

OVES

NEWS

THE CENTER FOR
MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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SPRING 2018

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SPRING 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

GREETINGS AND SALAMAAT TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF OUR CMES FAMILY! This past spring has been once again a busy and highly successful season for CMES. Here at the Center we hosted our first CMES Tunisia Postdoctoral Fellow, Housseem al-Din Chachia, who specializes in post-1492 Mediterranean history, with an emphasis on minority communities and Arab, Jewish, and Christian relations. Housseem, who teaches in the Department of History at the University of Sfax (Tunisia), taught an Arabic seminar in the spring: “The Arab Maghreb from Colonial to Postcolonial.” We also had the great pleasure of hosting Salim Tamari, who returned for a second appointment as Shawwaf Visiting Professor. Salim taught two very popular classes, supervised AM theses, and delivered public lectures on campus and throughout the area during the semester.

Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, delivered this year’s H.A.R. Gibb Memorial Lectures in April. The lectures, featured in this newsletter, were among the most highly attended in the history of the series.

Our symposia this spring included *Growing Up in Contemporary Iraq*, convened by Emeritus Professor Roger Owen and Weatherhead Fellow Muhamed Almaliky, MD; and *Honoring the Life and Legacy of Professor Herbert C. Kelman*, organized by CMES research associates Sara Roy and Lenore Martin. Our *Sohbet-i Osmani* series, created and directed by Cemal Kafadar, Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies, was highlighted in late April by a magnificent concert of music written by Turkish-Ottoman women composers.

CMES Tunisia began the semester by hosting ten Harvard students for its three-week winter term program. In March, Professors Gülru Necipoğlu and Cemal Kafadar visited the Tunisia Office and delivered lectures on Ottoman and Tunisian intersections.

Most significantly, CMES continued to fund research projects for an increasing number of students, many of them conducting fieldwork throughout the Middle East. The final product was a record-breaking number (eleven!) of excellent AM theses, based on research conducted abroad.

—WILLIAM GRANARA, CMES DIRECTOR



Q&A WITH HOUSSEM CHACHIA

In 2017-18, Housseem Chachia was the inaugural recipient of the CMES Tunisia Postdoctoral Fellowship, part of the CMES Tunisia Office and related programming made possible by the support of Harvard College alumnus Hazem Ben-Gacem '92. The fellowship brings Tunisian scholars, especially those whose research includes Tunisia and North Africa, to Harvard for an academic year to pursue their research and teach a course in their area of specialization.

What was your doctoral dissertation about?

My research spans work on identity, cultural, historical, and minority studies. Chronologically, I focus on the sixteenth to eighteenth century. The title of my dissertation was “Sephardim and Moriscos: The Journey of the Expulsion and Installation in the Maghreb (1492–1756)—Different Stories and Itineraries.” In 2015, it was named by the Arab Center for Travel Literature: London–Abu Dhabi as the best research in the field of historical geography and travel narrative. The dissertation is in two parts: First, it examines the politics of expulsion and settlement

in the Maghreb of displaced Moriscos and Sephardim from 1492 to 1756. Second, it attempts to understand the dynamics of expulsion and the settlement to problematize the situation of the two groups. I do so by analyzing the dynamics of expulsion, or how the thought of exclusion in the Iberian Peninsula

in general, and in Spain in particular, evolved between the second half of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. Moreover, to understand the process of resettlement and the reintegration of the two minorities in Maghreb societies during this same period, I consider the religious

conversion of coming and going members of the two minorities between the three religions of the Mediterranean: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In my research, I problematize the limitations of this settlement and the possibility of talking about a solidarity between the Sephardic and Moriscos minorities during the period



of expulsion and resettlement on the basis that they have the same Iberian origin, and on expulsion as a milestone in their journey.

What are your current research interests? What project have you been working on this year?

My research interests have recently evolved a little to include the East–West encounter. Lately, I have become interested in understanding the relationship between the West and the Arabo-Muslim world (especially the Maghreb) in the modern era. Currently, I am working on a monograph entitled “The ‘Images’ of the West through Tunisian Eyes from the 17th to Early 20th Century.” This project was inspired by the resurrection of the Tunisian identity that became prominent after the Tunisian revolution (2011), both within the Tunisian elites and in social media. To be more specific, I investigate the politics and the religious, linguistic, geographical, and cultural discourse of redefining Tunisia after Ben Ali. In understanding today’s tense relationship between the Islamic and Western worlds, one must revisit the East–West encounter discourse

and the historical roots of such discourse to answer a fundamental question: Is the Tunisian image of the West negative or is it a combination of both hostility and admiration?

What course are you teaching spring term? What does it cover?

This semester, I am teaching a seminar on the theme “The West in Tunisian Eyes: Through the Travel Literature.” This course is for students at an advanced level of Arabic and it is conducted entirely in Arabic. The goal of the course is to examine the evolution of Tunisian travel literature and the relationship between Tunisia and the West. Thus, we are focusing on the image of the West in Tunisian eyes and the extent to which Tunisian reformers were influenced by the image of the West. We are reading selected texts of Tunisian travel writers such as Ibn Abi Diyaf, *Ithāf’ahl az-zamān* (The History of the Rulers of Tunis and the Fundamental Pact), Ali Ben Salem Al-Wardeni, *al-Rihlah al-Andalūsīyah* (The Andalusian Journey), Muḥammad al-Miqdād Wartāni, *al-Burnus fi Bāris: riḥlā ilá Faransā wa-Suwīsrā* (The Journey to France and Switzerland), Ali Douagi,

Jawlah bayna ḥanāt al-Baḥr al-Mutawassiṭ (A Tour through the Mediterranean Taverns), and Abdelwahed Braham, *Isbāniyā ḥāḍinat al-Andalus*. In discussing these points and reading the texts, students examine different vocabularies, in various historical, geographical, cultural, political, and sociological events from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century.

How do you like working with Harvard students?

In general, I really enjoy teaching and students to me are the fruits of academia. Harvard students, however, are special in their curiosity and inquisitiveness. Although we are studying a topic that is relatively new for most of them, I feel that they go out of their way to understand everything. I am very intrigued by the ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and academic backgrounds of students and how enriching they are for the class discussion.

What do you like best about being at Harvard?

As a research-oriented person by nature, from my first week at Harvard I fell in love with Widener Library. It is my favorite place at Harvard. And not only for me but

for many researchers, it is paradise. I can always find all the books and articles I need. The system to request books is simple and fast, and you have access to many online resources. I also appreciate the wide range of lectures, conferences, symposiums, and workshops that the Harvard campus offers. I like the open educational atmosphere, and the discussions between researchers from all over the world, who form a very rich community. One, of course, cannot forget the faculty, administration, and staff members at CMES, who are always very friendly, ready to help, and willing to accommodate. I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to them all. Thank you for making this cold city a very warm place and less overwhelming.

How have you enjoyed living in Cambridge?

I am from a small city in Tunisia called Beni Khaled, which is famous for its orange orchards. I grew up in my family’s orange orchard, so you can imagine how much I like nature. Due to this, I found Cambridge a very beautiful place. I like how quiet and green the city is. I like its public parks. I

also like how organized the public transportation is. One thing that stands out about Cambridge, the city, is how it lends itself to a multicultural diversity. This diversity is reflected in its food, music, cultures, and events. As such, the city offers a home not only for its residents but also for those passing through. And, of course, one cannot skip the various types of American hamburgers served in Cambridge.

Had you visited the United States before? Would you like to visit again in the future?

This is my first visit to the United States. And I hope it will not be the last. The United States is not just a country; it spans a continent, and one needs many visits to say that he/she has visited the United States.

What do you miss most about Tunisia?

I miss my wife, my daughter, and my friends. And I also miss the sun, the blue sky, and the Tunisian food and air.

What advice would you offer future CMES Tunisia Postdoctoral Fellows?

I recommend that they organize their time at Harvard

very well, because I can assure them that the 10 months will pass by very fast. Therefore, they should take advantage of the library's resources and the rich scholarly environment that Harvard offers them. Above all, I would like to say, be ready for the weather, and stay warm.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

In the past, the United States and Harvard were very far off places and equally impossible dreams for someone like me. I never thought that it would be possible to even visit Harvard as a tourist, let alone work at Harvard, so I feel very lucky to be here. I am grateful for this opportunity, which gave me a chance to discover how a university ranked so highly in the world works. Again, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues at CMES, especially Professor William Granara, the Director of CMES, and offer my sincere gratitude to Mr. Hazem Ben-Gacem, whose generous gift made it possible for me to be here. Also, I would like to express my eternal gratitude to my university, University of Sfax, for being accommodating and for allowing me to take leave this year. □

NEWS AND NOTES

FACULTY NEWS

Rodrigo Adem, Visiting Lecturer on History, published “Ibn Taymiyya as Avicennan? Fourteenth-Century Cosmological Controversies in Damascus,” *Muslim World* 108.1 (January 2018). He was a visiting fellow in January 2018 at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton University, and gave the talk “Theorizing Islam Past and Present: The Great Epistemic Shift in Classical Islam (ca. 800–1200)” at Yale University in February 2018. **Sami Alkyam**, Preceptor in Arabic, published “Dictating the Narrative and Resisting Dictatorships in Sa’dī’s Novel al-A’zam,” *Studies in Literature and Language* 15.5 (2017). With Reem Hilal, he translated the Yemeni novel *Ṭā’ir al-Kharāb* (The Bird of Destruction), under review at Syracuse University Press. He participated in the panel *Retrospective Assessment of the Second Half-Century of African Language and Culture Scholarship and Instruction at University of Wisconsin, Madison*, in April 2018. He received Harvard Certificates of Teaching Excellence for three classes in fall 2017. And

above all, he survived his sixth consecutive year of living apart from his beloved ones: his wife, Reem, and his beautiful bilingual daughter, Uswah. **Ali Asani**, Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, gave the talks “Fostering Literacy about Islam and Muslim Societies through the Arts,” Harvard Today: A Faculty Forum, October 2017, and “Experiencing Islam through the Visual, Auditory, and Literary Arts,” Winchester Unitarian Society and Winchester Multicultural Network, and “Whose Islam Is It Anyway?” Harvard GSAS Alumni Day, both in April 2018, and gave keynote talks at the Calgary Teachers Convention in February 2018. He was a study leader for Harvard Alumni Association’s spring break trip to Morocco in March 2018. He moderated the panel “Resources for Engaging with Difference: Theology, Literature, and the Arts,” *Symposium on Islam, Dialogue, and Sectarian De-Escalation*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, April 2018. **Sheida Dayani**, Preceptor in Persian, wrote “The Theatrical

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Roots of Contemporary Visual Arts in Iran,” in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibition catalogue *In The Fields of Empty Days: The Intersection of Past and Present in Iranian Art* (LACMA, 2017). She received a Harvard

Certificate of Teaching Excellence in fall 2017. **Gareth Doherty**, Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Senior Research Associate, Harvard Graduate School of Design, was appointed Director of the Master in Landscape Architecture Program in 2017. He edited the book *Roberto Burle Marx Lectures: Landscape as Art and Urbanism* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2018).

William Graham, Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor and Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, wrote “Revelation,” in *The Concise Handbook to the Hadith* (Wiley Blackwell, forthcoming 2018), “Judicial Procedure and Practice during the Founding Period of Islamic Law,” in *Justice and Leadership in Early Islamic Courts* (Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, 2017), and “‘A Wandering Aramean Was My Father’: An Abrahamic Theme in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Scripture and Interpretation,” in *Exegetical*

Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Pre-Modern Orient (Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

Lisa Gulesserian, Lecturer on Armenian Language and Culture, wrote “The Language of Discontent,” in the *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, about postmemory in Micheline Aharonian Marcom’s trilogy of novels on the Armenian Genocide. This spring, she chaired a panel on translation for the *Feminist Interventions in Armenian Studies, Armenian Interventions in Feminist Studies* conference organized by the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at MIT. She is currently collaborating with the Armenian International Women’s Association on an English-language translation of Srpouhi Dussap’s nineteenth-century Armenian-language feminist novel *Mayda*. And she delivered the keynote address at the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research Annual Assembly of Members in May. In April 2018, **Michael Herzfeld**, Ernest E. Monrad Professor of the Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology, and Director, Thai Studies Program, Asia Center, was the Marion R. and Adolph J. Lichtstern Distinguished Visiting Professor at the

University of Chicago and gave the annual Jean Monnet Distinguished Lecture at the State University of New York at Buffalo. **Baber Johansen**, Professor of Islamic Religious Studies, Harvard Divinity School, participated in a discussion at Columbia University’s Center for Palestine Studies on Beshara Doumani’s book *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History*, October 2017. He gave the paper “Marriage and Filiation in Classical and Modern Muslim Law” at the seminar *Reconciling Islamic and European Civil Laws: Avenues and Obstacles to the Integration of European Muslim Immigrants* at Berkeley Law School, and participated in a discussion with Michael Cook on his new book *Islam before Modernity* at the Abdullah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization at Yale Law School, both in April 2018. **Nevenka Korica Sullivan**, Senior Preceptor in Arabic and Director of the Center for Arabic Study Abroad, signed a contract with AUC press to publish the book “Advanced Arabic through Discussion.” The book is designed to challenge advanced learners of Arabic by engaging them in thought-provoking discussions about social, ethical, and legal issues

related to advertising, censorship, dress codes, the environment, rap music, extreme sports, GMOs, and other topics. While exploring each issue, learners are guided to expand their vocabulary, acquire complex structures, and discover the systematic relationships between language form, function, and meaning. The activities are designed to create a lively, student-centered classroom where interaction is both the goal and the means of language study. All the materials in the book have been developed for the advanced Arabic classes she has been teaching at Harvard since 2010. **Luke Leafgren**, Lecturer on Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, presented his translation of the Arabic novel *The Baghdad Clock* (Oneworld Publications, 2018) at Harvard Book Store in May 2018. The novel is currently shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. **Lenore G. Martin**, CMES Associate and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Emmanuel College, gave the talks “Can Track II Diplomacy Contribute to Reviving a Kurdish–Turkish Peace Process?” at the Northeast Political Science Association conference, Philadelphia, and “A New Approach to Solving

Turkey's Kurdish Issue," at the Middle East Studies Association conference, Washington DC, both in November 2017. She presented the paper "Principled Realism as a Solution to Violent Extremism in the Middle East?" with Meliha Altunışık and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, and gave the talk "Regional Politics and the New Sectarianism: Turkey," *Symposium on Islam, Dialogue, and Sectarian De-Escalation*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, both in April 2018. She published "A New Track towards Resolving Turkey's Kurdish Issue," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 11.2 (2017). **Roy Mottahedeh**, Gurney Professor of History *Emeritus*, delivered the Victor Danner Memorial Lecture at Indiana University, Bloomington, and spoke at Princeton University, both in April 2018. He co-sponsored and delivered a paper at the conference *Islam and Toleration*, at the Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program at Harvard University in March 2018. **Afsaneh Najmabadi**, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of History and of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, received a National Endowment

for the Humanities grant to continue the work of Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran (www.qajarwomen.org) for another two years. **Roger Owen**, A.J. Meyer Professor of Middle East History *Emeritus*, co-organized the CMES symposium *Growing Up in Contemporary Iraq*, March 2018. **Derek Penslar**, Samuel Zacks Professor of Jewish History, University of Toronto, and Visiting Professor of History, published "What We Talk about when We Talk about Colonialism," in *Colonialism and the Jews* (Indiana University Press, 2017) and a survey of the history of modern Israel in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, v. 8 (Cambridge University Press, 2017). His article "Declarations of (In)Dependence: Tensions within Zionist Statecraft, 1896–1948" is forthcoming in the *Journal of Levantine Studies*. He gave talks at Boston University and Brown University, and gave the keynote lectures at a meeting of the European Association for Israel Studies in Cracow. **Intisar Rabb**, Professor of Law and Director, Islamic Legal Studies Program, co-edited *Justice and Leadership in Early Islamic Courts* (Islamic Legal Studies Program, 2017). She published "Digital Islamic Law: Purpose and Prospects," *International*

Journal of Middle East Studies 50.1 (2018), with Sharon Tai, and "Confessions," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3d ed. (Leiden, 2017). She gave the talks "Dynamic Islamic Legal Interpretation," Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization, Yale Law School, and "The Dilemma of Islamic Constitutionalism," WCFIA/CMES Middle East Seminar, September 2017; "God on Mass Avenue: The Past, Present, and Future of Law and Religion at Harvard," with Noah Feldman and Charles Donahue, Harvard Law School Bicentennial Celebration, October 2017; "Interpreting Early Islamic Law: Texts, Courts, Politics," Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, February 2018; "Dynamic Islamic Law," Harvard, Stanford, and UCLA, March–April 2018; and "Islamic Legal Canons as Interpretive Precedent," Sharī'a Workshop, Middle East Institute, Columbia University, April 2018. **Kristen Stilt**, Professor of Law, Director, Islamic Legal Studies Program, and Faculty Director, Animal Law and Policy Program, is working on "Halal Animals," a book project about animal welfare debates in the international halal industry. She conducted research in Jordan, Australia, New Zealand, and the

Netherlands, and gave talks on the project at Sydney Law School, Hong Kong University, and the University of Denver School of Law. With co-author Salma Waheedi, she presented "The Ambitions of Muslim Family Law Reform," forthcoming in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, at Harvard Law School. She published "Trading in Sacrifice," *AJIL Unbound* 111 (2017), "Constitutional Innovation and Animal Protection in Egypt," *Law and Social Inquiry* (2017), "Law," in *Critical Terms for Animal Studies* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), and "Animals," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). **Malika Zeghal**, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life, updated, with Mary Elston, PhD candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, her "Al-Azhar" entry in Oxford Bibliographies Online. She gave the talks "A Democratic Constitution in a Muslim state: Egypt 1923–Tunisia 2014," Bayt al-Hikma (Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters, and Arts), Carthage, October 2017, and "Constitutionalizing the Muslim State: Issues, Agreements and Disagreements," Duke University, March 2018. ▣

IN THE KITCHEN WITH KAFADAR

“Speaking about food or looking at old menus to explain the way culinary culture changes is one thing,” says Cemal Kafadar, Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies. “Hands-on exposure is another.” And so one evening in April, Kafadar led students in his course History 1878B: Ottoman State and Society, along with guests including CMES Visiting Researchers Bedriye Poyraz and Nil Tekgül, out of the classroom and into an industrial kitchen beneath freshman dining facility Annenberg Hall. There, under the guidance of acclaimed chef Ana Sortun—whose Cambridge-area restaurants Oleana, Sofra Bakery and Café, and Sarma are based in the cooking of Turkey and the Middle East—and ably assisted by Oleana junior sous chef Teddy Applebaum, students chopped, shredded, browned, and stuffed their way through a four-course meal of historically documented Ottoman dishes.

“In class we talked a great deal about the history of commodities and changing patterns of consumption after Columbus and ocean voyages of the sixteenth century, and about the new kind of connectedness of the world that emerged, which we identify with the early modern era. One of the

most interesting and important aspects of this period is rising volumes of trade of various new commodities traveling from one corner of the world to another.” This included commodities not only from the New World, but also from areas made more accessible by navigation around the Cape of Good Hope, or through trade routes that had nothing to do with European oceanic voyages. Coffee, for instance, came from Ethiopia via Yemen (where, as Kafadar explains, Sufis discovered its uses especially for nighttime vigils, and what they called “nimbleness of the mind”). “It’s the context of evolving trade of commodities that led us to look seriously at the history of food.”

Take tomatoes, unknown outside the New World prior to the early sixteenth century. “Every traditional cuisine has its own balance of sweet and sour and spicy and so on, and tomato eventually became a major balancing element in the cuisines of many Mediterranean countries. But before the use of tomatoes, sour grape juice and fruits were major balancing elements in Ottoman cooking.” Thus one of the dishes the class prepared was an *elma* (apple) dolma with lamb and sumac,

a recipe from a mid-fifteenth-century palace menu from the court of Mehmed II that Kafadar translated. “Dolma of course is widely known, but none of us, including Ana, had heard of a dolma using a carved-out apple.” Similarly, sour grape juice (similar to French verjus) is not often used today but was an element of almost any warm meat dish of the sixteenth century.

While some students worked on dolma, others assembled spinach borek, a savory filled pastry made with sheets of phyllo, or *yufka*, dough, and a dish called “the mighty stew,” baked on a base of grilled bread, from a mid-eighteenth-century manuscript. The recipe, also translated by Kafadar, describes this dish as “the ultimate of stews,” which chefs used to test each other’s skills. A milk pudding rounded out the evening’s menu.

Kafadar first met Sortun, who has traveled extensively in Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus, several years ago, although he doesn’t remember for sure who introduced them. It was either former GSD professor Hashim Sarkis (now Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT), who designed the

interior at Oleana, or former History and Middle Eastern Studies PhD student Şükrü Ilıcak, whose Turkish music ensemble often performed in the restaurant’s outdoor courtyard. The fact that it could have been either, Kafadar says, speaks to the many lasting connections that Sortun has developed with the Middle Eastern studies community at Harvard.

She and Kafadar first cooked together with students five years ago. “Like some orchestra conductors, some chefs prosper by being dictatorial. But Ana is quite the reverse. She thinks, she plans, and she prepares very well, but she doesn’t give the impression that everything is so disciplined. She’s soft-spoken and gentle with amateurs like us, which to me is a far preferable and ultimately more successful way of handling group work.”

Kafadar says that, as much as a learning experience, the session was a social event, a way to develop cohesiveness among members of the class. “The students told me that it was a great experience getting to know their classmates in that context. They tell me they will now demand a cooking segment in every Harvard course they take.” He’s joking, but maybe only a little. ▣



Ana Sortun, Cemal Kafadar,
Teddy Applebaum, Bedriye Poyraz



Marissa Smit, Maryam Patton



Ceren Ates



Daria Kovaleva,
Mitch Bacci,
Tark Tansu Yiğit



Ana Sortun, Cemal Kafadar



Bedriye Poyraz, Nil Tekgül

NEWS AND NOTES

STUDENT NEWS

AM STUDENTS

Oula Alrifai, along with her brother, Mouhanad Al-Rifay, were featured in a *Harvard Gazette* story describing their work with refugees from their native Syria and a documentary film they produced. She was a student intern at the Middle East Initiative at HKS, and she organized and moderated a panel on Syria as part of the Arab Conference at Harvard, November 2017. **Oliver McPherson-Smith** traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in April 2018 to present his research on changes in the oil industry and Iran's regional foreign policy to HRH Prince Turki al-Faisal, as part of a Belfer Center delegation to the Kingdom. He was also awarded a research grant by the Washington DC-based Mercatus Center to conduct fieldwork on state capacity and inclusive economic institu-

tions in Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan. **Becca Wadness** was selected for a summer 2017 internship with the US Embassy in Algiers, Public Diplomacy section, where she supported educational and cultural programming, with summer funding support from CMES. In August 2017, she was invited back to Basra, Iraq, by her former employer World Learning to facilitate the closing ceremony of the Maharat Mentorship Program, which provides leadership and career skills training for university students in partnership with the US Consulate, Basra. With these ties, she advocated for the expansion of the Maharat program, and helped launch a version of the program for Algerian university students in partnership with the US Embassy, Algiers. She was also a 2018 finalist in the Presidential Management Fellows program, a flagship leadership develop-

ment program for advanced degree candidates from a variety of academic disciplines, designed to develop a cadre of potential federal government leaders.

PHD STUDENTS

Caroline Kahlenberg published “The *Tarbush* Transformation: Oriental Jewish Men and the Significance of Headgear in Ottoman and British Mandate Palestine,” in the *Journal of Social History*. CMES funding helped to acquire the photographs used in the article. **Han Hsien Liew** presented the paper “Alexander the Great in the Articulation of Malay Islamic Kingship” at the conference *Space and Speech: Discursive Environments across Non-Arab Islam*. He won the MESA Graduate Student Paper Prize for his paper “Ibn al-Jawzi and the Cursing of Yazid ibn Mu'awiya: Debating Rebellion and Legitimate Rulership.” **Mira Xenia Schwerda** continued her

CMES distributed travel and research funding to more than 50 undergraduate and graduate students for summer 2018.

dissertation research in Iran, presented an invited lecture on Qajar photography at the Harvard Art Museums, curated the photography section of the exhibition “Technologies of the Image: Art in 19th-Century Iran,” and published the article “Iranian Photography: From the Court, to the Studio, to the Street” in the accompanying exhibition catalogue, edited by Mary McWilliams and David J. Roxburgh. She also published the essay “Amorous Couples: Depictions of Permitted and Prohibited Love,” in *An Album of Artists' Drawings from Qajar Iran*, also edited by Roxburgh (Harvard Art Museums/Yale University Press 2017). **Keye Tersmette** was awarded CMES Arabian Peninsula funding for summer 2018. He received a Certificate of Distinction in Teaching from the Derek Bok Center for his work as a teaching fellow in Sociology 23: Introduction to Political Sociology in fall 2017.



Oliver McPherson-Smith, Oula Alrifai



Caroline Kahlenberg, Will Tamplin



Mark Wadness,
Becca Wadness

CONGRATULATIONS 2018 GRADUATES!

AM PROGRAM

- **Ceren Ates**
- **Anna Boots**—*Thesis*: “The Boundaries of the Tunisian’: Migration and Race in Post-Revolution Tunisia.” *Advisor*: Steven Caton
- **Blaire Byg**—*Thesis*: “Changing Nature, Shifting People: Point Four, Water Development, and US Refugee Policy in the Jordan River Valley, 1949–1955.” *Advisor*: Sara Roy
- **Daniel Cord**—*Thesis*: “The Date Palm and the Da’wa: Non-Religious Factors Favoring the Rise and Resiliency of the Saudi States.” *Advisor*: Wilfrid Rollman
- **Mohamad Khalil Harb**—*Thesis*: “Escapism by Design: An Ethnography of Leisure-Consumption Architecture in Beirut.” *Advisor*: Steven Caton
- **Stephen Hurwitz**—*Thesis*: “United Nations Security Council Resolution 242: The Role of Ambiguity.” *Advisor*: Salim Tamari
- **Andrew McIndoe**—*Thesis*: “UNIFL and the Changing Nature of Peacekeeping.” *Advisor*: Sara Roy
- **Kim Quarantello**—*Thesis*: “Middle East Refugees in Lowell: A Case Study on

Refugee Resettlement— ‘American foreign policy f***** up my country, but the United States gave me a new life.’” *Advisor*: Sara Roy

- **Mano Sakayan**—*Thesis*: “Evangelizing in Eastern Anatolia: Historicizing the Rise and Early Work of the ABCFM’s Harput Station.” *Advisor*: William Granara
- **Mohamad Saleh**—*Thesis*: “Estrangement: Transience and Being in Modern Arabic Literature.” *Advisor*: William Granara

- **Jamil Sbitan**—*Thesis*: “Lubricating the Machines of the Western World: Knowledge and Subjectivity in Aramco’s American Employee Handbooks (1950).” *Advisor*: Steven Caton
- **Rebecca Wadness**
- **Theodore Wye**—*Thesis*: “Islamic State Prisons: Structural Violence and Connections to an Authoritarian Past.” *Advisor*: Kristen Stilt

JOINT PHD PROGRAMS

- **Ian McGonigle** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*:

“Genomic Citizenship: Peoplehood and State in Israel and Qatar.” *Chair/ advisor*: Steven Caton

- **Rubina Salikuddin** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*: “Sufis, Saints, and Shrines: Piety in the Timurid Period, 1370–1507.” *Chair/advisor*: Roy Mottahedeh
- **Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe** (History and MES)—*Dissertation*: “Brave New Turkey: Contesting the Production and Valuation of Bodies, Urban Space, and Ecology.” *Chair/advisor*: Michael Herzfeld



William Granara with 2018 CMES AM and PhD graduates

COMMENCEMENT RECEPTION 2018



Himmat Taskomur, Mohamad Khalil Harb



Ceren Ates and guest



William Granara addresses graduates and guests



Blaire Byg, Becca Wadness, and guests



Mano Sakayan, Andrew McIndoe, Ceren Ates, Mohamad Saleh



Himmat Taskomur, Sheida Dayani, Salim Tamari



Sara Roy, Daniel Cord, and guests



Theo Wye, Arafat Razzaque, Housseem Chachia, Stephen Hurwitz



Anna Boots, Kim Quarantello, and guests



Wil Rollman, Steve Caton, Ian McGonigle



Elizabeth Shlala, Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe

NEWS AND NOTES

STUDENT PROFILE: NICHOLAS NORBERG

Nicholas Norberg is a first-year student in the AM in Middle Eastern Studies program.

How did you become interested in Middle Eastern studies?

I became interested in Middle Eastern studies through my love of language acquisition. I studied linguistics as an undergraduate, and undertook intensive study of both Arabic and Turkish, but I did not pursue many courses in history, politics, or religious studies. I saw Middle Eastern studies as a way to blend my interest in history, politics, and religion while continuing to fulfill my interest in language and find ways to apply the language skills I had already acquired.

Why did you choose CMES?

CMES addressed my career and academic interests, but the program here offered me the greatest flexibility in terms of coursework of any program to which I applied. The opportunity to pursue coursework at any of Harvard's schools, and across multiple disciplines, was highly appealing to me. I was also drawn to the advanced-level language courses CMES

offered, especially the advanced Arabic curriculum.

What are your research interests?

I am interested in modern Middle Eastern history and politics, especially the rise and evolution of political ideologies in Turkey and the former Ottoman Arab territories. I have gravitated towards the study of Syria, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula in my exploration of the emergence of the states we know as the modern Middle East.

What do you like best about studying at Harvard?

I have been struck by the willingness of faculty and graduate students to engage in both formal and informal settings on their research interests. I have already encountered inspiring researchers and students who have readily offered advice on my own interests, and I find that collaborative approach to academic study to be one of Harvard's best qualities.

What do you like best about living in Cambridge?

The proximity to Boston is a major asset to living in

Cambridge. The city has a rich history and artistic scene, and I have enjoyed getting to know Boston's museum and arts community from living in Cambridge. Harvard boasts plenty of museums, but I have also found the city of Boston to be quite accessible from our location on this side of the river.

What travel/research opportunities have you pursued during your time at Harvard?

I traveled to Tunisia in January 2018 with a group of graduate students to gain exposure to

Tunisia's cultural heritage, and I benefitted hugely from the research staff at CMES's Tunisia Office (especially Sihem Lamine!). The trip included visits to Tunisia's ancient sites as well as contemporary landmarks, and I appreciated the study tour's focus on showcasing the full scope of Tunisian history. In the summer of 2018, I will travel to Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, to complete Turkish language training.

What extracurriculars have you participated in?



I became a writer and editor for the *Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy*, along with several CMES classmates. I have found working on the journal to be an enjoyable way to keep my journalistic writing skills sharp while giving me an excuse to justify reading the news as often as I can! I also attend as many of the CMES extracurricular lectures as I can, and I work part-time as a barista in the Cafe Gato Rojo on campus.

What are your plans after finishing your degree?

I plan to pursue further education after finishing my degree, and am preparing to apply to doctoral programs.

What advice would you offer a prospective student?

Build as much time into your schedule for talking with your professors and fellow students as possible! You will learn just as much (if not more) from your peers and faculty outside the classroom as you will when you are physically in lecture. I would also recommend getting to know the Harvard library system as well as you can—reading random books off the shelf while browsing is a great way to procrastinate while still feeling productive!

STUDENT PROFILE: HAMAD AL-HAJRI

Hamad Al-Hajri is a first-year student in the AM in Middle Eastern Studies program.

How did you become interested in Middle Eastern Studies?

I first became interested in the Middle East after being exposed to its cultural richness. Qatar's capital, Doha, is a very diverse place, as the population is only 10 percent Qatari and 90 percent foreigners. Having said that, Middle Eastern countries are

well represented in Doha. Doha's celebration of Middle Eastern culture opened up a whole new world to me. It introduced me to many cultural, social, and religious traditions. Furthermore, given the political volatility of the Middle East, it seems almost impossible to separate politics from one's daily life. I will never forget the impact that the 2003 invasion of Iraq had on the region. People expressed how they felt

about the invasion in various ways: art, music, political protests, humanitarian campaigns, and even collective prayers. Upon seeing those expressions, I realized that the facets of life in the Middle East are connected in fascinating ways.

Why did you choose CMES?

The flexibility and multi-disciplinary nature of the CMES master's program in tandem with Harvard's exceptional resources will enhance my research of the areas I am interested in.



NEWS AND NOTES

Furthermore, the diversity of a Harvard education, exhibited by the opportunity to study in different environments, such as the Kennedy School, Law School, School of Design, and the Divinity School, will help me develop comprehensive knowledge while also facilitating a multidimensional understanding of the Middle East.

What are your research interests?

My research interests include the political economy of the Arab Gulf states, the dynamic relationship among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, GCC–Iran relations, post-oil urbanism in Gulf cities, tribalism in the Arabian Peninsula, the role of Islamic and cultural traditions in community development, and political Islam in the Middle East.

What travel/research opportunities have you pursued during your time at Harvard?

I was lucky enough to be accepted into CMES's annual trip to Tunisia in January 2018. It was a great cultural immersion and dynamic learning experience. We visited numerous important

cities, such as Kairouan and Bizerte, in addition to our time in Tunis. My plans for this summer include trips to a number of Middle Eastern countries, including Iran and Kuwait, and enrollment in a summer Persian language program in Tehran.

What are your plans after finishing your degree?

After graduation, I intend to pursue a PhD by engaging the research interests and questions provoked during my master's program at CMES. Eventually, either during or after my PhD, I intend to gain policy research experience through working, for example, with international organizations.

What advice would you offer a prospective student?

I would advise prospective students to make the most of Harvard's academically prolific environment. I would encourage them to attend talks, conferences, or seminars that they deem interesting, networking events for possible employment opportunities, and informal events where they can share their experiences, goals, and aspirations with other students of diverse backgrounds.

STUDENT PROFILE: ANNA BOOTS

Anna Boots is a second-year student in the AM in Middle Eastern Studies program.

Why did you choose CMES?

I really liked that Harvard's Middle Eastern studies master's program is fundamentally academic and not policy-centric like some other similar programs. I wanted to study Middle Eastern history, languages, and literatures in addition to politics and policy. I like that the former is valued and emphasized here as much, if not more, than the latter.

What are your research interests?

I am writing my master's thesis about migration challenges in Tunisia. I'm interested in the fact that we often talk about the global migration crisis as a problem that Europe needs to deal with, when in reality North African and Middle Eastern states are receiving the vast majority of the migrants who have been displaced by regional unrest and instability since 2011, in addition to sub-Saharan African migrants being forced northward due to changing environments and economic

insecurity. Tunisia is a really interesting case because it has absorbed large waves of migrants since 2011, including both Libyans displaced by the civil war and sub-Saharan Africans displaced by other political conflicts, environmental catastrophes, and ongoing insecurity. Because Tunisia has had to address these challenges as a state and a society in the immediate aftermath of their own revolution, the issue has become intertwined with Tunisia's post-revolutionary national identity building processes. In other words, the way Tunisians are talking about migrants and migration reveals a lot about the values and identity of the post-revolutionary society. As I write this [in December 2017], I'm preparing to return to Tunisia for the winter session to conduct more interviews for my research!

What do you like best about studying at Harvard?

I've loved taking advantage of all of the different Schools and departments we can study in as master's students. One of my favorite classes, and the one that provided the

inspiration for my thesis, was at the Graduate School of Design. I also really love the community at CMES. It's a small center so most of the master's students know each other, and there's a strong sense of community and identity in our cohort, even though people are coming from so many different backgrounds and are at different phases of their lives and studies.

What travel/research opportunities have you pursued during your time at Harvard?

I have traveled to Tunisia twice with CMES programs, and am about to return for a third time to finish thesis research that I began there this past summer. I went on the CMES trek to Tunis during the Winter Session of my first year, which was my first introduction to Tunisia. My CMES classmates and I had so much fun traveling around the country and getting to know Tunis as a city. I loved the cultural and intellectual life and the rich sense of history in Tunis, and immediately planned to go back for the summer. This past summer, I participated in the month-long Arabic reading course with Nour Barmada. Nour made the class lively and interesting, and I would say that my classmates

and I struck a healthy balance between Arabic study and beach time. In August, after the Arabic program was over, I stayed in Tunis to start research for my master's thesis. I felt like I was just getting started when it was time to head back to Cambridge, so I'm really excited to pick up where I left off this January.

What extracurriculars have you participated in?

In my first year at Harvard I was an Associate Editor with the student-run *Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy*. This year, I am co-leading the journal's editorial board, along with my two CMES classmates and close friends Mohamad Saleh and Blaire Byg. The journal is completely online and publishes several analysis pieces per week, related to the Middle East and North Africa. We've also placed a strong emphasis on multimedia journalism during our time as lead editors, and were part of launching a podcast associated with the journal called *Middle East Weekly*. Every other week during the semester a group of editors and students get together to talk about interesting developments in the region, and we publish

the conversations as podcasts. It's still in its early stages and we're working out the kinks, but we've had a lot of fun doing it and hope that listeners are learning as much from it as we have been.

What are your plans after finishing your degree?

I am really hoping to start a career in journalism after graduation. I love to write and to talk to people, and I like the qualities that journalistic

writing helps me leverage: curiosity, storytelling, and good listening skills. Fall semester I took a course on investigative reporting taught by Jill Abramson, the former Executive Editor of the *New York Times*. It was a really interesting course and helped me merge my expertise in the Middle East and Arabic with the journalistic writing skills that I want to be working on. It's a hard industry to break into, but I'm going to give it a shot!



NEWS AND NOTES

STORYTELLING WITH YOUNG REFUGEES

This spring, the student-run Middle East Refugee Service Initiative (MERSI), which pairs newly settled refugees in the greater Boston area with Arabic-speaking Harvard students, hosted a public narrative training for Harvard and Lowell students. Participants—including CMES students Chloe Bordewich, Mariam Ghanem,

Kim Quarantello, and Becca Wadness—learned to tell compelling, in-the-moment stories to engage audiences and share the choices that have shaped their identities. Coaches urged students to consider sources of hope and courage that helped them to overcome challenges along the journeys that have led them to today. To celebrate

and feature these narratives, MERSI hosted the year's final event for the broader Harvard community on April 11: "Journeytelling: Stories of Courage and Agency in Creating Home." These journeys included stories from students who went East to find home and refugees from the Middle East who recently resettled in Lowell. Will Tamplin shared an Arabic poem with the audience and

CMES journeytellers included Ghanem, who shared her poignant perspective on grappling with dual identities in a world that constantly puts people into boxes, and Bordewich, who shared the friendships she made with students from the Middle East and concluded with a rousing call to action, urging greater American acceptance of refugees and immigrants globally.



Students from Harvard and from Lowell at Harvard Kennedy School

UNDERGRADUATE PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE REGION

CMES awarded a first prize and two honorable mentions in the 2017–18 Harvard College International Photo Contest for photos taken in the Middle East region. First place went to Near Eastern Languages

and Civilizations concentrator Portia Berry-Kilby ('20), who studied Arabic at Yale's Summer Study Abroad program in Morocco, with funding from the CMES A.J. Meyer Foreign Language award. Berry-Kilby

also accompanied the CMES study excursion to Turkey in January 2018. Honorable mentions went to Isabella Kwasnik ('20), who traveled to Aqaba, Jordan, and Visual and Environmental Studies

concentrator Michelle Ng ('18), who was in Morocco. She stayed with a host family in Rabat, as part of the IHP Climate Change study abroad program, which explored the politics of food, water, and energy in Vietnam, Morocco, and Bolivia.



"Cola, anyone?" Chefchaouen, Morocco, Portia Berry-Kilby



"Views," Aqaba, Jordan, Isabella Kwasnik



"Onwards," Merzouga, Morocco, Michelle Ng

NEWS AND NOTES

ALUMNI NEWS

AM ALUMNI

Zena Agha ('17) is the US Policy Fellow for Al-Shabaka, The Palestinian Policy Network, based in New York. Al-Shabaka is a transnational Palestine think tank whose mission is to educate and foster public debate on Palestinian human rights and self-determination within the framework of international law. In addition to publishing numerous briefs and op-eds including in the *Progressive Post* and *The Nation*, she has been featured on the BBC World Service and has spoken at various fora including New America, the Center for American Progress, Harvard and Columbia Universities, and on Capitol Hill. Zena was a summer fellow at Harvard Law School's Library Innovation Lab focusing on different mapping efforts in Palestine-Israel and she has presented her research at Dartmouth College and the Boston Athenaeum. Separately, her film *Little Jerusalem* has been selected for four international film festivals, including the Boston Palestine Film Festival, the Miami Independent Film Festival, the Tolpuddle Radical Film Festival (UK), and the Silk Road Film Festival (Ireland). Zena continues to write fiction

and poetry and has performed at the Boston Old South Meeting House and Swarthmore College. She was awarded the Margins Fellowship at the Asian American Writers Workshop. **Mona Ali Khalil** ('88), after 22 years of service with the UN Office of the Legal Counsel, founded MAK LAW in January 2018. MAK LAW is a legal advisory and consulting service specializing in public international law as a weapon in the peaceful pursuit of upholding the rights and obligations of nations—their duties to their peoples and their relations with each other—with a view to ensuring respect for those rights and fulfillment of those obligations. She is also an affiliate of the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict. She wrote the chapter "Legal Aspects of the Protection of Civilians in UN Field Operations" in *The Protection of Civilians in International Law* (Oxford University Press, 2016). **Dilek Barlow** ('04) is the Director of Partnerships and Business Development at Wildflower Health. Wildflower Health focuses on growing healthy families and creates mobile health products to improve clinical quality, connect patients to resources, and reduce medical costs. She

lives in San Francisco with her husband and son and loves to hear from other CMES alumni. **Aaron Bernay** ('05) was recently promoted to membership at law firm Frost Brown Todd in Cincinnati. In March 2018 he hosted an official trade delegation from Dubai that visited Ohio. **Kay Hardy Campbell** ('83) published *A Caravan Of Brides*, a historical novel set in the world of Saudi women (Loon Cove Press, 2017). The novel earned a coveted starred review from Kirkus Reviews. Due to the many changes taking place in Saudi society, Kay has been busy giving library and "senior college" talks throughout Maine about women in Saudi Arabia. **Rachel George** ('13) is completing her PhD in International Relations at the London School of Economics this year, focusing on human rights discourses in the GCC states. She started a position as Senior Research Officer at the Overseas Development Institute in London, working on a UN Women project focusing on establishing a regional network on gender and combatting violent extremism in North Africa. **Yadin Kaufmann** ('85) published an article about the nascent Palestinian tech scene, why it's important, and how to develop it further in the July/

August 2017 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. **Medhini Kumar** ('16) is the Communications and Development Officer for UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) USA, where she works to inform the American public about UNRWA's work and generates support for its programs in the Middle East through education, advocacy, and fundraising. Previously she worked with the International Rescue Committee as a Protection Manager in Iraq, providing emergency programmatic response following mass displacement in Mosul. Specifically, she worked on establishing and implementing a project focused on addressing the unique psycho-social needs and vulnerabilities of men and adolescent boys in IDP camps in Kirkuk. **Katherine Lyman** ('15) presented "School-Based Interventions in the West Bank," a review of school-based mental health care for Palestinian children and adolescents, at a psychiatry conference at UCLA in February 2018. She received a summer 2018 fellowship from the Stanford Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences to study transcultural interpretations of psychosis versus religious experience. She is currently

an MD candidate at Stanford, where she is a Klingenstein Fellow in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. **Alex Winder** ('09) participated in the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies fifth annual historical studies conference, *The Palestinian Nakba in Arab Historical Writing*, held in Doha, Qatar, in May 2018. In July, he begins serving as Visiting Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Middle East Studies at Brown University.

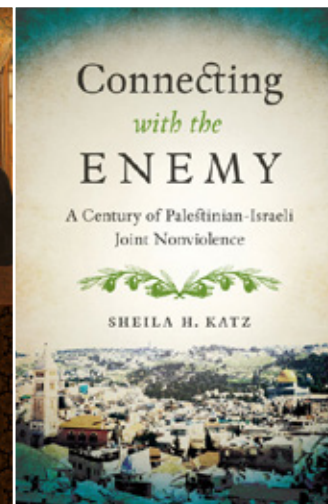
PHD ALUMNI

Alireza Doostdar ('12) published his first book, *The Iranian Metaphysicals: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny* (Princeton University Press, 2018). **Jesse Howell** ('17) is delighted to be returning to Cambridge as a postdoctoral fellow at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard. **Zahra Jamal** ('08) hosted UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements and State Department official Wa'el Alzayat to comment on the global refugee crisis; Harpreet Singh Mokha, Department of Justice National Program Manager for Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian Communities, and a group of federal agents to explore how to protect places of worship in the

wake of the Victoria Mosque arson and the Sutherland Springs Church shooting; and Columbia University's Lisa Miller to discuss early childhood development and her book *The Spiritual Child*. Jamal sat on panels with artist Olafur Eliasson of Project Green Light regarding refugee resettlement and resilience, former UK first lady and Chancellor of Asian University for Women Cherie Blair regarding women's education and power in Asian contexts, and producer James Younger of *The Story of Us with Morgan Freeman* regarding common values and principles that unite our global village. She delivered the lecture "A Muslim's Perspective on Food and Faith" at the Chautauqua Institute in New York and addressed the Texas Diversity Council state conference, alongside keynote speakers Jeb Bush, Angela Bassett, Julian Castro, and Donna Brazile. Jamal served on Houston mayor Sylvester Turner's Diversity Task Force to launch the city's first commemorative month signaling the embrace and inclusion of its varied populations as the most diverse metroplex in the country. This academic year, she provided religious literacy education to Houston-area high



school and AP teachers, the Richmond and Harris County Police Departments, the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce, Texas Diversity Council, and other entities. She also helped develop a Religious Tolerance Study Guide for use by high school and university students, and Guidelines for Respect for use in primary and secondary school classrooms. She worked with Rice University's Boniuk Council to serve Houston's homeless, refugee youth, and survivors of human trafficking. She published in *Vorgänge*, *Islamic Horizons*, and *The Meaning of My Neighbor's Faith*, an edited volume on migration and religion. Her efforts on interfaith understanding and cooperation were highlighted

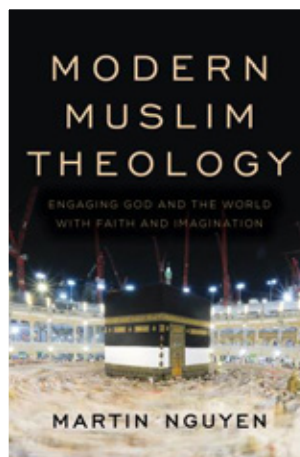


in the Interfaith Youth Core's volume on best practices in the nation's universities. Jamal has been featured in *Hidden Heroes*, a television series showcasing everyday people living values-based lives and teaching youth to do the same. She appears in the mini-documentary *I Want to be Free*, submitted to the Middle East Leadership Network film competition. Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook recognized Jamal for her efforts on facilitating understanding between Muslim-majority countries and the United States. **Sheila Katz** ('93) has been on an international book tour with her latest book, *Connecting with the Enemy: A Century of Palestinian-Israeli Joint*

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Nonviolence (University of Texas Press, 2016). The book was released on election day and the results changed the way the book was received. The remarkable hidden history of two peoples working together across deep polarization and inequality, and under impossible political conditions, turned out to be an inspiration for those resisting brutality of any regime. It is the first comprehensive history of their unprecedented grassroots efforts to forge nonviolent alternatives to the lethal collision of the two national movements. It brings to light the work of over five hundred groups in which children and elders, garage mechanics and physicists, and lawyers and prisoners spoke truth to power, protected the environment, demonstrated peacefully, mourned together, stood in solidarity, and advocated for justice and security. It critiques and assesses the significance of their work and explores why these efforts have not yet managed to end conflict and occupation. Katz traveled to four countries to give over two dozen lectures at universities including Harvard, UCLA, USF, UC Boulder, Brandeis, Trinity College in Dublin, and

Berklee's Valencia Campus, academic conferences, interfaith organizations, activist networks, community centers, churches, synagogues, a Buddhist monastery, bookstores, public libraries, private homes, a Rotary Club, and a senior residence. The presentations were attended by Palestinians, Israelis, Iraqis, Iranians, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Asians, Africans, African Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans, undergraduates and graduate students, chairs, deans, and scholars, housewives and secretaries, taxi drivers and plumbers, teenagers and retirees. Many responded to the work of Palestinians and Israelis across unbearable differences as validation of their own life-long activism. **Meir Litvak** ('91) was appointed Chair of the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. He edited *Constructing Nationalism in Iran: From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic* (Routledge, 2017) and with Meir Hatina co-edited *Concepts of Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Political and Social Perspectives of Sacrifice and Death* (I.B. Tauris, 2016). **Martin Nguyen** ('09)



is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Fairfield University. His second book, *Modern Muslim Theology: Engaging God and the World with Faith and Imagination* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), will be available later this year. **İklil (Erefe) Selçuk** ('09) is Associate Professor at Özyeğin University, Istanbul. **Lucia Volk** ('01) is Professor in International Relations and Middle East and Islamic Studies at San Francisco State University. She received the Middle East Studies Association 2017 Undergraduate Teaching Award, which recognizes outstanding scholarship on teaching or other material contributions to undergraduate education in Middle East studies. ▣

VISITING RESEARCHER NEWS

Visiting Scholar **Ersin Kalaycıoğlu** published “Two Elections and a Political Regime in Crisis: Turkish Politics at the Crossroads,” *South European and Black Sea Studies*, 18.1; *Role of Government in Turkey: A Comparative Study*, with Ali Çarkoğlu (Sabancı University, Istanbul Policy Center, 2018); *İşe Yönelim’de Türkiye’ye Karşılaşılmalı bir Bakış* (A Comparative Look at Work Orientation in Turkey), with Ali Çarkoğlu (Sabancı University, Istanbul Policy Center, 2018); and *Vatandaş Bakışıyla İstanbul İlçelerinin Yönetişim Karnesi* (Governance Report Card of the Istanbul District Municipalities from the Perspective of their Citizens), with Yılmaz Argüden, Korel Göymen, Fikret Toksöz, Erbay Arıkboğa, Enver Salıhoğlu, Fatma Ögücü Şen, Inan İzci (Argüden Governance Academy Publications 12, 2018). He presented the paper “Principled Realism as a Solution to Violent Islamic Extremism in the Middle East?” with Meliha Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, April 2018. He gave the lectures “Drifting toward

Authoritarianism: Turkish Politics at the Crossroads?” Department of Political Science and Comparative Legislative Research Center, University of Iowa, December 2017; “The Role of Government in Turkey from a Comparative Perspective,” WFCIA/CMES Middle East Seminar, February 2018; “Turkish Politics in the 21st Century,” CMES, March 2018; and “People, Democracy, and the Rule of Law: The Case of Turkey Revisited,” Northeastern University, April 2018. He participated in the panel “Academic Freedom in the Age of Populism and Post-Truth,” *Summit on the Future of Europe*, Center for European Studies, Harvard, November 2017. Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow **Umit Kurt** published “The Curious Case of Ali Cenani Bey: The Story of a Génocidaire,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 52.1 (2018); “Revisiting the Legal Infrastructure for Confiscation of the Armenian and Greek Wealth: A Political-Economic Analysis of the CUP Years and the Early Modern Republic,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 53.5 (2017); *History and Historiography in Turkey: Concepts and Practices* (Heretik Publishing House, 2018, in Turkish); *The Heroic Battle of Aintab*,

translated from Armenian with an introduction (Gomidas Institute Taderon Press, 2018); *Pages from My Diary*, translated from Armenian with an introduction (Tarih Vakfi, 2017, in Turkish); and *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide*, with Taner Akçam (Berghahn Books, paperback 2017). Visiting Fellow **Caitlin Procter** gave invited seminars at the Institute for the Study of International Development at McGill University on refugee youth migration from Gaza, and at the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University on the forcible transfer of Palestinians

from East Jerusalem. She presented papers on Palestinian citizenship applications in Israel at the Association of Social Anthropologists Annual Meeting in Adelaide, Australia, December 2017, and on refugee economics in East Jerusalem at the Refugee Studies Centre annual conference at York University, Toronto, October 2017. In March 2018 she was appointed Research Associate of the UNICEF Office of Research (Innocenti), where she co-edits a series of research briefs on the ethics of research among refugees and forced migrants. In June 2018 she was invited to speak with members

of Parliament at Westminster on British government funding to the Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) in light of the current funding crisis. Visiting Scholar **Bedriye Poyraz** published *Hakikatin Darında Durmak: Alevilikte Kadın* (Gender and Alevi) (Dipnot, 2018), which she presented at a conference sponsored by Alevi Institution, Germany, 2017. She gave the talk “Dersim 38 Tertele (Massacre): Reasons, Truths, Claims” at CMES, April 2018. Visiting Post-doctoral Fellow **Nil Tekgül** gave the talk “Emotional Script of the Ottoman Residential Quarters and Guilds (17th and 18th Centuries)” at CMES in April. ▣



William Granara with the 2017–18 cohort of CMES Visiting Researchers.

NEWS AND NOTES

AT THE CENTER

CMES GOES TO WASHINGTON

In March 2018, CMES Executive Director Lauren Montague and Graduate Programs Administrator Elizabeth Shlala went to Washington DC to participate in the second annual Council of National Resource Centers March Advocacy Event. They joined more than 90 Title VI/FH representatives and their federal relations officers from 22 states and the District of Columbia attending the event, representing 36 universities and 5 associations. Participants visited roughly 60 House and 30 Senate offices advocating on behalf of FY18 and FY19 funding for Title VI NRC/FLAS and Fulbright-Hays Programs. According to Miriam A. Kazanjian, Consultant Coalition for International Education, the Coalition's advocacy event was a success; on March FY18 Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs funded at \$72.164 million, the same level as FY17. Title VI funding is continued at the current level of \$65.103 million, and Fulbright-Hays (eliminated in the House bill) was restored to its current \$7.1 million. Both House and Senate "Dear Colleague" letters on FY19 funding yielded an unprecedented large number of sign-ons for Title VI/FH this year, with "investment" funding urged at a robust \$78.5 million for these programs for FY19, including \$70.5 million for Title VI and \$8.0 million for Fulbright-Hays.



Peter DeYoe, Cris Martin, Lauren Montague, Elizabeth Shlala, Jon Groteboer

THE MIDDLE EAST AT NEWTON NORTH

In May, CMES AM students Becca Wadness and Kim Quarantello, along with CMES Graduate Programs Administrator Elizabeth Shlala, spoke to a group of about 300 at Newton North High School as part of "Understanding and Celebrating the Middle East Day," organized by students and history teacher David Bedar. Shlala began with an overview of the history of the region, from the Ottoman Empire to the modern Middle East, Arab Spring, and Syrian migrant crisis. Quarantello spoke about her work with young Syrian refugees in Lowell, Massachusetts, through the Middle East Refugee Service Initiative (MERSI) at Harvard. And Wadness, herself a Newton North alumna, talked about her work with Iraqi refugees affected by the 2017 travel ban.



Becca Wadness, Elizabeth Shlala, Kim Quarantello with Newton North High School students and teacher David Bedar

CMES TUNISIA

SPRINGTIME IN TUNIS

This year the CMES Tunisia Office expanded its range of annual programming with a number of events throughout the spring. In March, Cemal Kafadar, Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies, visited Tunis and gave a talk titled “The Adventures of Coffee From Yemen to Istanbul to London with a Stopover in North Africa: Where Does the Story of Modernity Begin?” And Gülru Necipoğlu, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, gave a talk titled “Artistic Cosmopolitanism from Istanbul to North Africa: The Royal Images of Sultan Süleyman and Hayreddin Barbarossa.”

Also in March, CMES Director William Granara, along with Mark Elliott, Harvard’s Vice Provost for International Affairs and Mark Schwartz Professor of Chinese and Inner Asian History, and CMES Tunisia donor Hazem Ben-Gacem AB ’92, met with Tunisian Prime Minister Youssef Chahed.

In April, the office hosted an information session for the Lakshmi Mittal South Asia

Institute’s Second Annual Crossroads Emerging Leaders Program. This program, a collaboration with the Harvard Business School Club of the Gulf Cooperation Council and co-sponsored by CMES and the Center for African Studies, provides a fully funded opportunity for current or recent first-generation college students from South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, or Africa to travel to Dubai and attend an intensive, multidisciplinary program designed and taught by Harvard faculty. Participants will also attend mentor talks, visit important sites in Dubai, interact with peers, and discuss future education and career possibilities.

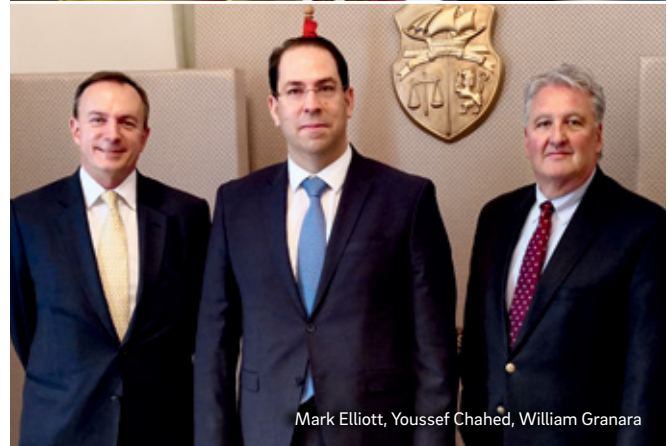
And in May, the office welcomed a capacity crowd of Tunisian high school students, their parents, and counselors at an open house and information session with Maxwell Dikkers AB ’13, Senior Admissions Officer at Harvard College, with additional remarks and insights provided by Hazem Ben-Gacem and current Harvard College student and native Tunisian Nebras Jemel ’19.



Crossroads Emerging Leaders Program session



Maxwell Dikkers, Hazem Ben-Gacem



Mark Elliott, Youssef Chahed, William Granara

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 2018

Iran in 2018: Between Regional Hegemony and Domestic Unrest. A talk with Payam Mohseni, Iran Project Director, Belfer Center, HKS. Co-sponsored with the Iran Project, HKS, and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

FEBRUARY 2018

The Role of Government in Turkey from a Comparative Perspective. A talk with Ali Çarkoğlu, Koç University, and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Sabancı University. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

A Türkü Performance. The Sohbet-i Osmani Lecture Series presents a concert by Cambridge Musiki Cemiyeti, Cambridge Society for Classical Turkish Music.

A Play within a Play, Khurma, 1918 – Riyadh, 2015: Abd al-Aziz, Salman, Succession, and Censorship.

An Arabian Peninsula Studies lecture by Benjamin Braude, Associate Professor, Department of History,

Boston College; Research Associate, Department of Religion, Smith College.

Palestine Ltd: Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory.

A talk with author and journalist Toufic Haddad.

Symposium in Honor of Professor Herbert C. Kelman.

With featured speakers Naomi Chazan, Professor *Emerita*, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Husam Zomlot, Palestinian Ambassador to the United States and Senior Advisor to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

The US–Turkey–Iran Triangle: The Challenges Ahead.

A talk with Aykan Erdemir, Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies; former member of the Turkish Parliament.

MARCH 2018

How to Study War? Insights from Syria. A talk with Jennifer Leaning, MD, François-Xavier



Ali Çarkoğlu, Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Lenore G. Martin



Naomi Chazan

Bagnoud Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights and Director, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

The Importance of Middle Eastern Archaeology to

Middle Eastern History.

A talk with Rocco Rante, Researcher-Archaeologist, Louvre Museum, Paris.

The Place of Ethics in Islamic Law.

A talk with Ahmed El Shamsy, Associate Professor, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago. Co-



Jennifer Leaning



Ahmed El Shamsy



Batuhan Aydagül



HE Dina Kawar, Margot Gill

sponsored with the Committee on the Study of Religion and the Islamic Legal Studies Program, Law and Social Change, and Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law, HLS.

The Future of Palestine and Palestinians: Key Insights from Public Opinion and the Making of Future

Policy. A talk with Karam Dana, Assistant Professor, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, University of Washington, Bothell, and Director, American Muslim Research Institute.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: A Critique of the Contemporary Education

Policy Scene in Turkey. A talk with Batuhan Aydagül, Director, Education Reform Initiative, Istanbul; Member, Advisory Board, Mother and Child Education Foundation; Fellow, Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Societies, London. Co-sponsored with the Center for European Studies.

The Middle East: Articulating a Way Forward. A talk with HE Ambassador Dina Kawar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the US; former Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Muhamed Almaliky, Roger Owen, Marsin Alshamary, Zahra Ali, Joseph Sassoon



Irit Aharony, Nili Gold, William Granara

Growing Up in Contemporary Iraq.

A one-day symposium organized by Roger Owen, A.J. Meyer Professor of Middle East History *Emeritus*, and Muhamed Almaliky, MD, Associate, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard; Director, Iraqi American Institute.

- **Panel I:** *Setting the Scene, The Youth and Its Content*
 - **Panel II:** *Preparing the Next Generation*
 - **Panel III:** *Possibilities for Reform*
 - **Panel IV:** *Iraq and the Region*
- Participants: Eric Davis, Rutgers University; Joseph Sassoon, Georgetown University; Kanan Makiya, Brandeis University; Roy Mottahedeh, Harvard; Ömür Budak, Turkish Consulate

General in Boston; Zahra Ali, Rutgers University; Bilal Wahab, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Payam Mohseni, Harvard; Nawaf Obaid, Harvard; Sayed Hossein Al Qazwini, Islamic Seminary of Karbala, Iraq; Abbas Alkateshi, Rutgers University; Marsin Alshamary, MIT; Safwan al-Amin, Harvard; Layth Sidiq, Berklee School of Music.

A City of Many Faces: Architecture, Literature, and Memory of My Diverse Hometown of Haifa.

A talk with Nili Gold, Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania. Co-sponsored with the Center for Jewish Studies.

From Subjects to Comrades in Arms: Armenians in the Ottoman Army after 1908.

A talk with Ohannes Kılıçdağı, Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow, CMES.

APRIL 2018

Women and Poetry in the Arab Modern World.

A CMES Director's Series talk with Francesca Maria Corrao, Professor of Arabic Language and Culture, Department of Political Science, Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli, Rome.

The Kurds and Turkey: A Transnational Challenge.

A CMES Director's Series talk with journalist and author Aliza Marcus.

Between House and Orchard: Family, Shari'a, and the Making of the Modern Middle East.

A talk with Beshara Doumani, Joukowsky Family Distinguished Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History, Department of History, Brown University.

Reputation, Communal Peace, and Public Order: Neighborhoods and the Politics of Collective Testimony in Istanbul (1730–1754).

A talk with Madoka Morita, PhD candidate, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, University of Tokyo, and Postgraduate Fellow, MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University.



Francesca Maria Corrao



Salim Tamari, Sara Roy, Ian Black, Nadim Shehadi



Himmat Taskomur, Jun Akiba, Cemal Kafadar



Eric Calderwood, Sami Alkyam

Sharḥ: Two Kinds of Sociality and Two Ways of Reading in Three Mughal Commentaries on Saʿdī’s Gulistān. A talk with Prashant Keshavmurthy, Associate Professor of Persian-Iranian Studies, McGill University. Co-sponsored with the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

Emotional Script of Ottoman Residential Quarters and Guilds (17th–18th Centuries). A talk with Nil Tekgöl, Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow, CMES.

The Conflict over Natural Gas Reserves in the Mediterranean: Political Risks versus Economic

Opportunities. A talk with Sema Kalaycıoğlu, Professor, Department of Economics, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul.

Contested Past, Uncertain Future: Enemies and Neighbors in Palestine and Israel. A talk with Ian

Black, Visiting Senior Fellow, Middle East Centre, London School of Economics; author of *Enemies and Neighbors: Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917–2017*.

Framed Forgeries: A Day in Court for Dubai’s Skyline. An Arabian Peninsula Studies talk with Todd Reisz, Lecturer, Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Dersim 38 Tertele (Massacre): Reasons, Truths, Claims. A talk with Bedriye Poyraz, Visiting Scholar, CMES.

Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture. A CMES Director’s Series talk with Eric Calderwood, Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature, University of Illinois.

Writing History, Writing Documents: Self-representation of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Historian-cum-Judge. A talk with Jun Akiba, Associate Professor, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo; Visiting Scholar, Department of History, Harvard.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



A. Tunç Şen



Salim Tamari



Samer El-Karanshawy, Roy Mottahedeh



Brian Klug

Scripture, Translation, and Authority in Muslim South Asia, 18th–20th Centuries. A talk with Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Professor, Department of Religion and Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University. Co-sponsored with the Committee on the Study of Religion and the Islamic Legal

Studies Program, Law and Social Change, and Julius-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law, HLS.

The Conquests of Kisirwan: Ibn Taymiyya and a Claimed-as-Twelve-Shi'i Past. A talk with Samer El-Karanshawy, Carnegie Centennial Fellow,

School of Public Affairs, American University. Co-sponsored with the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program.

Who Rules Iraq? Iraq's Political Transition since 2003. A talk with Muhamed Almaliky, Associate,

Weatherhead Center for International Affairs; Director, Iraqi American Institute.

The Business of Astrology in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire. A talk by A. Tunç Şen, Assistant Professor of History, Columbia University.

The Changing Dynamics of Kurdish Politics in the post-ISIS Era. A talk by Bayar Mustafa, Assistant Professor of Politics, College of International Studies, American University of Kurdistan, Duhok. Co-sponsored with the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

The Great War and the Remaking of Palestine. A talk by Salim Tamari, Shawwaf Visiting Professor, CMES; Professor of Sociology *Emeritus*, Birzeit University; Senior Fellow and Research Associate, Institute for Palestine Studies.

MAY 2018

“If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem”: The Use and Abuse of Jewish Memory.

The 2018 Hilda B. Silverman Memorial Lecture, delivered by Brian Klug, Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy, St. Benet's Hall, University of Oxford.

MUSIC OF TURKISH-OTTOMAN WOMEN COMPOSERS

On the evening of April 26, nearly 100 members of our community gathered for a concert that brought to light the underappreciated contributions of women composers to Ottoman music. The event was held as part of the *Sohbet-i Osmani* series organized by Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies Cemal Kafadar.

The evening began with an introductory talk, “A Woman Composer in the *Hamparsum* Manuscripts: *Reftâr*,” by Zehra Tülin Değirmenci, Professor of Musicology at the Haliç University Institute of Social Sciences in Istanbul. Değirmenci recounted how years of research on musical manuscripts in the Ottoman archives led her to the discovery of a previously unknown female composer, *Reftâr*. *Reftâr* lived in the seventeenth century and was a concubine in the harem of the Ottoman sultan at Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. Harem ladies commonly received musical training, Değirmenci explained. But beyond this, little is known about *Reftâr*’s own life. After describing the texts she used to construct *Reftâr*’s identity, Değirmenci turned to the musical notation in which the composer’s few surviving works are preserved. *Hamparsum* notation, as it is known, is indecipherable to non-experts, but Değirmenci has transcribed several pieces written in it to current notation.

Two of those pieces, composed by *Reftâr*, were brought to life by the quartet of Boston-based musicians who organized the evening’s program: Ceren Turkmenoğlu, Volkan Efe, Michael Harrist, and Tev Stevig. All have performed classical Turkish and world music internationally, and



recently developed the Turkish-Ottoman Women Composers program to bring attention to female composers whose names—and often works—have remained anonymous. It is likely, Turkmenoğlu explained, that the second of the *Reftâr* pieces, the instrumental *Saba Saz Semaisi*, had not been performed in hundreds of years, since Değirmenci discovered the composition deep in the archives.

The program continued with ten more pieces composed by Ottoman women between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. These selections showcased the variety of Ottoman music, from Adile Sultan’s (1826–99) “*Gizlice Şaha Buyur*” to Leyla Saz’s (1850–1936) “*Nerdesin Nerde Acep*.” The former is an *ilahi*, or hymn, in the *hicaz makam*, the latter a *şarkı*, song, in the *hicazkar makam*. Ottoman and Turkish music is typically classified

according to its *makam*, a melodic pattern constructed around a certain set of notes and intervals that governs the progression of a composition.

Most women composers whose work has survived had connections to palace patronage. Adile Sultan, for example, was the sister of two sultans, Abdülmecid I (r. 1839–61) and Abdülaziz (r. 1861–76). Leyla Saz was a poet from an aristocratic background.

In addition to the familiar violin, double bass, and oud, the concert featured several Ottoman-Turkish stringed instruments and drums that are less familiar to American audiences. The rebab, for instance, is a more than one thousand-year-old bowed, stringed instrument made of coconut shell and horsehair, and the saz, a larger stringed lute, is commonly used in Anatolian folk music.

— by *Chloe Bordewich*, PhD candidate in *History and Middle Eastern Studies*

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

VARIATIONS ON A THEME: 2018 H.A.R. GIBB LECTURES DELIVERED BY NASSER RABBAT

Nasser Rabbat, Aga Khan Professor and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, was the distinguished speaker this year for the H.A.R. Gibb Arabic and Islamic Studies Lecture Series, established in 1964 in honor of Sir Hamilton A.R. Gibb, who was a director of CMES as well as University Professor and James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic at Harvard. Meredith Lynn Winter, PhD Candidate in History of Art and Architecture and Middle Eastern Studies, covered the lectures for CMES.

In his two talks, entitled “The Historian and the City between Ibn Khaldun and al-Maqrizi” and “Designing Transcendence: Light in Islamic Architecture,” MIT’s Nasser Rabbat took to the platform April 3 and 5 as this year’s H.A.R. Gibb Lecturer to re-assert the subjective in the formative chronicles of Islamic historiography and the logical structures underlying the oft-repeated themes of Islamic architecture. In the first of his lectures, he presented the historical works of Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE) and al-Maqrizi (1364–1442 CE), situating their writing within a late medieval Cairene intellectual milieu. He

considered how, in a period of fading Mamluk glory, these forefathers of Islamic history sought to explain the causes of their society’s apparent decline. His second lecture focused on architecture to analyze the crowning achievements of Islamic architecture, from the Great Mosque of Cordoba to the Taj Mahal in India. In it, he took a broad look at the centrality of light, a theme that is generally considered an essential feature of Islamic architecture, and identified the formal elements that constituted it. By selecting two topics so all-encompassing and yet divergent, Rabbat united his talks through a subtle point of intersection: the importance of revisionist thinking in the field. The Western Academy, Rabbat’s lectures remind us, interprets Islamic artistic and intellectual culture using received narratives from places and epochs now foreign. Without continually returning to the sources—be they the writings of Mamluk historians or the light-filled spaces of Islamic architecture—the student of these civilizations stands at such a remove that detail and specificity risks turning to trope and generalization. Rabbat

provided a model for doing just this kind of work.

This approach asks us to return to the sources of the discipline—be they literary, physical, or conceptual—not in order to attack base assumptions, but instead to broaden the analytical framework we apply. Rather than reversing the direction of scholarship, it makes slight corrections to course and discourse. As Rabbat stressed in his opening remarks, his comparison of the Mamluk historians Ibn Khaldun and al-Maqrizi was meant to serve as an “addendum” to a work of H.A.R. Gibb himself, “Tarikh,” in which he crystallized the contributions of major figures in Islamic historiography, but somewhat skirted the complex works of these two core figures. Thus, the first lecture gave a close study of the pair, who were in fact contemporaries and knew one another. Whether one takes the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldun or the *Khitat* of al-Maqrizi, the works of these pre-modern historians represent the most heavily quoted sources for the study of the Islamic world. On the one hand, their ubiquity is the natural

result of the fact that the two scholars recorded a rare and not insubstantial amount of detail on topics so varied that they touched upon everything from quotidian urban life to plague. In addition, they drew on sources documenting earlier medieval ruling dynasties of Egypt otherwise lost to history. Perhaps, however, as Rabbat stressed, the works of Ibn Khaldun and al-Maqrizi have endured and remained relevant because their approach seems so familiar to what we now understand as historical inquiry. He emphasized that they, like the modern historian, charted the cycles of cause and effect over time and considered this to be the primary objective of the historian.

But whereas others might characterize this perspicacity as prescience, Rabbat is careful to situate the two contemporaries in proper context. It is true, he tells us, that when Ibn Khaldun was active in fourteenth-century North Africa and Cairo—the center of Mamluk Egypt—his fellow intellectuals were still very much concerned with writing histories driven by the fatalism more often associated in the present day with the tragic heroes of

antiquity. Yet Ibn Khaldun was uniquely positioned to observe, and from these observations, theorize. It should come as no surprise that someone formed in the analytical modes of Islamic jurisprudence should develop what Rabbat terms “the hermeneutics of political history,” but he situates Ibn Khaldun’s particular genius in the lessons gleaned from a lengthy political career in the courts of the Islamic world.

Rather than following a predetermined course, history, as Ibn Khaldun understood it, depended on the power (*sulta*) of the state. Thus the state could affect changes within civilization—good or bad—via the manner in which they exercised authority. And since civilization was, as Rabbat pointed out, synonymous with urbanism, it was the city itself which became the principle theater for observation. In theory, Ibn Khaldun’s approach was objective; it was informed by natural cycles of rise and decline. That said, his characterization of the later Mamluk sultans as having brought about a decline, leaves space for little other than criticism. And indeed, around the time that he was solidifying the theories in which he directly correlated the rise and

fall of cities to that of states, Ibn Khaldun met and influenced a young al-Maqrizi: an Egyptian-born, increasingly disgruntled member of the Mamluk bureaucracy’s scribal classes.

That al-Maqrizi picked up and carried the banner of Ibn Khaldun’s causal history to more pointed effect, Rabbat argues, was a direct result of his high moral and methodological standards (a trait which may have contributed to his subsequent withdrawal from the conservative intellectual circles that received the patronage of the Mamluk

sultans). Having internalized Ibn Khaldun’s framework, al-Maqrizi increasingly linked the city’s poverty and the patrimony’s dilapidation to the failings of the early fifteenth-century sultans and insisted on recording them. After all, in contrast to his well-traveled mentor, Cairo was al-Maqrizi’s only frame of reference and, indeed, his hometown. An underlying nostalgia for the grand city of his youth coupled with an uncompromising eye for detail—and not an inherent capacity for historical transcendence—are what

Rabbat argues has made his work resonate with so many for so long. But impressively, Rabbat is careful not to characterize this as a failing, but merely a feature of his detail-oriented scholarship and of his case-study structure. For what Rabbat does is to take these scholars’ narratives, which are now fundamental to the study of the region (for the Mamluk period, but also most periods before and after), and look for motives and subjectivity in what is so often treated as objective fact. Furthermore, he situates them



Photo: Martha Stewart

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explicitly in the context of our own scribal class—academia—and its founding father, the eponymous professor in whose honor these talks are given. In some sense, Rabbat asks us to see Ibn Khaldun, al-Maqrizi, H.A.R. Gibb, and even himself as part of the same tradition, and as a critical part of the founding myths that underpin all Middle Eastern area and cultural studies.

These, nonetheless, have shaped scholarship and indeed the public notion of what Islamic art and history essentially are. And although he began his second lecture by stating that it (and it alone) contained “no hidden agenda,” the same revisionist approach stood out and linked the first lecture to the second. The second lecture covered Islamic architecture, but it was likewise an intervention into established narratives that does not attack or tear down, but instead subtly re-orient.

His point of departure, the trope of light in Islamic architecture, is so often repeated as to be completely uncritical in the vast majority of its iterations. But Rabbat carefully broke the theme apart, taking his audience through so much content as to constitute a survey of Islamic

architecture in its own right. He demonstrated how light, which is often discussed as an essential feature of Islamic art, can be rooted in structural features. Rabbat noted that, in the post-colonial period, the thematic and structural have become entwined. Although they are deeply interconnected aspects of the study of Islamic architecture, distinguishing the two nonetheless proves fruitful. To illustrate this, he took his audience through three of the intersection points of light as theme and light as structure.

He began by reading the Light Verse of the Quran (*ayah al-nur*) aloud, highlighting in the language of the Arabic itself what he termed the “imperceptible shifts” from the concrete to the abstract. In this way he signaled from the start that, despite constituting the subject of his lecture, there is difficulty in assigning to the physical forms of Islamic architecture the intangible core value of light. His lecture sought to address this inherent contradiction, but also to complicate it. The verse speaks of a niche and an eternal, sacred light, which many associate with the characteristic prayer niche (*mihrab*) on the wall of the mosque indicating the direction of prayer (*qibla*) or

the glass mosque lamps, such as the fourteenth-century example of the Mamluk Sultan Barquq highlighted in the lecture. But Rabbat focuses on examples with light-filled prayer spaces such as the Hagia Sofia in Istanbul, which predates Islam and was originally a Christian church, and the sixteenth-century Selimiye mosque. Located in Edirne, the mosque was designed by the famed Ottoman architect Sinan and, according to the doctrine of the Hanafi legal tradition, was not sacred as no places of prayer were, with the exception of the holy cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. In such examples, Rabbat shows that the hallowed space of God’s light can find reference but not direct expression in mosque architecture. Even the Safavid Shaykh Lutfallah Mosque in Isfahan, with its gleaming, colored tiles receding into a heaven-like dome, and the Spanish Umayyad Great Mosque of Cordoba, wherein a forest of stacked columns and arches manipulates light, do not explicitly reference a purpose or doctrine in which light played a part—even though one could hardly deny light’s formal role.

The breakdown between form and presupposed religious content became all the more

apparent when Rabbat went on to discuss the quintessentially Islamic form of the *muqarnas*. These fractal-like niches appear to have evolved from serving as structurally unobtrusive squinches into the honeycomb decoration which refract and reflect light, now so recognizably Islamic. Rabbat highlighted the fact that so many of the *muqarnas*’ iterations, from the Seljuk Great Mosque of Isfahan to the Nasrid Palace of the Alhambra in Granada, had little intentional link between their formal characteristics and an Islamic interpretation. Even the twelfth-century mosque of Zumurrud Khatun in Baghdad, which has been interpreted as a statement of an Ash’ari conception of God’s nature, recommends little evidence to see Islamic thought as the driving force behind how the structural feature derived its formal qualities. Instead, the seeds of such associations were sown and accrued with time. Certainly, Rabbat seemed to tell his audience, by the seventeenth century, wherein the music room of the Safavid palace of the Ali Qapu and its nearby garden pavilion, the Hesht Behisht, reverberated with reflection and light, it was a light liberated of the bonds of doctrine.

But it was not until his third example, of the *mushrabiyya* (pierced screens or latticework), that Rabbat made explicit his alternative mode of interpretation. He showed how the formal similarities one would like to use to create a single Islamic building tradition—from the stone example in the eighth-century Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus, the stucco work at the Ibn Tulun Mosque of a century later in Cairo, the *jali* screens of India, and through to early modern domestic architecture in North Africa—are not driven by the same logic. The famed spaces of Humayun’s tomb and the Taj Mahal of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mughals were rooted in earlier examples on the subcontinent and fueled by an efflorescence in marble carving techniques arrived to India through trade, whereas the wooden window seats of examples like the Suheimi house in Cairo (1648) were practical solutions to climate and culture seized upon by Orientalists. In fact, Rabbat explained, there is nothing essentially Islamic about light except perhaps that it is fundamentally human to seek it. But this is not to denigrate either Islamic architecture



itself, or the role of light within it. Jean Nouvel’s work at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris (1981-87) and the Louvre, Abu Dhabi (2017), is no less Islamic, he argues, than any architecture explicitly built by Muslims. It is precisely this tension between light as form and light as idea that remains constant. At this point, Rabbat referenced the Quran once more, this time the Promethean Verse 17 of the Surah al-Baqarah: “Mankind sought to emulate the Light of God by kindling a fire, but when it was lit, God retracted His own Light

and left them in darkness.” In this way, Rabbat concluded, Islamic architecture’s fascination with light lay in the most human of desires and one which unites all architecture: to push the limits of the possible.

By linking these “Islamic” features of light as form, *muqarnas*, and latticework to different—indeed entirely distinct—expressions of what we now label as Islamic architecture, he shows us that there is no reason to seek out something “essentially Islamic” in Islamic architecture. In

that way, he both upholds and challenges the founding myths of art history, just as he did with Gibb’s approach to Islamic history. His was not to challenge long-upheld truths or to present evidence that all previous ideas were based in misinformation. Instead, he took us back to the source of our discipline, charting a straighter course for certain aspects of these narratives, characterized at times according to whim and bias, rather than through the logical reasoning and thinking-through of what fact has shown us. ▣

