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From the Director's Desk...

By Michael D. Calabria, OFM, Ph.D

One hundred years ago, the spring and summer of 1921 was a time of great transition for much of the world, not unlike the current day. Many nations were still recovering from the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20 that had infected nearly one-third of the world's population and claimed as many as 50 million lives.

While the Spanish flu pandemic abated, peoples and nations continued to feel the effects of the "Great War" and the momentous political and social changes it brought. Across the Middle East, in particular, new nations and leaders emerged following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire even as European countries expanded their hold on the region. This issue of Nūr focuses on critical events that occurred in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Iran in 1921.

In that year, a riot erupted between Palestinians and Jewish immigrants that presaged the conflict that is now a century old and remains unresolved. In Syria, a nascent constitutional monarchy was thwarted by the French colonial empire while Iraq became a new Arab Kingdom within the British Empire. In Iran, a military coup overthrew the monarchy and set into motion the events that culminated in the revolution of 1979. All of these events remain critical for understanding the political conflicts that plague the region in our time. Seeking to help heal the region's more recent wounds, Pope Francis traveled to Iraq this past spring to meet with political and religious leaders. This issue of Nūr documents the Pope's visit, and includes the prayer he used at an interfaith gathering at the ancient city of Ur, the traditional birthplace of Abraham, the prophet and patriarch revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Nūr readers will recall that I was in Iran when COVID hit that country in February 2020 (See Nūr, Summer 2020 issue). In this current issue, readers can take an armchair tour of two exhibits that highlight Iran's history and culture. These exhibits, held at Houston's Museum of Fine Art and London's Victoria and Albert Museum, explore the artistic connections between China and Iran seen in ceramicware, and the rich cultural legacy of Iran from ancient times to the present.

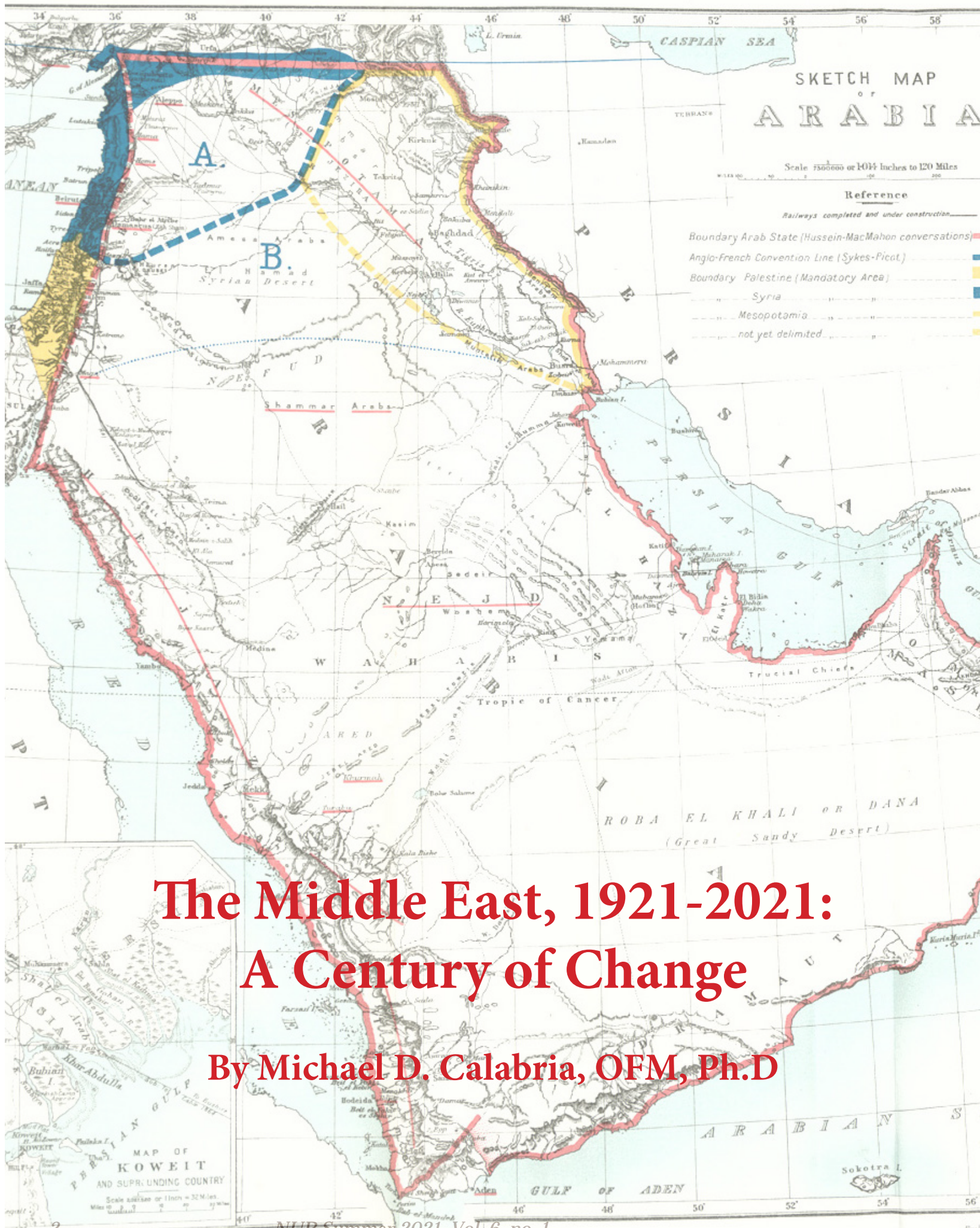
In spite of the challenges that COVID continues to present, CAIS alumni are doing great things! In this issue, read how three graduates in Arab and Islamic Studies are putting their Bonaventure education to good use. Read also how a doctor from the Olean-Allegany Muslim community answers both the call to medicine and the call to faith in a medical mission trip.

More than a year has passed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The personal losses and hardships we have all endured have been painful and profound. Earlier this year we mourned the passing of our university president Dr. Dennis DePerro. As a new academic year begins, let us honor his memory with our endeavors to build a safer, better informed, more peaceful and more just community, country and world.

Fr. Michael D. Calabria, OFM, PhD



السلام عليكم
peace be upon you



The Middle East, 1921-2021: A Century of Change

By Michael D. Calabria, OFM, Ph.D

Part I. Palestine: from Haycraft to Hamas

When violence erupted in Jerusalem and Gaza this past spring, politicians and pundits rushed to explain the causes. There were indeed specific reasons for these clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police, military and civilians well before Hamas entered the fray, and these are indicated below; but when viewed from a historical perspective, May 2021 sounds like “more of the same” – another manifestation of the unresolved issue of the Palestinians living under occupation in Jerusalem and the West Bank, their ongoing displacement over the last century, and the erosion of their rights. What makes the events of this past spring particularly frustrating is that a century ago, in May 1921, there was an outbreak of violence between Arabs and immigrant Jews that presaged the cycle of conflicts we continue to see in our time. In the aftermath of the clashes, the British established a commission to identify the root causes of violence in Palestine then which tragically continue to surface today – one hundred years later. This is the story of the Haycraft Commission.

The Background

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Allied victory in World War I, Britain and France rushed in to implement the secret agreement they had made in 1917, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, by which the two countries would divide the Middle East between themselves. Egypt had already been designated a British protectorate in 1914 and remained so until nominal independence was granted in 1922. A kingdom was created in the Transjordan in April 1921, ruled by ‘Abdullah ibn Hussein, the brother of Faisal I, King of Iraq (see Part II). Lebanon and Syria were under French control. That left Palestine which the League of Nations placed under British administration in 1920.

The immigration of European Jews to Palestine was already well underway at the time, accelerated by the Balfour Declaration of 1917 by which the British Crown indicated its support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” The plan was a mix of imperial politics and religion: creating a British client state adjacent to the Suez Canal, the

lifeline of the British Empire; and a desire by Christian Zionists among senior British politicians to return all Jews to the Holy Land in anticipation of the Messiah’s return. The settling of tens of thousands of European Jews in Palestine (some 84,000 by 1922) not only presented problems for the Arabs (Muslim and Christian) but among the immigrants themselves who came from a diversity of cultures and held different political views. It was, in fact, the tensions between Jewish groups in Palestine that ignited the violence that occurred in and around Jaffa in May 1921.

The Jaffa Riots

Among the new arrivals to Palestine were Bolshevik Jews from Russia who had organized themselves into the Miflagat Poalim Sozialistim (MPS) – the “Socialist Labor Party.” Fresh from the Russian Revolution where they had faced political and religious persecution as well as economic privation, they arrived in Palestine only to find a lack of sufficient gainful employment due to competition with other immigrants as well as Arab residents. Members of the MPS began to aggressively call for class warfare, revolution and the establishment of a socialist state, something that was rejected by the rival Jewish Labor Party and which created suspicion and fear among the Arabs.

On May 1, 1921, the MPS and Jewish Labor Party held competing demonstrations in Tel Aviv. When the two groups met on the street, a raucous clash ensued, requiring police intervention to separate the crowds. The conflict, however, soon drew in local Arabs, who joined in the fray. The partisan conflict then devolved into a sectarian one – a week of looting and violence between Arabs and Jews regardless of their party affiliation. Homes and businesses were destroyed, and individuals beaten or killed – some by the British military. Many of the attacks and counterattacks occurred in and around Jaffa, exacerbated by rumor, suspicion, and false reporting on both sides. The clashes were finally halted on May 6 when the British sent planes to help disperse groups of Arabs. In the end, 95 people had been killed – 48 Arabs and 47 Jews, with 219 wounded.

The Haycraft Commission

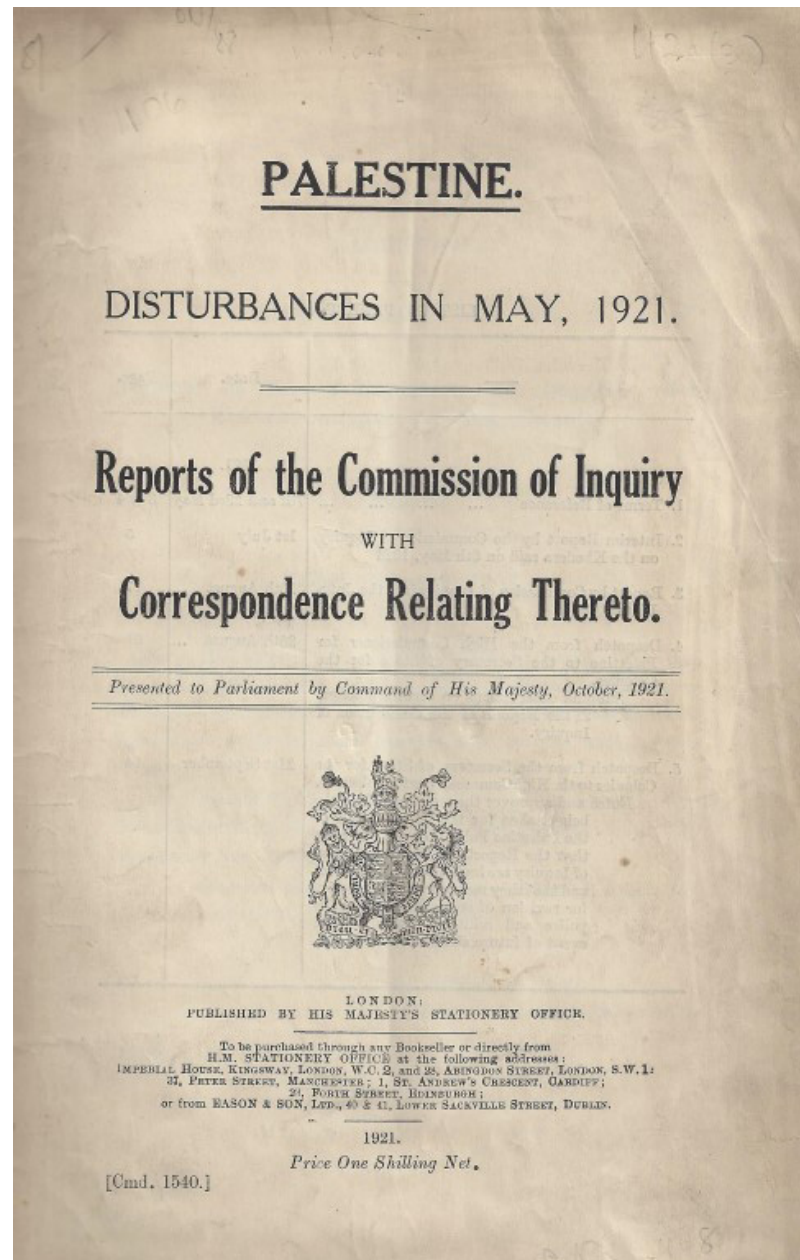
This riots in Jaffa were not the first incidences of Arab-Jewish violence. Just a year before, in April 1920, there had been clashes between Arabs and Jewish immigrants in Jerusalem, the “Nebi Musa Riots” which had left four Arabs dead in addition five Jews, and more than 200 wounded. Fearing more widespread violence after Jaffa, Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner for Palestine, appointed a commission to investigate the causes. The commission was chaired by Sir Thomas Haycraft, Chief Justice for Palestine, and included a representative from the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities. They met uninterrupted between 12 May to 26 July, 1921, and heard a total of 291 witnesses during that time. Their report, published in August 1921, concluded that the immediate cause of the violence – the MPS demonstration – was “the spark that set alight the explosive discontent of the Arabs.”

The Commission, however, had gone much further than this and undertook an investigation to identify the deeper causes for Arab anger and resentment. It is this part of the report that is the most insightful and relevant for the current state of affairs as it addressed Arab concerns that are still echoed by Palestinians today – and remain unresolved a century later as clearly evidenced by events this spring.

The non-Jewish witnesses who came before the Haycraft Commission conveyed a consistent critique of Zionist presence¹ and influence in the British administration of Palestine. Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner himself was a known Zionist Jew. Based on the testimony the witnesses, the members of the Haycraft Commission reported that Jewish immigrants enjoyed privileges denied to Arabs because the British Administration accepted the Zionist Commission as a representative body for the Jews, whereas the Arabs had no corresponding agency to advocate on their behalf. The principal grievances voiced by the witnesses related to economics, politics, and social conditions. Whereas the British had convinced the Arabs that the immigration of European Jews to Palestine would lift the economy of the region as a whole, this did not in fact happen. The Haycraft Commission noted:

We are credibly assured by educated Arabs that they would welcome the arrival of

¹ The term Zionist is not to be equated with Jew or Jewish as there are Christian Zionists as well. Zionist is used here within a historical context to refer to individuals (and organizations) who, whether for religious and/or political reasons, advocated the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Such individuals and organizations themselves used the term to identify their personal or corporate objectives.



well-to-do and able Jews who could help to develop the country to the advantage of all sections of the community...but we feel bound to express the opinion, arrived at in the course of the inquiry, that the Zionist Commission, which is the representative of the Zionist Organization in Palestine, has failed to carry conviction to the Arabs on this point. So far as we can judge, the only sentiment it has inspired in them is one of profound mistrust.

Arab laborers complained that ever-growing number of Jewish immigrants had displaced them in

employment. The Haycraft Commission “had evidence to the effect that the Zionist Commission put strong pressure upon a large Jewish landowner...to employ Jewish labor in place of the Arabs who had been employed on his farm since he was a boy. The farmer, we were told, yielded to the pressure with reluctance...because the substitution of Jewish for Arab labor would alienate the Arabs.” Arab businesses also suffered as witnesses testified:

Jews are exclusive in business, that a Jewish tradesman will not buy from an Arab if the goods he wants can be obtained from a Jew, and they argue that a Jewish official who has the power to influence the granting of a Government contract will not let it go to anyone but a Jew if he can help it.

This is here an implicit critique of High Commissioner Herbert Samuel as he had awarded Russian Zionist Pinhas Rutenberg exclusive concessions to produce and distribute electricity in Palestine and the Transjordan. The report continued: “whereas the Arab has to starve when he is out of work the newcomer is believed to be provided for by the Government or subsidized by his own organization” – i.e. the Zionist Commission.

Jewish immigrants also competed with Arabs for clerical positions, especially since Hebrew had been made an official language in Palestine – instituted by none other than High Commissioner Herbert Samuel. The report noted that the Zionist Commission paid subsidies to Jewish policemen and government clerks to supplement their official salaries, giving them an economic advantage over the Arabs.

According to the report, the prevailing fear among the Arabs was, that through extensive immigration, Palestine would become a Jewish dominion. According to the report, such fears were confirmed by the provocative Zionist literature that circulated at the time and which was known to Palestinian Arabs. The report cites a book by H. Sidebotham titled *England and Palestine* (1918) in which the author wrote: “It is desired to encourage Jewish immigration by every means, and at the same time to discourage the immigration of Arabs...”

The report continues with a quote from a newspaper article that appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* in May 1921:

Hence the real key to the Palestine situation is to be found in giving to Jews as such, those rights and privileges in Palestine which shall enable Jews to make it as Jewish as England is English, or as Canada is Canadian.

This aim was confirmed by Jewish witnesses who testified before the Haycraft Commission such as Dr. Montague David Eder, acting Chairman of the Zionist Commission: “In his opinion,” said the report, “there can only be one National Home in Palestine, and that a Jewish one, and no equality in the partnership between Jews and Arabs, but a Jewish predominance as soon as the numbers of that race are sufficiently increased.” Moreover, “he was quite clear that the Jews should, and the Arabs should not, have the right to bear arms.”

Eder had a good reason for wanting to deny arms to the Arabs. If the High Commissioner gave in to Arab demands to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine, he intended to ask the British to give up the mandate and “leave us Jews to have it out ourselves with the Arabs.” He calculated they had “10,000 men capable of bearing arms in the country,” and wanted to go down fighting, if necessary.² This was echoed by Vladimir Jabotinsky (d. 1940), father of “revisionist Zionism,” who in a letter published in *The Times* (May 1921) urged, in light of the Jaffa clashes, that Jews alone should have the privilege of military service in Palestine, and the Arabs be excluded from the right to bear arms. The attitude of Dr. Eder and other Zionists like Jabotinsky, the report noted, “is not negligible, as it is one of the irritant causes of the present discontent.”

From Haycraft to Hamas

Upon completion, the Haycraft Commission Report was submitted to High Commissioner Samuel who then forwarded it – with his clarifications and corrections – to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill. In spite of his own Zionist sympathies, Herbert Samuel did understand Arab concerns about the growing number of Jewish immigrants and attempted to stop or stem the tide of new arrivals, at least temporarily. Indeed, as a result of the Haycraft Report, the British Administration in Palestine came

² Moshe Mossek, “Immigration Policy under Sir Hebert Samuel: British, Zionist and Arab Attitudes.” PhD Thesis, University of London, 1975, p. 48.

to understand that the sheer number of Jewish immigrants and the inability of the economy to absorb them without adversely affecting the Arab population was the most pressing issue. Yet, both Samuel (and Churchill) continued to maintain the British fiction that the Arabs would benefit from the Jewish economic development of Palestine.

Attempting to assuage Arab religious and political fears, a month after the Jaffa conflict, Samuel publicly “clarified” for Palestinian Arabs the intent of the Balfour Declaration, assuring them that the British Government had “never consented and never will consent ... to their country, their holy places and their lands being taken from them and given to strangers”, and “will never agree to a Jewish Government being set up to rule over the Muslim and Christian majority.”¹ Of course, that is precisely what happened when the British withdrew from Palestine in 1947 and in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967.

One hundred years later, after several wars – aided and abetted by western powers, failed accords, forgotten resolutions, expanded settlements, ongoing occupation, the creation of the PLO (1964), Hezbollah (1985) and Hamas (1987), two Palestinian intifadas, violent clashes continue to occur between Arabs and Israelis. While American broadcast media facilely and falsely blamed Hamas for the recent conflict of May 2021, it has been well established that the conflict began nearly four weeks before the first Hamas rocket was fired from Gaza (New York Times, May 16, 2021). We may point to the tensions around al-Aqsa Mosque at the beginning of Ramadan (April 13), of two Israeli police raids upon the mosque, and the ensuing protests, attacks and counterattacks by both Arabs and Israelis – all too reminiscent of May 1921. At the same time, Palestinian families in East Jerusalem were facing

eviction as Israelis celebrated “Jerusalem Day,” marking their 1967 victory and taking of the city.

Yet, in the end, there is only one cause for the most recent violence which killed more than 250 Palestinians and 12 Israelis, and has wounded more than 2000. The reason is the displacement of Muslim and Christian Palestinians - geographic, economic, political, social, cultural and religious – the displacement has been ongoing for the past 100 years and continues to this day. But the Palestinians are not the only losers in this ongoing conflict. Israel has not achieved the security it so desperately claims it wants and which the United States so vociferously defends at a cost of more than three billion dollars in military aid per annum. The region and indeed the global community suffer as a result



as the unresolved conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis has fueled equally the hateful rhetoric of Arab dictators, white nationalists, anti-Semites, Islamists and Islamophobes, and has contributed to the rise to every extremist ideologies and organization – both Arab and Israeli - including that of Hamas. A hundred years have passed since the Haycraft Commission issued its report; but the problems of displacement remain and the situation and the suffering have only worsened. Must another century pass before anything is done?

³ Mossek, 64.

Part II. Iraq: The Reign of Faisal I (1921-1933)

On June 23, 1921, Faisal, the son of Hussein, Emir of Mecca, arrived at the Iraqi port of Basra at the head of the Persian Gulf. Two months later, early in the morning of August 23, he was officially designated King Faysal I to rule the newly created Kingdom of Iraq. For most of the preceding five centuries, the area had been part of the Ottoman Empire, and then had fallen under the British Mandate according to the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1917) and the series of treaties that ended World War I. On the day of his coronation, Faisal did not wear the flowing 'abaya (robe) of a Hashemite Arab but a drab military uniform. His head bore no crown nor even a keffiyeh (Arab headdress) but a pith helmet. As no Iraqi national anthem yet existed, the military band played "God Save the King," another poignant reminder that he owed his title to the British military and maintained a tenuous hold on his throne only with its support. Just a year before, the Syrian Congress had acclaimed him King of Syria but he was deposed by the French in July 1920 after a reign of just four months. The story of how Iraq became a kingdom and Faysal its king one hundred years ago remains critical for understanding the contemporary configuration of the Middle East and its continuing conflicts.



King Faisal at the time of his coronation in August 1921.

From Mecca to Istanbul (1883-1908)

Faisal's was the third son of Sharif Hussein. The term sharif signified those who were direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and the family that ruled Mecca as a semi-autonomous city-state within the Ottoman Empire. From age ten until his twenty-fifth year (1893-1908), Faisal lived with his family in Istanbul, the cosmopolitan imperial capital, while his father served on an advisory council to the Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid (r. 1876-1909). At age twenty-one, he was married to his cousin Huzaima (a common practice among the sharifs of Mecca), and fathered a son and three daughters.

Faisal grew into adulthood during a period of great change in Ottoman politics. As the empire weakened and lost territory, 'Abd al-Hamid had adopted a more autocratic rule, suspending the constitution and dismissing the Parliament in 1878. Opposition to the

sultan was represented by the Young Turks, a loosely knit group of intellectuals, political dissidents, and progressives. In 1908, officers in the Third Army Corps initiated a revolt that spread quickly, forcing the sultan to restore constitutional rule. Religious conservatives in the Arab provinces in particular were not supportive of the reforms as they feared the growth of secularism and European influence. At the time of the Young Turk Revolution, Sharif Hussein's cousin 'Ali was the emir of Mecca. When he openly opposed the restoration of constitutional rule in the empire, he was relieved of his rule by the Ottoman military. On 24 November 1908, Sharif Hussein was summoned to the palace where the Sultan named him the new emir of Mecca.

From Mecca to Damascus

In spite of the need to secure his own position in Mecca, Hussein remained concerned about how the rapid changes in the Ottoman court would affect the Hijaz (western Arabia) his family's rule in Mecca. Thus, soon after the family returned to Arabia, Hussein secured seats in the Ottoman Parliament for two of his sons - Faisal and his older brother 'Abdullah - as the deputies for Jeddah and Mecca respectively, compelling them to return to Istanbul periodically over the next couple of years until the outbreak of war in 1914. When Sultan Mehmed V called for a jihad against the Allied powers, Hussein, as emir of Mecca, was especially under pressure to echo the call among the Arab Muslims.

Not all were convinced to lend their support, however. Arab Nationalists in Syria saw the war as an opportunity to break free of Ottoman rule and establish an independent Arab state. Concerned about the fate of the Meccan emirate and his sons, Hussein renewed contacts with the British in Egypt that 'Abdullah had started several years previously. In a letter of October 1915, Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner in Egypt, wrote to Hussein about the future of Syria: "Great Britain is prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca."

When Jamal Pasha – one of the three pashas in control of the Empire – unleashed a bloody crackdown on nationalists, holding public executions in Damascus and Beirut (1915-16), Faisal became convinced that a rebellion against the sultan was a just cause. The Arab revolt was born.

The British alliance with the sharifs of Mecca and the Arab Revolt against the Turks (1916-18) is famously dramatized in the acclaimed 1962-movie *Lawrence of Arabia* based on T.E. Lawrence's book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926). Reflecting the author's bias, the film centers around the British captain and his aid to the Arabs against the Turks. In reality, however, it was Faisal who was, as commander of the Arab Northern Army, the most significant individual in the Arab Revolt, at one time leading a combined force of regular troops and Arab tribesmen numbering more than 10,000. More than his brothers 'Ali and 'Abdullah, Faisal became the figure most associated with aspirations for Arab independence.

Although McMahon had seemingly promised Hussein that Syria would be the heart of a free Arab

state, in 1917 a secret agreement came to light which showed that other plans had already been made for Syria's future. Known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, it revealed that Britain and France had mapped out a vision for the Middle East after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire whereby France would take direct control of portions of southeastern Anatolia and the Syrian coast (Lebanon) and oversee the governance of the interior. Britain would directly govern southern Iraq (where the oil fields were concentrated) and oversee the remainder of the country. None of details were revealed to Emir Hussein, however, even during the several meetings he had with the authors of the agreement in May 1917.

Soon after word about Sykes-Picot had been released, in November 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration declaring its intent to support "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" (see Part I of this article). Through his correspondence with McMahon, Hussein had been led to believe that Palestine would be part of the greater Arab state. While both he and Faisal were sympathetic to the plight of European Jews and welcomed them to Palestine, they believed the immigrants would become part of an Arab state – and not create a separate country. Yet, the British assured Hussein that "Jewish settlement in Palestine would only be allowed in so far as would be consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab population."¹ To quell the clamor among the Arabs caused by the Balfour Declaration, the British Foreign Office issued the "Declaration of the Seven," a copy of which was sent to Hussein, stating Britain's desire for the freedom and independence of the Arabs, and affirming the principle of the consent of the governed.

In spite of the doubts about Britain's sincerity in regard to Arab independence, Faisal fought on, pursuing the Turkish troops as they retreated northward from Arabia into Palestine and then Syria. In September 1918, British General Allenby wrote to Faisal: "Thanks to our combined efforts, the Turkish army is defeated and is everywhere in full retreat." At the end of the month, the Hashemite flag of the Arab Revolt was raised in Damascus as the Ottoman forces fled north. On the next day, October 1, the Arab Army entered the city along with an Australian brigade. Faisal arrived two days and was escorted into the city by thousands of supporters.

Soon after his arrival in the city, however, at a meeting with Allenby and other officers and officials, Lawrence had the unpleasant task of telling Faisal that

¹ Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq*, 104.



Faisal (center) at the Paris Peace Conference (1919) with T.E. Lawrence (2nd from right) and other officials.

Syria would become part of a French mandate; that an Arab administration of Syria was to have French guidance and financial backing; and that Lebanon would be directly administered by the French. Lawrence who had held out hope for a different outcome – i.e. Arab independence – requested permission to return to England immediately; but Lawrence's association with Faisal was far from over, nor was Faisal's fight for Arab independence.

From England, Lawrence urged Faisal to attend the Peace Conference that would meet in January 1919 to discuss the future of the Arab lands formerly under Ottoman control. The French attempted to bar Faisal from the Conference since he did not yet have any official standing in Syria; but with support from the British he was admitted as a delegate from the Hijaz, and addressed the assembly invoking President Wilson's principle of self-determination. US Secretary of State Robert Lansing observed:

Of the many prominent representatives of race, nationalities and creed who gathered in Paris...there was none more striking in appearance than his prince from the Sacred City [Mecca]...No one could look at Amir Faisal without the instinctive feeling that

here was a man whom nature had chosen to be a leader of men, a man worthy to be a leader of men...Everything about the Amir commanded respect. In him one seemed to see nobility of character and nobility of purpose...He was the personification of a cause, the living aspiration to Arab unity and independence.²

Although the French and the British had already agreed to a division of Arab lands as roughly laid out in Sykes-Picot, the presence of Wilson kept the issue of self-determination for the Arabs alive for the moment. The issue of Syria and Arab independence was not settled at the Conference, however, and Faisal continued to gain popular support across sectarian lines and build a nation even as the French planned to impose their mandate. The matter finally came to a head in March 1920 when the Syrian Congress declared Syria to be a fully independent state and made Faisal its constitutional king.

The Syrian Congress drafted a constitution that affirmed freedom of belief, association, and speech; protected citizens from torture and arbitrary arrest; protected private property; guaranteed public education for children – and made all Syrians, without distinction,

² Allawi, 204-5.



Faisal towards the end of his life.

equal before the law.³ A Middle Eastern democracy was about to be born, but was soon killed by European imperialism. Although the British were reluctant to hand Syria over to the French, they were unwilling or unable to prevent it. On July 24, 1920, at Maysaloun, twenty miles west of Damascus, French forces routed Faisal's army. Two days later, Faisal was ordered by the French to leave Damascus – a king without a country. Past promises were cast aside as were democratic principles. Arabs had shaken off the Ottoman Empire only to surrender to the French and British.

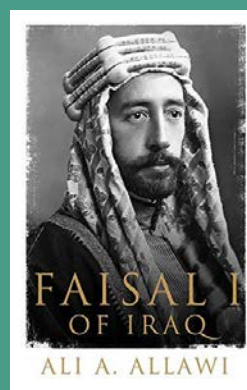
From Damascus to Baghdad

Intending to press the case for Arab independence with the British, Faisal returned to England – his third trip since the end of the war. By this time, the British had turned their attention from Syria to Iraq which had been accorded to them after the war. Like the Syrian Congress, the Iraqi Congress had also met in March 1920 calling for an independent state with Faisal's brother 'Abdullah as their constitutional king. At the same time the French were dealing with a Syrian resistance, the British faced a widespread tribal uprising in Iraq, incurring huge losses on both sides with thousands killed or wounded. Faced with an untenable situation, London decided to move ahead with forming an Arab state as promised, albeit one that would be overseen by the British, i.e. a mandate such as they had already been granted in Palestine. It would not be 'Abdullah, however, who would rule over Iraq, but Faisal. He was better known to the British, and favored by Lawrence, General Allenby and other senior officials, including Winston Churchill, the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies. 'Abdullah was instead installed as emir of the Trans-Jordan, a principality carved out of the British Mandate of Palestine.

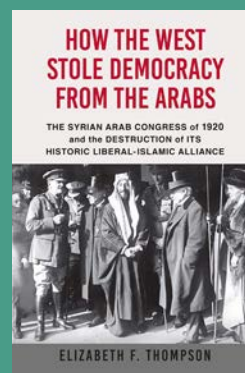
Arab unity was a dream never realized, however. It was perhaps a flawed concept from the beginning given the deep tribal divisions, religious and ethnic differences, and political ambitions among the peoples of the region. Moreover, any attempt at unity was thwarted by the pre- and post-war agreements among the Allies devised to satisfy British and French imperial objectives. The Kingdom of Iraq served Britain's interest in the oil fields of the south, and helped to secure approaches to British India. Faisal did his best to play the cards he had been dealt. Throughout his reign he endeavored to

make Iraq independent and to build unity among the people of his realm, Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'as, Muslims and non-Muslims, urban elites and Arab tribes. But this was a kingdom built on shaky foundations, dependent as it was on British political, financial and military support – and on the person of Faisal ibn Hussein. The kingdom did not survive long after his death in 1933 at age fifty. In 1958, during the reign of his grandson and namesake Faisal II, a military coup overthrew the monarchy, assassinated the royal family, and established the Republic of Iraq.

Recommended Reading



Ali A. Allawi. *Faisal I of Iraq*. New Haven: Yale, 2014.



Elizabeth F. Thompson. *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs: The Syrian Arab Congress of 1920 and the Destruction of Its Historic Liberal-Islamic Alliance*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020.

³ Elizabeth F. Thompson, *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs: The Syrian Arab Congress of 1920 and the Destruction of Its Historic Liberal-Islamic Alliance* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020), 209.

Part III. Iran: Reza Khan and the Coup of 1921

The year 1921 was significant not only for the events happening in Palestine, Iraq, and in other parts of the Arab World. Important events were also occurring further east in Iraq where the British were also heavily invested, events that would draw the United States into the region by mid-century.

Background

From the late eighteenth century, Iran had been ruled by the Qajar shahs. With the expansion of European empires in the nineteenth century, the Qajars wished to modernize their realm, especially the military like their Ottoman rivals. Development requires capital, however, and so like rulers in the Middle East, the shahs became financially dependent upon the British and then the Russians. Political influence and military occupation followed such that by 1907, Qajar Iran was essentially divided into two spheres of influence: the Russian-controlled north and the British-controlled south with a “neutral zone” between them.

The British were, of course, keen in protecting sea and land access to India; but in 1908, their stake in Iran became even more important: the discovery of oil in Khuzestan, in the southwestern part of the country – the first oil discovered anywhere in the Middle East. Military units from India were redeployed to protect British oil fields. Since the British navy was now powering its fleet with oil, it became critical for control of the seas and defense of the empire. The Russians, for their part, maintained an important military (and political) influence in most of the major cities including Tehran, the Qajar capital, in the form of the Cossack Brigade. Inspired by the Russian model, Naser al-Din Shah established the regiment in 1879 as an elite and effective force commanded by Russian officers. When constitutional reformers threatened Mohammad Ali Shah’s authority in 1908, it was the Cossack Brigade that bombarded the Parliament (Majles) and terrorized the populace into submission.



World War I

When the first World War broke out, the fifteen-year-old Ahmad Shah declared Iran’s neutrality; nevertheless, Russians and Ottoman fought for control of the country at a devastating cost to the populace. In his history of Iran, Abbas Amanat writes: “houses were looted, women raped, children abducted, fields burned, and their provisions confiscated.”¹ Given that Britain and Russia had opposed democratic reform in Iran and were occupying the country, Iranian nationalists were more sympathetic to the German-Turkish axis than to the Allies. In the south, British-Indian forces battled Iranian tribesmen who were assisted by German agents. John Ghazvinian has described Iran as “the great undeclared battlefield of the Great War.” The miseries of war were compounded by poverty, famine and epidemics that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives – and the government of Ahmad Shah was powerless to address the crises.

¹ Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven: Yale, 2017), 395.



The *faravahar* (above), the ancient symbol of Zoroastrianism and the Persian Empire, was used commonly during Reza Sha's reign in lieu of Islamic calligraphy. It was carved over the entrance to the National Bank of Iran in Tehran (below, ca. 1930).



When the Bolsheviks withdrew Russian forces from Iran in 1917, British stepped in to fill the void, occupying much of the country by the end of the war and seizing control of Iran's tattered finances. British influence extended even to the leadership of Cossack Brigade (rebranded the Cossack Division) which, relieved of Russian control, now came under the command of Reza Khan (1877-1944) who had risen through the ranks.

The Coup of 1921 & Aftermath

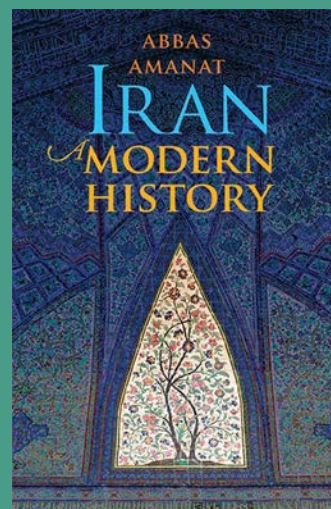
As the British forces prepared to leave Iran to attend to their mandates in Palestine and Iraq, Reza Khan made his move – with tacit approval of the British, if not outright collaboration. On February 21, 1921, Reza Khan led 2500 Cossack cavalry into Tehran, and seized control of the government. Two days later he assumed control of all the country's armed forces. Over the next couple of months, hundreds of officials and politicians were arrested. Two years later, Reza Khan, then as prime minister, encouraged Ahmad Shah to leave the country on an extended holiday. Then, in December 1925, the Majles abolished the Qajar Dynasty, and named Reza Khan as the new Shah, the first of the Pahlavi Dynasty.

Reza Shah was determined, writes John Ghazvinian, "to drag Persia, kicking and screaming, into the twentieth century."² In addition to developing industry and infrastructure, this meant transforming Persia (the term used by Europeans) from an antique Islamic realm into a modern secular Iran built upon an ancient past. Public buildings now displayed the *faravahar*, the winged symbol of Zoroastrianism, the religion of pre-Islamic Iran. The lunar-based Islamic calendar was replaced with the Zoroastrian solar calendar. As in Atatürk's new secular Turkish republic, Iranian men were forced to abandon traditional garb and adopt western-style clothing. Women were to be required to remove their veils. Sharia (Islamic law) was applied only in matters of marriage and divorce. Religious instruction was eliminated from school curricula, and with the exception of a few seminaries, schools were placed under state control. Clerics who voiced objection to such measures were arrested, imprisoned or executed as were those who followed them. In his efforts to make Iran a modern state, Reza Shah thus instigated a conflict with the clerical class that would ultimately lead to the downfall of the Pahlavi Dynasty little more than fifty years after ascending the throne as shah.

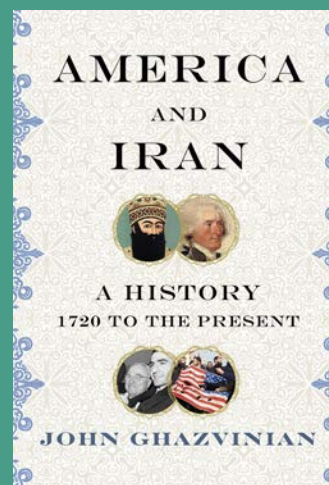
Although he kept an iron grip on Iran's internal

affairs, Reza Shah was unable to keep the external forces at bay particularly as war clouds were gathering again. In 1941, after ruling Iran for twenty years first as military commander and then as its king, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate by the British and the Soviets who found his association with the Germans too dangerous to the Allied cause. His pliant son, Mohammad Reza succeeded him as Shah, and became the United States first and foremost ally in the region until he was overthrown by the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Recommended Reading



Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*. New Haven Yale, 2017.



John Ghazvinian, *America and Iran: A History 1720 to the Present*. NY: Knopf, 2021.

² John Ghazvinian, *America and Iran: A History 1720 to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 2021), 107.

Pope Francis in Iraq

By Michael D. Calabria, OFM, Ph.D

This past March, Pope Francis travelled to Iraq where he met with both political and religious leaders, Christians from eastern and western Churches and Muslims, both Sunni and Shi'i. On the eve of his departure for Baghdad, he explained:

For a long time, I have wanted to meet those people who have suffered so much; to meet that martyred Church in the land of Abraham. Together with the other religious leaders, we shall also take another step forward in fraternity among believers.

Iraq has been devastated by decades of war – in a protracted war with Iran (1980-88), with the US in the Gulf War (January 1991), during the US invasion and occupation (2003-2011), and its struggle against ISIS (2013-present). Among those who have suffered are Iraq's Catholics, numbering some 300,000. Pope Francis said that he had come particularly "as a pilgrim to encourage them in their witness of faith, hope and love in the midst of Iraqi society." In the town of Qaraqosh, he returned a 14th-century liturgical book to a Syriac church that had been looted and burned by ISIS. The Aramaic book of prayers for the Easter season had been taken to Rome for safekeeping and painstakingly restored there by experts.

Especially noteworthy was his meeting with Iraq's top Shi'ite cleric and renowned scholar, Grand Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani, known for his efforts to end sectarian violence in the country. This was the first time a pope has met with such a senior Shi'a cleric, and a rare occasion for al-Sistani who avoids public appearances and does not speak or preach publicly. Shi'ite Muslims comprise more than sixty percent of Iraq's population, and like Christians, they particularly have been the targets of unspeakable violence perpetrated by ISIS. Pope Francis met al-Sistani at his home in Najaf, Iraq's main Shi'ite religious center that draws Shi'i pilgrims from around the world. After their meeting in Najaf, al-Sistani released a statement in which he affirmed that Christian citizens should be able to live like all Iraqis in peace and security, and with full constitutional rights.



From Najaf, Pope Francis travelled to the city of Ur, renowned for its ancient Sumerian *ziggurat*, and as the birthplace of the prophet and patriarch Abraham (Ibrahim), an important figure among the monotheistic traditions. In an interreligious service, the Pope was joined by Muslim, Christian, Yazidi and Mandaean representatives from the region. (Jewish leaders were also invited but were not present for the occasion.) The service included hymns, and readings from the Bible and the Quran, as well as testimonies by members of the different faith communities. In a prayer of unity, Pope Francis invoked Abraham as an example of faith and courage for all Iraqis as together they rebuild their country.

PRAYER OF THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

Almighty God, our Creator, you love our human family and every work of your hands:

As children of Abraham, Jews, Christians and Muslims, together with other believers and all persons of good will, we thank you for having given us Abraham, a distinguished son of this noble and beloved country, to be our common father in faith.

We thank you for his example as a man of faith, who obeyed you completely, left behind his family, his tribe and his native land, and set out for a land that he knew not.



your command. We know that this was an extreme test, yet one from which he emerged victorious, since he trusted unreservedly in you, who are merciful and always offer the possibility of beginning anew.

We thank you because, in blessing our father Abraham, you made him a blessing for all peoples.

We ask you, the God of our father Abraham and our God, to grant us a strong faith, a faith that abounds in good works, a faith that opens our hearts to you and to all our brothers and sisters; and a boundless hope capable of discerning in every situation your fidelity to your promises.

Make each of us a witness of your loving care for all, particularly refugees and the displaced, widows and orphans, the poor and the infirm.

Open our hearts to mutual forgiveness and in this way make us instruments of reconciliation, builders of a more just and fraternal society.

We thank you too, for the example of courage, resilience, strength of spirit, generosity and hospitality set for us by our common father in faith.

We thank you in a special way for his heroic faith, shown by his readiness even to sacrifice his son in obedience to

Welcome into your abode of peace and light all those who have died, particularly the victims of violence and war.

Assist the authorities in the effort to seek and find the victims of kidnapping and in a special way to protect women and children.





The ziggurat of Ur (c. 2100 BCE) where Pope Francis held an interreligious service.

Help us to care for the earth, our common home, which in your goodness and generosity you have given to all of us.

Guide our hands in the work of rebuilding this country, and grant us the strength needed to help those forced to leave behind their homes and lands, enabling them to return in security and dignity, and to embark upon a new, serene and prosperous life. Amen.

Plain of Ur
Saturday, 6 March 2021

For other addresses, comments and prayers of the Pope during his visit to Iraq, see:

<http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2021/outside/documents/papa-francesco-iraq-2021.html>



*Art Exhibits:
Persian Treasures in Houston and London*



Fig. 1

*Between Sea and Sky:
Blue and White Ceramics from Persia and Beyond.
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. November 2020-May 2021.*

Not many people were travelling in the first part of this year, but Texas residents and other stalwart travelers were treated to a fine exhibit in Houston which highlighted historical, cultural and commercial exchanges between Persia and China as seen in blue and white ceramics from the 9th- to the 17th century. Many of the pieces in the exhibit come from the Hossein Afshar collection, one of the finest collections of Persian art, on long-term loan to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a dish made in Iran in the 15th which beautifully blends Chinese and Persian themes, aesthetics and techniques (fig. 1).

Trade between Islamic lands and China occurred as early as the 9th century when the Abbasid Caliphate reached eastwards into Central Asia while the

Tang Dynasty expanded its domain westwards. Merchants also plied the waters between the Persian Gulf and the South China Sea, facilitating artistic and technical exchanges that made blue and white ceramics possible. By the ninth century, ceramicists in the Middle East were attempting to imitate the form and quality of white Chinese ceramics. At the same time, they began to use cobalt blue, mined primarily in Persian and Arabia, for decorative elements and inscriptions on the vessels. The blue pigment was then imported by the Chinese who then produced blue and white ceramics for export to Middle Eastern markets.

It was not until the second half of the 11th century that potters in the Abbasid Caliphate were able to produce a product that more closely resembled the hard, white translucent Chinese imports. This was accomplished by using stone paste (or fritware) made by



Fig. 2

adding crushed quartz and glass to white clay. Although it lacked the malleability of the Chinese material, the stone paste allowed for molding and casting into more diverse designs and different glazing techniques and materials, including turquoise (fig. 2). Stone paste was

molded into tiles that bore Chinese dragons and phoenixes along with texts in Persian and Arabic (fig. 3). In the 12th-13th centuries. Star tiles molded from stone paste (with their adjoining cross tiles), many of which were produced in Kashan, Iran, were decorated with floral designs, human and animal subjects, are now found in museum collections throughout the world (fig. 4-5). In the Timurid Period (ca. 1307-1507), the popularity of Chinese wares in Iran sparked production of blue and white ceramics in Samarqand, Nishapur, Mashhad and Tabriz where the combination of Chinese and Iranian decorative motifs resulted in inventive new designs.

It was in the 15th century, during China's Ming Dynasty, that the city of Jingdezhen produced the finest blue and white Chinese porcelains that are still renowned today. These porcelains were greatly prized in Safavid Iran and some 1000 vessels were endowed to the shrine of Shaykh Sadi al-Din (d. 1334 CE) in Ardabil, Iran. One such dish (fig. 6) in the exhibit is particularly noteworthy, not only for its beautiful design, but for its historical significance: it is inscribed with the name of Shah Jahan, the Mughal Emperor (r. 1628-1658). It is likely that the dish was a diplomatic gift from the Safavid court to Shah Jahan who likewise prized and collected Chinese porcelains.

Although the COVID pandemic prevented many from seeing this exhibit, many museum collections feature comparable Persian and Chinese blue and white ceramics. As curator Aimée Froom has noted, these pieces demonstrate that “the routes of artistic, technical and economic exchange with China, as well as other points east and west in the interconnected globe at the dawn of the early modern era, were not bilateral but multi-directional, enriched by many layers of intersection and influence” – an important point for the current age when countries and cultures have turned away from and against one another.



Fig. 3

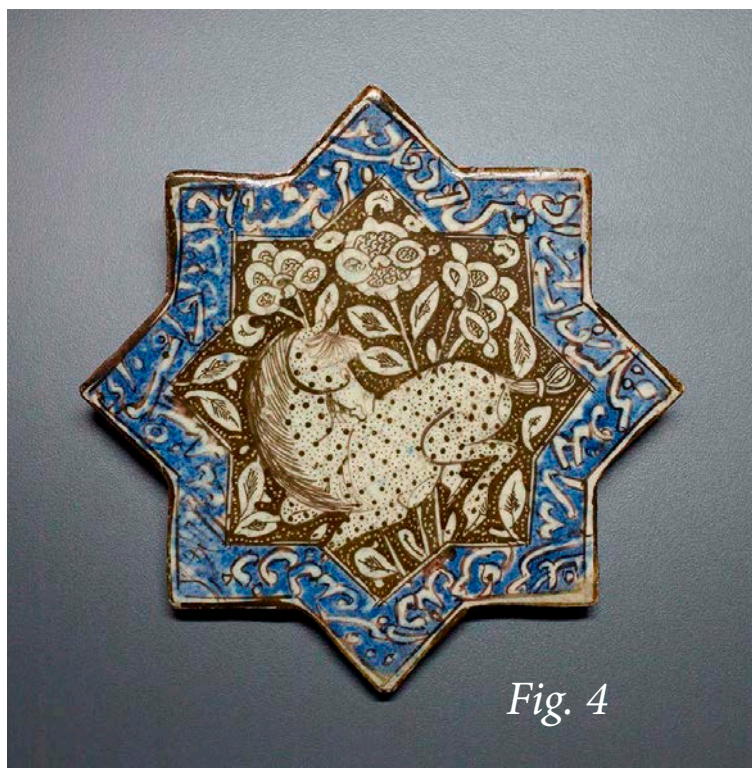


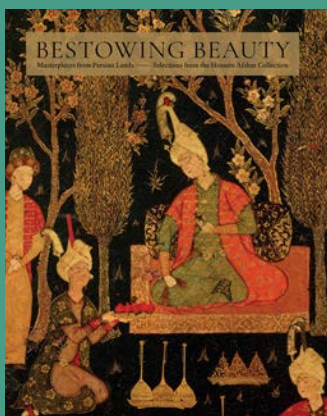
Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Suggested Reading:

Aimée Froom, "Between Sea and Sky: Blue and White Ceramics from Persia and Beyond at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston." *Arts of Asia*, September-October, 2020.



-----, ed.
Bestowing Beauty: Masterpieces from Persian Lands – Selections from the Hossein Afshar Collection. Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2019.



Fig. 6

Epic Iran: 5000 Years of Culture.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. May 29-September 12, 2021.

The rancor of geopolitics has sadly obscured the significance of Iran's cultural heritage for decades now. *Epic Iran* provides an important corrective to the current political and sectarian myopia, and is, in the words of V&A Director Tristram Hunt: "an emphatic statement of the richness and importance of Iran's material heritage." The exhibit is an expansive view of five thousand years of Iranian cultures and civilizations from the dawn of history (ca. 3200 BCE) to the current day, including the artistic legacy of ancient Elamites, Persians and Sasanians, Zoroastrians, and Christians, as well as medieval, modern and post-modern Muslims. Virtually every artistic genre and material is represented – sculpture, ceramics, metalwork, coins, textiles, carpets, books, painting, calligraphy, and photography. The 250 objects on display are drawn from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, significantly supplemented by the Sarikhani Collection of Iranian Art, as well as objects from other UK collections, the Louvre, New York's Met-



Fig. 2

the exhibit turns its attention to the early historical period, demonstrating that even before the rise of the Persian Empire, Iran's civilization rivaled those of Egypt and Mesopotamia. At the same time Egyptian hieroglyphs and Sumerian cuneiform appear around 3200 BCE, proto-Elamite inscriptions are found in southwestern Iran (fig.1). The Achaemenid Period (550-330 BCE) is represented well by stone sculptures from Persepolis, gold and silver rhytons, as well as the Cyrus Cylinder (539-538 BCE) which bears an important historical inscription (figs. 2-4).

Although the Persian Empire would give way to that of Alexander the Great, ancient Iran continued beyond the Hellenistic Period, ruled by the Parthians, Rome's most formidable foe, and the Sasanians who, vied with the Byzantine Empire for control of the Levant, and captured Jerusalem in 614. The Zoroastrian faith of the Sasanian Period provides a good transition to the Islamic Period (beg. 637 CE). One of the exhibit's masterpieces of Islamic Iran is the Qur'an produced for the Mongol emperor Öljeytü (r. 1304-16). Comprising thirty volumes, the holy text was rendered in elegant muhaqqaq calligraphy, each letter written in gold (fig. 5). Iran's contribution to Islamic civilization and culture are inestimable. While Arabic remained the primary language of worship and religious scholarship, Persian

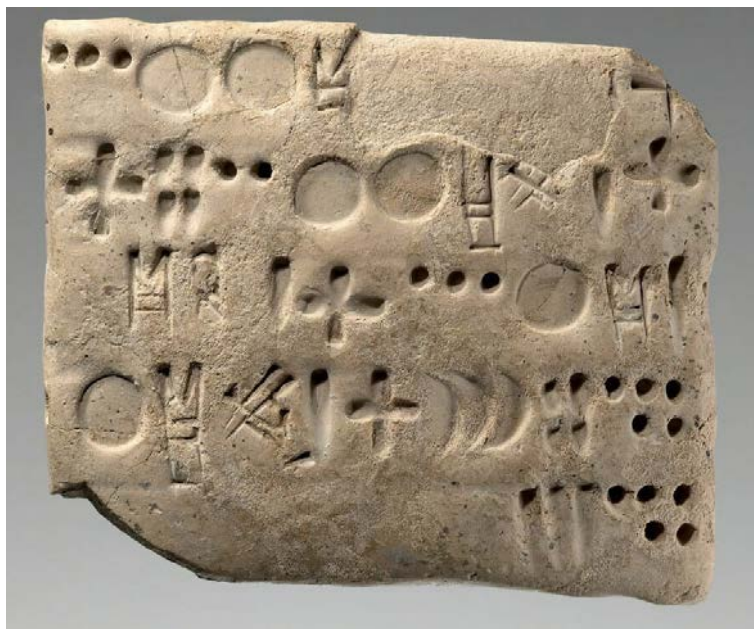


Fig. 1

ropolitan Museum, Brussel's Musées Royaux, St. Petersburg's Hermitage and other collections. Objects from Iran's National Museum were also to be on display, but COVID restrictions rendered the loans impossible.

After an introduction to the geography of Iran,



Fig. 3 (left)

emerged as the language of poetry and literature, as well as the lingua franca of the Islamic world from the Balkans to the Bay of Bengal from the 13th to the mid-19th centuries. Persian poetry of Hafiz, Rumi, and Nizami among others were incorporated into the visual arts due to the use of poetry on ceramics, metalwork and carpets, and illustrated with or accompanied by paintings collected into albums (figs. 6-7).

Iran cultural and commercial connections to both Europe and Asia are seen in the liturgical garments

made of imported Iranian silk (fig. 8), and in the Iranian blue and white ceramics bearing Chinese influence (fig. 9). The richness of Iranian history and culture is not, however, a thing of the past. It continues to change, develop and reflect on the past as attested by the exhibit's final section. Here we see traditional calligraphy and spiritual concepts such as *eshgh* (Ar., *ishq*) – “mystical love” - rendered in crystal and glitter (fig. 10). Farideh Lashai's 2009 painting of Mohammad Mossadegh (fig. 11) reminds us of the popular prime minister who, in 1953, was overthrown in a coup orchestrated by Britain and the CIA, striking a serious blow at democratic reform in Iran, and at American-Iranian relations. It is perhaps the exhibit's latest pieces that conveys Iran's innate ability to survive and thrive amid the rise and fall of empires, religious change and political upheaval. It is a 2013- calligraphic work rendered in bronze by Hossein Valamanesh (b. 1949) conveying in Farsi: “This will also pass” (fig. 12) – a potent reminder that neither pandemics nor politics need separate us forever.

Fig. 4 (below)





Figures 5 (above) and 6 (right)

Even if travel restrictions prevented you from seeing Epic Iran at the V&A, there is a beautiful accompanying volume of the same name (V&A Publishing, 2021) with outstanding essays by John Curtis, Academic Director of the Iran Heritage Foundation, and Tim Stanley, Senior Curator in the Asian Department of the V&A.

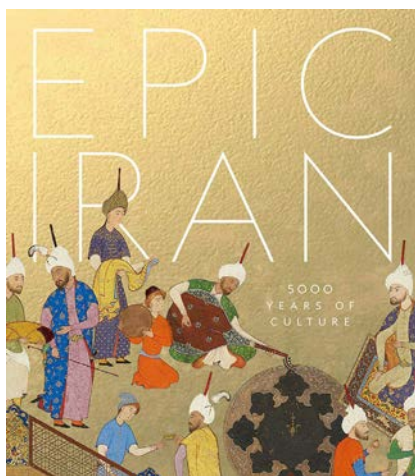




Fig. 7 (left), 8 (above), and 9 (below)





Figures 10 (left), 11 (below), and 12 (right)





Into Africa: A Local Doctor Answers a Medical Call in Mauritania

Tahir A. Chauhdry, DO; FACOG

Being a physician, our role in society is to help humanity. Living in the greatest country in the world, one does become complacent. Having ample resources, money, safety, home life, peace, work, friends, family, etc., we tend to take these things for granted. I have made it a point to shake up my mind and comfort by volunteering on Medical Mission Trips.

By the Grace of God, I have traveled to Northern Pakistan, Haiti, Syrian Refugee Camps in Greece and Jordan under various Medical Organizations. Last spring, the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) asked me to go to Mauritania on a Fact Finding Mission. Located in west Africa, Mauritania is quite peaceful. The people have both North African and sub Saharan blood lines. It is 99.9% Muslim. The main resources are in mining, but the capital, Nouakchott, is a fishing city.



I had the privilege of working in the main “city” hospital in Nouakchott. The hospital was once the palace of the former president, and later converted into the Women’s and Children Hospital. The hospital runs quite well, although their resources are limited. Pregnant women were cared for by midwives, with little training. Nonetheless, I assisted and made my recommendations. Sterile conditions, compassion, privacy, were less than adequate. Their philosophy, “it’s in Allah’s Hands.”

After spending time in the Obstetrical Ward, I

mostly attended surgeries. The skill set of the GYN doctors were surprising good. They made things work. Recycling medical equipment was standard procedure. They sterilized equipment to be reused such as bovie (cautery), suction devices, tubing, plastic basins, towels,



sheets, etc. Here, in the US, we would typically use things once and discard it. The sterilization process in Mauritania is not monitored but I was told that their infection rates are low. This was hard to imagine when it is hot, with poor AC, and flies everywhere. Nonetheless, observing their processes were eye opening. I demonstrated my techniques and they were quite appreciative.

I did spend time at another hospital. This was in the slums of Nouakchott. This hospital was run only by midwives. There were no doctors! They had a clinic, a L&D system without an Operating Room. This facility delivered about 5000 babies per year. I was astounded by that. If there were an obstetrical emergency, they would place the patient in the back of a SUV, the makeshift ambulance and go to another facility in hopes of a decent outcome. The neonatal and maternal morbidity/mortality is quite high. Once again, “it’s in Allah Hands.”

I spent a week there. I made a few friends. It makes me realize how lucky I am. Working in a modern day hospital such as Olean General, is a blessing. Having the modern comforts of home brings me joy. However, I need to realize how fortunate we are, time and time again.

Recent CAIS Events

On April 29, 2021, Fr. Michael Calabria presented: *The Art of Christian-Muslim Relations: Shared Objects, Structures, Symbols and Stories* via Zoom for the Centro Pro Unione in Rome, Italy. Fr. Michael discussed how relations between Christians and Muslims are reflected in and by works of art: textiles, crystal, metal, parchment, paper and pigment. This artwork comprised objects, structures, symbols and stories that Christians and Muslims have shared over the centuries – knowingly or unknowingly.

In his conclusion, he noted that such artwork demonstrates that:

Christians and Muslims have been interacting with another since the 7th century – deeply, profoundly, spiritually, intellectually, creatively, artistically,

poetically, scientifically, commercially, politically and yes, at times, violently, as well. The problem is that, for a long time, we have continued to emphasize, publicize and dramatize the violence to the virtual exclusion of the deeply spiritual, intellectual, and artistic relations we have had with one another, those connections that have not merely “added” to our respective cultures and traditions, but have made our societies, our cultures, our communities into what they are today. Without “the other,” however defined, we would not be us.

The presentation can be viewed in its entirety on the Centro Pro Unione website at:

<https://www.prounione.it/webtv/live/29-apr-2021>

The Art of Christian-Muslim Relations

Shared Objects, Structures, Symbols and Stories



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Center for Arab & Islamic Studies
St. Bonaventure University
www.sbu.edu/CAIS



Alumni Updates

Emily Palmer, Class of '20

Since graduating from St. Bonaventure in 2020, I have had the extraordinary opportunity to continue my education—which began in the Center for Arabic and Islamic Studies (CAIS)—at the University of Exeter in England's Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS). I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Arab and Islamic studies. The courses I have taken here at Exeter feel much like a natural continuation of those I had at St. Bonaventure: International Relations in the Middle East, Theorizing the Middle East, New Approaches to Islamic Thought (with a focus on decoloniality in Islam), Islam in Practice, and an independent reading course focusing on Muslim-Catholic relations. All of these courses (as well as the ones from St. Bonaventure) have provided a great foundation for my current phase of writing my thesis, which is a comparison of Sufi Muslim and Franciscan Catholic spiritual journeys to God “within the self.” This topic came to me as a direct result of my studies of St. Bonaventure and his Journey of the Mind into God, as

well as my studies of Sufism in both the CAIS and IAIS, and I am excited that I can merge my two educational experiences together for such a project.

I am also extremely lucky to have moved from one institution with wonderful faculty to another with a similar welcoming and encouraging atmosphere. Nearly every Wednesday, the IAIS holds either an Arabic text-based discussion or varied themed lecture and discussion. These meetings are a way for students and faculty from the whole department to come together and share some sweets and ideas, which reminds me of the Wednesday tea held in St. Bonaventure's CAIS. There have also been plenty of opportunities to attend special evening or day-long seminars with major figures spanning topics of theology, gender, history, archaeology, Palestine, and more. The courses from CAIS provided a significant foundation in each of these topics, and it was exciting to attend these Exeter seminars and realize how much background knowledge I had from my previous studies. I am excited to finish my degree and discover what the next step holds!



العربية

Study Arabic at St. Bonaventure! Fall 2021

ARBC 101 Elementary Arabic	MWF 9:30-10:20
ARBC 201 Intermediate Arabic	MWF 10:30-11:20
ARBC 301 Adv. Intermediate Arabic	MWF 11:30-12:20

Michelle Semancik, Class of '06

Before CAIS fully existed at St. Bonaventure, I was a student in the first Arabic language classes taught on campus. After graduating, I used the foundation built at Bonaventure to earn a MA in History with a focus on the Ottoman Empire and to study Turkish language as well.

Now that I am a high school Social Studies teacher at DePaul Cristo Rey High School in Cincinnati, my background allows me to help students contextualize events and policy centered around the modern Middle East. More importantly, however, it helps me to forge connections with my students. Having their teacher meaningfully recognize important holidays and having her be able to greet them in a language that they don't often hear in their academic lives helps my Muslim students feel more at home in their school community and positively impacts their learning.

Deciding to take a chance on those first St. Bonaventure Arabic classes was one of the best decisions I made as a student. What I learned in them has enriched my personal, educational and professional life in ways I absolutely could not have foreseen at the time.

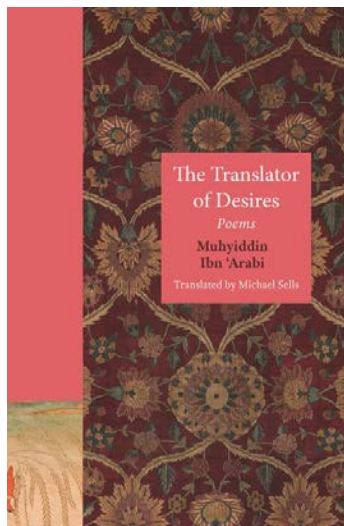


Amina Golden, Class of '19

With help from Fr. Michael, I traveled to Egypt after graduation to teach English in Minya, Egypt. This year, I was hired to teach Arabic at Global Concept Charter High School in Buffalo, NY. The Center for Arab & Islamic Studies at St. Bonaventure played an enormous role in preparing me for the position. I also had the opportunity to teach Arabic in SBU's summer session. Aside from my background in the Arabic language, working closely with Fr. Michael as a CAIS intern allowed me to develop the skills and knowledge that I could take with me into any field. I am very grateful for the connections I have made through the CAIS, the knowledge that I can now share, and the lifelong lessons that I will treasure throughout all my future endeavors.



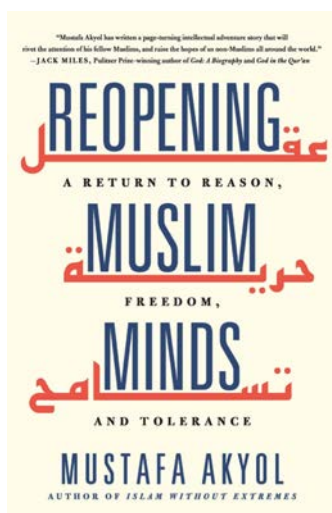
From the Bookshelf



Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi. *The Translator of Desires*. Translated by Michael Sells. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021.

A new translation of *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, the classic collection of mystic love poems, by Ibn 'Arabi, the great Sufi shaykh of the 13th century. A much-needed replacement for Reynold Nicholson's translation of 1911. In-

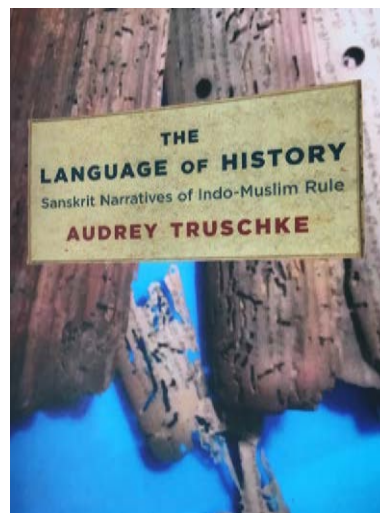
cludes commentary and parallel Arabic text of the poems.



Mustafa Akyol. *Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom and Tolerance*. New York: St. Martin's Essential, 2021.

A penetrating and provocative (as well as problematic) critique of contemporary Islam by the Turkish author of *Islam Without Extremes* (2011). Using the positions of theologians and philosophers from the

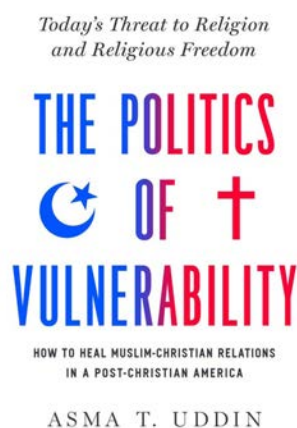
Islamic past and present, Akyol challenges widely held beliefs and positions. Certain to provoke a lot of controversy!



Audrey Truschke. *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Indo-Muslim Rule*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.

In a cogent analysis of Sanskrit histories of Muslim rule in South Asia, Truschke corrects the distorted narrative currently promulgated by Hindu nationalists (*Hindutva*), demonstrating that identities

in the early modern period did not fall along exclusively religious lines, and that there was no mass Hindu resistance against Muslim rule.



Asma T. Uddin. *The Politics of Vulnerability: How to Heal Muslim-Christian Relations in a Post-Christian America*. New York: Pegasus, 2021.

A breezy discussion of politics and religion in the Trump era. Uddin, a religious liberty lawyer, discusses the decline of white Christian dominance in

America, how politicians have exploited fears among Christian conservatives, and the ensuing Islamophobia. She offers common sense advice for bridging the divide.

Fall 2021!

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

T / Th 11:30-12:45

Fr. Michael Calabria, OFM

SBU Center for Arab & Islamic Studies



Use this course to fulfill THFS distribution requirements!

Remembering Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021)

In July 2018, I had the great honor to meet the Islamic scholar and peace activist Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, later listed among *The 500 Most Influential Muslims in the world* (2020). For decades, Maulana had presented views on Islam that were deeply spiritual, profoundly peaceful, and often controversial in a country that is increasingly divided along sectarian lines. My friend, Shafi Ahmad Dar, had arranged the audience in Delhi with his spiritual teacher. Although weakened by age, Maulana spent about an hour with me during which I had the opportunity to ask him questions about Islam in India, relations between Hindus and Muslims, and questions about my own personal faith journey. At the end of our time, he graciously presented me with his translation of the Qur'an and with several of his many books on various aspects of Islam. On April 21, 2021 Maulana passed away due to COVID-19. In *The Indian Express*, Amitabh Matoo wrote: "With his passing, India and the world have lost a remarkable religious leader and Islamic theologian who tried, till the very last, to bridge differences especially amongst the believers of different faiths."

My friend Ilyas Asad was first introduced to Maulana's writings and thought as he was finishing up his studies

in Islam at al-Jamia al-Islamiya in Kerala, India in 2013. He recalls a sense of dissatisfaction with the traditionalist approach he had encountered and experienced a real crisis of faith until he heard Maulana lecture and began to read his writings on Islam. "The basic aim of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Sahib was to transform people's thinking," Ilyas writes, "to foster peace in the individual and in the world. Indeed, it was his mission until his last breath to create peaceful individuals and a peaceful society whatever the cost. He was the rarest of scholars who put humility before self-righteousness. The most important role played by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan Sahib was creating an atmosphere of dialogue in a pluralistic society. He believed in interfaith dialogue as an effective way to counter a violent mentality. As Maulana said: 'We have to study every religion objectively in our search for truth, one should not live in bias.' He emphasized the importance of respecting all cultures, and discarding the concept of 'us vs. them.'"

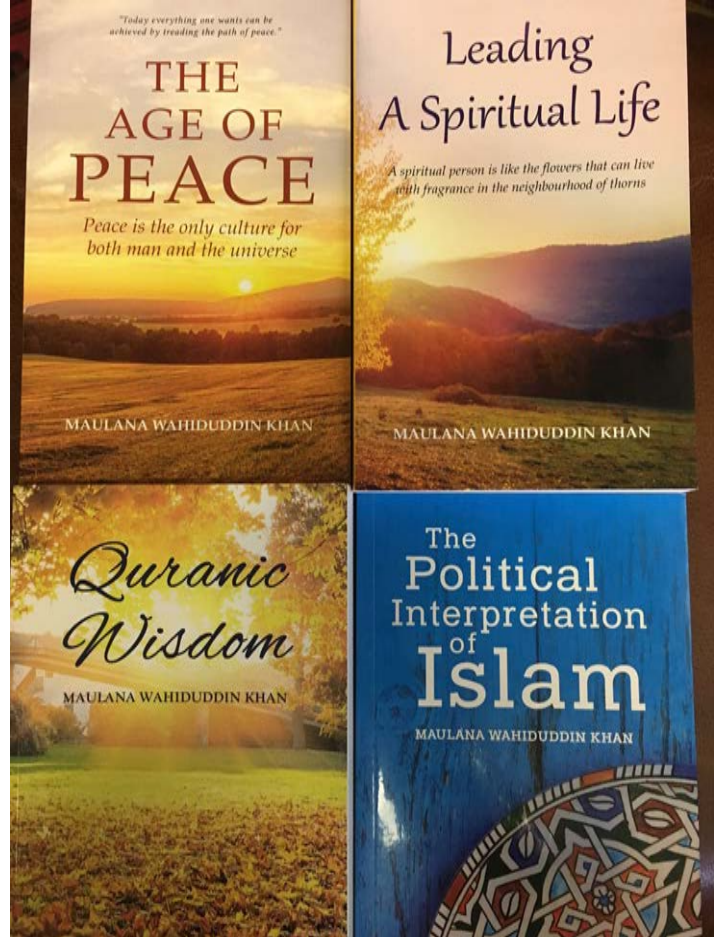
For more on Maulana Wahiduddin and his works, see:

www.cpsglobal.org





Mr. Ilyas Asad greets Maulana Wahiduddin Khan on two occasions (above, below).



The Center for Arab & Islamic Studies

St. Bonaventure University

presents:

Matthew Hoh

Senior Fellow for International Policy

Former Defense and State Department Official in Afghanistan

Author, Commentator and Activist

Afghanistan: The Inevitable Failure & Unpredictable Consequences of Violence



Wednesday, 22 September 2021, 7-8pm

Location: TBA

Matthew Hoh had nearly twelve years' experience overseas with the United States Marine Corps, Department of Defense and State Department. In 2009, he resigned from his post in Afghanistan with the State Department over the American escalation of the war. His writings have appeared in online and print periodicals such as the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *CounterPunch*, *CNN*, *Defense News*, the *Guardian*, the *Huffington Post*, *Mother Jones*, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*. He has been a guest on hundreds of news programs on radio and television networks including the BBC, CBS, CNN, CSPAN, Fox, NBC, MSNBC, & NPR.

For location information, go to: www.sbu.edu/CAIS “events”

Prayers for Afghanistan



“Dear brothers and sisters, I join in the unanimous concern for the situation in Afghanistan. I ask you to pray with me to the God of peace so that the clamour of weapons might cease and solutions can be found at the table of dialogue. Only thus can the battered population of that country — men, women, elderly and children — return to their own homes, and live in peace and safety, in total mutual respect.”

– Pope Francis, 15 August 2021

السلام

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The Center for Arab and Islamic Studies

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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



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

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Center for Arabic & Islamic Studies
3264 W. State St. Bonaventure, NY 14772
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mcalabri@sbu.edu
www.sbu.edu/CAIS

Janet Glogouski, *10
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