

Middle East Studies *Bulletin*

A Biannual Publication of the Middle East Studies Center

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50th Anniversary of Higher Education Act in Washington, D.C. (from left): Anne Betteridge, University of Arizona; Alam Payind, Ohio State MESC director; and Nazif Shahrani, Indiana University

Letter from the Director

Most of us who have had the privilege to serve as directors and staff members of Title VI National Resource Centers (NRC) were invited by the U.S. Department of Education, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Coalition for International Education to participate in the 50th Anniversary of the Higher Education Act, Title VI, and Fulbright-Hays International Education programs. The celebration took place in Washington, D.C., from March 18–21, 2009. Fifty years ago, Congress and the President of the United States recognized the need for programs to educate and train Americans in foreign languages, cultural studies, international affairs, research, and study abroad. During the following years, with each reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, additional programs were created to meet the ever-growing needs. According to the office of postsecondary education of the U.S. Department of Education, “The Title VI portfolio contains 10 programs that address undergraduate training, graduate fellowships, research, global economic competitiveness, education, national security, library and technology development, and outreach.

I was asked to help organize a related program at the Driksen Senate Office building in the Library of Congress: “Engaging the World: U.S. Global Competence in the 21st Century,” which included a symposium on “Critical Challenges in an Unpredictable World.” It was an honor to take part in the forum, along with such notable participants as Sen. Richard G. Lugar; Sen. Christopher J. Dodd; Molly Corbett Broad, president, American Council on Education; the Honorable Lee Hamilton, president and director, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; and the Honorable Zbigniew Brzezinski, counselor, Center for Strategic and International Studies and professor of American Foreign Policy, Johns Hopkins University. We discussed current and past issues in Afghanistan and Iraq, and, in a dialogue with Brzezinski, I mentioned the previous role of the United States in supporting and training mujahidin in fighting the Soviets. He was

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Letter from the Director

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a part of that effort, and I can remember when he was there. Those memories brought home the idea that global awareness remains a critical issue, one essential to national interests.

Title VI continues to play a vital role in promoting less commonly taught modern languages, international education, global understanding, and the free exchange of ideas, as well as in acquiring knowledge and incorporating differing viewpoints. With growing economic competitiveness in the world, regional and global knowledge and relationships become more critical than ever.

In two years, our Middle East Studies Center will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its designation as one of the 17 Title VI National Resource Centers (NRCs) dealing with the Middle East and the greater Muslim world. As a major recipient of the FLAS Fellowship, the federal government has been providing much of the funding (\$549,000 per year) for the center's activities.

Currently, we are preparing our eighth consecutive application for the NRC status, and we hope that our application will again be successful. We have continued to be very active in designing, promoting, and hosting Middle Eastern-themed academic outreach activities for colleges, K-12 schools, business and civic clubs, law enforcement, and military bases. There is currently a growing demand for our academic outreach at military bases. On January 29, I traveled to the Defense Finance and Accounting Services building and spoke with soon-to-deploy troops about Afghanistan and its history, culture, and climate. Approximately 30 members of the armed services were there. On April 4, I organized a four-hour workshop on Afghanistan for the Ohio National Guard at the same facility. Our outreach coordinator Cory Driver gave a lecture to students in the Christopher Program, an Early College Experience program, in preparation for their debate project on recent violence in the Gaza strip (see p. 13). We were also a major contributor to "Notable Moments in Egyptian Film from 1947 to 1997," a film series focusing on the most popular films and actors of Egyptian cinema from the Golden Era (see p. 14). Participation rates, an important aspect in measuring impact, ranged from eight to 775 since August 15, the beginning of the current grant year. During that time, the center sponsored or co-sponsored 75 events which attracted a total number of 3,480 attendees (see more on p. 12, "MESC Outreach and Engagement"). We have continued to improve our resources with updates to the new web site that was launched in the fall of 2008, and additions to our lending library (see p. 14, "New Additions to the MESC Library").

Letter from the Editor

Reflections on "Reading" the Middle East from Multiple Perspectives

After reading the pieces herein, I gained a renewed appreciation of the rich variety of cultural products—both "East" and "West"—we have to draw from in our journey toward better knowledge and understanding of the Middle East. One wonderful advantage of area studies is its ability to draw from a wide variety of sources, across disciplines, geography, and epistemological boundaries. While a graduate student in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, I felt saturated, overwhelmed even, with the cultural knowledge I was gaining with literary texts. One of my questions (not in terms of research—but in my personal journey) was what to do with that knowledge?

It was difficult to specify what cultural knowledge I had actually gained from learning Arabic and reading Arabic literature. In time, that knowledge became easier to articulate, and I came to appreciate the information conveyed in sources coming from inside the cultures I was studying and consider them invaluable for scholarship. The contrast between one's own cultural assumptions and that of another creates a space for learning and understanding, as well as tools for critiquing one's own cultural practices.

The scholars of the "West" during the Age of Exploration and the peak of colonization provided much valuable information and the underpinnings of theory for established disciplines of Academy today, though it came from an assumption of superiority, which can be felt throughout. With the awareness of ethnocentrism, and a developing sense of the importance of scholarship from within the world areas, sources from the "East" are now recognized as well. Rather than favoring one or the other, I believe it is our job over the next centuries to take all viewpoints into account and to view chances to challenge our own assumptions as valuable fields of research and learning.

In this issue, we offer Afghan history through spectacular artifacts, Egyptian popular culture through film and music (Egyptian Film, p. 14); Sufism through its long, yet *alive* tradition of poetry (Sufism Today, p. 15); Christianity, by looking at its history and its current shape in Israel (Notes from the Field, pgs. 6-7); and Sir Richard Burton and his connections to the formation of anthropology and Near Eastern literature in European and American academia (Research from the UK, pgs. 3-5).

It is exciting to see what scholars are engaged with and to be able to share this transformative knowledge through this bulletin. It takes constant searching and critiquing to find the truth about places far away, in time or space. We are fortunate that students and faculty at Ohio State are able to go abroad on a regular basis and share what they learned.

The tapestry of the Middle East has a complex story woven into it, and multiple sources and research methods are essential in its construction. This issue includes diverse sources in diverse forms underlining the need to look at scholarship not only as the actions of reading and writing, but as an aggregate of activities as diverse as life itself. Enjoy!

Melinda Wightman



Notes from the Field

Research from the UK By Sabra Webber

Captain Burton—unlike ethnographers of today who are expected to spend a long time immersed in one corner of the world—was nomadic and seemed drawn to other travelers from Bedouins, pilgrims, and peddlers to professional guides. Whether working as a military man, a spy, an explorer, or a consul, Burton did not stay put. One Foreign Office official, whose comments concerning Burton's behavior as consul in Fernando Po I found in documents in the National Archives, sums up the situation. Burton, he observes in a scribbled note, will always be claiming sick leave as long as there were more places he wanted to explore.

My own endeavor to trace Burton's pre-anthropological studies of manners and customs from India to Brazil and beyond through the tracking of bits and pieces of paper in numerous archival sites is another funny sort of nomadic ethnographic endeavor that mimics Burton's. Archival research is central to my attempt to hypothesize and follow, through the study of one man, a global network of interrelated communities composed of people who themselves were global nomads. This

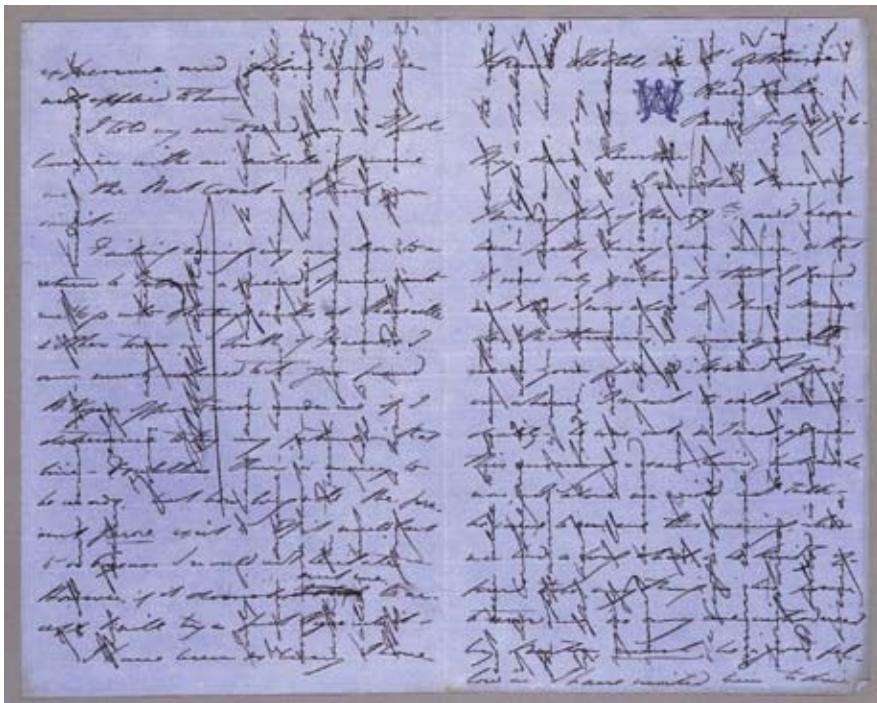
study is the first in which I have used archival research apart from a few days decades ago in the National Archives in the medina in Tunis, Tunisia, and, leaving aside the difference in geographical scope, I find archival work on a day-to-day basis more like my field research in North Africa than like library research. As in fieldwork, one ventures forth each day with high expectations, but little actual idea of what if anything will be learned. Some days eight hours would pass with little to show for struggling through boxes of manuscripts and documents, but even one exciting discovery or insight could make my day.

The character of each archive is different, although none resembles a U.S. library. At some, white gloves are provided and must be worn at all times while handling certain delicate archival materials. At other small archives, I would be offered a cup of tea or coffee while looking through materials just as rare. Most archives now have set ups for lap tops and most for Internet as well. It is lovely to come across an unfamiliar name in a letter and to be able immediately to follow up by searching for the

mysterious person online.

The challenge to the archivists in very large research facilities is to keep many tiny scraps of invaluable paper safe from pilfering or damage and at the same time to enable scholars to get their work done. All of the mid-to-large archives provide clear plastic bags in which what is allowed in the archives (lap top, pencils, magnifying glass, blank paper, locker key) must be placed. Briefcases, coats, purses, and so on must be left in lockers outside the guarded room, where one usually needs a specially made photo I.D. to enter. Upon leaving, lap tops must usually be opened to be sure that nothing is concealed and all paper with writing on it is examined. At the British Library, patrons using the most rare and valuable materials are assigned seats close to the librarians' stations. (Mount St. Mary's University in Maryland has a succinct explanation of the differences between archival and library culture at: faculty.msmary.edu/fitzgerald/research_in_archives.htm and also provides a list of bibliographic resources pertaining to archive culture.)

My first archival work on Burton, aside from a brief visit to the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin, was done at the Huntington Library in San Marino, Calif., which had purchased most of Burton's papers from the Royal Anthropological Institute in London. A Finding Aid had just been completed for the Burton materials so it was "easy" to work my way through the various papers, although Burton's writing and that of some of his correspondents was unreadable at times, even equipped as I was with a magnifying glass. Sometimes I would set aside a particularly difficult passage that seemed to have promise hoping to have more success if I tackled it fresh the next day. In my defense, others had trouble with his penmanship as well. In his correspondence, I came across jokes by Burton's friends and family about the state of his writing and at the National Archives I found stern orders from the Foreign Office during Burton's time as British consul in Fernando Po, West Africa, instructing him to re-submit his reports as those he had sent were illegible. (Of course, he didn't.) Most of the material at the Huntington is from Burton's time after he married Isabel Arundell when he was around 40, both because she kept good, though self-censored at times, records and because many of his early materials had been stored in a building that burned down.



Letter to Sir Richard Burton from a British trader working in West Africa. The writing is done in two directions to save on postal expenses, which were very high at the time. Professor Webber unearthed this artifact at the Huntington Library in London.

(continued on page 4)

There is more material to be found at archives on the East Coast, I believe, although I have found some interesting material at the New York Public and the Columbia University libraries tucked in their rare books sections. It was at Columbia that I discovered on the shelves a rare book of Burton's (*Stone Talk*) written under the pseudonym of Baker, which had been typed up by a California WPA worker during the depression. There is sure to be a story behind that, and these are the unexpected distractions that make it difficult to stay on track with a particular archival project!

Before going to an archive, I suggest being sure that the material it contains has not been published or is not otherwise available. The important Burton materials held at the Wiltshire Record Office in the UK, for example, are on microfilm and thus Dona Straley, our Middle East librarian at Ohio State at the time, was able to obtain those for me on special loan from a university in the United States, saving me a costly trip. It was from that material that I learned, for example, a great deal about Burton's troubles as British consul in Syria, found

the recipe for "Captain Burton's Bitters Tonic," and learned that more than 125 years ago the English-speaking military were already being taught classical, rather than a colloquial, Arabic, and trying it out on Egyptian farmers—to the frustration of all concerned. Likewise, wondering if Charles Darwin and Burton had crossed paths I searched on the new online record of Darwin's correspondence and found a brief reference to Burton by Darwin.

In the spring and summer of 2007, with the assistance of a grant from the Huntington Library and the British Academy, I was able to travel to the UK and follow up on leads to materials in the following libraries and archives: the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Royal Asiatic Society, the National Archives, the British Library, collections at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the National Archives of Scotland, and the National Library of Scotland. Each one yielded astonishing amounts of information. Because Burton's earlier records were lost in a fire, there is little directly other than in the RGS by or to him until after his Nile or Mecca adventures. Thus, I am now concentrating for those early years on trying to find letters written to others by friends or enemies that mention him. This work is a bit of a treasure hunt as one never knows when his name will pop up. It was during an oblique quest of this sort at the National Library of Scotland that I discovered almost by accident at the end of my stay the vitriolic letters of John Speke in which he refers to Burton as a "witch," and worse.

Archival work is lonely, necessarily so or the work doesn't get done, so I preferred the

smaller archives where I ran into familiar faces day after day—people who would be interested in the project and even come up with suggestions for new searches or introductions to people who had worked or were working on similar projects. That said, I ran into a colleague from Denison completely by accident in the National Archives—a large and efficient venue which yielded a wealth of material about Burton's days as a British consul, including fascinating scrawls about Burton by Foreign Office officials of his time, including the above-mentioned comments on his handwriting as well as complaints about the amount of sick leave he took. The Royal Geographical Society archives are extremely efficient and attractive, of medium size. I came across an especially poignant letter of Burton's from 1855 about the sad state of affairs among soldiers fighting in the Crimea (where Florence Nightingale first came to notice and subsequently was able to elevate the public's respect and standards for nurses). His letter to E.B. Tylor concerning his theories of West African languages is in the British Library archives. At the other end of the spectrum, at the RAI, I found notes by Isabel about a *cous-cous* that she and "Dick" prepare together, she says, as well as a little notebook with her treatments for various illnesses, including cholera, a common complaint of travelers. "Must be quick!" she notes, alluding to the steps to be followed.

These are not just national, but powerful global resources both humanizing and recontextualizing oversimplified histories; it is troubling to think of parts of the world where these documents representing the key to our common past cannot be adequately protected. Their care everywhere is tedious and time-consuming, and I have been meeting countless dedicated archivists devoted to their preservation.



(left) Sculpture in front of the British Library;
(bottom left) National Library of Scotland;

(bottom right) British National Archives
Photos by Ohio State Professor Sabra Webber



Traveler As Trickster: Sir Richard F. Burton & The Anthropologicals

By Sabra Webber

In 1863, Captain (later “Sir”) Richard F. Burton chaired the first meeting of the “anthropologicals,” (the Anthropological Society of London) and served as the first vice president of the organization. He was active in both the Ethnological and Anthropological Societies until they merged. George Stocking, well-known historian of anthropology, notes in his work on Victorian anthropology that of the early membership of the anthropologicals, Burton “is the only one besides the poet, Swinburne, who is still widely known today,” but dismisses him as archetypifying in his personality the faults of the fledgling Anthropological Society, describing Burton’s life as “a fugue on themes of cultural marginality and psychological dualism.” My aim in visiting archives that contain papers and letters written by, about, or to Burton, as well as re-reading his published works, is to understand a more complex Burton in the context of the beginning, not even 150 years ago, of anthropology as something like the discipline we know today.

Edward Said in his work, *Beginnings*, observes that “Beginning is basically an activity which ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment. . . . It implies “beginning-again.” So I draw upon Sir Richard and his work in the field as a touchstone for the muddle that was mid-to-late 19th century anthropology in Britain, one way to “begin-again” to try to see differently the uncomfortable genesis of anthropology—a story of collusion with Empire as well as of racism, sexism, classism, and spectacular public squabbles among the scholarly community worthy of today’s tabloids. (Indeed, most of Burton’s biographers, of which there have been at least one per decade since his demise in 1890, have been more interested in his ruffian ways and bohemian lifestyle than his scholarship.) I argue that Burton as “anthropologist,” is emblematic of the paradigm shift that took place during that seminal period in the formation of disciplines. He was a marginal man, a kind of trickster figure in his construction and reconstruction of himself, but we recognize that change comes from the “edges” of societies, and in many ways Burton exemplified that transitional moment of what were anthropology’s confused and uncomfortable beginnings as a marginal discipline.

By the time Burton became a member of both the Ethnological and Anthropological Societies in the 1860s, he was already something of a rock star among certain of the British populace, having made his way to Mecca (whether he had indeed become a Sufi was and is unclear), been highly visible in the rush to find the origins of the Nile River, and earlier had earned some respect and envy as a military man of derring-do in his life as a soldier in the Bombay infantry—a man proficient in a multitude of Western and non-Western languages, especially Arabic, as well as an undercover agent, spy, and adventurer. Like many of his time, he still aspired to be a Universal Man, to be both a man of letters and of science. At a time when disciplinary lines were being drawn, Burton would not be “disciplined,” carrying on correspondence with important poets, literati, scientists, and social scientists of his day.

Despite his ranking in the Royal Geographical Society and his devotion to exploration and the collecting of flora and fauna on his journeys, Burton, both in the field and in his study, was a “manners and customs” person who was particularly interested wherever he went in the languages and literatures, folk practices, and folk literatures of those he encountered. In another time he might have been a sociolinguist or a cultural or linguistic anthropologist, but, as Stocking observes, the practice of anthropology in those early days remained itself something most scholars had to fit in around the edges of one’s professional life—an avocation or occasional pursuit unless one was in the spy business. Knowledge of manners and customs to most geographers, or biologists,

was a means to an end—filling in the white space on the map in the middle of the African continent for example or classifying and appropriating plants and animals. One fellow explorer and later bitter enemy, John Speke, writes to a friend that Burton is a “mean and malignant witch,” apparently because Burton chided him for knowing “neither Arabic nor French,” yet exploring in East Africa.

Richard Burton’s anthropological persona was only one of many he assumed in his travels. In addition to his performance of the emergent discipline of anthropology in various regions of the world, he at the same time continued to represent himself variously as an explorer, a member of the literati, a bohemian, a speculator in gold on more than one occasion, and a representative of the British government as soldier and later as consul in West Africa, Brazil, Syria, and Trieste. He didn’t seem at all introspective about what it meant to be an anthropologist (or ethnologist), but he tended to bring his knowledge of manners and customs to bear on whatever pursuit he was currently undertaking, including on his well-known, multi-volume, translation of *1001 Nights* from Arabic, in which the many ethnographic footnotes tend at times to overwhelm the stories.

Even near the end of his life when Burton, who had something of a reputation as a gold hunter in East Africa and explorer in West Africa, was lured back to West Africa to assist gold speculators in Liverpool, he applies his ethnographic observations of the West African Gold Coast to the locating and extracting of gold. He warns the project coordinator that the venture will fail because the mining engineers were ignoring his advice to copy the simple methods, “the memorial custom of the country,” used by African women he had observed panning for gold on the Gold Coast back in 1861 “within shot of the fort walls.” At exactly the same time, October of 1883, Burton is carrying on a correspondence with a contemporary, the famous early anthropologist E.B. Tylor, in which he chides Tylor for not tending to various issues concerning erroneous publications of data on West African dialects and, in particular, information on the Akkas, pygmies.

Burton, despite his immersion in the Empire, was also often, like cultural anthropologists today, an “object of suspicion” in the eyes of the establishment. His ability to reflect back on Britain, to critique the British way of life, and to find value in alternative ways of being in other parts of the globe might be partly explained by his own outsider status—having spent so much of his youth, and indeed his adult life, abroad—that he chafed under the social restrictions of the Victorian Age at the same time he wanted to take advantage of its privileges. And Burton’s reputation management didn’t extend to keeping truth from power. When he mentioned in one publication that Oxford could learn a great deal about teaching from the example of Al Azhar University in Cairo or, in an issue of *Ethnological Notes*, commented, “The iron working of the [West African] Fans, turns out an article very superior to that which is sent from Europe. . . . precisely similar to the handicraft of the Amazulu and the Somal, who call the best blades of Sheffield ‘rotten iron,’ because they chip and snap,” he troubled the Empire’s assumptions of superiority.

The bizarre and unsettling ways in which Burton and the Empire interact suggest parallels with international politics today. For example, as the scholar Homi Bhabha observes, villains can be externalized; antics abroad can mask or divert attention from injustices at home. Then, in Burton’s Victorian era, as now, obsession with racial and international conflict let imperialism be an ideological safety valve to divert working class “radicalism” and middle class reformism.



Image courtesy of the Huntington Library, London

Christians in Palestinian Territories

By Cory Driver

On my most recent trip to Israel, while not focusing on my research on Moroccan Israelis' recollections of time in Morocco, I tried to learn about the Christian presence in the Holy Land. There are many groups—among them, the ancient Christian community in Bethlehem and the surrounding villages as well as several much more recent additions to Christian life.

My first stop was to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, inside the Old City of Jerusalem. The church building was funded by Kaiser Wilhelm in the late 1800s. When it was finished, he dedicated the church in 1898, when he and his wife, Augusta Victoria, visited Jerusalem. The Lutheran church houses other Lutheran congregations, speaking four different languages (Arabic, German, English, and Danish) and is the headquarters of the bishop for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (www.elcjlh.org).

From there, I stopped at the Augusta Victoria Hospital on Mount Scopus. Built in 1907 and dedicated in 1910, the hospital was first conceived of as a guest complex for German pilgrims to the Lutheran Church of the Ascension, which is now attached to the hospital. In 1910, it was among the most modern buildings in Jerusalem and the first to have electrical power. The complex was turned into a hospital by the British after the 1948 war to care for Palestinian refugees. After the British and the International Committee of the Red Cross departed, it has been managed by the Lutheran World Federation since May 1, 1950. There are 161 beds and the first pediatric oncology unit for Palestinians.

I also visited Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala's Christian communities. Among the many projects and works undertaken by the communities was the Siraj Center (www.sirajcenter.org). Through alternative tourism and ecumenical and multi-faith dialogues, the center attempts to create links between Christian communities around the world with the community in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas.

While in Bethlehem, I visited Bethlehem University (www.bethlehem.edu), which was founded in 1973. Since that time, more than 10,816 students have graduated with 2,936 students currently attending. The university was founded by De La Salle Christian Brothers but is open to people of every faith and background. Practically, though, the student body is made up almost exclusively of Muslim and Christian Palestinians. The university offers 20 undergraduate majors and has two master's degrees: International Cooperation and Development and Molecular Biotechnology.

Finally, on the way back from Hebron, I stopped at the village of Tawani to speak with a Christian Peacemakers Team (www.cpt.org/work/palestine). Among other things, they monitor the Israeli military escort of Palestinian children to school and make sure they are not harassed by settlers. The CPT is also trying to start up a women's handicraft cooperative.

The Christian community in the Holy Land comes in many shapes and forms, but it is alive and active.



Interior: Church of the Sepulchre, Jerusalem

¹ www.avh.org/ourhistory/ourhistory.html

² *ibid.*

³ nytimes.com/2005/04/03/international/middleeast/03hospital.html?scp=2&sq=augusta%20victoria%20hospital&st=cse

⁴ www.bethlehem.edu/news_events/bu_news/bun_fall_2007/2008-01-19%20BU%20at%20a%20Glance.pdf



Christianity in the Middle East

Christianity was originally founded in the Middle East and was first spoken of in Antioch, which is in modern-day Turkey. Early Christian communities spoke a variety of languages, including Aramaic, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Ge'ez, Georgian, and Arabic, besides Greek and Latin. The modern churches continue to speak these languages. All together, the various Christian churches in the Middle East have around 19 million adherents today.

Christianity spread rapidly in its first several centuries. Christians could be found from North Africa well into Central Asia. According to the early Church, believers came from many of the ethnic groups of the Middle East, including “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya, and visitors from Rome, Cretans, and Arabs.”

Indeed, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia played important roles in the development of Christianity. St. Augustine of Hippo, the Bishop of Hippo Regius, was born in Thagaste, which is present-day Souk Ahras, Algeria. He is considered a church father of the Latin Church. He was of Amazigh [Berber] background.

After Nestorius, the archbishop of Constantinople, was condemned in the First Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, in the first major schism, he left Roman territory and sought refuge in Sassanid Persia. The Assyrian Church of the East, which had previously separated from Constantinople, harbored him.

Soon after the time of schisms, the Muslim Conquest severely reduced the number of Christians in the Middle East. There were still noteworthy communities in and around the Byzantine Empire as well as in Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine.

Western Christians launched Crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries to retake parts of the Holy Land. In the long run, the Crusades failed and most remaining inhabitants of the Crusader kingdoms converted, were killed, or left, but for several years, Crusader kingdoms were a part of the Christianity of the Middle East.

During the Ottoman Period, particularly the 19th century, mission activity expanded in the Middle East, and Western churches started to gain a new foothold.

Today, ancestral churches as well as more recent incarnations of the church can be seen all throughout the Middle East, as well as the activities of Christians who remain a significant minority in Middle Eastern countries.

Cory Driver is the MESC outreach coordinator and a graduate student in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures.

¹ looklex.com/e.o/christianity.htm

² Acts 2:9-11



Jenny Nowlin in Cairo

A doctoral student in political science, **Jenny Nowlin** will use her increased language skills to interview women for her dissertation project on women and political participation in the Middle East. “I hope to be able to use Arabic in order to complete my dissertation, focusing on women and political participation in the Middle East. I’ll interview women and conduct a study,” she explained. Nowlin built on two years of Arabic language training by attending the Arabic Language Institute at the American University in Cairo, Egypt, where she focused on both Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. She studied the high intermediate category of standard Arabic and the low intermediate category of colloquial Arabic with her MESC-supported fellowship.

“It was an amazing, eye-opening experience,” Nowlin said. “There’s nothing like having your feet on the ground in order to acquire the Arabic speaking skills you need. Plus, language is nothing without its cultural context. Studying in Egypt was great at providing that.”

FLAS fellow Jenny Nowlin in Cairo, Egypt



The Event Structure Metaphor: The Case of Arabic

Author: Reyadh Aldokhayel
Degree: PhD, Ball State University, 2008
Advisor: Elizabeth Riddle

This research is a further step towards a crosslinguistic generalization concerning the metaphor cluster called the Event Structure Metaphor (ESM). Cognitive linguists (e.g. Lakoff 1990; 1993; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; 1999) have speculated that ESM, among other conceptual metaphors, may be a candidate for a metaphorical universal because of its universal experiential motivation.

In ESM, various aspects of events, such as STATES, CHANGES, PROCESSES, ACTIONS, CAUSES, PURPOSES, DIFFICULTIES, and MEANS are systematically conceptualized in terms of the concrete concepts of space, motion, and force. This study investigates whether ESM, with its OBJECT-LOCATION duality, exists in Arabic, just as it does in English, Chinese, and Hungarian, and whether Arabic exhibits the same or different submappings as those realized in English, hence same or different patterns of metaphorical abstract reasoning. Investigating the existence of ESM in Arabic, a language from yet another linguistic family, should provide more insight into the nature of ESM and its potential universality.

This study suggests that metaphor in general is central to the comprehension of abstract and complex concepts. ESM, in particular, is found to be generally manifested in Arabic as well. The notions incorporated in ESM seem to be systematically conceptualized in Arabic and English in the same way; in general, they are comprehended in terms of the concrete, image-schematic concepts of space, motion, and force. Further, the study suggests that speakers of different languages appear to have similar cognitive structures, especially at the higher, generic levels of the inheritance hierarchy. However, as conceptualizations move down the hierarchy, they may diverge crosslinguistically so as to reflect culture-specific models.

The potentially universal conceptualizations are a consequence of the sensorimotor, image-schematic experience that is common to all human-beings, and which is bound to surface linguistically in the same way at the higher, generic levels. This research, therefore, strengthens earlier claims about the potential universality of ESM.

Toward an Anthropology of the State: Unsettling Effects of the September 12 Coup on the Ülkücü Movement in Turkey

Author: Esin Duzel
Degree: MA, The Ohio State University, 2008

This thesis explores the effects of the state violence on political subjectivities and the reformations of the State. More specifically, it examines the interviews and memoirs by members of the ultranationalist (ülküçü) movement in Turkey about their prison and torture experiences during the 1980 military coup. It demonstrates different ways their encounters with the State violence are understood and incorporated into oppositional or loyalist discourses. The project employs two methodological approaches, genealogical and anthropological. For the first, the historicity of the coups is provided, and different dynamics of power are laid out. For the second, the State is regarded both as an entity and a notion, and the relationships between the political subjects and the State are investigated with paying attention to the instances from daily life. In doing so, this thesis offers a perspective to the scholarship on the coups in Turkey which has predominantly been crafted by the political science studies. It challenges the notion of the State as reified, rational, and in the Turkish case, “guardian” of the Nation.

Cultural Divides, Cultural Transitions: The Role of Gendered and Racialized Narratives of Alienation in the Lives of Somali Muslim Refugees in Columbus, Ohio

Author: Richelle Schrock
Degree: PhD, The Ohio State University, 2008
Advisor: Amy Shuman

Since the mid-1990s, Somali refugees have been resettling in the large Midwest city of Columbus, Ohio, in the United States. In 1990,

there were less than 100 Somalis living in the Columbus metropolitan area, while the current estimate is that between 40,000 and 60,000 Somali refugees are Columbus residents. This population continues to grow and constitutes the second largest community of Somali refugees in the United States. The Somali community in Columbus is almost entirely Muslim, and this creates particular challenges in the post 9/11 era and within the specific context of Columbus, which has never before seen a high influx of African refugees or Muslims into the community. Situating my fieldwork with this Somali community within existing debates in feminist theory concerning multiculturalism and women's rights, I examine the representations and narratives that Somali Muslim women and men identify as dominant in the Western media and in Columbus, Ohio, concerning their community. In addition, I explore Columbus Somalis' discursive and material practices of resistance to these narratives. I employ feminist ethnography to gather and analyze what I have identified as *narratives of alienation* that predominate in both discursive constructions of Somalis as well as interactions between Somalis and non-Somalis in the Columbus community.

These narratives of alienation are gendered and racialized, relying on Orientalist images of Islam to construct discursive divisions within the Columbus community that have material repercussions for Somali women and men. Somali men and women are differently framed by narratives of alienation and have differing reactions and resistance strategies as a result. For Somali women, beginning to wear the hijab is an important practice of resistance to narratives that construct them as inherently subjugated. Somali men's resistance strategies differ because they position themselves as agents in pursuit of the American Dream in order to contest narratives of alienation. In calling attention to these narratives and resistance strategies, I lay the groundwork in this dissertation to explore in my future work how feminist directives can be employed productively in improving women's lives in minority cultures without reinforcing larger narratives of alienation between hegemonic America and newly arrived immigrant groups.

French National Identity at the Dawn of Globalisation: Searching for a New Cohesion

Author: Roya Mesbah
Degree: PhD, The Ohio State University, 2008
Advisor: Karlis Racevskis

The quest for identity is becoming one of the most politically charged issues at start of the third millennium. The transformative processes that are occurring as a result of globalization, as well as the mass population migrations that took place in the 20th century, explain why the question of identity has become so central a political driving force to both the well-established democracies of the West and the post-colonial societies as they evolve in their quest toward modernization. In reaction to the dehumanization and alienation brought about by the post-industrial economies, new dissident and “deviant” identities are being forged. The concept of French citizenship, a universal abstraction as conceived by the Enlightenment, is being challenged by specific forces relating to gender, culture, sexual orientation but especially those tied to ethnicity religion, once considered as belonging to the past.

New identities are being forged around sub-cultures associated with consumer habits and leisure time activities such as soccer and Rai music. Others seek refuge and legitimacy searching for roots in mythical pasts and imaginary ancestry, or in transnational movements and causes. Facing simultaneously the pressures of assimilation and exclusion within the society, ethnicity and religion become alternative choices to new immigrants who also become victims of the socio-economic vagaries of globalization. The struggle for the recognition of a dissident identity is a fight for power. Representative democracies gradually absorb dissident currents into their mainstream, Islam, however, represents a particular challenge as it has become an ideological opponent to the Western rationalism. The sheer number of followers and the size of its territory appear menacing to the West, making the migrants of Muslim descent doubly undesirable, both as poor neighbors and as suspected radicals.

The uprisings of the marginalized suburbs are a symptom of this crisis. The 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center only amplified these fears. This study seeks to analyze the efforts undertaken by the French government since the 1990, to ease the social integration of its divers minorities without sacrificing the norms and principles that make the singularity of the French national identity.

Transports of Progress: The Arabian American Oil Company and American Modernization in Saudi Arabia, 1945–1973

Author: Chad Parker
Degree: PhD, Indiana University, 2008
Advisor: Nick Cullather

In his influential book, *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott described modernity as a uniquely governmental way of looking at and ordering society. But what happens when a corporation carries out modernization? Primarily concerned with the security of the oil concession, the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) engaged in a series of modernization projects in hopes of studying and organizing the Kingdom and its inhabitants for work in the oil fields and establishing a stronger diplomatic position with the Saudi crown.

Aramco’s modernizing style contained three attributes that separated it from the prevailing development norms presented by states. First, Aramco’s approach to development suggested a different attitude toward tradition. Whereas states wanted to standardize and rationalize local social practices, Aramco nurtured tradition alongside modernity as it worked to overlay Saudi society with new technologies and new organizations. Second, corporate ends were notably different than state goals. Aramco had an immediate profit motive and sought an immediate return on its investments. States, on the other hand, sought long-range goals. Third, Aramco’s modernization operated on an advanced timeline. Kennedy’s development decade began in 1960 when theories of nation-building were just coming into vogue, but modernization as transported by Aramco arrived in Saudi Arabia earlier and, by the early 1960s, was winding down. Since there was no body of modernization theory in the 1940s and 1950s, there was no clear vocabulary or experts; the concepts were inchoate. Aramco’s modernization began earlier, and as a consequence, it was improvisational and ad hoc in an attempt to accommodate Saudi notions of nation building and modernity.

The company fashioned programs that allowed for parallel development that fostered tradition—Monarchy and Islam—while modernizing the oil industry, medicine, and agriculture. Medicine served as a primary tool of modernization that demonstrated corporate competence, allowed for corporate control of the physical body of potential workers, and granted the Saudi crown a legitimacy confirmed by Western technology and organization. Aramco’s legacy in this respect has been

forgotten, but it is important if we are to uncover the instrumentalities of modernization and American foreign policy in the Middle East in the postwar era.

World Views of the Peoples of the Arabian Peninsula: A Study of Cultural System

Author: Naser S. Alhujelan
Degree: PhD, Indiana University, 2008
Advisor: Hasan El-Shamy

This study attempts to examine the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula to better understand their world views, the cultural systems that control their behaviors, their way of thinking, and their value system. This work attempts to utilize cultural information about their world views to study the perceived contradiction in living a modern life governed by traditional values. The study relies on many factors that are integral to human experience including literature sources, linguistic elements, oral folk texts; in addition to analysis of culturally influential factors such as the location, time; and modern technology. New cultural changes have been highlighted in addition to their cause and their ramifications relative to religion, politics, social life, economy and education.

To acquire authentic data for this work, written texts including both folk and elite genres as well as oral texts have been collected from various parts of the Arabian Peninsula. These texts are analyzed in accordance to their cultural contexts to obtain conclusions pertaining to the form of cultural changes that have been induced by different factors both internal and external. The world views of the people of the Arabian Peninsula have been molded and are constantly being influenced by the ever changing cultural scheme encouraged by new ways of life.

The study starts with a background highlighting Arabic cultural criticism studies to contextualize this current work in this field. Chapter one discusses the cultural influence of the location as inferred from oral folk texts and literature sources. Then, chapter two assesses the impact of the chronological element in shaping people’s world views in the Arabian Peninsula. Social relations and cultural traditions have been emphasized in chapters four and five that analyze cultural codes governing relations among males and females as separate groups and also between each other. Lastly, chapter five discusses the effect of technology in the culture focusing on certain changes in language and tradition.



Frithjof Schuon: The Shining Realm of the Pure Intellect

Author: by Renaud Fabbri
Degree: MA, Miami University, 2007
Advisor: Elizabeth Wilson

This thesis provides an intellectual biography of the Perennialist philosopher and Sufi Shaykh Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998). I have argued that Schuon's message is best understood as an autonomous path of knowledge (*jnana-marga*), ritually based on Islam but centered on the *Religio Perennis*. I have also compared and contrasted it to certain metaphysical doctrines and contemplative disciplines of the Hindu monastic traditions (Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, Samkhya-yoga, Kashmiri Shaivism, etc...) and certain Gnostic schools of Sufism (*wahdat al-wujud*, Shadhili ritual practice, etc...), to none of which can it be reduced in the last instance.

Gua sha and the Scientific Gaze: Original Research on an Ancient Therapy in a Call for Discourse in Philosophies of Medicine

Author: Arya Nielsen
Degree: PhD, Union Institute and University, 2007
Advisor: Robert McAndrews

This original research into the physiology of *Gua sha* used laser Doppler scanning to measure the effect of *Gua sha* treatment on the microcirculation of surface tissue in healthy subjects demonstrating a four-fold increase in perfusion for the first 7.5 minutes compared to a control area, and a sustained significant

increase in surface perfusion for the full 25 minutes after *Gua sha* with a corresponding subjectively reported reduction in pain that persisted to the time of follow-up scan several days later. The results are consistent with a traditional medical perspective that *Gua sha* treats pain and, among other things, moves blood and increases circulation.

A literature review identifies *Gua sha*, aka *cao gio*, coining within the scientific gaze as a baffling, superfluous and even dangerous attempt by Asians to care for their cultural rather than physical health. A history of blood-letting and counteractive medicine explains the philosophy of techniques like *Gua sha* and their rejection by conventionalists whose medical philosophy is delimited by science or concerned primarily with morality and ethics. Conspicuously absent within the Academy is philosophical discourse in non-Western scholarly medical traditions of East Asian medicine, Ayurveda, the medicine of Islam or other local or regional sets, as well as the ground of health care practice across history and culture, which resides in the familial domestic sector. The marginalizing of East Asian medicine as an oral folk tradition is linked to Orientalism, and the discursive invisibility of all but conventional biomedical care to the colonial effect of the hegemony of science that positions methods outside of its culture as “complementary and alternative,” even when studies prove benefit over standards of practice.

Integrative clinical practice engages philosophies of medicine and the partial knowledge of the physiology of *Gua sha* here illuminates the heterogeneous epistemologies of medicine that are active in the professional as well as domestic familial sector supporting a call for discourse in philosophies of medicine.

Ijtihad: Individual Reasoning and the Empowerment of Women

Author: Soraya (Layla) Saatchi
Degree: MA, Wayne State University, 2007
Advisor: May Seikaly

The subject of women in Islam is an emerging area of study that has only taken shape in the

last decade. Muslim women's studies go beyond existing academic disciplines and involve, but are not limited to, scholarly works on law, religion, gender and history, challenging existing received wisdom on these subjects. Within this burgeoning area of study and inquiry, Muslim-American women academics have emerged as both the subject and researcher. Their dual role simultaneously gives them the advantage of first-hand knowledge of their subject and the benefits of academic training and inquiry. This insider/outsider combined status, although not exclusive to these Muslim women, has led Gisela Webb to refer to their work as scholarship-activism. The following research is not meant as a critique of the methodologies employed by these women, but rather as an analysis of their work, in particular their use of *ijtihad*, which is in congruence with a greater Islamic rationalist revival stemming from the modern historical period of the mid-19th century.

To date, the academic publications of Muslim-American women have been read and analyzed separately from existing Islamic modernists and post-modernists such as Fazlur Rahman, Muhammad Arkoun, and Khaled Abou El Fadl even though their theories calling for a revival of *ijtihad* in Islamic exegesis and law figure prominently in the published works of these women. This isolation has often relegated them to a position of renegade or vagrant innovator, severely limiting their perceived legitimacy and scope of readership. Muslim-American women scholars are, however, building upon an existing tradition calling for ongoing independent re-interpretations of Islam.

Muslim-American women scholar-activists are engaging in an epistemological analysis of the methodology, scope, and validity of individualized, private Islam. Their work marks the beginning of an exegetical tradition that is not unlike that of preceding Islamic modernists, but significantly differs in two ways: First, these women explicitly address their Western context and changing socio-political contexts generally as the reason for ongoing *ijtihad*. Second, *ijtihad* represents an Islamically legitimate method, by which to empower themselves in a male-dominated faith tradition.

The Contextualization of the Gospel of Jesus Christ among Bektashi Albanians

Author: Richard William Shaw
 Degree: PhD, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2007
 Advisor: Terry Muck

Although many Albanians have historically identified with Christian faith, in spite of contrary influences of Islam and Communism, many Albanians profess adherence to several of the Sufi orders, or fraternities. The Sufi order Bektashi boasts the largest number of Albanian faithful, and is prevalent in Albania, western Macedonia, and southwestern Kosovo. Very few Albanian Bektashis have responded to gospel witness. If Albanian Bektashis are to become disciples of Jesus Christ, and an indigenous church be established among them, the gospel must be contextualized, appropriating indigenous language, symbols, and ceremonies.

This dissertation is an experiment in action research, testing the innovation of the critical contextualization of nine elements of Bektashi belief and practice, and contextual theologies developed from these nine elements. Following anecdotal research and bibliographic surveys of literature on Bektashism, from both emic and etic perspectives, I developed a questionnaire to analyze the opinions of 80 pre-selected interviewees. I interviewed these 80 persons and tabulated the results. I summoned a hermeneutical community of 21 Albanian Bektashi Background Believers, and charged them with the task of subjecting the nine elements of Bektashi belief and practice to the mechanism of critical contextualization. As part of this process, these 21 persons developed contextual theologies appropriating biblical passages as the criterion for interpretation. The discussion style of these gatherings was the indigenous Albanian cultural method called *muhabet*, or heart-to-heart discussions. The leaders of the sessions attempted to stay within the parameters of this method, but occasionally went beyond it, in order to be inclusive of all persons participating. These Albanian Bektashi Background Believers leaders insisted that all voices be heard.

When the hermeneutical circle completed its work, its leaders asked me to write the formulations of their sessions. I penned these expressions, and submitted them to the 80 interviewees for their study. Following the reading of these expressions of understanding, I interviewed the 80 persons a second time. As after the first set of interviews, I tabulated the results from this second round. I found that the contextual theologies reinforced articulated belief for many of the interviewees. Additionally, I discovered that the process of contextualization helped believers to give the implicit words, and to give the explicit depth.

I developed a contextualization gauge to assess the degree the gospel of Jesus Christ has been inculturated among a given population. I incorporated five domains of religious experience in this gauge, including cognitive, affective, volitional, spiritual-mystical, and association or belongingness. Participants in the hermeneutical community evaluated their congregations in light of this gauge, and addressed its usefulness in their spiritual formation.

If contextualization is to be useful as a method of discipline and evangelization, it must be tested in practice, and not remain only as a theoretical construct. This study has done just that, subjecting contextualization to the experimental method, and finding it to be an appropriate tool in the task of Christian mission.

The Headscarf Ban in the Turkish University: Educational and Cultural Experiences of Part-Time Unveilers

Author: Fatma Nevra Seggie
 Degree: PhD, Michigan State University, 2007
 Advisor: Ann Austin

This dissertation examines the impact of the higher education headscarf ban policy on the educational and cultural experiences of part-time unveilers. The term “part-time unveiler” is coined to refer to undergraduate female students who cover their hair in their private lives in line with the tenets of Islam, but who remove the headscarf while at a Turkish university

as a result of the higher education headscarf ban policy. This is a qualitative study based on one-on-one interviews with thirty participants and informed by grounded theory. The study highlights how part-time unveilers understand and negotiate the policy, the challenges and opportunities associated with unveiling and the strategies they use in response to these, and the impact of the headscarf ban on part-time unveilers’ sense of identity. Based on the findings, one conclusion of the research is that the headscarf ban is more than just a policy of access. It appears to be a value-laden, multifaceted, and complex policy with many layers, interpretations, and implications, and with multiple intended and/or unintended outcomes. Another conclusion to be drawn from the study is that the ban appears to impact part-time unveilers at different levels. It seems to affect their daily lives on campus, their personalities, and their identity development in numerous ways. The effects of the ban have long-term and short-term implicit and explicit implications for higher education, society, and the role of Islam, democracy, and secularism in Turkey, which may have an overall impact on the social, political, and economic contexts of the country. The dissertation makes recommendations for policy makers, administrators, and faculty. It also offers suggestions for future research.



Exemplary Activities: MESC Outreach and Engagement By Cory Driver

This reporting period (August 15, 2008, to April 15, 2009) has been an exciting time for outreach and enhancement of scholarship on the Middle East at The Ohio State University. A variety of events, including workshops, individual lectures, lecture series, P-12 outreach, radio programs, comedy events, poetry readings, community outreach, and partnerships with university and governmental partners served to increase knowledge and understanding of the Middle East among an increasingly wide group of beneficiaries of our programs. Not only were students, P-12 educators, professors, and university staff aided by the work of the center, but so was the community at large, including heritage communities and those typically underrepresented in international studies. This profusion of events and beneficiaries notwithstanding, there were several events during this period which merit special attention.

Academic Engagement

Ottoman Lecture Series

The Middle East Studies Center sponsored a visit by Ussama Mekdisi, who gave a lecture entitled “Anti-Americanism in the Arab World: A Brief History,” on April 16, 2008, as part of the Ottoman Lecture Series. In it, Professor Mekdisi traced the declining enthusiasm for U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world to relatively recent support for Israel and unpopular regional leaders in Egypt and elsewhere, noting that for most of its history, the United States has been very popular in the Ottoman-controlled Middle East. Wars in Iraq also did not improve America’s image. Mekdisi pointed out that while distaste was expressed towards U.S. policy, the notion of anti-Americanism is largely a false one: American culture is consumed on a massive scale, and many people would like to go to America, at least for education. Mekdisi answered question from a crowd of 60, including 30 students and 20 educators.

Islam and Democracy Series

On May 15, 2008, MESC sponsored the last lecture in the “Islam and Democracy Lecture Series” by Jamal Amaney, entitled “Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World.” Professor Amaney spoke about the reasons for the popularity of Hamas including their provision of social services and reputation for a lack of corruption to 65 people in attendance.

Honors Lecture on *The Kite Runner*

On September 3, 2008, Alam Payind gave the Mount Union College’s Dewald Honors Lecture to 180 students on the relevance of *The Kite Runner*. Payind discussed the historical context of *The Kite Runner* as well as his own insights as an immigrant from Afghanistan into the cultures represented in the book.

Diversity within the Muslim Community

Asma Mobin-Uddin and Awatif El-Nour spoke about diversity within the Muslim community in Columbus to Ohio State freshmen as part of the First Year Experience Program and co-organized by MESC. On October 20, 2008, the two women spoke about their national origins—Pakistan and Somalia, respectively—and their thoughts on Islam and the role it played in their lives. Students, many of whom wrote back on feedback cards that they “had never met a Muslim,” asked questions of the doctor and PhD candidate for 45 minutes after the talk. There were 60 students in attendance.

U.S.–Muslim Engagement Project

On February 20, 2009, MESC co-sponsored “Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World” by Dalia Mogahed, executive director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies; Thomas Dine, director of the Syria Project for Search for Common Ground; and Robert Fersh, executive director of Search for Common Ground-USA. The lecture focused on developing a new direction for U.S. relations with the Muslim world by advancing four goals: diplomacy, efforts to improve governance, job-creating growth, and mutual respect. More than 200 people attended.

Iranian Culture

On February 24, 2009, Mino Moallem delivered the lecture “Political and Cultural Citizenship: The Making and Unmaking of the Nation of Iran” to more than 35 attendees, including nine instructors and 28 students. She spoke about the nuances of society in Iran, and how identity is framed on many levels and in many spheres at the same time.

Sufi Poetry Night

The Middle East Studies Center continued its tradition of hosting themed poetry nights on March 4, 2009, with Sufi Poetry night. Using Arabic, Dari, Urdu, Pashto, and Turkish, nine poems were recited by faculty and community members while music and Sufi images were shared. The event was attended by 42 students, eight faculty and six community members (See p. 16 to read selected poems from the evening).

Arts and Performance

Film

MESC joined with the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department, the Comparative Studies department, the OSU Film Studies Program, and Landmark’s Gateway Theater to host an Egyptian film festival: “Notable Moments in Egyptian Film from 1947 to 1997.” On March 13 and 14, 2009, an audience of more than 80 viewed such films as *A Voice like Egypt* (1997), *Fatmah* (1947), *Wife Number 13* (1962), *M Empire* (1972), *The Escape* (1991), and *Destiny* (1997). On March 14, a panel discussion on the films was held with three Egyptians: Amany Seleem, a director and actress, as well as a PhD student in the Department of Theater; Aladdin Mahmoud, Fulbright scholar and major contributor to the conceptualization of the film series; and Aly Hassan, professor and research librarian for Arabic texts in the Middle East Studies Library at Ohio State. Professor Sabra Webber of the departments of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and Comparative Studies in the Humanities directed the program (see more about Egyptian film, p. 14, and Professor Webber’s research, p. 3).

International Linkage and Institutional Cooperation

Iraqi University Presidents’ Visit

From February 10 to February 14, 2009, the Middle East Studies Center helped host a delegation of Iraqi University presidents visiting The Ohio State University. Abdulrazzaq Issa, president of Kufa University; Nabeel Kaghd, president of the University of Babylon; and Asmat Khalid, president of Dohuk University, came to observe The Ohio State University and compare methods and practices. In addition to aiding in numerous meetings with faculty and staff of the university, Alam Payind, Melinda Wightman, and Cory Driver, as well as intern Carolyn Giesel, facilitated a meeting with community members such as Asma Mobin-Uddin, president of the Ohio Council on American Islamic Relations and Hany Saqr, chairman of the Noor Islamic

Cultural Center. Over three full days of the visit, the delegates were able to speak to several groups of students about life in Iraq in general and university life in particular. A panel discussion was facilitated so that the community at large would have a chance to have questions answered by the three presidents. Ties were strengthened between Ohio State and the three universities represented and scores of students and educators gained valuable insight on life in Iraq. For additional coverage of their visit, see the article "A Time to Heal" on Ohio State's web site, osu.edu/features/2009/iraq.

Afghan Culture and Music at Indiana University

Alam Payind delivered a talk on "Afghan Culture and Music" in a lecture at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, on Jan. 2, 2009. He spoke about the long history of Afghanistan as an important part of the Silk Road and made reference to Bactrian, Greek, Persian, and Indian influences in culture. More than 150 students and educators attended.

U.S. Security and the Middle East at Mount Union College

On Sept. 4, 2008, Alam Payind spoke on U.S. security interests in the Middle East to a crowd of over 775 people at Mount Union College. As part of the lecture, Professor Payind addressed U.S. military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. relations with Iran, and U.S. policy concerning the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Of those in attendance, more than 500 were students and 100 were educators.

Government Collaboration

On Thursday, Jan. 29, 2009, Alam Payind addressed a group of 30 Ohio service men and women who were preparing to deploy to Afghanistan at the Defense Finance and Accounting Services facility in Columbus, Ohio. Payind addressed the climate, culture, and history of Afghanistan, and responded to the soldiers' many questions and concerns.

P-12 Outreach

Presenting Global Perspectives

During every academic year, the Middle East Studies Center offers volunteer training for the "Global School Bus" project that provides schools with presenters who teach a short unit on the Middle East. A sampling of the schools that benefited from the project are Emerson Immersion Elementary, Westerville South High School, Bexley Middle School, Gahanna

Lincoln High School, and Darby High School. The topics for discussion include, but in no way are limited to Turkey in Modernity, Islam, and Cultural Practices and Somali Culture. Participation in this project is based on the number of requests that are received from different schools during the academic year independently and through the P-12 outreach office of OIA.

Scholarly Outreach

Cory Driver, the center's outreach coordinator, made several trips to area schools to provide students with a nuanced analysis of events and peoples of the Middle East. On Feb. 10, 2009, Driver visited the Christopher Program, a college prep program, to help the students prepare for classroom debates on Middle East issues, most notably the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Driver spoke to a class of 20 high school juniors and seniors.

Driver also spoke about the Complex Issues of Identity in Morocco to a surprisingly attentive group of 75 third graders and third teachers on Monday, March 16, 2009. The students learned about rural/urban differences as well as Amazigh, Arab, and Jewish groups within Morocco.

Melinda Wightman, assistant director, spoke to more than 200 teachers at a workshop on teaching the Holocaust on Wednesday, Aug. 6, 2008. Wightman focused her talk on the Holocaust in a Middle Eastern context. She provided many resources, such as Outreach World, TeachGlobalEd, and links to the Israeli Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem.

Community Development

Interfaith Dialogue

On Sunday, Sept. 21, leaders of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious communities gathered at the Islamic Society of North America in Plainfield, Indiana. Alam Payind gave a talk about inter-faith relations. Many faith practitioners were exposed to adherents of religions outside their own traditions in addition to Payind's analysis of the intersection of religion culture and society. There were 50 people in attendance.

Community Groups

As part of the continuing effort to reach out to the community and provide scholarly information to community groups, Alam Payind gave a lecture at Brookwood Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio, on "Economic, Political, and Religious Causes of Terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan," on Jan. 11, 2009. He made note of many causes of violence beyond the purely religious and pointed out that most Muslims roundly prohibit acts of ter-

rorism against civilians. A crowd of more than 40 people listened to the lecture and engaged in a question and answer time.

Media

Alam Payind regularly conducts interviews for radio programs including, but not limited to, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, al-Jazeera, and the BBC. Some examples of his interviews are:

Elections in Pakistan: 8/22/2008

Current Developments in Israel: Invasion of Gaza: 1/3/2009

What Obama Will Do Differently than Bush: 1/13/2009

On the 20th Anniversary of Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: 2/10/2009

Obama and Iran: 2/12/2009

Richard Holbrooke, Afghanistan, and Pakistan: 2/19/2009

Afghanistan Update: 3/11/2009

Plans for Spring 2008

Study Abroad for Minorities

The Middle East Studies Center will continue its outreach to minority communities underserved by study-abroad programs through a series of lectures at area community colleges and minority-rich high schools.

Iraqi Women

MESC will continue to partner with the Women in Development group to bring Isis Nusair to speak on "Gendered Bodies/Gendered Wars: Iraqi Women Refugees in Jordan," on May 21, 2009.

Conclusion

The Middle East Studies Center has taken great strides during the past six months to expand not only its outreach efforts but also its on-campus activities. The above 20 programs which had a total attendance of 2,223 people, not including the ongoing Global School Bus and radio programs which reach untold numbers of people, are only a sampling of the 48 outreach and academic enhancement activities MESC conducted over the reported time span. MESC continues to provide excellent scholarship and outreach that serve to better inform the Ohio State campus, Columbus, Ohio, and the world.



Depiction of Umm Kulthum from 1947 film "Fatmah" (played at the OSU Middle Eastern Film Fest, 2009)

Umm Kulthum

By Carolyn Giesel

Egyptian singer and actress Umm Kulthum is considered by many to be the Arab world's greatest singer and "Kawkab Ash-Sharq" or "Star of the East." Virginia Danielson, biographer of Umm Kulthum, wrote, "Imagine a singer with the virtuosity of Joan Sutherland or Ella Fitzgerald, the public persona of Eleanor Roosevelt, and the audience of Elvis, and you have Umm Kulthum, the most accomplished singer of her century in the Arab world." In a career that lasted more than 50 years, her musical legacy thrives largely to Egyptian radio's weekly broadcasting of her timeless music. A humble background (her father was a deeply religious Imam) and a strictly controlled public life made her seem real and a part of the Arab community. Her beauty, voice, and symbolism are engraved in the minds of the Arab world and strongly united with nationalist and Arab cultural identities. Her performances would last hours, sometimes with only one or two songs, as the virtuosity of her voice allowed her to captivate and ensnare her audience and never sing the same line the same way. Her funeral was one of the largest gatherings in history, with more than four million people taking turns carrying her coffin to her favorite mosque in Egypt. This treasure of the Middle East will never be forgotten.

Liane Hansen, Umm Kulthum: The Voice of Egypt, NPR, May 11, 2008, *Weekend Edition Sunday*.

Danielson, Virginia. *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arab Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Fifty Years of Egyptian Film: The Golden Era and Beyond

By Sabra Webber, edited by Stephanie Stewart Moged

On March 13–14, the Middle East Studies Center co-sponsored an Egyptian Film Festival, under the direction of Professor Sabra Webber. The other sponsors were Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, the Department of Comparative Studies in the Humanities, and the OSU Film Studies Program. Special thanks goes to Aladdin Mahmoud, Fulbright scholar; Amany Seleem, PhD student in the Department of Theatre; and Aly Hassan, professor in the Middle East Studies Library at Ohio State, for their invaluable contributions and commentary at the festival.

The Egyptian film industry is one of the oldest in the world, with more than 3,000 films produced since its debut in 1912 of the short film *On the Streets of Alexandria*. Egyptian film showings began as early as the late 1890s playing to audiences in crowded cafés or under the skies on warm summer evenings. Its first full-length silent film, *Laila*, about an abandoned pregnant woman played by 'Aziza Amir, debuted in 1927. 'Aziza Amir went on to become one of the most successful female producers in the Arab world.

With the advent of "talkies" five years later, Egypt's film industry dominated Arab world cinema, which explains, along with the popularity of Egypt's music industry, the familiarity of Middle Easterners with the Cairene Arabic dialect. In 1932, Egypt showcased its first full length speaking film, *Awlad al Zawat (High Class Society)*. With the introduction of sound, the film industry in Cairo, Egypt, became regionally well-known, and between 1930 and 1936 at least 44 feature films were introduced. Production more than doubled from 1933 to 1936.

Music became, and continues to be, an important element of Egyptian films. One of the biggest draws to the public in other Arab countries was the chance to see their favorite stars singing. Umm Kulthum, Mohamed Abd el Wahab, and Leila Mourad were some of the most popular draws during the late 1940s. The most popular singers from the stage, such as Umm Kulthum, even starred in films based on their songs.

The late 1940s through the early 1970s is considered the "golden era" of Egyptian cinema. Director Kamal Salim gave Egyptian audiences a taste of neorealism in 1940 with *Determination*, shot in the streets of Cairo and incorporating the real actions of daily life in the city. It was at this time that some films began to be more overtly critical of Egypt's social situation and to address issues of class and gender. Still, Egypt's exports throughout the Arab world continued to depend on the overwhelming popularity of musical comedies and melodramas. In the 1950s especially, a rigid star system evolved for actors with Faten Hamama and her husband Omar Sharif as the most popular screen actors. (Sharif, born a Syrian-Lebanese Christian named Michel Chalroub, is said to have converted to Islam for love of Hamama.)

Despite the decline of the Egyptian film industry toward the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, critically and popularly well-received films such as *The Vagabonds* (1985) and *Kit Kat* (1991) were still being made. Towards the end of the 1990s, only 16 feature length films were made, down from 90 in the 1960s and '70s. Ten years later, however, that number shot up again to 40 productions in 2007. Recent films that have achieved both critical and popular success are *Al Massir* and *Emaret Ya'qoubian*.

New Additions to the MESC Library

Recent additions to the MESC Library include a book by Sylvia Wing Önder, *We Have No Microbes Here: Healing Practices in a Turkish Black Sea Village*. From personal visits and interviews, she relates individuals' health and wellness treatments that incorporate traditional care with modern medicine. Her stated aim in writing this book was to show the value of both traditional and clinical medicine in treating illness and providing the best in patient care.

A special acquisition for the library is the 303-page book, *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum*, Kabul, 2008, National Geographic's Official Companion to the Exhibition, and a 30-minute DVD overview of the collection. This is a full-color catalogue of the exhibition that is on travel in the United States from spring of 2008 through autumn of 2009. Some personal photos taken at the exhibit are shown in this bulletin.

A movie with a seasonal title but an all-season message is *Santa Claus in Baghdad* by Raouf Zaki. This 38-minute film expresses the spirit of giving in a place and time when basic needs are difficult to meet. The film is a screen adaptation of the title story in Elsa Marston's 2008 book *Santa Claus in Baghdad and Other Stories about Teens in the Arab World*, short stories of strength and courage involving teenagers in the Middle East.

Sufism Today

By Melinda Wightman

Introduction

Sufism, or in Arabic, *tassawwuf*, is an umbrella term which refers to Islamic mystic traditions. It is a highly diverse set of traditions, with adherents from many different walks of life and with different levels of involvement. The same linguistic root also generates from the word for wool in Arabic; hence, a sufi is one who wears a wool garment. There is an antinomial aspect of sufism that relates to sufi mystics who lived life on the margins of society and often went against cultural norms. Many of them were ascetics who wore austere clothing, such as the aforementioned rough wool garments. However, adherents to an inner path that harmonizes with codes for daily life were among the prophet's companions and the earliest Muslims, before Orthodox Islam was established. This makes it impossible to understand Sufism as a purely antinomial phenomenon. It has always been and continues to be an integral part of Islam as it is practiced, both in its inner journeys, and in its outward prescriptions for living life in accordance to God's will.

Its mainstream aspect is confirmed by the fact that it is considered to be a path to spiritual enlightenment by many in the Muslim world (though *not all*¹), and that it has been responsible for much of the conversion in the Muslim world. It has become intertwined with local traditions and folk practices of Islam, which often reflect pre-Islamic traditions of the area. Its inclusive nature, and its focus on the Qur'an as the primary source for religious interpretation, creates a more flexible and open stance toward other religious frameworks which may be seen as having emerged from the same source, the one God, or *Allah*.

There is a lot of press given to Sufism these days, whether focusing in on whirling dervishes, or citing their founder Rumi as an exemplar of ecumenical tolerance and spiritual transcendence. And it is largely due to Rumi, in fact, that sufism provides such potent imagery and ideas and has captured the popular imagination. Sufism consists of much more than the order founded by Rumi and the whirling dervishes, of course, and its practices are as diverse as the regions in which it thrives. From West and North Africa, to Turkey, to Iran and Afghanistan, sufism has many interfaces with average people and mystics alike. These include the maintenance and visitation to shrines and tombs of deceased saints, *waqfs*, buildings intended for sufi practice, and the passing on of the traditions (called by many different names: *khanakat*), as well as the many daily manifestations which occur in sayings, references, concepts in literature and popular culture, and deeply held values of average people.

Epistemology

In addition to the Islamic sciences of legal interpretation, or *fiqh*, and histories and accounts of the prophet and the early companions, or *Hadi>th*, the Sufis added a third pillar to their epistemological structure, the science of the interior world, or *'ilm al-batan*. This is, perhaps, what is so remarkable about sufism, and possibly what makes it so appealing across cultures. Individualist cultures, in particular, may find this to be an attractive concept as it focuses on the unique experience, inner experience, of an individual. However, it is important not to overemphasize the importance of this romantic notion; Sufism is integrated with mainstream Islam in most

places, particularly in connection to Islamic endowments, or *waqfs*, and over time Sufi movements have tended to place continually more emphasis on the greater good of the umma, and on practices in accordance with Islamic Law, or *shar'iyah*, rather than on individual, possibly anti-establishment, practices. Lodges continue to take members and promote their particular practices for achieving closeness to God.

Major Sufi Orders and Their Founders

Chishtiyya, The Chishti Order

Abu Ishaq Shami> "The Syrian" brought Sufism to Chisht in the early 10th century (near Herat, or modern day Afghanistan), which is how the order originally received its name. Through Abu Ish{aq, the lineage, or *silsila*, of this order can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad, and includes such notables as 'Ali bin Abi Talib, and Ibrahim Adham al-Balkhi. Sheikh Mu'i>n ad-Din of Ajmir established the order in India in the 12th century where it spread and cultivated a significant following until today.

Qadiriyya, The Qadiri Order

'Abd al-Qadir of Gilan, member of the H{anbali School of Islamic Law, started the order in Baghdad during the 12th century, though later followers did not necessarily adhere to that school. The order proliferated in Northern Africa, established a presence in Asia Minor, and a Qadiri lodge existed in Mecca as late as the 18th century. Many distinct orders derived from Qadiriyya exist now within its geographical domain across nearly every Islamic country.

Suhrawardiyya, The Suhrawardi Order

'Abu al-Naji>b Suhrawardi was the founder, and his nephew Shihab ad-Di>n 'Umar Suhrawardi propagated the order in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Their activities occurred in Baghdad under the 'Abbasids, and many disciples founded orders upon returning to their homelands. The decentralized nature of the order allowed many of these sub-orders to take shape on their own terms. It is the most orthodox of the major orders, with emphasis on prayer, chanting, and fasting during Ramadan.

Naqshbandiyya, The Naqshabandi Order

Khoja Baha ad-Di>n Naqshband was born in the 14th century in Bukhara. He studied under both Persian-speaking and Turkish-speaking spiritual masters, and the order became widespread in both Turkish and Persian-speaking territories; this order is second only to the Qadiriyya in its geographical spread. Fidelity to Islamic law is emphasized, and there is a large degree of alignment with orthodox Islam.

¹Members of the Salafiyya movement, from the 19th century until today, condemn sufism. They consider it to be derived from superstition and connected to folk practices of Islam that they strongly disapprove of, such as ritual tomb visits and shrines to *walis* (literally "friends of God"); i.e., deceased spiritual masters or mystics. Ibn Tamiyya, an important theologian of the 13th and 14th centuries, was the first to vehemently oppose tomb worship and is the source of inspiration for this aspect of the modern salafiyya movement.

Poetry & the Literature of Sufism

The languages of Sufism include Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. The oldest languages are, of course, Arabic, the original language of Islam, and Persian, which was used by many great Sufi poets starting in the 10th century. Sufi poetry of later Islamic Empires was composed in Turkish and Urdu as well. Here are some examples that were shared during our Sufi Poetry Night on March 4, 2009.

Persian

My Soul is Like an Eagle Soaring High

Written and translated by Alam Payind

At daybreak, I heard someone groaning
Saying: we have seen from these narrow-minded
akhunds and *mullahs*, nothing but evil
In this commotion, religion has become an instrument,
And I ran away when I saw the cloak of a *mullah*

For years these *mullahs* and *akhunds* have found their ways to torture my body
But they did not capture my soul and it is still like an eagle soaring high
By closing the doors of the Sufi lodges² what have they (*mullahs* and *akhunds*) achieved?
There will come new cupbearers bearing sweet wine³
They have confiscated from Sufis their string instruments and *nay*⁴,
not knowing that the water will flow again where it used to flow before.
Day and night I long for seeing my beloved freedom,
expecting that she will return to me without her veil.
For how long should I suffer separation?
Oh Payind, come and sing your new song.

² *khanakat*

³ Wine means intoxication through closeness to God.

⁴ Flute

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Useful links

metmuseum.org/special, click "Past Exhibitions," click "February 2008"

encyislam.brill.nl/subscriber/uid=1509/entry?entry=islam_COM-1188

Arabic

Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd Al-Būsīrī

(1213–1296)

Muhammad, leader of the two worlds
and of Man and the jinn,
Leader also of the Arabs and
non Arabs and their kin.

Our Prophet, Commander of right,
prohibits evil's way,
Yet no one's speech more gentle could be
than his *nay* or yea.

Beloved by Allah is he upon
whose pleading we depend
From terrors of the Day of Judgment,
which on us descend.

He summoned people unto Allah,
they to him did adhere,
And clung fast to the rope that none
could ever rent or tear.

In morals and features
he, all prophets did exceed,
None could approach his knowledge,
or his bounty e'er precede.

And thus from Allah's Apostle
they acquired and did gain,
A handful of the vast sea
or a sip of gen'rous rain.

So other prophets in their rightful place
before him stand,
Regarding knowledge and the wisdom
that they understand.

He perfect is in traits concealed,
and features bright and clear,
And Man's Creator chose him
as His most beloved and dear.

Too far above all men is he
to have a partner who
Has equal qualities, because
the essence of virtue
That in him lies is indivisible,
and wholly true.

Turkish

O BELOVED

Written by Sezai Karakoç (b. 1933)

Transl. by Snjezana Buzov

First I was exiled from Your heart
All my exiles are, in a way, but a season of this exile
Outside of all rituals, parties, ceremonies, festivals
I came to you I came to fall over your feet
I came to ask for forgiveness although I don't deserve forgiveness
Do not prolong my worldly exile
To my heart hurling in the air
Like a cloud of salt
Breaking off this most incurable of loves
Ah do not prolong my worldly exile
It is from my feet, not my shoes
That one can see how tired I am

Lamps are bent
Mirrors are the angel of Scorpio
The last dream of the time-struck horse
House is not heritage it is the illusion of it
Rising like a monument to humanity
In days and nights
From the feathers and milk of the bird
That gave birth to my heart
Brought it up, nursed it
Beloved
Most Beloved
O beloved
Do not prolong my worldly exile

You are what I speak of in all poems
If I say Suna that is you, if I say Leyla that is you
From Salome, from Belkis' shadows I benefited to hide You
In vain was my effort to hide You, You are so very evident so obvious
Birds fly to imitate your heart
From Your hands spring gathers its flowers
From Your eyes the sea takes the knowledge of its infinity
O the softest, the deepest of hearts
Beloved
Most beloved
O beloved
Do not prolong my worldly exile

Years passed they left a deviating immortal trace on earth
Reaching to the stars I kept asking for you at midnights

In attics in basements
The matchless lamp illuminating my night was Your shadow
Always at Kanlica at Emirgan
On lead-colored morning twilights of Kandilli
I remained conversant with you in a life's spring, summer
Now in its sudden autumn
I came to you I came to fall over your feet
I came to ask for forgiveness even though I do not deserve forgiveness
O Jerusalem (Mary) of the time
O Egypt (Zuleyha) carrying her secret in her heart
O heart of mercy granting softness to silks
Beloved
Most Beloved
O Beloved
Do not prolong my worldly exile

In a Venus cup I saw the collapse of mountains
At the market of markets I was sold like a slave
On Constantine's wall I saw the sun turning pale
I burned in dreams with visions of You
It was Your shadow reflected always in the fountain of life
In that moment when thoughts of death overwhelmed me
With the fear of unsettled accounts
I came to You I came to fall over Your feet
I came to beg forgiveness even though I do not deserve forgiveness
Beloved
Most Beloved
O beloved
Do not prolong my worldly exile

What news there is of the birds in your homeland
There is a spring rising even from tombs
What is the use of love's executioner when there is beloved
There is an Existence on the other side of non-existence and of existence
The guilt is not always mine there is an omen that burns and ruins me
There are verses that make that poem longed for and sang
Just don't say fate there is a fate above fate
Whatever they do there is a predictability coming from the empty skies
If sun sets there is, in any case, an architect who restores the night
If I burn there is a fortress made of my ashes
There is a victory growing on defeat after defeat
With you is the key to arrive at the secret of secrets
There is a vein summoning exile in its own heart
I will not give up on you there is a plane tree in your heart called mercy
Beloved
Most Beloved
O beloved

Uncovering Rich and Complex Layers of Afghan National Identity

By Melinda Wightman

The Middle East Studies Center staff and interested community members took a trip to the National Gallery in Washington last August to take advantage of the unique opportunity to view “Afghan National Treasures,” an exhibit organized by National Geographic. These artifacts are, indeed, national in their significance, representative of many parts of the multi-faceted Afghan identity, and testament to the richness and complexity of the country’s historical and contemporary culture. Understanding of the country’s Greek past gains new clarity when looking at artifacts that could have been taken from a dig near Athens, such as a statue of a Greek warrior (see photo, right), one of the objects re-discovered when the contents of the museum were found in their place of safekeeping in the presidential palace.

Ai Khanum, where many of the artifacts were originally uncovered, was a Greek colony far from the center of the Empire, but quite pure in its keeping of Greek customs and arts. (In addition, Tepe Fullol provides insights into a past culture of the area that is more elusive for contemporary archeologists, exhibiting exchanges with Indus and Mesopotamian cultures. One gets a sense of the hybrid nature of Tilla Tepe and Begram just by looking at the wide cultural variety of the treasures found in those two excavations. In the words of the Tilla Tepe site’s discoverer, Viktor Sarianidi:

“Nowhere in antiquity have so many different objects from so many different cultures—Chinese-inspired boot buckles; Roman coins; daggers in a Siberian style—been found together in situ (i.e., in the context in which they were left.)” (“Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul” exhibit catalogue, p. 215).

In fact, the owners of the gold, who wore many of the most interesting pieces found, were nomads who had made their settlement on a prior Bactrian structure. They were most likely nobles of the Kushan who formed their empire on the ruins they had made of the Greco-Bactrian civilization which had previously resided there. Among many of the individual objects at Tilla Tepe, one finds a cultural hybrid that evokes a combination of Greek, Indian, and Chinese impressions, as well as an aesthetic all its own.

If you would like to learn more about the history of these discoveries, as well as other facets of Afghan culture today, the Middle East Studies Center now has the following additions in the lending library:

“Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul,” edited by Fredrik Hiebert and Pierre Cambon (The Official Companion to the Exhibition)

“Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures,” DVD companion to the exhibition, narrated by Khaled Hosseini

“Afghanistan Untouched,” a two-CD set of Afghan folk tunes, all recorded in the field by ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin prior to the Soviet invasion

“Children’s Songs from Afghanistan: Qu Qu Qu Barg-e-Chinaar,” by Louise M. Pascale, book and CD of songs



Related Articles

On the treasure:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bactrian_Gold
news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/11/photogalleries/afghan_treasure/
news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/11/1117_041117_afghan_treasure.html
nytimes.com/2008/05/23/arts/design/23afgh.html?_r=1

On the Bactrian Empire:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bactria
On the Bronze Age and its Ecological Effects:
<https://www.geology.ucdavis.edu/~cowen/~GEL115/115CH4.html>

A time line of Post-Soviet and Taliban period

End of 10-year Soviet Occupation/
four years of Nagib government

National Museum personnel placed
on non-active status late in the year

December 31 - Two major
works from Shotorak are stolen

Museum struck by a rocket
while being used as a military base

Roof is destroyed
and more treasures perish after steel
doors are installed

1992

1993

1994

1995

Items on Display:

Treasures Unearthed from Tilla Tepe

Treasures were unearthed in the midst of a project in northern Afghanistan lead by archeologist Viktor Sarianidi to gain further information about the Greco-Bactrian civilization during the 2nd millennium BC. The project was abruptly ended in 1979 when the Soviets invaded, just as the treasures were found at Tilla Tepe (near Sheberghan, in Northern Afghanistan, from the Turkic *Tilla Tepe*, meaning hill of gold). The treasures contained the contents of tombs of wealthy nomads dating from early in the Common Era (around 100 CE, including gold and silver jewelry from a number of civilizations, Bactrian crafts, and Roman, Parthian, and Greek coins. The site had been a Bactrian structure, thought to be a temple by Sarianidi, with a later settlement on top and burial area for a nomadic people, possibly of the Kushan Kingdom, created in the second century when Kushan nomads from what is now western China and Scythian nomads united to conquer the Greco-Bactrian culture.

The central figure of this belt decoration (below, left) presents a mystery to archeologists and other scholars, as it seems to depict Dionysus, but has the features of some of the local goddesses at the time. It looks like a man in most respects, wearing a Greek hair knot, but he seems to be drawing milk from his breast into the vessel he is holding.

This phial, or bowl (below, center), provided a resting place for the male noble's head in the tomb at Tilla Tepe. Herodotus regarded such phials as symbolizing royal authority among the Scythians, but each of the deceased had similar headrests, so it may be that they had no particular significance other than to display the headdresses and make a more honorable burial arrangement.

The animal figure (below) is a depiction of a Marco Polo ram, described by Marco Polo in an account from 1273. The horns on this sculpture are not exaggerated; it is a species that still exists in Afghanistan, though it is threatened with extinction.



Recent History

Another amazing aspect of these treasures is their history in the 20th and 21st centuries. Thought to be lost for 25 years, the treasures had been hidden for safekeeping from the Soviets and, later, the Taliban. They had been placed in the vaults of the central Bank of Afghanistan in 1988 by the curators of the National Museum who kept silent until it was deemed safe to reveal the location. In 2003, President Karzai confirmed that the precious artifacts had remained safe. In 2004, an inventory project, the data kept in English and Dari, began in partnership with the National Geographic Society (22,607 objects were listed, 20,587 from Tilla Tepe).

A detailed history can be read here: spach.info/ehistoryplan.htm#2



Treasures Found at Begram

Other treasures from the national museum at Kabul include items from Begram, aesthetically representing exchange with Indian and Chinese culture as well as Greek and Roman. The carved decorative plaque (below) is Indian in origin and is one of several which depict life in women's quarters. The glass vessel (above) shows the story of the battle between Hector and Achilles, according to some scholars. The blue glass vessel shown on the back cover is Roman in origin.



Sources: "Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul"; Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures DVD; interview with biologist George Schaller on "Saving the Marco Polo Sheep," NPR: npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5300762

Photos: Ra'uf Mehrpour

Ministry of Cultural Works & Information removes the remaining contents of the museum

Some items are moved to the Kabul Hotel and spared, but items placed in the museum's storerooms are looted by the Taliban

Taliban decided all representational art must be destroyed: 2,500 pieces of art were destroyed in the country, including the world's largest Buddha statues at Bamiyan

1996

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

Afghan Treasures unearthed

Afghan cultural identity has connections to the treasures of Tilla Tepe and other archeological sites. As a crossroad of migration and trade, Afghanistan's artifacts reveal exchange with travelers and merchants from the Mediterranean to China.



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