Mughal Court"), the exhibit review ("The Fabric of India"), and the review of Roger Crowley's book *Conquerors* all demonstrate how Islamic South Asia and "the West" have been intertwined since the 15th century.

Since the first issue of *Nūr* was published in September 2015, CAIS has been involved in a number of endeavors, programs and activities. In late September, I began a "blog on timely issues" concerning Islam which is now available on the CAIS website. In October, I presented a program at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, PA titled, "Mary and Jesus in Islam: Grace and Good News Beyond the Gospels." At the end of October I traveled to Turkey to plan an educational experience for students and faculty to be offered under the auspices of the Franciscan Missionary Union in cooperation with Peace Islands Institute. During our time there, we had the opportunity to meet with writer and journalist Mustafa Akyol, author of *Islam Without Extremes: a Muslim Case for Liberty* (2011; rev. 2013) who provided much insight into the Turkey's religious and political climates just days after the parliamentary election.

As the American presidential campaign continues to intensify and acts of terrorism claim innocent lives, there has been a significant rise in anti-Islamic rhetoric from some political candidates and portions of the electorate. In response to this, I wrote an op-ed that was published in both the *Olean Times Herald*

(12/18/15) and the *Buffalo News* (12/26/15). It can be viewed at:

[www.buffalonews.com/opinion/another-voice/another-voice-blaming-islam-for-terrorism-perpetuates-prejudice20151226-](http://www.buffalonews.com/opinion/another-voice/another-voice-blaming-islam-for-terrorism-perpetuates-prejudice20151226-)

Even in this political climate, there seems to be no end to genuine interest in and appreciation of Islamic art and culture. In November and December, I had the opportunity to see two opulent and informative art exhibits: *The Fabric of India* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (reviewed in this issue), and *Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons and Poets at the Great Islamic Courts* at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (on view until Jan. 2016 ,31; to be reviewed in the next issue of *Nūr*). Such exhibits, which highlight the dazzling artistic and intellectual legacy of the Islamic world, can do much to correct erroneous views of Islam and Muslims perpetuated in political and popular culture.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of *Nūr*. Best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year!

Fr. Michael D. Calabria, O.F.M.,  
Director, Center for Arab and Islamic Studies

كل عام ولدتتم بنخير





# *From Morocco to the Mughal Court:*

## *Crusading Commerce in Islamic Lands (1615-1415)*

By: Fr. Michael D. Calabria, O.F.M.

Bookstores in England were awash in 2015 with books on World War I to commemorate the centenary of “the war to end all wars.” (See: Recommended Reading). The year also marked the six-hundredth anniversary of the much less-known Portuguese crusade against Ceuta on the Moroccan coast (Aug. 1415), as well as the four-hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Sir Thomas Roe in South Asia, the first British ambassador to the Mughal Court (Sept. 1615). They may seem like two completely unrelated events and perhaps not terribly significant, but in fact there is an important connection between the two, and both events had incalculable and lasting effects on the peoples of Europe, Africa and South Asia.

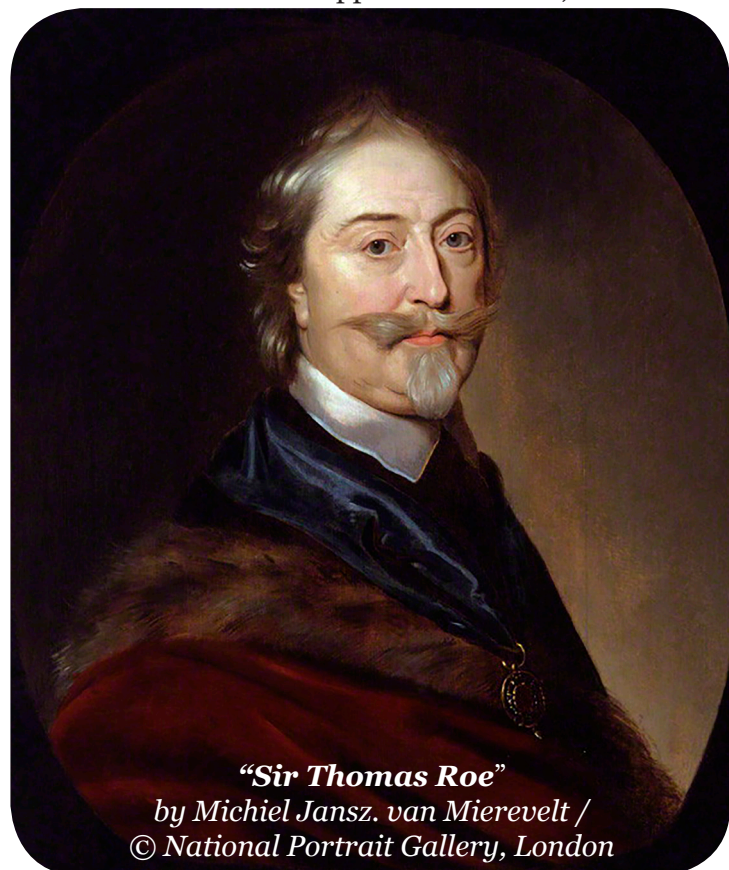
Three young Portuguese princes, Edward, Peter, and Henry, needed something to do to mark their entry into knighthood, some great and dangerous exploit. They approached their father John (João) I, King of Portugal (r. 1433-1385) with an idea for an adventure: an attack on the city of Ceuta. Located on the Moroccan coast opposite Gibraltar, Ceuta was

a major commercial port and terminus for trans-Saharan trade that brought gold, ivory and slaves to the Mediterranean coast. At the time the princes were looking for a manly diversion, Ceuta lay within the realm of the Marinid Sultans of Fez, but also periodically under the control of the competing Nasrid Sultans of Granada.

Having already been stricken with plague and famine before the Portuguese invasion, Ceuta fell in a single day. Three days of looting, torture, and terror followed. In the city’s central mosque, now dedicated as a church, Princes Edward, Peter, and Henry knelt before their father and were knighted. The capture of Ceuta in 1415 marked the beginning of Portuguese attacks on Muslim trade and territory, and signaled the birth of Portugal’s overseas empire driven by both commercial and crusading ambitions. Within a few years, Prince Henry would be installed as head of the Order of Christ, the latest incarnation of the Knights Templar, established to combat the forces of Islam. Seeking to tap into the sources of Muslim wealth, Prince Henry (dubbed “the Navigator”) launched maritime expeditions south along Africa’s western coast, his ships’ sails emblazoned with a red cross, the symbol of the Order of Christ. Pope Nicholas V endorsed Henry’s crusading vision in the 1452 papal bull, *Dum Diversas* (“Until different”):

We grant you [Kings of Spain and Portugal] by these present documents, with our Apostolic Authority, full and free permission to invade, search out, capture, and subjugate the Saracens and pagans and any other unbelievers and enemies of Christ wherever they may be, as well as their kingdoms, duchies, counties, principalities, and other property [...] and to reduce their persons into perpetual servitude.

Portugal’s rulers reasoned that if they could break the Arab monopoly on the spice trade in the East, they would impoverish Muslim powers and defeat them once and for all. This is what drove Vasco da Gama, sailing under the Order of Christ banner,



**“Sir Thomas Roe”**  
by Michiel Jansz. van Mierevelt /  
© National Portrait Gallery, London



to the western coast of India in 1498. By seizing or destroying Arab ships, bombarding and torching cities where Muslims engaged in trade, and kidnapping and publicly executing Muslim merchants, da Gama and his compatriots continued the crusading commercial empire that had begun in Ceuta in 1415. Christopher Columbus, too, viewed his expeditions as part of the larger Crusade against Islam, and wrote to his Spanish royal patrons: "I have already petitioned Your Highnesses to see that all the profits of this enterprise, should be spent on the conquest of Jerusalem."

In September 1615, two hundred years after the Portuguese attack on Ceuta, Sir Thomas Roe, an Englishman from the court of James I, arrived in the port of Surat on India's western coast where the Portuguese had already been trading (and engaging in piracy) for over one hundred years. Roe had come not as a crusading conqueror, but as England's first ambassador to the Mughal court of the emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627). This vast Islamic empire reached from Kabul in the west to Bengal in the east, and the emperor's wealth amounted to seventeen times that of the king of England. With Portugal's commercial empire now reaching from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, England was eager to get a foothold in South Asia. In spite of his best efforts, however, Roe failed to obtain the trade agreement that he desired. Jahangir's son, Prince Khurram (later the emperor Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal) distrusted the English as much as he did the Portuguese. His instincts proved sound on both accounts. Later, Shah Jahan would drive the Portuguese from Bengal for enslaving the local population and forcibly converting them to Christianity, while in the reign of his son, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), the British East India Company attempted, but failed, to invade Bengal to secure control of its lucrative trade. It was only a matter of time, of course, before the Company's designs were realized, and India became the jewel in England's colonial and commercial crown.

When the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II, was deposed by the British in 1857 and exiled to Rangoon, did he know that in essence his real journey had begun, not in Delhi, but centuries earlier in Ceuta, in 1415, when a Portuguese victory by John I and his sons had given birth to a crusading commercial empire that led the Portuguese to the shores of India, only to be followed by the English in 1615?

Empires – whether driven by religious ideology, commercial interests, a combination of these two, or some other agenda – cost innumerable lives to extend and defend, and while they sometimes can lead to a confluence of cultures with positive results, more often they lead to conflicts between cultures with devastating



**"Portrait of King John I of Portugal"**

by unknown artist /

© National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon

Photo by Paul Hermans

and lasting effects. This was as true in 1415 and 1615 as it was in 1915, and it was in 2015.

### Suggested Reading

Cliff, Nigel. *The Last Crusade: the Epic Voyages of Vasco da Gama*. New York: Harper, 2011.

Crowley, Roger. *Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire*. New York: Random House, 2015.

*Encompassing the Globe: Portugal and the World in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. Jay A. Levenson, ed. Washington, DC: Aurthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Keay, John. *The Honourable Company: a History of the English East India Company*. London: Harper Collins, 1993.

Rogerson, Barnaby. *The Last Crusaders: East, West and the Battle for the Center of the World*. London: Abacus, 2010.



# Exhibits Review:

By: Fr. Michael D. Calabria, O.F.M.

***“The Fabric of India,”  
Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Oct. 2015 ,3 – Jan. 2016 ,10.***

In fall 2013, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York presented an exhibit titled: *Interwoven Globe: the Worldwide Textile Trade, 1800-1500*. The exhibit documented the cultural and commercial connections that encompassed the globe in the early modern period as evidenced by the textiles of Indian, Ottoman, Persian-Safavid, Japanese, Chinese, Iberian and Latin American peoples. In “The Fabric of India,” the Victorian & Albert Museum achieves a similar goal while focusing on its extensive collection of opulent Indian textiles, from the early centuries CE to the contemporary age, some of which have never been on public display before. Some five centuries before the coming of western Europeans to India at the end of the 15th century, textiles from South Asia were already being traded in the markets of medieval Cairo and along the Swahili Coast of East Africa. While Arab-Muslim merchants knitted the ports of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to those of the Indian Ocean into a kind of free-trade zone, Europeans – Portuguese, Dutch and British – often using violence and military might, made Indian textiles a global commodity, sewn into Japanese kimonos, Nigerians wraps, European jackets, petticoats, and dresses, Viennese bed curtains, Portuguese coverlets, and American handkerchiefs. For several centuries, people and furnishings on at least four continents were clad in Indian gingham, calico, chintz, and seersucker.

It was not only international trade that made Indian textiles a ubiquitous indicator of intercultural connections; it was their very design. A noteworthy example in the exhibit is a riding coat of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (r. 27-1605). Made of satin-woven silk, the coat is decorated with a repeating pattern of wild animals, flowering plants and trees. Although the Mughals were Muslim by faith, they ruled a culturally, religiously, and ethnically diverse empire. This diversity is expressed by the design of Jahangir’s coat that incorporates elements of Persian manuscript painting, particularly in the depiction of animals and

trees. These Persian elements had been influenced by Chinese design, and the flowering plants on the coat – poppies, irises, daffodils and tulips – were based on European prints that had been brought to the Mughal court by Portuguese Jesuit missionaries. A Muslim Mughal Emperor, descended from Turko-Mongols on his father’s side and Hindu royalty on his mother’s, who married a Persian woman, engaged in theological debates with Jesuits, fittingly sported a multicultural coat.

One of the most historically interesting pieces in the exhibit was the tent of Tipu Sultan (r. 99-1782), comprising cotton panels covered with beautifully vibrant floral sprays of red poppies and carnations in the Mughal style. Tipu was the Muslim ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore in south India at a time when the Mughals were mere figureheads in Delhi and when the British were extending their authority across the subcontinent. Tipu sought to stem the British tide but lost half of his kingdom in 1792 to General Cornwallis, the same British officer who had surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown in 1781. Cornwallis had restarted his military career in India. When Tipu established contact with Napoleon in Egypt in 1798, the British invaded Mysore and Tipu died in battle in 1799. His tent was then taken to England as a war trophy, evidence of the new jewel in the Empire’s crown.

Whether viewed as works of art, as historical relics, as commercial commodities or cultural artifacts, it is clear that India’s textiles have a story to tell, not only of Mughals or Maharajas, conquerors or colonizers; they tell our story, the human story.

## Further Reading:

*The Fabric of India*, ed. Rosemary Crill. London: V & A, 2015.





***Jahangir's riding coat***  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London





## *From the Bookshelf:*

### *Conquerors: How Portugal Seized the Indian Ocean and Forged the First Global Empire*

by Roger Crowley, London: Faber & Faber, 2015.

Review by Fr. Michael D. Calabria, O.F.M.

Roger Crowley is no stranger to the imperial conflicts of the early modern period, having already written on the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (1453) and on the Battle of Lepanto (1571). In his most recent work, he turns his attention to the Indian Ocean, into which the Portuguese stumbled at the end of the 15th century. Crowley covers similar material to Nigel Cliff's *The Last Crusade: the Epic Voyages of Vasco da Gama* (Harper, 2011), but the story is fascinating and his writing so engaging that it is well worth a read.

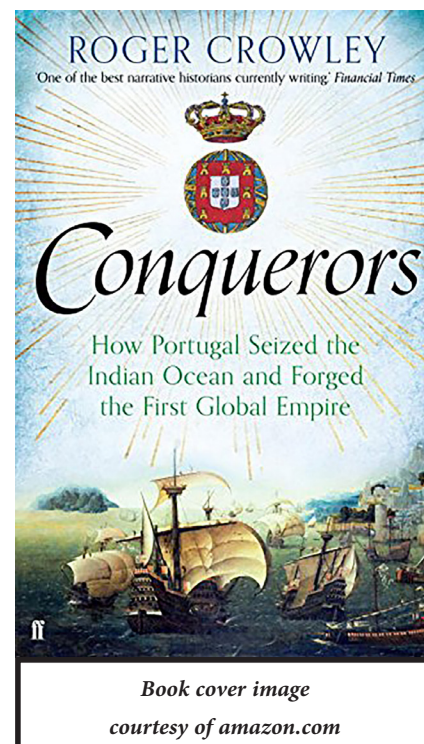
The emergence of Portugal as a commercial empire at the beginning of the sixteenth century is nothing short of miraculous. Crowley captures well the uncertainty of Portugal's first tentative probing maritime expeditions along the West African coast in the 1480s. Yet, within a few decades it had established a commercial empire that reached not only to India, but to Malacca in Malaysia, and was supported and defended by a fleet of well-armed warships ready to seize and destroy any competitors' ships.

While Portugal's commercial global reach is certainly dazzling by any standards, Crowley reminds us that it is also a horrifying tale, as the enterprise was built on intimidation, violence, and terror fueled not only by the spice trade, but by a deep-seated hatred for Muslims and a desire to definitively end their rule of the Holy Land (see "From Morocco to the Mughal Court" in this issue). Even before his historic arrival on the Indian coast in 1498, Vasco da Gama had resorted to hostage-taking and torturing captives when he landed in Muslim-ruled Mozambique and Mombasa in East Africa. Seizing Muslim ships, their merchandise and killing or enslaving their crews became Portuguese policy in the Indian Ocean.

In one of the most horrific incidents on da Gama's second voyage to India, he robbed and ultimately sank an Arab ship carrying 240 men, women, and children returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca. A Portuguese eyewitness recorded that "with great cruelty and without any pity the admiral burned the ship and all who were in it" (Crowley, 128). In order to drive

Muslim merchants from India's ports, da Gama took to hanging Muslim captives from the masts of his ships as a warning to local residents. To increase the terror, the bodies were decapitated and thrown into the sea, while heads, hands, and feet severed from the bodies were put into a boat and towed to shore for all to see. Da Gama was not alone in his use of such tactics. They were repeated and used with increasing frequency and ferocity by Francisco de Almeida, the viceroy of Portuguese India (1509-1505), as did his successor Afonso de Albuquerque (1515-1510) who instructed his troops not "to spare the lives of the Muslims, their wives and children wherever they are found" (Crowley, 300).

With so much attention focused on ISIL and terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam, Crowley's book is a riveting, timely and often horrifying reminder of the terror exacted upon Muslims by those who sailed under the sign of the Cross, but who were inspired more by greed than the Gospel.



Book cover image  
courtesy of amazon.com





# Course Offerings for Spring 2016

## Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced Intermediate Arabic (ARBC 302 ,202 ,102)

Instructor: Ms. Dea Hart, Modern Languages

## Christian-Muslim Relations: Past, Present & Future (THEO 307)

This course examines the historical, social, and theological dimensions of Christian-Muslim relations from the advent of Islam to the current day. The first part of the course addresses questions such as: How have Christians and Muslims viewed each other's faiths over the centuries? To what extent have their relations been characterized by harmony and cooperation, or by strife and discord? How have these relations changed and why? The second part, of the course addresses contemporary theological questions, perspectives, and debates arising from this historical interaction.

T / Th 2:15-1 pm

Instructor: Fr. Michael Calabria, O.F.M. (CAIS)

## History of the Modern Middle East (HIST 365)

This course examines the emergence of the modern Middle East, focusing on the period from Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 until the present day. It will address the impact of European colonialism, reformist attempts to meet this challenge, the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of nationalism, Zionism, pan-Arabism, and Islamism. Particular attention will be given to American involvement in the Middle East since the mid20-th century.

T / Th 3:35-2:30 pm

Instructor: Fr. Michael Calabria, O.F.M. (CAIS)

## American Foreign Policy (POLS 320)

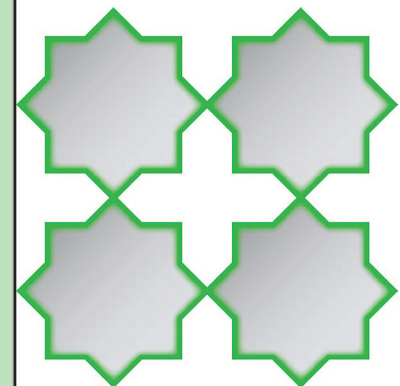
The United States emerged from the past millennium as the world's only "superpower." During the semester, we will explore questions such as: How did the U.S. gain this undisputed advantage in the international arena? Does U.S. hegemony threaten world stability or is U.S. guidance the key to peace and prosperity in this millennium? How are other countries and groups reacting to U.S. power? Were the September 11 attacks the manifestation of a "clash of civilizations" or a reaction to U.S. imperialism? As we move chronologically through the major foreign policy events of the past fifty years we will consider traditional political science explanations for U.S. decisions, considering evidence for realist, liberal (or idealist), and critical viewpoints.

T/ Th 3:45-2:30 pm

Instructor: Dr. Ibrahim Zabad (Political Science)

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Arab and Islamic Studies online

***[www.sbu.edu/CAIS](http://www.sbu.edu/CAIS)***





*St. Bonaventure University*  
*School of Franciscan Studies*  
*Summer Program 2016*  
*July 4–29*

**Women and Gender in Islam:  
from Revelation to Revolution**  
**SFS 599 – 3 credits**

Contrary to popular stereotypes, women have played integral roles in Islamic societies from the revelation of the Qur'an to the present day. Beginning with an overview of women in the pre-Islamic Near East, this course examines the status, significance and spirituality of women as revealed in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition, as well as in Islamic history and culture. Comparisons and contrasts will be made with the Christian and Franciscan traditions. Contemporary issues facing Muslim women will also be addressed.

Fr. Michael Calabria, OFM, Ph.D

To register visit: [www.sbu.edu/schools/franciscan-studies/summer-program2016-](http://www.sbu.edu/schools/franciscan-studies/summer-program2016-)



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**The Movie Mogul, Moses and Muslims:  
Islamic Elements in Cecil B. DeMille's "The Ten Commandments"**

**What?**

Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 film, *The Ten Commandments*, has come to define the genre of the biblical epic. It has earned a permanent place in American culture due to its annual airing on television during the Easter and Passover holidays. Most viewers are unaware, however, that DeMille had sought to make a film that would appeal to Jews, Christians and Muslims at a time when their common Abrahamic ancestry had yet to be articulated, and interreligious dialogue was all but unheard of. In this program, CAIS Director Fr. Michael Calabria, O.F.M., Ph.D., explores the social and historical context for the film, and using film clips, examines the film's references to the Qur'an and Muslims.

**When?**

Monday, March 21  
4–5 p.m.

**Where?**

University Club, St. Bonaventure University





## Our supporters

Since being inaugurated in August 2015, the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies has received generous support from a number of individuals and groups who continue to make the activities and programs of CAIS possible. We wish to express our sincere and heartfelt thanks to the following:

Dr. Adil and Mrs. Jehan Al-Humadi  
Dr. Mohaned Al-Humadi  
John and Wardia Hart  
Akbar and Nisreen Firdosy  
Drs. Zahid and Durriya Khairullah  
Donald and Mary Swanz

And: The Islamic Society of the Southern Tier



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16-winter-Cntr Islam

### Mission of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies

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.

