

# CMES

NEWS

THE CENTER FOR  
MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

الفنون  
والدراسات  
المتوسطة  
والشرقية

الفنون  
والدراسات  
المتوسطة  
والشرقية

2019–20

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## 2019–20 HIGHLIGHTS

*A message from 2019-20 CMES Acting Director Cemal Kafadar*

The original script made it look easy. I was going to be Acting Director for a year, while Bill Granara would enjoy his hard-earned sabbatical leave. The first eight months were indeed smooth, thanks above all to our administrative staff, working with great professionalism and efficiency under (to me) Lady Lauren Montague. Speaking of our staff colleagues, the fall opened with the felicitous news that Carol Ann Young had given birth to Olive, whose visits to the Center were the most cheerful moments of the semester—no contest.

In September, the book I co-edited with Gülru Necipoğlu and Cornell Fleischer, of the University of Chicago, arrived from Leiden in a handsome set of two volumes. *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)* is the product of a group project launched in 2014 with a workshop at Harvard, to offer a detailed analysis of the library collection of the Topkapı Palace through its inventory from 1502 to 1504, listing more than seven thousand titles in different disciplines. The twenty-two essays on the intellectual life of the empire include those of Harvard colleagues Khaled El-Rouayheb, Mohsen Goudarzi, and Himmet Taşkömür and CMES alumni Aleksandar Shopov and Hüseyin Yılmaz, with contributions by Hesna Ergun Taşkömür and CMES students Didar Akbulut and Eda Özel.

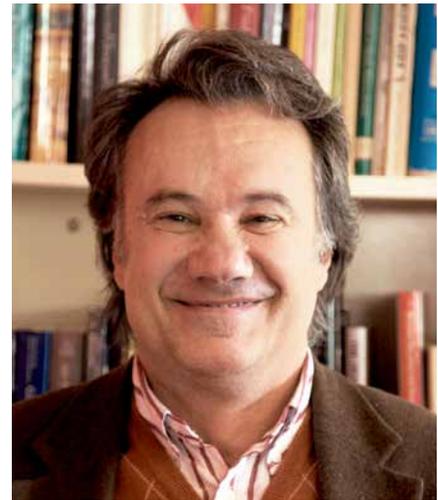
In recognition of her “outstanding contributions to subjects within the humanities and social sciences,” Gülru Necipoğlu was named Corresponding Fellow of the British

Academy. Her cohort includes another dear CMES friend and former faculty who is now in the other Cambridge, namely Khaled Fahmy. Kudos to them both!

Bill Granara’s new book, *Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World*, was the true delicacy of fall 2019. Why should I be embarrassed to promote it? Gülru and I took it along on our journey to Sicily in December, and it turned out to be a fabulous travel companion.

It was a great joy to have my first full year of collegueship with Rosie Bsheer at the Center and to see her take charge of her teaching and advising responsibilities with such poise and generosity. We sorely needed a modern Middle East historian, and we lucked out by having Rosie in that role. The public lecture series that she organized, inviting authors of some exciting new books in Middle East studies, was an intellectual feast, well attended by engaged audiences. (Spoiler alert: the field will be blessed with an accomplished and stunningly original new book this fall, namely Rosie’s own volume on Saudi Arabia.)

Working with Jesse Howell, CMES’s Academic Programs Manager, was another first-full-year collegueship pleasure. Not only did he and I and Lauren collaborate and conspire regularly, but he and I also co-ordinated the proseminar for our superb cohort of first-semester AM students, who gave an engaging and entertaining hard time to different CMES faculty members and guests each week.



I experimented with something new in terms of my own seminars, and that was the highlight of the year for me as a history teacher. No, make that the highlight of several years. Beshara Doumani, a colleague at Brown University, and I structured a seminar around a set of recent books in early modern and modern Middle East history, alternating the venue for each week’s session between Cambridge and Providence. We provided the syllabus and led the discussion, but it was the brilliant Middle East history students (from both Brown and Harvard) who provided the intellectual vibrancy that became our weekly fix. CMES’s logistical support was essential in pulling this traveling circus off.

Our J-Term programs in Tunisia and Turkey went as usual, namely superbly, thanks to Sihem Lamine and Jesse Howell, respectively.

February opened the second semester nicely with two big events. Derek Penslar, who published his eagerly awaited book on Theodor Herzl that month, hosted Noam Shuster-Eliassi, a wizard comedian who

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

knows how to turn matters of gravity into the stuff of hilarity with biting humor and daring. The room was packed, of course, and bursting with laughter. But the other big event had an audience flowing into the corridors, because colleagues and students from many different parts of the university came together to celebrate and discuss Bill's book on Sicily. Engaged does not begin to describe the audience, carried by Bill's passion about his subject.

We had a fabulous lineup for the rest of the spring: concerts (Ara and Onno Dinkjian, Ezgi Stump); film opening (*Zeynep Dadak's Invisible to the Eye*, based on Eremya Kōmürjian's seventeenth-century account of Istanbul); a visit by a celebrated author (Kapka Kassabova); book launches (CMES alum Ayfer Karakaya-Stump; the Harvard team of our *Treasures of Knowledge*); distinguished lectures; and more.

And then came March 2020. I'd better be brief about it. My memory of those days is foggy on many details but vivid when it comes to the feeling of uncanniness that was growing by the hour, as news circulated about an unparalleled challenge that we were facing and unprecedented decisions that had to be made. It was the saddest moment in my thirty-five years as a teacher when I saw the faces of students during those few days when they were still around but had been told that the campus would need to be vacated. I remember running into a senior I know in the lobby of Widener Library. Were we still shaking hands? We certainly were not wearing masks yet. One could still take for granted an encounter with a warm human touch in that sumptuous setting. I asked him how

he felt, and he told me that he was "robbed of his senior year experience that he had been looking forward to for four years." Neither he nor I doubted the wisdom of the University's decision, but we could not clear the heavy air of the feeling of loss that the circumstances dished up.

We were all robbed of the spring 2020 experience. Online teaching was odd but not too bad, and in fact enjoyable in its own right at times. Given the absence of bodily travel, it also inspired us to invite a "commencement speaker" for our own graduating students for the first time. The award-winning author-intellectual Leila Slimani kindly agreed and dazzlingly delivered. But nothing, absolutely nothing, can replace the person-to-person face-to-face corporeal experience of a university, we all realized anew. The rest of the spring and summer, faculty and staff colleagues in the administration and on various committees worked tirelessly to articulate and keep refining new regulations regarding access to and mobility on campus.

Our developing fluency with Zoom allowed us to bring together our globally dispersed PhD students for a three-part workshop titled Research and Disruption. Students were able to share the challenges of conducting research abroad at a time when the pandemic (in tandem with historic floods in one case) caused closures of essential libraries and archives, disrupting all well-laid plans and research expectations. Seeing their commitment and resourcefulness in the face of such obstacles was a jolt of energy for all of us.

The wait for the University's decision regarding fall 2020 was suspenseful, to say

the least, and by the time it was announced, the writ was on the wall.

As if the pandemic was not enough, there was another—dare I say, bigger—cataclysmic event to unfold. On May 23, first day of the Eid, I gave an interview to Medyascope, a Turkish web news channel, where we spoke about pandemics in the past and our current circumstance, simply thinking of coronavirus and the strange "normal" of the lockdown. At some point, I happened to mention that I had read about the fact that a far larger number of Black than White Americans were hit by the virus, and added that "the virus is working on the major fault-line of American society, the racial divide." That much was and is obvious to anyone following the news. But how could any of us have known what May 25 would bring and lead to?

I need not go over the events since the tragic murder of George Floyd on that fateful day. We have posted a letter to our CMES community that is on our website.

And even that does not do it for a full account of the spring and summer. Having already acquired unmatched notoriety by the summer, the year 2020 also gave us the devastation in Beirut, where some dear members of our community, and an extended family of sorts, friends, friends of friends, former visitors, colleagues, students, happened to be witnesses to the tragedy and suffered the trauma. Words do not do much in these instances, but I know that each one of us, wherever we are, would like to express that we share their loss and their deep mourning and look forward to the revival of that glorious city of invincible citizens.

How I wish we had Roger with us for some bottomless conversations about all this.

Will you now think that I am being disingenuous if I say that there is also a lot to be cherished? But there is. Staying close to home, I am thinking, above all, of the remarkable resilience and perseverance of our community as well as the remarkable instances of solidarity that I have witnessed and heard about from so many.

Looking out beyond this Center of our own, I am cautiously but not skeptically encouraged and inspired by the response to all of the above in many corners of the world. I was born in 1954 and have lived my life in an age defined, not unambiguously or unequivocally I am afraid, by decolonization. This is one of the few moments in this age of decolonization when the decolonizing looks sharp and earnest in the very centers of colonialism. Never have I seen the critique of racism, colonialism, and ethnicity- and gender-based violence coalesce and speak to each other so sincerely and productively. At least in academia, I can attest to a sense of purpose and resolve to do things differently in a substantive manner rather than keep relying on statistical advances in inclusivity and diversity.

Maybe it is that September air that blesses us each year with a collective sense of rejuvenation, with the possibility of a beginning. A new semester is upon us. Having started my own sabbatical leave, and thousands of miles away from the campus, I can still feel the buzz, the energy, the optimism and determination no matter what.

This is a university, after all, and we believe in the power of education to make this a better world. That is our work, our vocation, our calling. May you all enjoy good health to continue to contribute to that noble mission. ▣

## NEWS AND NOTES

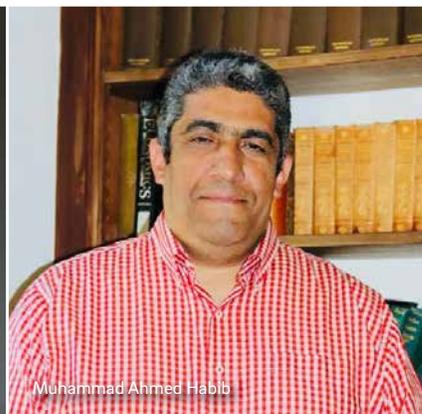
### AT THE CENTER

CMES welcomed two faculty members to Harvard's Middle Eastern studies community in fall 2019. Richard Cozzens and Muhammad Ahmed Habib both joined the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations as Preceptors in Arabic. Cozzens has been teaching Arabic for over ten years. He received his AB in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Music from Harvard and has lived in Syria and Jordan for study and work. Cozzens holds an EdM degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he studied experiential pedagogy and classroom dynamics. In addition to teaching Arabic at universities and schools, he has directed the STARTALK Arabic Summer Academy in Boston since 2011. His professional interests include second language acquisition, developing curricular materials for various levels of proficiency, and Arabic literature and music.



Richard Cozzens

Born in Egypt, Muhammad Ahmed Habib received his MA and PhD in Arabic language and linguistics from Al-Azhar University in Egypt. He was an Assistant Teaching Professor of Arabic at Georgetown University and previously taught at Duke University. His research interests include Arabic linguistics, syntax, and morphology as well as teaching Arabic as a foreign language, Arabic literature, Islamic studies, and Qur'anic studies. He has published a monograph in Arabic, *Usul al-nahw wa masa'ilahi al-khilafiya* (Principles of Arabic grammar and scholarly debates among medieval grammarians) and several academic articles on historical Arabic grammar and contemporary Arabic language pedagogy. He studied the art of Arabic calligraphy at the Calligraphy Institute in Cairo and has given workshops on Arabic calligraphy at universities around the United States.



Muhammad Ahmed Habib

# FALL RECEPTION 2019



Acting Director Cemal Kafadar welcomes the CMES community



Lisa Gulesserian, Reilly Barry



Mitch Bacci, Akif Yerlioglu, Daria Kovaleva



John P. Murphy, Kathryn Lorber Falk, Nana-Korantema Koranteng, Mouhanad Al Rifay



Cemal Kafadar, Meryem Demir



Nevenka Korica Sullivan, William Graham, Muhammad Ahmed Habib, Meryem Demir, Jesse Howell, Melani Cammett



Richard Cozzens, Eleanor Ellis



Siren Çelik

William Graham, Nicholas Boylston, Lenore Martin



Hüseyin Oylupinar, Himmet Taskomur



Dina Khatib, Badriyyah Alsaban

## NEWS AND NOTES

### FACULTY NEWS

**Ali Asani**, Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, published “Nizari Ismaili Engagements with the Quran,” in *Communities of the Qur’an: Dialogue, Debate and Diversity in the 21st Century*, ed. Emran El-Badawi and Paula Sanders (Oneworld, 2019). He curated “In the Eye of Beholder,” an exhibition of art created by students of his course Multi-sensory Religion: Rethinking Islam through the Arts, Smith Campus Center Art Gallery, December 2019. He participated in musical performance “The Covenant of Love: The Poetry, Music and Spirituality of South Asian Muslim Cultures,” with Pakistani singer and musician Ali Sethi ’06 and Grammy-award-winning musician Noah Georgeson, the finale of the Harvard Arts First Festival in spring 2019. He gave the lectures “Pluralism, Intolerance and the Quran,” Annual Dinner of the Harvard Club of North Shore, June 2019, “Understanding Islam in a World of Fake News,” West Vancouver Community Centre, December 2019, and “Understanding Islam in an Age of Polarization and Misinformation,” Inaugural

Muslim Cultures Lecture, University of Calgary and University of Alberta, Edmonton, March 2020. He was awarded the Harvard Foundation Faculty of the Year award for making Harvard a more inclusive place. **Yael Berda**, Gerard Weinstock Visiting Lecturer on Sociology, published “Managing ‘Dangerous Populations’: How Colonial Emergency Laws Shape Citizenship,” *Security Dialogue*, January 2020. **Rosie Bsheer**, Assistant Professor of History, spoke about her research, focusing on her forthcoming book, *Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia*, and her next book project, “Crude Empire,” at the Standing Committee on Women Mini-Symposium, Harvard, October 2019. She was the Inaugural Speaker for the series Scholarship in Conversation, New York University, February 2020. She spoke at the Historians and Public Engagement speaker series, Department of History, Harvard, February 2020. She was a discussant on a panel for Rashid Khalidi’s new book, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance, 1917–2017*, Columbia University, March 2020. And she gave the talk “The Archive Question” at the Middle East

Seminar, Harvard, March 2020. **Melani Cammett**, Clarence Dillon Professor of International Affairs, published, with Ishac Diwan and Irina Vartanova, “Insecurity and Political Values in the Arab World,” *Democratization* 27.5. With Evan Lieberman, she wrote the white paper “Building Solidarity: Challenges, Options, and Implications for Covid-19 Responses,” Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard, April 2020. With Lama Mourad, she wrote “The Twin Crises and the Prospects for Political Sectarianism in Lebanon,” Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, April 2020. And she received Harvard’s 2019 Government Department Graduate Student Association Faculty Mentorship Award. **Jocelyne Cesari** was awarded the 2020 Distinguished Scholar Award of the International Studies Association for her work in religion and politics. **Richard Cozzens**, Preceptor in Arabic, received a Certificate in Teaching Excellence for fall 2019. In November 2019, **Sheida Dayani**, Preceptor in Persian, was awarded an Honorable Mention for “superior scholarship, originality, clarity, and the significant contribution [made] to the field of Iranian Studies” for her PhD dissertation, “Juggling Revolutionaries: A

Theatrical History of Indigenous Theatre and Early Playwriting in Iran.” **Meryem Demir**, Preceptor in Modern Turkish, received a Certificate in Teaching Excellence for fall 2019. In October and November 2019 she published two related short stories in Turkish in *Ek Periodical*, “Fear” and “L’shanah Tovah,” which are inspired by Jewish Quarters in Budapest and Venice. **Gareth Doherty**, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Director of the Master in Landscape Architecture Program at the Graduate School of Design, lectured in both the Critical Humanities Lecture Series and the Arabian Crossroads Lecture Series at NYU Abu Dhabi in December 2019. In October 2019, he spoke at the International Federation of Landscape Architects’ Africa region conference in Tunis and lectured on his book, *Paradoxes of Green*, at the Harvard CMES Tunisia Office. **Kristin Fabbe**, Assistant Professor of Business Administration, with Matt Buehler and Joon Han published “Postmaterialism and Attitudes toward Migrants in Morocco,” *International Studies Quarterly* (forthcoming); “Republic of Turkey,” in *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*,



William Granara, Sihem Lamine, and Gareth Doherty at the CMES Tunisia Office

ed. Sean Yom (Routledge, 2020); with Efe Murat Balıkcıoğlu and Umit Ozlale, “Islamic Capitalism and the Rise of Religious-Conservative Big Business,” in *Business, Ethics and Institutions: The Evolution of Turkish Capitalism in Global Perspective*, ed. Geoff Jones and Asli Colpan (Routledge, 2019). She received grants from Innovations for Poverty Action, Peace and Recovery Program, “Covid-19: Businesses and Social Cohesion in Turkey” (2020) and “Businesses and Social Cohesion in Turkey” (2019); Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Sweden),

“From Revenge to Forgiveness: Strengthening Durable Peace in Post-Conflict Iraq” (2019); and Center for Excellence for Development Impact and Learning, “Syrian Refugee’s Business Development, Refugee Livelihoods, and Regional Trade” (2019). **William Graham**, Murray A. Albertson Research Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor, published the chapter “Revelation,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith*, ed. Daniel W. Brown (John Wiley

and Sons, 2020). **Baber Johansen**, Professor of Islamic Religious Studies, gave the keynote speech, “The Integration of the Mentally Ill into the Ritual Community of Islam through the Cosmic Causes of Time and Space,” at the colloquium Casuistry, Contingency, Ambiguity: New Approaches to the Study of Ethics in the Islamic Traditions, University of Cambridge Faculty of Divinity, July 2019. In September he gave the talk “The Supreme Constitutional Court’s Interpretation of Islam as part of Egypt’s Democratization

Process during the 1980s and 1990s” at the international conference Islamic Studies Today at the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies. He accepted memberships to the Advisory Board of the *Journal of Islamic Research* (Islam Araştırmaları Dergisi), November 2019, and the Faculty Review Board of the *Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School*, December 2019. After five years of research, CMES Research Associate **Susan Miller** completed the manuscript for her new book, “Out of Morocco: The Refugee Crisis in North Africa during World War II,” the story of Hélène Cazes Benatar, who organized a program of relief in Morocco for European refugees fleeing Nazism. Morocco’s first woman lawyer, Benatar was disbarred by the Vichy regime in 1941 following the imposition of anti-Jewish quotas. Braving numerous threats, she helped thousands of Europeans on their way to freedom.” In 2019–20, **Derek Penslar**, William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History, published *Theodor Herzl: The Charismatic Leader* (Yale University Press); “Gender and Economics through a Trifocal Lens,” as part of the forum The Economic Turn in American Jewish History in *American Jewish*

(continued on page 19)

## Q&A WITH ROSIE BSHEER

*Rosie Bsheer is Assistant Professor of History in the Department of History and a member of the CMES Steering Committee. Her teaching and research interests center on Arab intellectual and social movements, petroculturalism and state formation, and the production of historical knowledge and commemorative spaces. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on oil and empire, social and intellectual movements, petromodernity, political economy, historiography, and the making of the modern Middle East. Her first book, Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia, will be published in fall 2020 by Stanford University Press.*

### **What classes have you been teaching since coming to Harvard?**

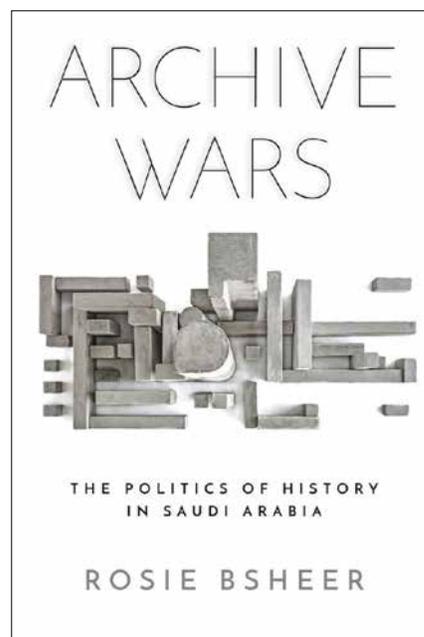
I have taught several courses since joining Harvard University in September 2018. At the undergraduate level, I taught “Oil and Empire,” an advanced writing seminar that explores how the political economy of oil has shaped the rise and fall of empires, the fate of nation-states, the making of “the economy,” the nature of class, gender, and racial discrimination, and the production of historical knowledge and the built urban environment. I also taught a survey course titled “The Making of the Modern Middle East,” which looks at how the region of North Africa and West Asia between the Atlantic and Central Asia was constructed, physically and discursively, as “the Middle East.” Some of the themes the course covers include challenges in the study of the modern Middle East, the politics of modernity, Ottoman reform, the formation of modern

nation-states, colonialism and imperialism, social and intellectual movements, petrostates in global perspective, and religion and politics. At the graduate level, my focus has mostly been on the historiography of the modern Middle East as well as theories and methods in studying the region, in addition to directed reading courses that prepare PhD students to take their general exams.

In fall 2020, I am teaching a new undergraduate seminar titled “Reformers and Revolutionaries in the Arab World.” It will examine the local, regional, national, and international contexts within which social movements have operated in the Arab world from the late Ottoman to the contemporary era. The course aims to introduce students to the kinds of questions and issues that peasants, workers, unionists, feminists, leftists, nationalists, Islamists, secularists, and liberals were dealing with throughout the twentieth century and the imperial, colonial, and postcolonial worlds they were caught in. I plan on going on research leave in calendar year 2021 and so will not be teaching until spring 2022.

### **You are the first tenured or tenure-track historian of the modern Middle East to teach at Harvard since the late Roger Owen retired in 2013. Does stepping into a role that has been somewhat in flux for several years come with any extra sense of pressure or scrutiny? Does it have any effect on the nature of the courses you’ll offer or the material you’ll teach?**

It goes without saying that I have some really big shoes to fill, but at least I do not



have to go it on my own. For one, Roger’s legacy and spirit remain guiding posts for all of us here at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and for me in particular, especially as I occupy the same office he called home for so many years, his office. At the same time, wonderful colleagues at the History Department as well as at the Center have made my landing, and the transition, as smooth as one can hope for. While there was a substantial community of eager students for whom the modern Middle East was a primary or secondary field, they all came to me with excellent training and preparation. This made working with a large group of students, many of whom took their exams in my first teaching semester, somewhat manageable. I was also advising new graduate students, which was an es-

sential part of building the modern Middle East field. The long absence of ladder faculty in modern Middle East history necessarily meant that I had to cater my teaching and mentoring to their diverse methodological and theoretical needs, which I try my best to do even under usual circumstances.

**What is your upcoming book about?**

My book, *Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia*, will be out in September 2020. Taking late-Ottoman Arabia as one of many possible starting points, the book explores how the destruction of one form of

historical memory in Mecca has been complemented by the belated creation and memorialization of an official, secular history in Riyadh. *Archive Wars* explores this dissonance through a genealogical reading of the material, spatial, and symbolic politics of Saudi petromodernity. It addresses the late-twentieth-century production of state archives, memorial spaces, and urban redevelopment plans, and the power struggles therein, as everyday practices of state-making. Specifically, in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, ruling elites in Saudi Arabia adopted measures that aimed to reconfigure state power by

pacifying wartime popular opposition, reshaping the politics of subject formation, and diversifying the petroleum economy. The ensuing struggle over state form—what I call archive wars—revolved around the production of history, the reordering of space, and the repurposing of valuable real estate. Historicizing these practices helps us rethink the nature of modern archival formation as well as statecraft while calling into question scholarly assumptions about the cohesiveness of authoritarian states, and of states in general. Approaching the domains of history-making and urban planning as mutually constitutive,



Rosie Bsheer speaking at the Middle East Seminar in March 2020

## NEWS AND NOTES

contested, and ongoing material practices of state formation complicates conventional understandings of the nature of state power and its imbrication with archive formation.

### **What is the focus your current research?**

I am currently working on a second book project, tentatively titled “Crude Empire.” It examines the history of Saudi Arabian state formation through connected and competing processes of capital accumulation, land redistribution, and infrastructural development. As a legal history of private property ownership in Saudi Arabia, it takes seriously the emergence and centrality of private land ownership to state formation. Doing so sheds light on the kinds of social relations that the kingdom’s successive property laws were meant to engender and the struggles they prompted. Relatedly, the project explores the transnational political, economic, social, and technical networks that have shaped state formation through a study of the various flows of capital and expertise that have enabled the ruling Al Saud monarchy’s imperial conquests in the Arabian Peninsula, and the subsequent transformation of their empire into a state in 1932. Local as well as seafaring merchants operating across the Indian Ocean and South Asia, multinational corporations, and imperial powers financed and constructed the state’s infrastructural and bureaucratic requirements. Along with legal scholars, these have sustained the authoritarian state in its current form, as the project aims to show.

### **You are a co-editor of the *Jadaliyya* e-zine and you have contributed to the**

### ***Washington Post*, *The Nation*, and other popular media outlets. How do you view the relationship between your popular writing and your academic work, and how do they inform one another?**

My popular writing and academic work are dialectically related and have fed into each other in the most productive and lasting of ways. I joined the editorial team of *Jadaliyya* in late 2010, shortly before the e-zine went live, which also occurred on the eve of the 2011 Arab uprisings. I was conducting dissertation research in Saudi Arabia at the time and began to write short pieces that, to some extent, intersected with my research and forced me to think of and write about it in more accessible ways. Over the years, I also worked closely, and on a daily basis, with hundreds of writers, scholars, activists, and artists. Many were directly involved in political organizing across the Arab states and wanted to foreground the struggles they were involved in. Others—as firsthand observers or as analysts—were trying to make sense of the uprisings, the potential for creating a different future, and the major obstacles to doing so, not least of which was the reactionary counterrevolution that ensued.

While my work with *Jadaliyya* initially slowed down my academic writing, it in fact deepened it and made me a more critical thinker and writer. I was learning, almost firsthand, about myriad social and political movements and how they connected with or departed from past struggles, a subject I now teach on a regular basis. The experience also taught me that writing is a communal act; no one person is the sole author of any work, it takes a

village. *Jadaliyya*—as a community of both editors and contributors—was my village.

Writing in other popular platforms also forced me to reconsider, in more pressing ways, the historian’s craft and the responsibilities that come with it—issues of audience, accessibility, positionality, political stakes, and “truth,” among others. Having access to the popular press necessarily implicates one in processes and politics of knowledge production. It is at once a privilege and a responsibility, especially when writing about a place like Saudi Arabia whose own citizens and residents are largely prevented from voicing their opinions, let alone speaking truth to power.

### **You were an Associate Producer of the documentary film *My Country, My Country*, which tells the story of an Iraqi doctor and political candidate during the US occupation of Iraq. What was your role in that project, and how did you become involved?**

I worked on the post-production of the Sundance-sponsored and Oscar-nominated *My Country, My Country*, an intimate portrait of Iraqis living under US occupation and the tragic narrative of how this occupation unfolds. I did so first as a translator and then as an aspiring editor. In 2005, after translating over 180 hours of footage that Laura Poitras had filmed in Iraq, I taught myself how to edit and joined the small team of two in the studio/editing room, day in, day out. It turned out that I was really bad at (and did not like) editing, but I was not so bad at making other things needed for the film happen, hence Associate Producer. ▣

## NARRATING MUSLIM SICILY

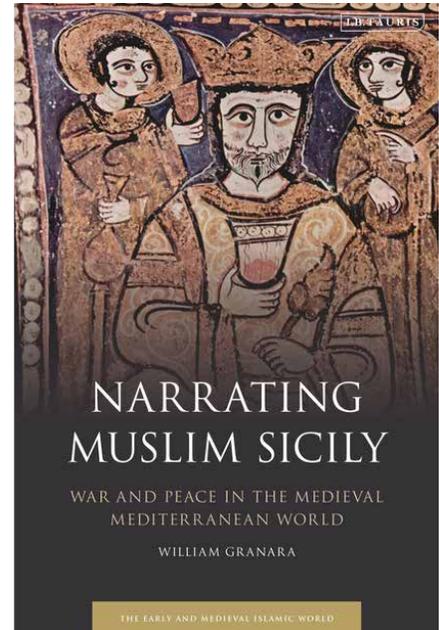
*War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World*

“The history of Muslim Sicily is often thought of in terms of the history of Muslim Spain,” says CMES Director William Granara, who this May was awarded a Walter Channing Cabot Fellowship for his book *Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (I.B. Taurus, 2019). And although there are similarities to their histories, there are marked differences as well. For one, the conquest of Spain came through a series of wars in the name of the *ummah*, or collective Islam. Muslim Sicily, on the other hand, “was the first *jihad* movement in Islamic history that was not coming from a unified Islam. This was a political *jihad* that was launched by an autonomous group of people for very political reasons.” Second, while there exists a wealth of primary sources on the Islamic period in Spain, there are few extant primary sources from Muslim Sicily. “We do have some primary sources from this time, but much of it has been lost.”

Muslim Sicily also becomes “somewhat of a footnote” to the subsequent Norman period, from which many archives and other primary sources remain. In histories of Sicily, Granara says, there typically are extensive treatments of the classical period, and the Byzantine period, and “then there’s about three paragraphs on the Muslims in Sicily—they came in and then they left,” and then extensive coverage of the Normans, the Bourbons, the Angevins, and so on, up until the modern period. “Muslim Sicily doesn’t have a very big press in scholarship.”

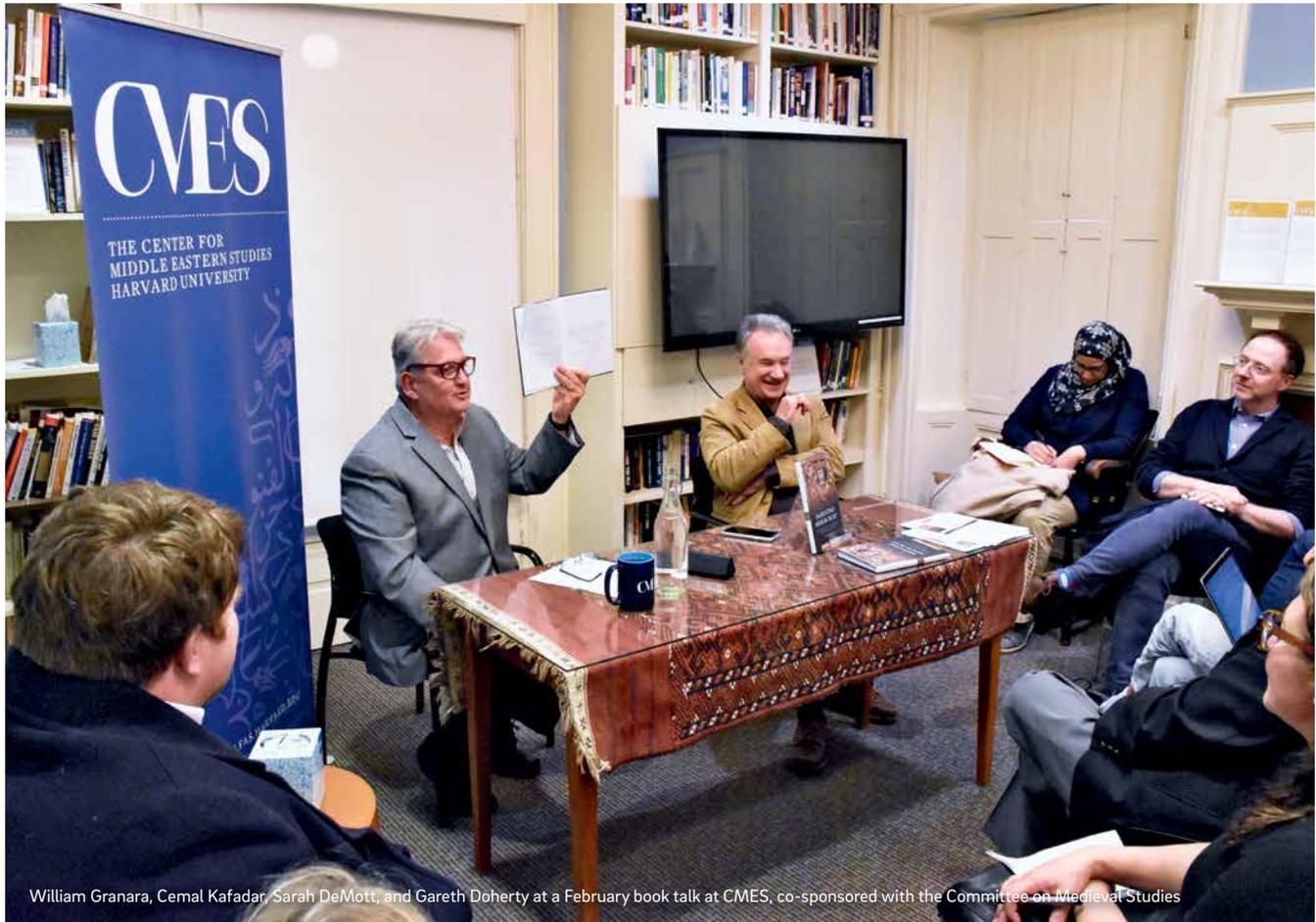
Much of what we do know about the Muslim period in Sicily, beginning around 827, when Arabs came to the island on a military expedition against the Byzantine Empire, and lasting until some time around 1220, when Frederick II ultimately expelled them from the island, comes through the work of nineteenth-century Italian patriot and historian Michele Amari. Amari collected all the manuscripts and printed material dealing with Muslim Sicily that he could find into a volume called *Biblioteca Arabo-sicula*, a depository of historical writings, literature, and biography, and he spent many years thereafter writing his multivolume *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*. A generation of Italian Orientalists followed in his path, “but by and large it was Amari who created a paradigm for the history of Muslim Sicily and developed a schema that has existed up until today. And there’s really no work that doesn’t make some kind of reference to Amari.”

“What I’m trying to do in the book is to move away from that grand narrative of Muslim Sicily,” Granara explains. “I’m trying to look at the gaps, and to deal with questions that in some ways disturb or destabilize the general narratives of what went on. The book is basically about how medieval Arabs—poets, historians, legal scholars, geographers—viewed Muslim Sicily, the way that they interpreted it or remembered it, because most of the knowledge that we have of Muslim Sicily comes from primary sources that were written after the fact.”



Chapter one revisits Amari’s basic narrative of Muslim Sicily, but through the particular lens of *jihad*. “When you read through the chronicles,” Granara says, “every time there was a new ruler, his immediate reaction upon assuming power was to go on some kind of a foray into Christian territory to get new land.” This was partly to gain money and prestige, but much of it had to do with authority and legitimization. “I’m looking at the idea that Sicily was a military operation that eventually evolved into a civil society, but that the *jihad* was always there,” that it became “a motor for authority or for legitimization.”

Chapter two traces the idea of treason. “Muslim Sicilian history begins with treason and it ends with treason,” Granara



William Granara, Cemal Kafadar, Sarah DeMott, and Gareth Doherty at a February book talk at CMES, co-sponsored with the Committee on Medieval Studies

says. Around 827, a Byzantine commander in Sicily named Euphemius decided to revolt against Constantinople, and he petitioned the Aglabids in North Africa to bring in armies to conquer the island. Two hundred and fifty years later, as the island was breaking up into fiefdoms, a warlord named Ibn al-Thumna went to the Normans for help against his rivals, and he

let the Normans into Sicily. “Treason just permeates this whole period of history. It was a trope that was constantly used not only by poets but by geographers and chroniclers.” Sicily was a border area—between east and west, north and south, Christendom and Islamdom—and its own historical and political borders were porous. “People came in and out,

and it was a place you could reinvent your own identity or remake yourself. It was a place that drew in pirates and mercenaries and all kinds of people. Acts of treachery and betrayal were part and parcel of the terrain,” an environment that Granara connects to ideas of loyalty and of identity in Sicily. “This was an island that was never fully Islamicized. It was

never fully Hellenized, it was never fully Latinized, or Bourbonized. Even today you're going to find Sicilians who say we're not Italian, we're something else. Loyalties could be bought and sold, and this was a marketplace for such things."

Chapter three deals with a number of *fatwas* relating to the conquest and rule of Muslim Sicily. In a series of comments and *fatwas* in the ninth century, Tunisian jurist Muhammad ibn Sahnun made a claim that "of all the lands conquered by Islam, none was more unlawful than the conquest of Sicily." And a later Sunni jurist named al-Daudi, who left Sicily when the Fatimid Shiites took over, wrote a series of *fatwas* about settlements of land in Spain, Sicily, and North Africa—most of which are devoted to Sicily—in which the conquest of Sicily was deemed to be illegal according to certain Islamic precepts. Ongoing contestations between Muslim jurists over such questions were as much political as legal, and the *jihad* of Sicily "becomes somewhat of a juridical and political football between Sunnis and Shiites and between certain factions of jurists from North Africa."

Chapter four is a study of the poet Ibn Hamdis, who was born in Syracuse in 1055. Sometime after Palermo fell to Robert Guiscard, in 1072, Ibn Hamdis and his family left the island, going first to Sfax and eventually to Spain, where he worked as a poet in the Abbadid court in Seville. Throughout his life he wrote constantly about Sicily in his panegyrics. "I extracted from his poetry what I would call the trope of *jihad*," Granara says. "But I contest the oft-quoted line that Ibn

Hamdis was a religious zealot. He wasn't a religious zealot at all. He talked about wine and women and dancing, singing late at night and getting drunk. That's really not religious zealotry as far as I know. I wanted to show that much of the political content of the first three chapters was very much part of what Ibn Hamdis was writing about." Like the politicization of Sicilian *jihad* that manifested itself in legal affairs, a similar politicization of *jihad* appears in some of Ibn Hamdis' poetry. "He evolves eventually as a poet who uses *jihad* as a way of liberating his homeland."

By 1090 the Norman conquest of Sicily was complete. King Roger II, however, needed and appreciated Muslim scholarship, agriculture, technology, and culture, and many Muslim poets worked at the Norman court, writing Arabic panegyrics in favor of Roger II and eventually his grandson William II. Chapter five deals with "what I would call the texts and the subtexts of these panegyrics." The poems were written nominally in favor of Roger, "whom the Arabs liked—Roger was pretty good to them," and Normans in the eleventh century did embrace aspects of Arabic culture. But as Roger got older he became more and more Christian, and the island became more populated by Lombard barons, and things became more difficult for the Arabs. "I take the view that these poems were written at a time of high anxiety. They were written by Arabs for Arabs, in high classical Arabic, not the kind of Arabic that was spoken on the street. These panegyrics to Roger were actually odes to the island of Sicily." Apocalyptic images run through the poems, as do references to Caesar, and

a sense of impending loss and doom and the end of the world. "I'm looking at these not so much as poems of praise as poems of survival, and I'm seeing these poets as a community of people who were writing to one another," a dwindling Muslim Sicilian population attempting to keep each other going amid moments of trauma and tension.

Chapter five thus confronts more directly the contemporary idea of *convivencia*, "the myth of interfaith utopia that has held sway in this field for a long time—the idea that Muslim Spain and Muslim Sicily were areas in which Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together and created these wonderful moments in history where there was harmony and peace. There was *convivencia*, but there wasn't one day in the four centuries of Muslim Sicily where there wasn't some kind of fighting going on. What my book is trying to do is to negotiate between war and peace, to question how these forces and conditions fed off each other, sometimes in positive ways."

Ultimately, "what I wanted to do was to look more closely at some of the cracks and missing pieces in Muslim Sicilian history, at questions that have never really been answered," Granara says. "I wanted to look in the back alleys of the traditional grand narrative and explore where post-Amari scholarship can lead." ■

*Hear more from William Granara on this subject in "Muslim Sicily and Its Legacies," episode 452 of the Ottoman History Podcast, hosted by Chris Gratien ([www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2020/02/muslim-sicily.html](http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2020/02/muslim-sicily.html)).*

## TREASURES OF KNOWLEDGE

*An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*

To a historian, few things are as exciting as the discovery of a key document that reveals a hidden world of knowledge. Such a discovery was made in Ottoman history several years ago. Only recently, however, with the publication of *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)* in 2019, has this extraordinary document become widely available.

The “treasures” of the publication’s title are the thousands of books that were collected, produced, and stored in the Inner Treasury of Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace. The “inventory” is a detailed list of these works, commissioned by the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II and carried out by Hayrüddin Hızır ‘Atufi, his royal librarian. ‘Atufi’s 365-page inventory—the only known example of its kind—lists 5,700 volumes and over 7,200 individual titles (many individual volumes were compendiums holding multiple works bound together).

*Treasures of Knowledge* is the two-volume critical edition of ‘Atufi’s inventory, edited by Harvard’s Gülru Necipoğlu, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art, Cemal Kafadar, Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies, together with Cornell H. Fleischer of the University of Chicago. The editors—three luminaries of Ottoman studies—open the first volume with three essays that locate the inventory within the physical, social, and intellectual dimensions of the Ottoman palace at the dawn of

*View from the Marmara Sea of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, with the Inner Treasury (Treasury–Bath complex) (vol. 1, p. 2).*

the sixteenth century. The palace library and its disciplines are further explored in 25 essays by specialists in Ottoman and Islamic book culture and intellectual history. The second volume includes a facsimile of the inventory and a complete transliterated text, prepared by Himmət Taşkömür, Senior Preceptor in Ottoman and Modern Turkish, and Hesna Ergun Taşkömür.

Ismail Erünsal was the first modern scholar to note the existence of ‘Atufi’s inventory, having located it in the Oriental Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The manuscript, MS Török F. 59, was then the subject of a

preliminary study by Miklós Maróth, published in 2003. Shortly thereafter, a copy of the inventory was obtained by Harvard’s Aga Khan Librarian András Riedlmayer. Recognizing the inventory’s tremendous potential, Necipoğlu, Kafadar, and Fleischer first began to work on it independently, and then joined forces. A three-day workshop held at Harvard in 2014 established a working structure that culminated in the 2019 edition, handsomely published by Brill.

The Inner Treasury of Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace was built in the 1460s by Bayezid II’s father, Mehmed II, not long after the audacious conquest of the great imperial city of Constantinople in 1453. Topkapı is a sprawling complex of radiating circles, but it is easy to see the treasury as



its focal point. The double-arched portals of its loggia frame a perfect view of the Anatolian shoreline; below is the sparkling confluence of the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara. Metaphorically surveying two seas and two continents, the treasury is the ideal vantage point from which to take in the expansive domains of the ascendant Ottoman empire. The decision, by a young Sultan Mehmed II, to fill this privileged location with a wide-ranging collection of works of learning is striking.

Ottoman chroniclers and foreign observers alike marveled at the treasury's riches, which included chests of coins, jewels and precious gems, scientific instruments and holy relics. But scholars could only speculate about the identity and number of the manu-

scripts that once filled its bookshelves. 'Atufi's inventory provides a precise account of the library's holdings in 1502/3, twenty years into the reign of Bayezid II. The document does not include the relatively small number of manuscripts written in western European languages. Instead it enumerates the thousands of books written in Islamic languages that were the heart of the royal collection.

Reflecting its place in the linguistic hierarchy of the polyglot Ottoman world, Arabic is the language of majority of the works listed in the inventory. Some 450 titles in Persian are also registered, although actual numbers were higher, as some authors were so obviously tied to the Persian language that no indication was needed (Jalal al-Din Rumi, for example). Turkish works have

their own smallish section, along with works in Chaghatai and Qipchak Turkish, and a limited number of Greek, Syriac, and Old Church Slavonic titles.

Following Bayezid II's directive to "classify each book according to its particular discipline" (vol. 1, p. 24), the inventory divides the library's holdings into twenty sections, organizing them by subject, form, and language. Perhaps reflecting his patron's reputation for piety, the inventory's first section lists copies of the holy Qur'an, followed by a multitude of entries on the Islamic sciences. The remaining categories survey a broad range of subjects from Sufism to horsemanship to medicine and the interpretation of dreams.

Two prefaces are attached to the beginning of MS Török F. 59: one in Arabic and one in Turkish. These invaluable texts articulate the central logic of 'Atufi's classification scheme, which is based on the popularity of subjects and titles. The librarian placed the titles he expected to be most frequently sought at the top of each section, to facilitate the most likely requests. As Necipoğlu points out, the document is not only the only surviving example of its kind from the Ottoman period, it is the only known catalogue from any pre-modern Islamic library that spells



*Left: "Bursa-arched" wall niches with horizontally stacked volumes at the royal observatory in Galata, Istanbul, where chief astronomer Taqi al-Din works with his colleagues, from 1581 manuscript Shahanshāhnāmah, Seyyid Lokman (vol. 1, p. 15). Right: An assembly of Sultan Bayezid II, from ca. 1495 manuscript Shāhnāma-i Malik-i Āhi, calligrapher and painter Darwish Mahmud b. Abdullah Nakkash (vol. 1, p. 184).*

out its organizing principles (vol. 1, p. 3). By prioritizing popularity, 'Atufi greatly expands our understanding of the reading preferences of a palace that was both a royal household and a center for learning and intellectual production.

Topkapı's Inner Treasury was not a static hoard of dusty tomes, but an active circulating library whose collection was an educational tool for the sultan, his family, and the Ottoman elites who lived and studied in the palace complex. These included the pages in the palace school and the women of the royal harem. Notes on certain title pages confirm the circulation of books within the palace (vol. 1, pp. 37, 95). Thanks to this single document, we are able to gain a precise snapshot of the intellectual horizons of the center of the Ottoman world.

'Atufi's inventory is also a reminder of importance of Topkapı Palace as a locus of book production. The inventory includes many works previously obtained by Mehmed II, and many produced for his successor. The latter works were largely produced by the calligraphers, binders, and decorators of the palace workshop that had been organized by Bayezid II. The sultan, who was a trained calligrapher, was closely involved in the production and organization of his book collection. In fact, it is believed that some titles written on the opening pages of man-



Pages from 'Atufi's inventory of the palace library (vol. 2, p. 251).

uscripts were written by the sultan's own hand. In the years following 'Atufi's inventory, the palace collection would continue to expand under the sultan's patronage.

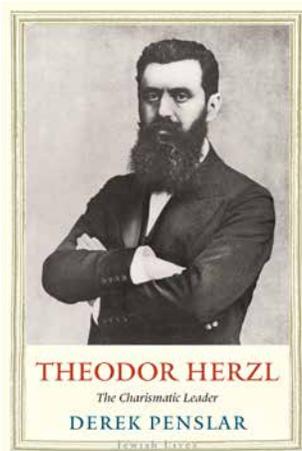
As Kafadar points out, the years after 1484 were noteworthy for the production of a great number of works on the history and lore of the Ottoman dynasty supported by the patronage of Bayezid II. 'Atufi's inventory comes on the heels of this dynamic period that fused the sultan's intellectual and polit-

ical ambitions. While scholars from the Ottoman lands had felt undervalued by his father, who had a reputation for favoring foreigners, many of the authors and intellectuals promoted by Bayezid II were born and educated in Ottoman territory. 'Atufi himself was from Amasya, the intellectually lively if provincial Anatolian city where Prince Bayezid also spent the first 27 years of his life.

Hayrüddin Hızır 'Atufi lived a long and productive life after completing his inventory. Unlike some of his contemporaries in Ottoman service, he never obtained great fame as a scholar or author. He served as a tutor in the palace school and as court librarian. He had a special interest in medicine and dream interpretation and four of his works on these subjects are listed in the inventory. Like his patron Bayezid II, he tends to be overshadowed by the brilliance of others. The sultan and

his librarian both labored to give coherence and order to a vast and cacophonous realm. As a scholar and author, 'Atufi would no doubt prefer to be remembered for his own works. Yet, after lying dormant for half a millennium, it is his painstaking work as a compiler of the works of others that proves invaluable. □

—Jesse Howell, CMES Academic Programs Manager and Associate Director of the AM Program



*History*; “What’s Love Got To Do with It? The Emotional Language of Early Zionism,” in *The Journal of Israeli History*; and “Comparing the Incomparable: Analytical Tool or Moral Stimulus?” in a forum on Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg’s edited volume *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, in *The Journal of Genocide Research*. In view of the Covid-19 related inaccessibility of the library, **Intisar Rabb**, Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, published a Field Guide for Digital Islamic Law on the Islamic Law Blog ([islamiclaw.blog](http://islamiclaw.blog)). From discussion guides to links to translated primary sources, this guide features online resources for Islamic law and history, and related topics, in virtual settings. The guide includes Harvard

resources, a collection of over 100 global online digital resources, and a set of teaching resources. Also on the Islamic Law Blog, she curated and published the series Covid-19 and Islamic Law, including roundups of global developments in Islamic law and scholarly commentary on plagues and pandemic in Islamic history. She published “Interpreting Islamic Law through Legal Canons,” in *Routledge Handbook of Islamic Law*, ed. Khaled Abou El Fadl, Ahmad Atif Ahmad, and Said Fares Hassan (Routledge, 2019); and, with Bilal Orfali, “Islamic Law in Literature,” in *Arabic Literary Culture: Tradition, Reception, and Performance*, ed. Margaret Larkin et al. (Harrasowitz, 2019). She gave the talk “Transitions in the Middle East” as a workshop participant in the Middle East Legal Studies Seminar hosted by Yale Law School in Madrid, Spain, January 2020. She presented the paper “The Qur’anic Uncanon” at the conference The Transmission and Reception of the Qur’an in Light of Recent Scholarship at Harvard, December 2019. She was a panelist at a book talk for Elizabeth Kamali’s *Felony and the Guilty Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 2019)

sponsored by the Harvard Law School Library, November 2019, and a book talk panelist at the American Society for Legal History Wallace Johnson Early Career Workshop, HLS, October 2019. She received an S. T. Lee Innovation Grant, in partnership with Harvard Law School Library Associate Director Kevin Garewal, for StackLife 2.0, a search and visualization tool to browse Islamic law and history sources in Harvard Libraries. **David J. Roxburgh**, Prince Awaleed Bin Talal Professor of Islamic Art History, continued in his role as Chair of the Department of History of Art and Architecture during academic year 2019–20. He offered four courses: Genghis Khan and His Successors: Art in the Wake of the Mongol Conquest, a lecture course; Islam vs. Image? Visual Representations in Islamic Art, a freshman Seminar; Medieval Architecture of Greater Iran and Central Asia, a proseminar; and co-taught the revamped lecture course Landmarks of World Architecture with Lisa Haber-Thomson. For his landmark, he lectured on the Alhambra, Granada. At the beginning of the academic year, he presented “The Birth of Art/Craft in Mid-19th Century Iran: Dialogues between Subject,

Medium, Composition,” at the conference The Art Academy Outside Europe, held at the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, organized by Yukio Lippit and Claudia Mattos. In November 2019, he delivered the paper “New Technologies of the Image in 19th-Century Iran,” for the conference Re-Thinking Modernity: Global Art History Conference, organized by Dean Shao Yiyang, at the Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing. During the same visit he gave a keynote lecture on “The Timurid-Ming Embassy of 1419–1422” and the broader topic of artistic exchanges between East and Central Asia. He visited several exhibitions in Beijing and made studio visits to contemporary artists Xu Bing and Wu Jianan. He continued as President of the National Committee for the History of Art, the US Affiliate of CIHA, and to participate in the CIHA board meetings and planning related to the 35th Congress on the theme of motion, divided between Florence (Motion: Transformations) and Sao Paulo (Motion: Migrations). The NCHA organized two panels for the College Art Association annual meeting—held at Chicago in February 2020—to prepare for the Brazil congress

## NEWS AND NOTES

and also continued to support the global conversations panels and events organized by the CAA International Committee and the Getty Foundation. The Brazil congress is now postponed until August 2021. His publications in 2019 include “Emulation in the Arts of the Book: Baysunghur’s Two Kalila wa Dimna Manuscripts,” in *The Arts of Iran in Istanbul and Anatolia*, ed. Olga Davidson and Marianna Shreve Simpson (Harvard University Press and the ILEX Foundation, 2019); “The Art of Writing and Its Collection in the Islamic Lands” and catalogue entries in *Bestowing Beauty: Masterpieces from Persian Lands—Selections from the Hossein Afshar Collection*, ed. Aimee Froom (Museum of Fine Arts and Yale University Press, 2019); and a review of *Art, Trade, and Culture in the Islamic World and Beyond: From the Fatimids to the Mughals: Studies Presented to Doris Behrens-Abouseif*, ed. Alison Ohta, Michael Rogers, and Rosalind Wade Haddon (Gingko Library, 2016), in *Review of Middle East Studies* 53.1 (2019). **Mariam Shebani**, Lecturer on Islamic Studies at HDS, gave the talks “A Tale Of Two Tariqas: The Iraqi And Khorasani Shāfi’ī Communities

(4th/10th and 5th/11th Centuries),” at the Middle East Beyond Borders Workshop, February 2020; “Legal Canons and the Evolution of Islamic Legal Philosophy,” at the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Exeter, UK, December 2019; and “Judicial Misconduct and the Critique of Adjudication in Medieval Damascus: The Case of the Orphan and Her Cunning Guardian,” at the American Society for Legal History Annual Meeting, Boston, November 2019. Her article “Innovation, Influence, and Borrowing in Mamluk-Era Legal Maxim Collections: The Case of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām and al-Qarāfi” is forthcoming in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. **Kristen Stilt**, Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, is also the Faculty Director of the Program on Law and Society in the Muslim World and the Animal Law and Policy Program. During the 2019–20 academic year she continued work on her book project, “Halal Animals: Food, Faith, and the Future of Planetary Health,” conducting research in India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the UK. She gave the keynote address on Islamic Animal Rights at the inaugural event of the Cambridge Centre for Animal

Rights at the University of Cambridge; presented the paper “Foreign Animals in Middle Eastern Markets” at the University of Vienna Animals in the Middle East Workshop; gave a presentation on Family Law and Legal Change at the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore; spoke about Animal Law in the American Legal Academy at the NALSAR University of Law in Hyderabad, India; presented draft chapters of “Halal Animals” at the HLS Animal Law and Policy Workshop series; participated in the Wesleyan University Symposium on Ethics and Animal Ethnography; and gave the Inaugural Lecture in Animal Rights Law and Policy at the University of Victoria. She published “Trading in Sacrifice” in the edited volume *Studies in Global Animal Law*. Under her directorship, the Animal Law and Policy Program launched the Animal Law and Policy Clinic this academic year. Stilt also served as Deputy Dean of HLS this year and continues to co-convene the Middle East Beyond Borders graduate student workshop with **Malika Zeghal**, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life.

## STUDENT NEWS

### PHD STUDENTS

**Chloe Bordewich** published the article “Diaries of an Ottoman Spymaster?: Treason, Slander, and the Afterlife of Memoir in Empire’s Long Shadow” in the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, July 2019. **Caroline Kahlenberg** published the article “New Arab Maids: Female Domestic Work, ‘New Arab Women,’ and National Memory in British Mandate Palestine” in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. **Mira Xenia Schwerda** successfully defended her PhD dissertation, which focuses on the impact of photography on politics during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911), in the spring of 2020. Her dissertation was awarded honorable mention for the Alwaleed Bin Talal Prize for Best Dissertation in Islamic Studies. In her final year at Harvard, she presented her research at international conferences in Berlin and Istanbul and chaired a panel on new research on Qajar Iran at MESA in New Orleans. In November 2019 she delivered an invited lecture at Edinburgh University titled “Negotiating Constitutionalism and Conflict in the Qajar Era: A Close Reading of the ‘bast’ at the British Legation.”

## CONGRATULATIONS 2020 GRADUATES!

### AM PROGRAM

- **Badriyyah S. Alsabah**
- **Sultan Faiez Althari**
- **Hannah M. Clager**—*Thesis:* “The ‘Houthification’ of Education in Yemen: A Revival of Pedagogical Battlegrounds?” *Advisor:* Rosie Bsheer
- **Eleanor Takenaka Ellis**—*Thesis:* “The Afterlives of Aftershocks: Collective Memory and the 1992 Cairo

Earthquake.” *Advisor:* Soha Bayoumi

- **Thomas Roland Harris**
- **Ryan Herring**
- **Maria Khoury**—*Thesis:* “Ghosts and Parallel Times: The Haunting of Palestinian Citizens of Israel.” *Advisor:* Rosie Bsheer
- **Kit Hoi (Jerry) Li**

### JOINT PHD PROGRAMS

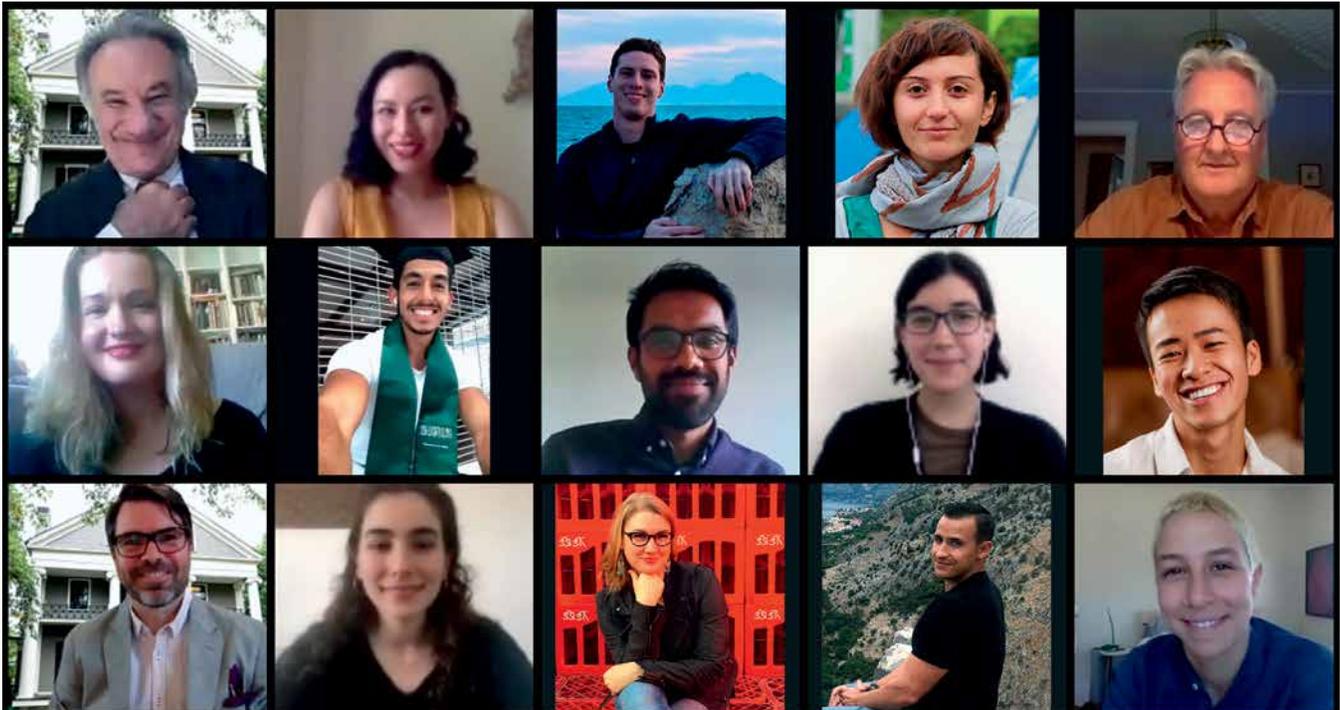
- **Gwendolyn Collaço**—

*Dissertation:* “The Image as Commodity: The Commercial Market for Single-Folio Paintings in Ottoman Istanbul, 17th–18th c.” *Advisors:* Gülru Necipoğlu and David Roxburgh

- **Ekin Kurtic**—*Dissertation:* “Sedimented Encounters: Dams, Conservation, and Politics in Turkey.” *Advisors:* Ajanthan Subramanian, Steve Caton, and Christine Walley (MIT)
- **Arafat Abdur Razzaque**—

*Dissertation:* “The Sin of Ghība in Early Islamic Thought: Disciplining the Tongue in the Zuhd Tradition and Its Late Antique Background.” *Advisors:* Afsaneh Najmabadi and Roy Mottahedeh

- **Mira Xenia Schwerda**—*Dissertation:* “How Photography Changed Politics: The Case of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911).” *Advisors:* David Roxburgh and Gülru Necipoğlu



Cemal Kafadar, William Granara, and Jesse Howell with 2020 CMES AM and PhD graduates

## NOVELIST LEILA SLIMANI OFFERS INSPIRATION TO CMES GRADUATES AND GUESTS

*On May 27, CMES's virtual commencement celebration included an address by French-Moroccan novelist Leila Slimani, bestselling author of The Perfect Nanny, one of the New York Times Book Review's 10 Best Books of the Year, and Adèle, for which she won Morocco's La Mamounia Prize. Slimani is French president Emmanuel Macron's personal representative for the promotion of the French language and culture and was on Vanity Fair France's annual list of The Fifty Most Influential French People in the World.*

I want to congratulate all the students, and I'm very, very sorry I have to do that in front of a computer. I would have loved so much to do that in front of you and to meet you and to have the time to know you. But I want to tell you that you should be very proud for your hard work, for your ambition, and you should enjoy this moment and enjoy those joys.

I don't know if you know this very famous French writer Paul Nizan. He was born in 1905, he was a friend of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, and he wrote a novel called *Aden, Arabie*. And the first sentence of the novel is, "I was twenty years old, I won't let anyone say that these are the best days of our lives." And you know what? I think that for me Nizan is wrong, because I know deep inside me that I envy you, I envy your youth. Because for me, my twenties were the best days of my life. Those who get old like to reassure themselves. They will tell you that you are stronger at thirty, more serene at forty, wiser at fifty, and that may be true. But the

youth, your youth, is probably the most exciting moment of life. When you are twenty you have everything to win. When you are forty, and I am forty, you have a lot to lose.

When I was asked to write this address to you, I began remembering my academic years and asking myself what I have learned from them. So today I want to share with you my own experience. When I was twenty, I had no idea of who I was, or who I wanted to be. But I had ambition. I wanted to change the world. I was not conscious at all of all the difficulties, all the obstacles, or the challenges I was going to face. And all the better for that. Because if I had listened to all the people who told me that my dreams were impossible to achieve, I wouldn't be here today in front of you.

When I was eight, my father asked me, "What do you want to do when you grow old?" At that time a little girl would respond, "I want to be a princess," or maybe an actress, or perhaps a doctor. But I said to my father, "I want to be paid to think." I remember that my own grandmother was very, very shocked by my answer, and by my confidence. She said to my mother that I was very presumptuous, and that it was a shame. But my father understood. I even think that he was proud. He said to me, "You are right—there is no better life than a life dedicated to knowledge."

I grew up in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. In the eighties it was a tiny little town, quite boring, with no bookstores, no cinema, no entertainment. At that time I felt I was living independently of the world.

I felt that nothing that was happening around me mattered. The real life was elsewhere. And if I wanted to become someone I needed to leave my country. I needed to leave my family and all that I have ever known. But I had no plan, no strategy. I left my country. I went to Paris to study literature and philosophy. I was seventeen.

The world in which I arrived was completely unknown to me. And of course I experienced moments of doubts, of terrible loneliness, and sometimes I had the desire to give up and go back home. But the truth is I don't really remember those dark moments. What I remember is the excitement, the freedom, the joy of spending all my hours reading books and studying. Because I was very conscious of my privilege. You have to remember that I come from a country where 70 percent of the women in the '80s were illiterate. My grandmother couldn't read or write.

My nanny, who inspired the main character of *The Perfect Nanny*, couldn't either. She never went to school. She taught me how to walk. She knew me when I was a baby. She spent nights with me when I was sick. She was probably the most important person in my life when I was a little child. And I remember how she suffered when I began to go to school. Every day I would come back, and I had learned something new. I was six, she was forty. I could write my name, and she couldn't.

I always knew that learning, studying, was not only something you have to do to succeed in life, but it is an extraordinary

privilege. My grandmother, my nanny, they lived in the dark. All their life, they were dependent on someone, especially on men. They couldn't read a map and find their way. They couldn't read the prescription of a doctor. They couldn't read the law and defend their rights.

Studying is of course the best way to emancipate yourself and to defend your dignity. So I was in Paris, and I entered Sciences Po. And I remember very precisely my first day there because it was September 12, 2001. And I had just turned twenty, the world had changed, and I was in Sciences Po to study geopolitics and international relations.

When I got my diploma I had different options. I could become a diplomat, a journalist, or I could enter politics. At that time, a very famous French party contacted me, and the man said, "You are a woman, you are from Maghreb, and people see you as a Muslim. That would be the jackpot for us. We want you. Come in our party, and you can be sure we will give you extraordinary opportunities." This man asked me nothing about what I wanted, about my convictions, my dreams, my ambitions. The only thing he was seeing in me was an image, a cliché. Of course I refused what he offered, and I never had regrets. Don't let people manipulate you. Don't choose a way because you think it's going to be easy. Ask and demand that



people value who you really are, and not only what you represent.

I was twenty-two and I wanted to leave. I wanted to enjoy my youth. So I took a job as a waitress and I decided to study dramatic arts. For three years I acted on stage and in movies also. I read the most beautiful texts of the repertoire and I learned a lot: how to speak in public, how to fit in a group. I learned not to be afraid of being ridiculous, not to be afraid at all. But I didn't become an actress. And to be really honest, I was not very talented and I couldn't imagine a life waiting that someone would call me for a role.

So I submitted an application to the newspaper *Jeune Afrique*. At that time I had

never written an article. I knew nothing about journalism. But when I arrived in the office of my future boss, I acted very confident. I said that I was not afraid at all of traveling all over Africa, that I had contacts over there, which was a lie. Anyway, the managing director looked at me and he said, "I am going to put you in the pool. If you can swim, good for you. If you drown, I'm sorry for you." That was quite rough, but I think it was good advice. Because there are a lot of things in life that you can't learn in books, obstacles that you will face and for which your training will be useless.

So you have to do with what you have, with what you are. You have to learn to

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adapt yourself, to not be afraid to jump. So I tried to use my personal experience, my dreams, my souvenirs, and I was not afraid of making mistakes. I was not afraid of failing. I traveled all over Africa, and to be really honest, sometimes I was dying of fear. But I did it. And I discovered something about myself—that I was capable of doing that.

But I didn't want to be a reporter either. And I was not ready for all the sacrifices you have to make if you want to have this kind of life. I wanted to be a writer. Since I was a little girl I've always dreamed of writing a novel. I was thirty, and I still haven't written this novel, and I was telling all my friends, "You'll see, you'll see—one day I will write a novel." And I was afraid that I was going to become a woman in her forties, in her fifties, saying to her friends, "You'll see, you'll see—one day I am going to write a novel.

So I decided to quit my job and to take one year—not more—to write a book. If at the end of this year, I haven't written a book, I was decided to continue my life as a journalist and never talk again of the novel I was going to write. So, the day after my resignation, at eight am, I began to write a novel. After a few months, I sent it to all the publishing houses in Paris, and they all refused it. And they all said to me that it was really bad. But I was not ready to give up. So I threw the first novel away and I wrote another one. It was accepted by Gallimard, and a few months later, it was a success, and I was a writer.

Samuel Beckett wrote, "You tried, you failed, whatever. Try it again, fail again, fail better." The life of a writer is a life full of

failures, of frustration. You fail all the time. Even when you finish your book, you have the feeling you failed to write exactly what you wanted to write. But it doesn't matter. What matters is that you are doing exactly what you wanted to do. What matters is that the fight is meaningful.

Don't let failure discourage you. You have to take risk and not be afraid to waste time. No time is wasted, if you are enjoying what you do. Because we live in a world, a very utilitarian world, where everything you do is supposed to be for a reason. But let this reason be pleasure, enjoyment. You should give yourself the right to do something just because you want to do it.

When I left Morocco, my father said to me, "Work as hard as you can. And if you fail, don't ever tell me that's because you're a woman or an Arab—I don't care about your excuses." It takes a whole life to know who you are, and maybe you never know who you are. And to be honest, I'm not a big fan of the verb "to be." I prefer the verb "to become," or "to believe." In that matter, I think I'm an existentialist. I think that we are what we do, that we are defined by our actions, our beliefs, our fights.

On my passport, it's written that I am a woman, that I am Moroccan. So what? What does it say about me? Not much. So if someone tries to reduce me to that, I refuse it. That's what I love about being a writer: When I write, I can be whoever I want. I can put myself in other people's shoes. I can be a man, a child, an old Russian aristocrat, or a poor Caribbean child. Writing fiction taught me that there is a link between all human beings, that emotions are universal, and that we are able to understand each

other, even if we have nothing in common.

So don't give too much credit to all the labels, the cliché, and seek for complexity; beware of Manichaeism and ideologies. Affirm your own singularity far away from the crowd and from conformism. Don't try to please, or to seduce. We live in a world obsessed with the number of likes. But I think you should always prefer the truth to the approbation of others.

And as a conclusion, I would like to speak especially to the young women among you. Because when I grew old, I became aware of the fact that one of the most difficult things in life is to conciliate your personal life and your professional ambition. No one ever asked a man, "How do you be at the same time a good father and a good professional?" As a woman I am being asked this question all the time. For a man, it's natural to be ambitious and to have a family. But as a woman, people are going to make you feel guilty. They will insinuate that you should sacrifice your own ambition for your family.

If I have any advice to give you, it is to read a text, a wonderful text, by Virginia Woolf, called "The Angel in the House." In this text, she explained that we are raised, as women, not to be selfish. We are used to think of other people before thinking of ourselves. But don't let the guilt stop you. Be selfish sometime and accept the idea to disappoint people. I disappoint my children, my husband, my own mother. But I am a free woman. And freedom is not free. So beware of the myth of the superwoman, because the truth is, you can't succeed all the time, but it should not be your problem. So be free. ▣

## I, ISTANBUL

*Selina Xu, Harvard College '21, traveled with the 2020 CMES Winter Excursion to Turkey. This article originally appeared in slightly different form on her personal website, Selina Xu: Telling Life Like a Story (selinaxu.com).*

The cypress and plane trees, the rooftops, the heartache of dusk, the sounds coming from the neighborhood below, the calls of hawkers and the cries of children playing in mosque courtyards mingled in my head and announced emphatically that, hereafter, I wouldn't be able to live anywhere but in their city.

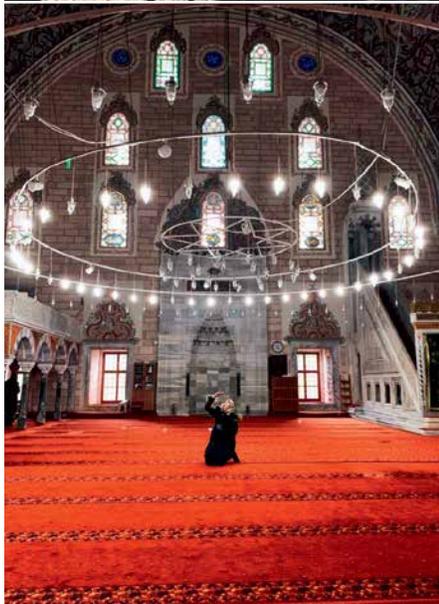
—*My Name Is Red*, Orhan Pamuk

Funny how all you need is a novel to throw you back into the feeling that a city gave you. Memory isn't too reliable now that I'm sitting on my bed in Cambridge trying to recollect the city from the glimpses and fragments on my phone camera roll. And Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*.

Istanbul has to be seen from up above—the balcony of the Galata Tower, the mountaintop views at the Pierre Loti Café, on the cable car from the waterside at Eyüp. After the ascent, or during, there's a breathtaking moment where your eyes drink in the three peninsulas: on one side, Asia, the other, Europe, and then the historical side with a skyline of minarets, domes, coastal villas, electric lines.

As I type this post, pausing ever so often, I am casually flipping through the dog-eared pages of *My Name Is Red*, which has traveled with me from Istanbul to Singapore to Cambridge—I started reading it on the rocking





ferry across the Golden Horn and finished it on the red-eye flight from Istanbul to Singapore. Even a continent away, now, the pages still immediately engulf me in the chill and mystery of winding streets; the sheets of rain tickling a Bosphorus that has seen far too many conquerors and armies on its banks; the incredible awe that leaden domes, cypress trees, stone walls, minaret towers inspire at first sight; the bitter burn of *çayı* (tea) when gulped down too fast; the clink of teaspoons against the curve of the glass; the sound and fury of lives past; the romance of Istanbul.

Words, photos, and memories coalesce.

I think of sensory vignettes. The meat and onion-filled *mantı* (dumplings) with a generous scoop of yogurt, topped off with a sprinkling of red pepper flakes. Striking blue tiles. Ornate stalactite patterns. Golden pyramids of *baklavas*. Cigarette butts on the floor, embers glowing. A hint of fog, always. The heartache of dusk dissipated by the fluorescent glow of the streetlamp. The city is, to the eye, a painting.

*I, Istanbul*, the city sings and intones. A first-person proclamation that asserts its undisputed character amidst modernization.

But Istanbul is so hard to unravel. History assaults you on the streets, so saturated that it seeps in through your soles with all its layers and contradictions. Once the epicenter of Christendom and then the heart of the Muslim caliphate when conquered by Mehmed II in 1453, Constantinople was the seat of the Sultan till 1923—the year the Turkish Republic was founded. The modern republic was for Turks, an ethnic-driven nationalism that would erase and stifle the breathing space even further (after the 1915 Armenian genocide) for the minorities.



Who gets to define who counts as a citizen? In our two weeks there, we saw Greek schools and Orthodox churches, Armenian foundations, Syrian and Iranian restaurants.

What is Turkishness if these people have all lived on this piece of land for centuries, through the rise and fall of three empires? What is it like to grow up in a state where

you don't officially belong and yet its lands are all that you've known?

On January 19, 2020, I attended the first protest in my life, commemorating Hrant Dink's assassination 13 years ago outside what was once the offices of the Armenian weekly *Agos* and now Hrant Dink's Site of Memory. People held placards that read "Shoulder to shoulder against fascism" and "We are all Hrant. We are all Armenian." A Turkish journalist of Armenian heritage, Dink fought for minority rights in a country where such causes counted as violating Article 301 of the Turkish penal code (penalizing remarks against the state or insults against *Turkishness*).

If there's one place I recommend that you visit in Istanbul apart from Hagia Sophia, it would be the Site of Memory. I knew nothing about the man before visiting but was moved by his fiery sense of justice and bold crusade for his beliefs. His words would eventually cost him his life, but I walked away realizing that ideas are bullet-proof. They live on.

May my pen too never falter.

Istanbul, Constantinople, Byzantium,  
 call you by whatever name:  
 Be a book on the palm of my hand,  
 let me run my fingers over your ridges,  
 your weathered pages,  
 blemished margins,  
 the ink illegible,  
 in a font of sorrow,  
 a palimpsest of empires and histories,  
 layer upon layer,  
 teach me how to read you.

Good night x

## CMES MARKS FOURTH WINTER TERM IN TUNISIA

*In January 2020, NELC PhD candidate Haci Osman “Ozzy” Gündüz joined a dozen other graduate and undergraduate students from across the University for CMES’s fourth annual Winter Term Study Excursion to Tunisia. Here is his account of the trip.*

On Saturday, 1st of Jumādā al-ʿŪlā in 997 (March 18, 1589), ‘Alī b. Muhammad al-Tamgrūtī (d. 1594/5) set off on a diplomatic mission to the court of the Ottoman sultan from his native Tamegroute in Morocco. His account of the journey makes it clear that he was not fond of sea travel. Raging storms and fear of pirates prowling the North African coast added to his distaste of the sea. He was happiest when his feet were firmly on the ground. Tunis was one of the stops in this arduous journey to Constantinople. One morning he roamed the streets of the city as the “forehead of horizon peaked through the veil of dusk.” He was struck by the beautiful gardens and pleasant skyline of timeless buildings; it was the perfect coastal town. The city, in no doubt, al-Tamgrūtī notes, deserves the poems sung for it, like the following line he cites in his work *al-Nafha al-miskiyya fi al-safāra al-Turkiyya*:

Tunis is the best of abodes in the west;  
A home to any stranger who settles in it.

My trip to Tunis was not as arduous. I did not have to brave any raging tempests, nor did I have to be fearful of pirates. I boarded a plane in Boston and landed in Tunis safely after a lengthy layover in

Istanbul/Constantinople. On the flight to Tunis, I reread al-Tamgrūtī’s account and wondered what he would say about the miracle of flying. I also wondered what my first impression of Tunis would be like. I have been a student of the Arabic language, culture, and literature for a long time. I had the opportunity to travel and live in the Arab Mashriq, but I had never set foot in the Maghrib. I was truly exhilarated. My knowledge of North Africa in general and Tunisia in particular was not more than cursory readings of the region’s history, a few novels and Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī’s famous lines of poetry which became the rallying cry of the Arab Spring. This trip was definitely destined to fill a void.

The Winter Term Study Excursion in Tunisia is one of the programs that CMES runs in the country. This year’s program was the fourth of its kind, and I can confidently state that the excursion was again a great success. In previous years, groups of graduate students traveled to Tunisia to partake in the program, and, this year, undergraduate students were also admitted. Our group had thirteen members hailing from diverse backgrounds. Under the supervision of CMES Director William Granara, Gordon Gray Professor of the Practice of Arabic, and Sihem Lamine, Administrative Manager of the CMES Tunisia Office, the Center organized a meticulously planned itinerary. Unfortunately, we did not enjoy the pleasure of having Professor Granara with us. Ms. Lamine and Laura Thompson, a PhD candidate in the Study of Religion at Harvard University, accom-

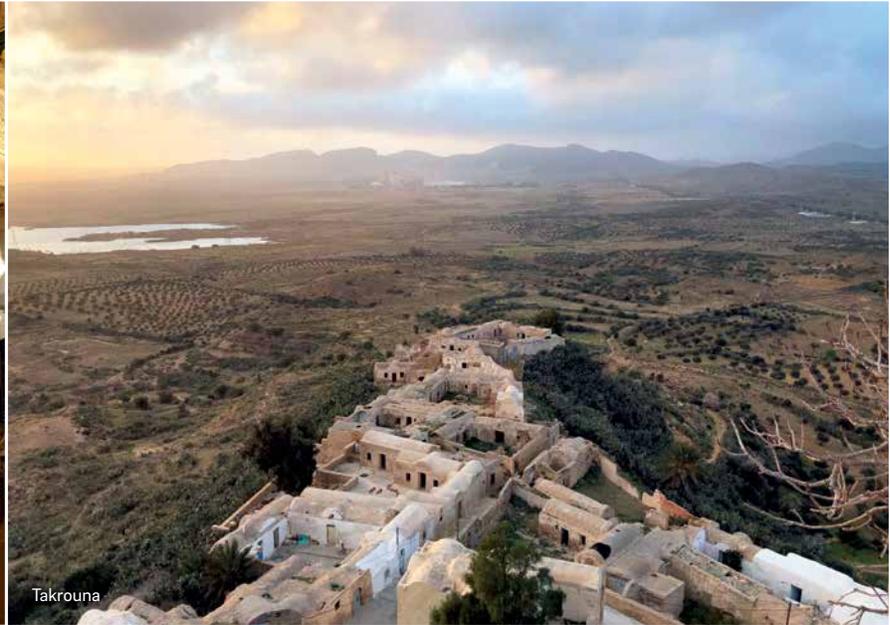
panied us in our trips around the country. They both were a WhatsApp message away ready to answer any questions and help with any needs. In addition to road trips and urban excursions, we were also invited to lectures and panels that the Center organized. The program lasted for three weeks, and it flew by too fast. We visited around ten cities and towns in addition to major sites in and around the city of Tunis.

The first urban excursion was in the medina quarter of Tunis, a labyrinthine network of narrow streets flanked by beautiful white-washed houses with iconic blue doors. It was an absolute pleasure to walk through the medina with Ms. Lamine, who is an architect. In each trip and excursion, we also had well-informed and passionate guides. It also helped that, in our group, we had fellow travelers knowledgeable of the architecture and history of the region. There was no need to resort to Wikipedia at all! My highlights of the medina were little shops selling *shawāshī* (sing. *shāshiya*) skullcaps that dominated the headgear fashion of the Ottoman empire for quite a while, and, of course, al-Zaytuna Mosque, the second mosque built in North Africa. The mosque is a calm oasis in the midst of a bustling medina, a forest of splendid columns, spolia from the nearby ruins of Carthage.

I was also able to explore the city on my own. I took the train from Sidi Bou Said, where our hotel was, to the city center, and walked to the medina quite a few times. I learned from the Urbex photographer Mourad Ben Cheikh Ahmed after his lecture at the Center about a street famous for its bookstores, Rue des Tanneurs (Nahj



al-Zaytuna Mosque



Takrouna

al-Dabbāghīn). He showed us pictures of a peculiar bookstore occupying a four-story old building with piles and piles of books stacked against walls and shoved into dusty bookshelves. I had to find it, and I did. The bookstore does not have a name, it is simply known as Khālīd's bookstore. It is easy to miss as the door that opens to the chaotic assemblage of books is rather unassuming. Khālīd has been running his bookstore for decades. He gathered a formidable collection of books during his trips throughout the Arab world. He seemed to have total mastery in locating books within a minute or so. He was very welcoming and friendly. We had lengthy conversations, and he allowed me into the top floor, albeit at my own risk—I had to jump over books and squeeze myself through bookshelves.



Dougga



The Medina of Tunis

I visited Khālid a few times, each time exploring a new room.

All the road trips we had to amazing sites were beautiful. We were transported in two vans, a “lecture” van and a “quiet” van. I had the pleasure of being a permanent member of the former. The lecture van had facing seats; we entertained ourselves by reciting poetry, listening to a fellow traveler’s expertise about this or that topic, or simply chatting. If I had to choose two favorite sites we visited outside

Tunis, the first would be the small town of Takrouna, tucked into the hills between Hammamet and Sousse. We visited the town in the afternoon, and we were treated to a gorgeous sunset in addition to freshly baked bread, and olive oil. The second would be the archaeological site of Dougga, some 110 kilometers southwest of Tunis. It is a gleaming crown in the midst of emerald fields. I definitely understood why the country is called Green Tunisia (Tūnis al-khadrā’).

spearheaded the program, and Ms. Lamine and Ms. Thompson, who ran it masterfully.

Just like al-Tamgrūti I also went on a sunrise stroll, not in Tunis but in Sidi Bou Said. A fellow traveler and I left our hotel in the dark and by the time we climbed up a hill to a Sufi shrine, in al-Tamgrūti’s words, “the king of the east was putting on his golden crown.” One of the poems al-Tamgrūti cites in his travelogue declares that whoever visits Tunisia will wish to go back. I definitely wish so. ▣

After three unforgettable weeks, I left Tunisia with an additional suitcase full of books, three *shawāshi*, Tunisian molokhia, and many other keepsakes. This trip gave me the opportunity to explore the country in a way that I could not have done on my own. I must note here that I also finally developed a taste for couscous. A milk-soaked couscous dish topped with nuts and dates we had in El Kef did the trick! The trip was also a great opportunity to strike up pleasant friendships. I am very grateful to Professor Granara, who

## TIMELESSNESS IN FLORENCE: LOCKDOWNS, FLOODING, AND DISRUPTION

*While conducting dissertation research in Italy, Maryam Patton, PhD candidate in History and Middle Eastern Studies, has had the unusual fortune to experience both severe flooding in Venice and quarantine in Florence. Here is her account.*

Time flies when you're having fun, as the saying goes. So too, apparently, when you are under national lockdown and lose all sense of daily rhythm and order. Since October, I've been living in Italy for the second leg of my dissertation research. I first found myself in Venice, then in January I moved to Florence. I remember feeling aware that the growing crisis in Northern Italy was lurking ever nearer in late February, and I wondered whether to stay or go. I chose to stay. A few weeks later, on March 13, all of Italy came under national lockdown and it was here in Florence that I spent the next two months under strict quarantine, only venturing into the empty city center once a week for groceries. And to this day, in late June, I wonder where exactly that time went, and how could I not feel its passing.

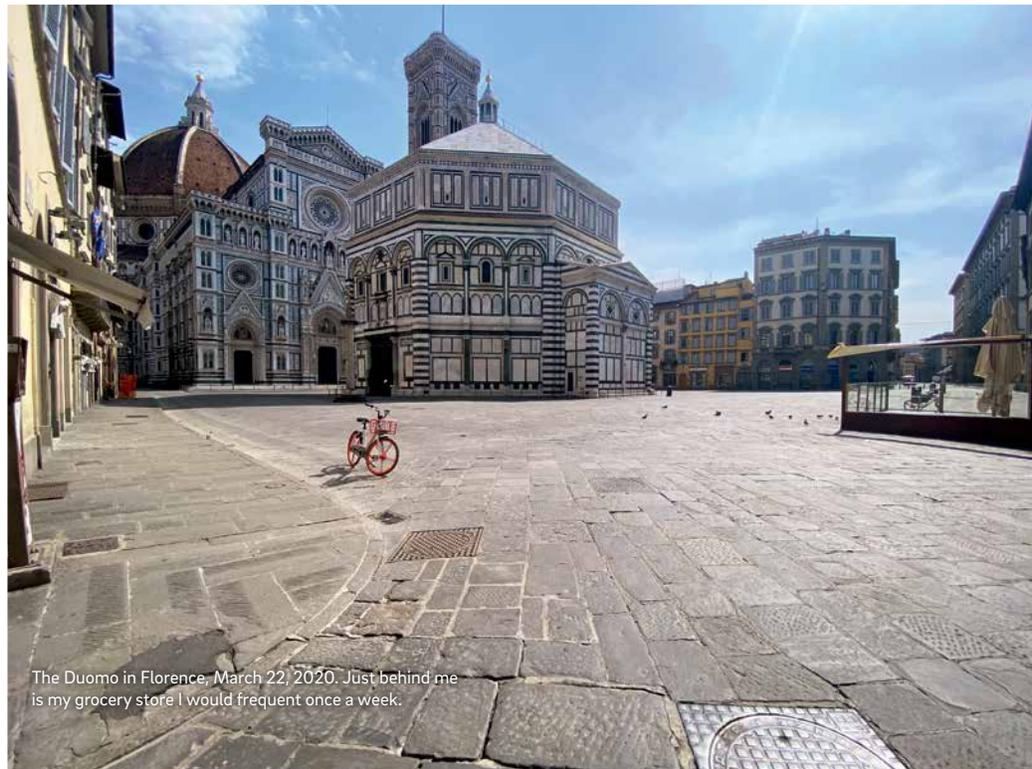
I know that every one of you reading these words felt something like what I am describing, this sense that the days we spent, and are still spending, under quarantine passed by imperceptibly, and that time itself felt very different. Suddenly stripped of most of the trappings of campus life and the daily rituals and activities which gave structure and a semblance of order, I had more time than ever to fill with whatever I wanted to do, undistracted by administrative tasks that filled my days

previously. But I was not one of those noble, virtuous souls who took this opportunity to explore new hobbies, catch up on reading, or formulate a new domestic routine to stand in place of the social one. Instead, I wanted to participate in this new experiment and try to understand this experience through the lens of my research.

I am a historian of time and I study the ways in which past cultures grappled with time, organized their lives, and understood time in both real and philosophical senses. My dissertation addresses these questions through an integrated history that links fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Istanbul and Venice. The average early modern Venetian or Istanbulite would not have had a portable timepiece that kept

moderately accurate time. Astrolabes were expensive, luxury devices. At best, the average individual could rely on fixed clock towers or sundials in the city center or on prominent buildings, which they would likely not be able to see from their homes. The geographical extent of their temporal awareness might be extended by listening for the calls to prayer, or the chiming of the bell towers. And barring all that, they could approximate based on the position of the sun in the sky. And that was enough.

During the first few weeks of quarantine, before everything really sank in back on campus, I felt profoundly alone. I did not have Zoom meetings with colleagues, and none of the virtual events like lectures and conferences that we have now were a



The Duomo in Florence, March 22, 2020. Just behind me is my grocery store I would frequent once a week.

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thing then. Except for my calls to family, time zones didn't matter because my world was contained in my apartment. For a few weeks, I had no need to keep the time. What was the point? My weekly grocery shop wasn't weekly because I had decided that was a reasonable rate. It was all I could fit in my fridge. In the absence of external pressures, I reverted to Maryam time. It turned out to be a very relaxed, unstructured way of seeing the world. I spent a lot of time thinking, thinking about things like how the expression "spending time" didn't really capture what I was doing because my time was no longer a finite commodity that I had to ration. I thought about whether my experience of time was fundamentally different from what the protagonists I study

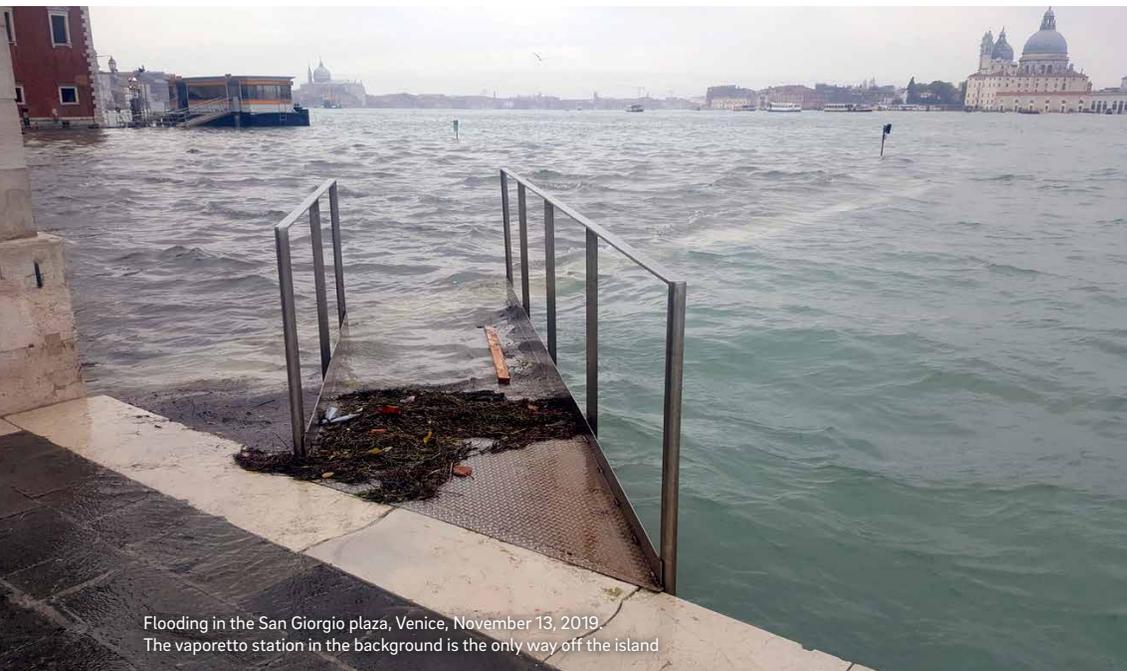
would have felt. The answer is undoubtedly yes, but not because of the actual personal experience of this strange force which rules our lives, but because of the inescapable social and cultural structures around us that shape what we believe makes for a valuable use of time. These are the structures that I study for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and for a few weeks, I felt free of my own culture's structures.

This was not the first time that I experienced a major disruption to my research. I was in Venice for the record breaking *acqua alta* that hit November 12, 2019. I was blissfully unaware this could happen, and I'll never forget that night when the librarians of the Bibliotheca Marciana called me over to the windows, and we listened to the sirens

that warned of the impending waters. Still unaware of what was in store, I returned to my residence on the small island of San Giorgio just a short ferry ride away, where luckily, I was staying on the second floor. I never did get back in to the Marciana. The rare book room was still shut when I left three weeks later. After the initial flooding, I was stranded at my residence until I could get hold of a pair of the highly unfashionable knee-high plastic shoe covers. Eventually, I learned to follow tide charts and how to safely navigate to and from home while avoiding most of the water, and realized that all that separated my experience of the tides from the sixteenth-century Venetians was that I could pull these charts up on my smart phone. It led to an unexpected angle in my

research about the ways Venetians relied on lunar cycles, and the experiences of cities situated on water.

A little disruption can be a good thing. I still feel unable to truly plan out what I should do in the next few months, and that discomfort has made me question my assumptions about many things. I know that, all told, I have been very fortunate, that I and my family have been safe during these difficult times. I hope that has also been the case for anyone reading this. As we cautiously emerge from lockdown and begin the return to the temporal regime of synchronicity, I hope to hold on to some of those lessons from when I came unstuck in time. ▣

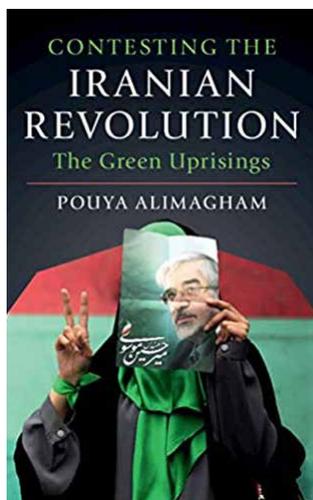


Flooding in the San Giorgio plaza, Venice, November 13, 2019.  
The vaporetto station in the background is the only way off the island

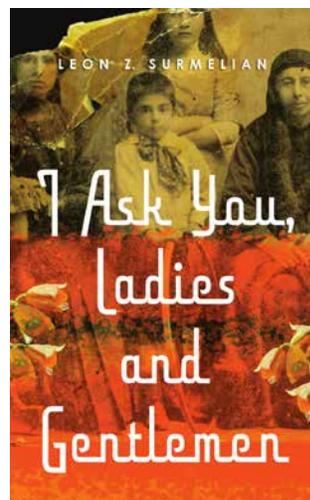
## ALUMNI NEWS

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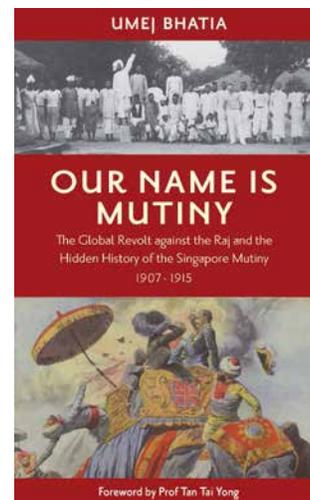
**Zena Agha** ('17) is a writer and policy analyst. She published “The Palestinian Authority Is a Sinking Ship” in the *New York Times* (February 2020) and “Israel’s Problematic Role in Perpetuating Water Insecurity for Palestine” in the *Atlantic Council* (June 2019). Her research on mapping and cartography was published in *Al-Shabaka* and presented at the British Library. She was awarded a writing residency at the Millay Colony for the Arts in August 2019 and her poetry manuscript “Objects from April and May” was selected as a finalist for the Alice James Book Award. **Hind Al-Ansari** ('16) is enrolled at a PhD program in education at the University of Cambridge. Her research is about the impact of political and religious trends on the education sphere in Qatar. At the same time, she examines the ways in which Qatari women capitalize on their education to achieve social change. She published “The Challenges of Education Reform in GCC Societies” on the London School of Economics Middle East Centre Blog in February 2020. **Pouya Alimaghham** ('09) is a lecturer in MIT’s history department. His PhD-dissertation-turned-book,



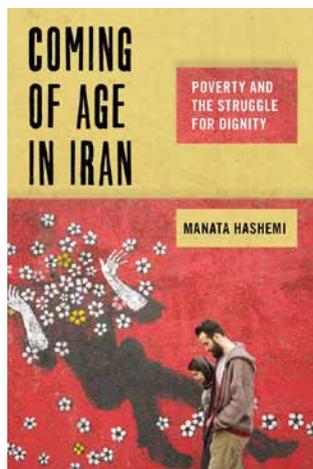
*Contesting the Iranian Revolution: The Green Uprisings*, was published in March 2020 by Cambridge University Press. **Oula Alrifai** ('19) became a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Arab Politics Program in September 2019, where her research focuses primarily on Syria and Iran. In addition to providing policy analysis and recommendations, she meets and engages with US government officials to advise them on the Middle East. Since September, she has published several pieces, one of which was featured in the *Washington Post*—“Assad Is Growing Stronger under Trump’s Nonexistent Syria Policy” (December 2019)—and another on CNN—“How the U.S.



Can Help Ease Idlib’s Catastrophe” (March 2020). **Richard Anoooshian** ('77) recently spearheaded the republication, by the Armenian Institute, of *I Ask You, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Leon Surmelian’s personal tale of deep sorrow and profound gratitude, of terrible loss and a lively embrace of life itself. The out-of-print book, first published in 1945, a bestseller in its time, was internationally acclaimed and translated into many languages. After nearly fifteen years covering Middle East issues in Singapore’s Foreign Ministry, including three consecutive postings in the Gulf Arab region, **Umej Bhatia** ('05) took post in August 2019 as Singapore’s Ambassador to the United Nations and International Organisations in



Geneva and Vienna. He oversees a broad cluster of health and pandemics, human rights, disarmament, labor, narcotics, nuclear energy, and terrorism issues in the multilateral arena. In November 2019, his narrative nonfiction book *Our Name is Mutiny: The Hidden History of the Singapore Mutiny and the Global Revolt Against the Raj* (Landmark Books) was launched in Singapore, where it debuted on the nonfiction top ten bestseller list. The international launch has been postponed to later in the year. **Samah Choudhury** ('14) will defend her dissertation on American Muslim humor from UNC Chapel Hill’s department of Religious Studies in June 2020. She will join the Depart-



ment of Philosophy and Religion at Ithaca College as an Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies in the fall. **Amber Glavine** ('19) began work as an undergraduate Admissions Officer at Harvard in 2019. As part of this role, she evaluates admissions applications from several Middle Eastern and North African countries. Shortly after starting in this position, she was promoted to work as a Financial Aid Officer for both prospective and current students as well. She is excited to be able to use her regional expertise, gained at CMES, to serve Middle Eastern students at Harvard. **Manata Hashemi** ('07) is the Farzaneh Family Assistant Professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. Her first book, *Coming of Age in Iran: Poverty*

and the Struggle for Dignity, has just been published by New York University Press.

**Archibald Hovanesian** ('74), Esq., has backed away from his law practice, with enthusiastic help and assistance from the coronavirus. "Though Florida's nitwit governor hasn't ordered a statewide stay-at-home order," he writes, his own county "has been more sensible." He has often wondered what has become of the group of agreeable and bright people he was so happy to be a part of for two years, and would be pleased to hear from them at [hovanesian@aol.com](mailto:hovanesian@aol.com). In May 2019, **Scott Liddle** ('07) was appointed Special Advisor to the UK Secretary of State for International Development. In October 2019 he became Director of Policy for Rory Stewart's electoral campaign for Mayor of London. In March 2020 he led a team establishing SpareHand ([www.spare-hand.org](http://www.spare-hand.org)), a platform for matching volunteers to charities and community organisations during the Covid-19 crisis. While **David L. Mack** ('74) continues his many years of support for the Middle East Institute in Washington, he has changed his primary affiliation to the Atlantic Council. He focuses his attention on Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula states, and

Libya. **Aaron Magid** ('15) started working as a senior Middle East analyst with Leidos in September. This past year he published "Iraq Is Not an Iranian Vassal State" in *Foreign Policy*. In a piece published in the *Washington Post* in May 2020, **Amir Hossein Mahdavi** ('17) argues that the US policy of blocking Iran's access to any sort of financial resources to address its severe coronavirus outbreak has been an invitation for the "invisible government" to usurp the functions of the elected government, a situation that will have a permanent impact on the nature of governance in Iran. **Aya Majzoub** ('16) is the Lebanon and Bahrain researcher at Human Rights Watch, where she investigates human rights abuses in both countries and conducts national and international advocacy. She has documented security force abuse and torture during Lebanon's revolution and has written extensively on a range of issues from free speech to access to healthcare. Her writing has been published in local and international outlets, including the *Guardian* and Al Jazeera, and she has been quoted in the *Washington Post*, NPR, the *New York Times*, and the BBC, among others. **Alexander Schrank** ('01), a Foreign Service Officer

since 2004, served from 2018 to 2019 as head of the Human Rights and Rule of Law Unit at the US Embassy in Kabul, where he led the US team in the post-peace planning donor process to safeguard human rights, and spearheaded policy on detainee issues. For the past year he has served as Deputy Director in the Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, overseeing regional security and arms transfers to the Middle East and Africa. Effective summer 2020, he will serve as Deputy Director in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of North African Affairs overseeing policy towards Egypt. **Alex Shams** ('13) is currently a PhD student in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Chicago. Since 2018 he has been based in Tehran, where he has been conducting fieldwork research focused on the politics of religious pilgrimage and sacred space in Iran and Iraq. In February 2020, he organized a workshop at the Lahore Biennale bringing together academics and artists from Iran and Pakistan to discuss cultural and historical connections between the two countries. In April 2020, he gave a talk via Zoom at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs about Iran's experience with the coronavi-

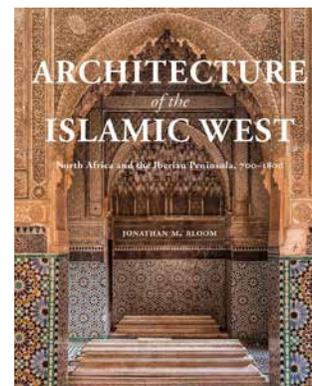
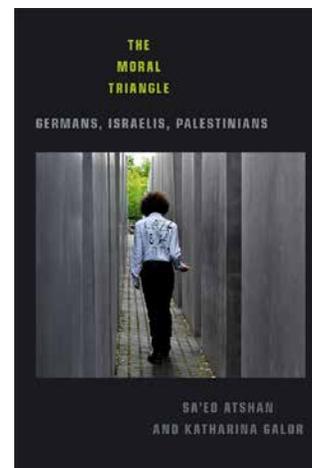
rus. **Ben Smith** ('04) published "Transitional Portraits: Syrian Immigrants of the North American Mahjar in 'Abd Al-Masih Haddad's Prose" in *Mashriq and Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies*, February 2020. **George Somi** ('12) has written two articles, "Bilcon v. Canada: A New Paradigm for Causation in Investor-State Arbitration?" forthcoming in the *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution*, and "The Death of Nonresident Contribution Limit Bans and the Birth of the New Small, Swing State," forthcoming in the *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal*. He has moved back to Massachusetts from New York City and just accepted an offer as an associate at an employment law firm, the Law Office of Joseph L. Sulman, Esq. **Mandy Terc** ('04) has been serving as the Executive Director of the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) for almost a year now. It's an organization and publication that many Harvard students, alums, and faculty have been a part of over its 50-year history. MERIP has a new series called "Voices from the Middle East," a series of interviews with people on the ground describing how Covid-19 is threatening the region's most vulnerable popu-

lations. Included have been interviews with an Iranian pharmaceutical executive trying to produce medicine under sanctions, an ER doctor in Gaza describing how the blockade makes medical resources scarce, a first-hand account of how refugees are losing access to food and services under Jordan's lockdown, and many more. **Andrew Watkins** ('15) recently joined the International Crisis Group, a global conflict resolution research organization, as their Senior Analyst on Afghanistan. In 2019, he served as a political affairs officer with the United Nations mission in Afghanistan, and conducted research on the Taliban insurgency that was published in 2020 by the US Institute of Peace in a peer-reviewed report, "Taliban Fragmentation: Fact, Fiction and Future." In December and January, **Caroline Williams** ('65) took ten of her family—four grandchildren, three daughters, and two sons-in-law—to Egypt, for a week with the Pharaohs and a week with the Sultans. "It was magical for them," she writes, "but for me rather sad. Egypt has changed greatly since I first discovered it fifty-eight years earlier. The monuments have become commodified: In Islamic Cairo cell towers now vie

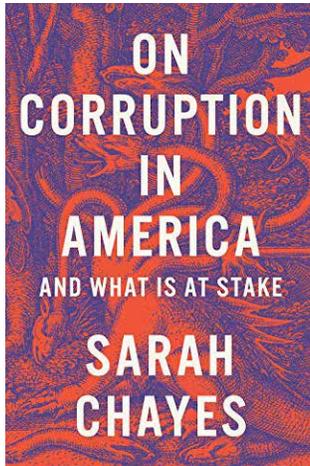
with minarets; there is little appropriate zoning; theft in monuments is rampant, and the military government seems indifferent to the uniqueness and value of this area's cultural, historic, and architectural legacy." **John Zavage** ('13) is the Foreign Area Officer Chair on the faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. He teaches a course titled Security Sector Assistance in an Era of Great Power Competition, and also collaborates with the Defense Security Cooperation University to teach courses in Middle East regional and cultural orientation. He recently partnered with two colleagues to jointly author an article for the Carnegie Middle East Center, "Security Assistance in the Middle East: A Three-Dimensional Chessboard." He intends to retire from the military later this year but aspires to continue working in the field of security studies.

#### PHD ALUMNI

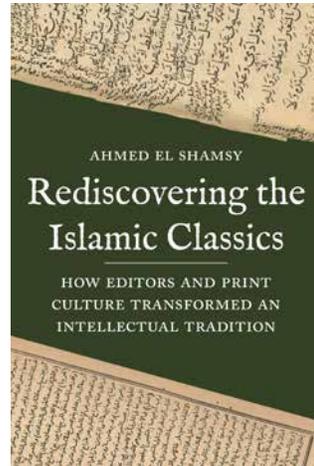
**Sa'ed Atshan** ('13) published two books in May 2020: *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique* (Stanford University Press) and, with Katharina Galor, *The Moral Triangle: Germans, Israelis, Palestinians* (Duke University Press). **Jonathan Bloom** ('80) pub-



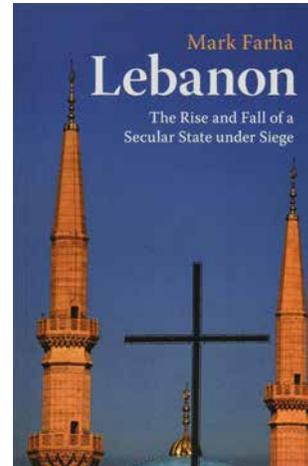
lished *Architecture of the Islamic West: North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, 700-1800* (Yale University Press) in June 2020. **Elise K. Burton** ('17) joins the University of Toronto in fall 2020 as a tenure-track assistant professor at the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology. **Sarah Chayes** spent the past year



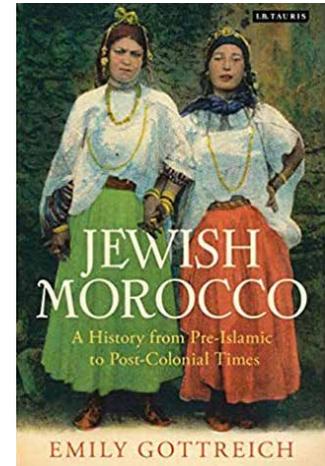
completing her book *On Corruption in America: And What Is at Stake*, published by Alfred A. Knopf in August. It was a soul-searing book to write. The balm was doing so, self-isolated, overlooking a meander of the Cacapon River in West Virginia. **Alireza Doostdar's** ('12) book, *The Iranian Metaphysicals* (Princeton University Press, 2018) has won the 2020 Vinson Sutlive Book Prize in historical anthropology from the Anthropology Department at William and Mary. He will deliver the Sutlive Lecture there in September. **Ahmed El Shamsy** ('09) published his new book, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton University Press) in 2020 and



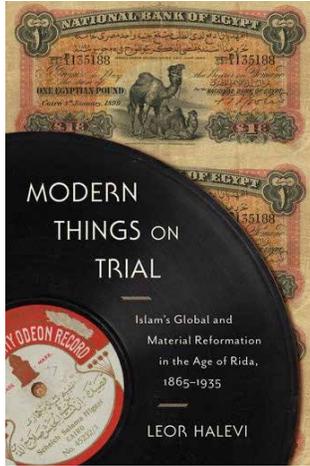
gave a talk on it at the inaugural Hay Literary Festival in Abu Dhabi. **Aykan Erdemir** ('04) has been promoted to be the Senior Director of the Turkey Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, where he co-authored a monograph, *Brothers in Arms: The Consolidation of the Turkey-Qatar Axis*, in December 2019. The same month, he received the First Freedom Award from the Hellenic American Leadership Council in recognition of his advocacy for minority rights and religious freedoms. Erdemir, who was one of the founding legislators of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2014, rejoined the initiative's steering committee in March 2020.



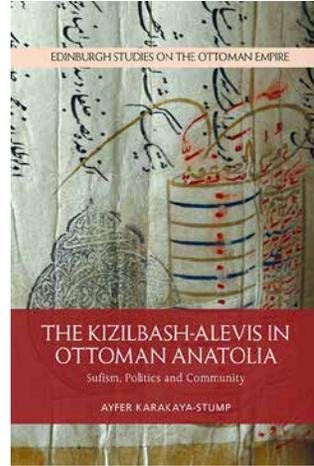
**Mark Farha** ('07) published *Lebanon: The Rise and Fall of a Secular State under Siege* (Cambridge University Press) in September 2019. He gave the talk "Religion, State, and Society in Lebanon: Consociational Curse or Blessing?" at Columbia Global Centers, Amman, in February 2020. **Richard Foltz** ('96) has published three journal articles on the popular religion of the Ossetes, an Iranian-speaking people of the Caucasus descended from the ancient Scythians: "The Rekom Shrine in North Ossetia and its Annual Ceremony," *Iran and the Caucasus* 24.1 (2020); "Scythian Neo-Paganism in the Caucasus: The Ossetian Uatsdin as a 'Nature Religion,'" *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 13.3 (2019);



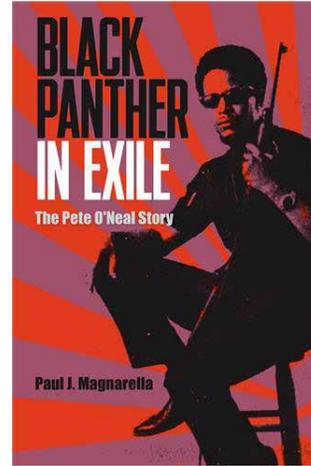
and "The Caucasian Alans between Byzantine Christianity and Traditional Paganism," *Nartamongæ* 14 (2019). He is preparing a book entitled "The Ossetes: Modern-Day Scythians of the Caucasus," which is due to be published by I.B. Tauris in 2022. In the meantime he is chronicling his research on his blog A Canadian in Ossetia ([www.canadossete.com](http://www.canadossete.com)). **Emily Gottreich** ('99) is completing her final semester as Chair of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley. She recently advanced to Full Adjunct Professor in Global Studies and the Department of History, and her newest book, *Jewish Morocco: A History from Pre-Islamic to Post-Colonial Times* (I.B. Taurus) was published in February 2020.



**Leor Halevi** ('02) published *Modern Things on Trial: Islam's Global and Material Reformation in the Age of Rida, 1865-1935* (Columbia University Press) in July 2019 and won a Guggenheim fellowship. **Perween Hasan** ('84) is Vice-Chancellor of Central Women's University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This all-women's university is located in the old part of the city, one of the worst Covid-19 affected areas. In this lockdown, faculty members are regularly conducting online classes and have incorporated Covid-19 into courses wherever possible. Students have been assigned to keep journals to record their own experiences during this critical time. The way students are responding to online teaching, a novelty in Bangladesh,

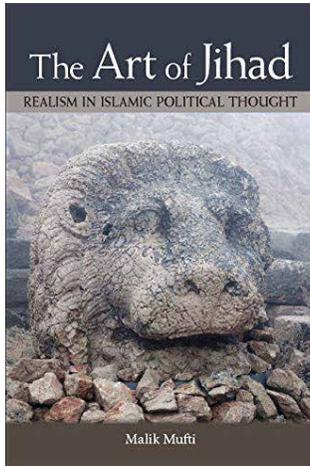


has been amazing, as teachers report almost 95 percent attendance in most classes. "We don't know how long their enthusiasm will last," she writes. "But someday when Covid is behind us we will surely remember with a smile the time when virtual classrooms became real and gave respite." **Zahra N. Jamal** ('08) published in *Foreign Policy Magazine* in 2020, addressed the United Nations Association USA on the role of religion in achieving gender parity via Sustainable Development Goals. She interviewed Congressman Andre Carson on the role of religion in politics, and Aga Khan Award for Architecture Director Farrokh Derakhshani on the award as a catalyst for socioeconomic change and peace-building. Jamal advanced research



and programming that counters hate crimes and promotes peace as a supporter of the Tanenbaum Peacemaker's Action Network, national trainer and subject matter expert with the US Department of Justice, board member of the Community of Conscience, and leader in the Houston Coalition Against Hate. She trained diverse audiences, including chief diversity officers and corporate VPs on religious diversity in the workplace through the Tanenbaum Center, Religious Freedom and Business Forum, National and Texas Diversity Council, Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce; civic leaders on engaging religious freedom and pluralism in the public sphere through the Dallas Institute, Solid Ground, and the Ismaili Council for the

USA; religious communities on engaging and adapting faith in light of Covid-19; K-12 teachers on religious literacy and pedagogy through the Glasscock School, Sacred Heart Schools of Chicago, and the Secondary Teacher Educator Program; and middle school through college students in interfaith leadership through the National Alternative Winter Break program, Fort Bend Interfaith Student Council, Rice Interfaith Council and Rice Student Leadership Summit. She was honored by Rice University for her 2019 publications. **Ayfer Karakaya-Stump** ('08) is Associate Professor of History at the College of William and Mary. She published *The Kizilbash/Alevi in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics, and Community* (Edinburgh University Press) in December 2019. **Darryl Li** ('12) published his first monograph, *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity* (Stanford University Press) in December 2019. **Paul Magnarella** ('71) published *Black Panther in Exile: The Pete O'Neal Story* (Florida University Press), about the former head of the International Section of the Black Panther Party in Algiers, in April 2020. **Paul Malik Mufti** ('93) published *The Art of Jihad: Realism in Islamic Political Thought*



(SUNY Press) in October 2019, and “Is Ibn Khaldūn ‘Obsessed’ with the Supernatural?” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139.3 (July–September 2019).

**Martin Nguyen** (’09) was promoted to the rank of full professor at Fairfield University in the Department of Religious Studies and will become the Chair of the department beginning with the fall term.

**Aleksandar Shopov** (’16) is a postdoctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. From 2021 he will be a tenure-track assistant professor in early modern Ottoman history (ca. 1300–1800) at SUNY Binghamton. **Eve Troutt Powell** (’95) was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in April 2020.

## VISITING RESEARCHER NEWS

Visiting Fellow **Ibrahim Khatib** founded and hosted three meetings of the Palestine/Israel research forum at CMES, initiated a Palestine/Israel research guide project, a collaboration between CMES and the Harvard Library, and received a Harvard Experiments Working Group grant. He gave the talks “Conflict, Resistance, and Justice,” Visions of Peace Initiative, Tufts University (2019); “Conflict, Democratic Values, and Reconciliation in Context of Protracted Conflict,” International Relations Department, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2019); “Conflict Framing, Democratic Values, and Reconciliation in Zones of Protracted Conflict,” School of Political Science, Government, and International Affairs, Tel-Aviv University (2019); “Conflict Perception, Democracy, and Reconciliation in the Middle East,” School of Political Science, University of Haifa (2019); and “Understating the Arab–Israeli Conflict,” Middle East Seminar, Harvard (2020). He published a book review of *Israel in the Post Oslo Era: Prospects for Conflict and Reconciliation*

with the Palestinians, by As’ad Ghanem, Mohamad Mostafa, and Salim Brake, in *The Arab World Geographer* 23.1 (2020). Visiting Fellow **Mansour Salsalibi** published “Weapons of Mass Destruction Prohibition: In Pursuit of Peace and Justice in International Relations and the Middle East,” *International Journal of Humanities* (Tehran University of Tarbiat Modares) 27.1 (January 2020). He presented the paper “Shiite Ulama Contending Responses to the Educational Modernization and the 1906 Constitutional Revolution” at the Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Society Spring Conference, Middle East and South Asian Studies Department, Emory University (March 2020). He gave the talk “Religiosity and Violence: Shiite Ulama Responses to Modernization and the 1906 Constitutional Revolution” for the CMES Middle East Forum (November 2019). Visiting Fellow **Carol Solomon** continues work on her book manuscript “Art and the Transformation of Society in Morocco.” Her essay “Reclaiming the Past: Post-1999 Visual Art, the Archive, and Moroccan Postcolonial History” will appear in

*Enquête d’archives/In Search of Archives: Contemporary Approaches to the Past*, forthcoming from Archive Books. Visiting Scholar **Arif Orçun Söylemez** won a grant from the Scientific and Technological Research Center of Turkey. He has signed two book contracts, one with Routledge for a book titled “Is It Possible to Predict the Foreign Exchange Rates?” and the other with Emerald Publishing for a book titled “Rethinking International Capital: Building a Stable Global Financial System.” He also wrote the chapter “Significance of Non-monetary Forms of Capital: Importance of Social Capital” in an edited volume in the Contributions to Management Science series, forthcoming from Springer. Visiting Fellow **Zeynep Tek** published two articles in 2019 (in Turkish): “Meaning Areas of ‘a Broken Language’: Women in Çiğdem Sezer’s Poems,” *Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Letters* 36.2 (2019); and with Emine Yücel, “An Analysis of Refik Halit Karay’s ‘Yatık Emine’ within the Framework of the Dehumanization Phenomenon,” *Mediterranean Journal of Humanities* IX.2 (2019).

# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## SEPTEMBER 2019

### **The Iranian Revolution at 40: Precursor to an Age of Populism?**

A talk with Houchang Chehabi, Professor of International Relations and History, Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### **Urban Activism: Staking Claims in the 21st Century City.**

A conference organized by Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe, University of Basel, Joan Chaker, Harvard, and Stefano Portelli, Harvard. Co-sponsored with the Center for African Studies, Department of Anthropology, Department of History, Center for History and Economics, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### **Trauma, Magic, Love: Being in Aleppo with Karagöz Puppets, My Ancestors, and the Spirit of Osman Kavala.**

A presentation of the Hrant Dink Memorial CMES Fund

including a talk and Karagöz puppet show, featuring stage and film actress, writer, and activist Sona Tatoyan and puppet master Ayhan Hülagu.

### **City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk.**

The inaugural talk in the CMES Modern Middle East Speaker Series, with Arbella Bet-Shlimon, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Washington, on her 2019 publication.

### **New Authors on Palestine.**

A conversation in the CMES Modern Middle East Speaker Series with authors Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law As Politics in the Question of Palestine* (2019); Seth Anziska, *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo* (2018); and Tareq Baconi, *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance* (2018). Moderator Sara Roy.

**The Gaza Seldom Seen: Innovating and Aspiring Palestine Refugees.** A talk with David de Bold, Senior



Stefano Portelli, Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe, Michael Herzfeld



Ayhan Hülagu



Arbella Bet-Shlimon

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Noura Erakat, Seth Anziska, Tareq Baconi, Sara Roy



Ridha Moumni



Nathalie Peutz



Sandra Naddaff, Shahad Al Rawi, Luke Leafgren

Deputy Director of Operations in Gaza, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and Edward S. Mason Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### **Representing Power at the Court of Ottoman Tunisia in the 19th Century.**

A talk in the Harvard University Aga Khan Program Lecture Series by art historian and curator Ridha Moumni, 2019–20 CMES Tunisia Postdoctoral Fellow. Co-sponsored with the Harvard University Aga Khan Program.

### **OCTOBER 2019**

#### ***Islands of Heritage: Conservation and Transformation in Yemen.***

A book talk in the CMES Modern Middle East Speaker Series with cultural anthropologist Nathalie Peutz, Associate Professor of Arab Crossroads Studies, NYU Abu Dhabi, on her 2018 publication.

#### **A Contemporary Sufi Tradition: The Case of the Late Ottoman Elite and Sufi Sheikh Ken'ân Rifâî.**

A talk with Arzu Eylül Yalçınkaya, Lecturer, Institute for Sufi Studies, Üsküdar University, Istanbul.

***The Baghdad Clock.*** A talk with author Shahad Al Rawi on her novel, which was short-listed for the 2018 International Prize for Arabic Fiction, and translator Luke Leafgren, Lecturer on Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard.

#### **“Erdogan’s Empire”: Continuity and “Revolution” in Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East?**

A talk with Soner Cagaptay, Director, Turkish Research Program, Beyer Family Fellow, Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

#### **Champions of Peace? Tools in Whose Hands? The True Story of Norway and the Peace Process in the Middle East.**

A talk with Hilde Henriksen Waage, Professor of History, University of Oslo. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### **NOVEMBER 2019**

#### **The Catastrophe of Translation.**

A presentation in the Mahindra Center for the Humanities Rethinking Translation Seminar with Adriana X. Jacobs, Associate



Hilde Henriksen Waage



Karam Dana



Suzy Hansen



Dana Burde

Professor and Cowley Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Literature; Fellow, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Oxford. Co-sponsored with the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies; Charles Knapp Israel Studies Fund, Center for Jewish Studies, and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

**Arabic Classes and Classics in the Opera House.** A talk with Samuel England, Associate Professor of Arabic, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Co-sponsored with the Committee on Medieval Studies.

**The “Deals” of the Century from Balfour to Trump: The Political Economy of Failure and a New Palestinian**

**Response.** A talk with Karam Dana, Associate Professor of Middle East Politics and Islamic Studies, University of Washington Bothell.

**Jerusalem: City of the Book.** A talk with Benjamin Balint, writer based in Jerusalem, and Merav Mack, Research Fellow, Truman Institute for Peace, Hebrew University

of Jerusalem. Co-sponsored with the Center for the Study of World Religions, HDS.

**On Feminist Labors.** A MEiNA GSD talk with designer, curator, researcher, and writer Rosana Elkhatib, co-founder of f-architecture. Co-sponsored with MEiNA GSD.

**Schools for Conflict or for Peace in Afghanistan: Jihad Literacy, Community-Based Education, and the Shifting Goals of US Foreign Policy in the Region.** A talk with Dana Burde, Associate Professor and Director, International Education Program, International Education and Politics, New York University; Research Fellow, Center for Economic Research in Pakistan; Editor in Chief, *Journal on Education in Emergencies*. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

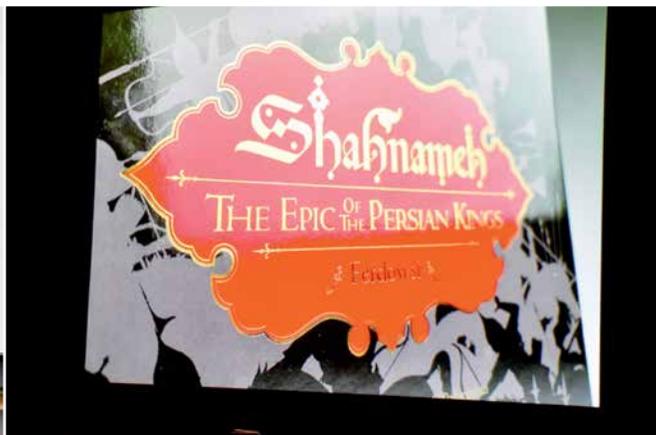
**Seeing America from a Distance: Reflections from Turkey and Beyond.** A talk by writer Suzy Hansen, 2018 Pulitzer Prize finalist for *Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World*.

**Religiosity and Violence: Shiite Ulama Responses to**

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Denis Sullivan



Ibrahim Khatib



Noam Shuster-Eliassi, Derek Penslar

### **Modernization and the 1906 Constitutional Revolution.**

A talk with CMES Research Fellow Mansour Salsabili.

### **In Name Only: Dismantling Citizenship and Human Rights across the Arab World.**

A talk with Denis Sullivan, Director, Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies, and Professor of Political Science and Inter-

national Affairs, Northeastern University. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### **Meet the Director: Hamid Rahmanian and a Film Screening of *Feathers of Fire*.**

A screening of designer and director Hamid Rahmanian's film version of his stage production *Feathers of Fire*, a shadow

puppet play based on the Persian epic *Shahnameh*, followed by a Q&A with the director.

### **DECEMBER 2019**

***The Lived Nile: Environment, Disease, and Material Colonial Economy in Egypt.*** A book talk in the CMES Modern Middle East Speaker Series with Jennifer L. Derr, Associate Professor, Department of History,

University of California, Santa Cruz, on her 2019 publication.

### **JANUARY 2020**

### **Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Between Perceptions, Democratic Values, and Reconciliation.**

A talk with CMES Fellow Ibrahim Khatib. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

### **FEBRUARY 2020**

### **Comedy or Leadership? A**

conversation with activist-turned-comedian Noam Shuster-Eliassi, Visiting Fellow with the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative, HDS. Co-sponsored with the Center for Jewish Studies.

### **Heads and Tails (*Baştan Başa*).**

A screening of Aylin Kuryel and Firat Yücel's 2019 documentary on the hair trade between Turkey and Israel, followed by a Q&A with the directors.

### **Following the Laws in Islam: A Phenomenological Perspective.**

A talk with Hessam Dehghani, Lecturer in Philosophy, Bentley University, and Lecturer in Persian and Arabic Language and Linguistics, Boston College. Presented by Aga Khan Fund for Iranian Studies.



Rosie Bsheer, Darryl Li, Intisar A. Rabb



Chris Gratien

**Modernism and Political Modernity: Tunisian Art in the Time of Bourguiba (1957–1979).** A talk with CMES Tunisia Postdoctoral Fellow Ridha Moumni.

**Narrating Muslim Sicily: War and Peace in the Medieval Mediterranean World.** A book talk with CMES Director William Granara,

Gordon Gray Professor of the Practice of Arabic. Co-sponsored with the Committee on Medieval Studies.

**The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity.** A book talk in the CMES Modern Middle East Speaker Series with Darryl Li, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Social

Sciences in the College, and Lecturer in Law, University of Chicago. Co-sponsored with the Program in Islamic Law, HLS.

#### MARCH 2020

**Çağatay Akyol and Bülent Evcil: A Magical Journey through Music with Flute and Harp.** A performance presented by the Consulate General of Turkey in Boston.

**Reciprocal Pan-Islamism: Bosnian Muslim Reformists and the Young Turk Revolution, 1908–1914.**

A talk with independent scholar Harun Buljina.

**The Archive Question: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia?** A talk with Rosie Bsheer, Assistant Professor of History, Harvard. Co-sponsored with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

**A Friendship Forged in Wartime: Ukrainian–Turkish Encounters on the Galician Front in WWI.** A talk with Hüseyin Oylupinar, CMES Postdoctoral Fellow in Turkish–Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar Studies.

**An Environmental History of the Late Ottoman Frontier.** A talk with Chris Gratien, Acad-

emy Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies; Assistant Professor of History, University of Virginia.

**Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq.** A book talk in the CMES Modern Middle East Speaker Series with Sara D. Pursley, Assistant Professor, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University.

**The US–Iran Crisis: A Reporter’s Firsthand Perspective.** A talk with freelance foreign Correspondent and Peabody Award winner Reese Erlich.

#### APRIL 2020

**The Probable Implications of the Long-lasting Fight for Bread in Turkey.** A virtual talk for the CMES community with CMES Visiting Scholar Arif Söylemez.

**Byzantine Studies Talks.** Virtual talks for the CMES community by CMES Byzantine Postdoctoral Fellows Siren Çelik and Nathanael Aschenbrenner on their ongoing research, with response by Dimiter Angelov, Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Byzantine History, Harvard University.

الفنون  
والدراسات  
الشرقية



Remy the cat, Cemal Kafadar



William Granara



Sheida Dayani

## AT A GLANCE

**FACULTY NEWS**  
**Q&A WITH ROSIE BSHEER**  
**NEW FACULTY BOOKS**  
**STUDENT NEWS**  
**VIRTUAL COMMENCEMENT**  
**ALUMNI NEWS**  
**VISITING RESEARCHER NEWS**  
**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

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والدراسات  
الشرقية