

## **The Center's Mission**

The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies was established at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2004. It aims to encourage and initiate research relating to Islam as a religion and civilization, from its advent in the 7th century C.E. until today, in the Arab world, elsewhere in the Middle East, in Asia and Africa, and in the West. To fulfill this goal, the Center organizes research groups, conferences, seminars, and lectures; supports individual and collaborative research; grants scholarships; and encourages dialogue between scholars of Islamic studies and related fields. Islam is approached not only as a religion, but, more broadly, as a culture and a civilization. As such, the Center deals with subjects that include religious thought and practice, material and intellectual culture, politics, society, economics and interfaith relations.

To this end, the Center supports interdisciplinary research in religious studies, history, the social sciences, law and other fields. Innovative research projects within specific disciplines are also encouraged and supported. The Center directs some of its activities to the general public with the aim to bring about greater understanding of the Islamic faith and civilization. The Center's publications seek to reach a wide audience of scholars as well as the public at large.

## **The Annual Lectures**

The Nehemia Levtzion Lectures bring noted scholars to the Center to discuss main themes in the field of Islamic studies. The lectures are held in collaboration with leading academic institutions in Israel and are later published by the Levtzion Center. The lectures are the main part of an annual event which includes the announcement of the Center's scholarship recipients. The first annual lecture took place in 2005, shortly after the Center's establishment.

### ***The Eleventh Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lecture, June 14, 2016, the Hebrew University***

The eleventh annual lecture, delivered by Dr. Lena Salaymeh of Tel Aviv University's Faculty of Law, took place on June 14, 2016 and was titled: "Circumcising membership: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions". Dr. Salaymeh's lecture examined circumcision in late antique Jewish, Christian, and Islamic legal traditions. She argued against the assumption of a genealogical or linear relationship between Jewish and Islamic circumcision. Muslims did not simply "borrow" (or "transplant") circumcision from Jews. Instead, circumcision was widely practiced in the Near East and for dissimilar reasons. She concluded with contemporary legal debates, carried out in Europe and in the United States regarding Jewish and Muslim circumcision, and their anti-immigration as well as anti-Semitic contexts.

## **The Annual Hava Lazarus-Yafeh Lectures**

Prof. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (1930-1998) was Professor of Islamic Civilization at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, and a prominent scholar of the intertwined worlds of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A generous donation made by Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh's family has enabled the Levtzion Center to establish a new lectures

series in her memory. This memorial lecture series continues the memorial event held in 2013/14, marking fifteen years since Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh's passing. The project's steering committee includes Dr. Daniella Talmon-Heller of Ben-Gurion University, Prof. Avner Giladi of Haifa University, and Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher of the Hebrew University. The lecture series opened March 2015, with a talk and a seminar by Prof. Sidney H. Griffith of the Catholic University of America.

In June 7 and 8, 2016, we hosted Prof. Bethany J. Walker of the University of Bonn for a seminar and a lecture in memory of the late Prof. Lazarus Yafeh. Prof. Walker is a leading scholar in the field of Mamluk studies and is an active archaeologist working in various archaeological sites in Jordan. The seminar, also open to students of Islamic archaeology, was titled "A Tale of Three Villages: Transregional Studies of Agriculture and Village Life in Mamluk Syria", was facilitated by Dr. Katia Cytryn in the framework of her seminar to students of the Department of Islamic and Middle East Studies and Institute of Archaeology.

Prof. Walker's lecture in the following day was titled "Daily Life on the Mamluk Frontier: Excavations at Tall Hisban (Jordan), "The ruins of Tall Hisban in central Jordan - where both village and Citadel are well preserved - offer us a unique opportunity to investigate daily life in a thriving rural community on the Mamluk frontier. Over forty years of American excavations at the site have produced a picture of market agriculture and family life, as well as the intimate relationship the large village maintained with the Mamluk garrison in its midst. The historical picture is enhanced by a carefully integrated study of medieval Arabic documents and some narrative sources, which describe the socio-cultural and political relations of a village community. The joint archaeological-historical project bears witness to the resilience of the local community in face of the political, economic, and climatic changes of the late medieval era. Prof. Walker's talk presented the results of recent excavations at the site, with an emphasis on new information learned about how villages in this region experienced the globalizing transformations of the 15th and 16th centuries. The lecture was followed by a lively discussion with Israeli archeologists and research students.

## **Conferences**

During the 2015/16 academic year, the Levtzion Center held several conferences in collaboration with various research institutes at the Hebrew University and elsewhere in Jerusalem. They are listed here in chronological order.

### ***1. Between the Euphrates and the Tigris: History, Culture, Literature and Language in Modern Iraq***

The conference was co-organized by Dr. Geula Elimelekh of Bar Ilan University and Dr. Roni Shaked of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University, and was co-sponsored by the Truman Institute and

the Nehemia Levtzion Center. It was held in honor of Prof. Shmuel Moreh, a professor emeritus in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University and a prolific scholar of Arabic literature and of Iraqi culture and heritage.

Its first panel was dedicated to the relevance of Iraq's history to its present. Prof. Amatzia Baram of Haifa University dedicated his talk to recent developments in Iraq's geopolitical realities – in the transition from Saddam Husayn's rule to ISIS. Michael Eppel's talk concentrated on Arabism, sectarianism and Kurdish nationalism in present-day Iraq. Finally, Dr. Noga Efrati of the Open University lectured on women and revolutions in Iraq's history – and the influence of Iraq's political turbulences on women's status. The Second panel was dedicated to the language and literature of Iraqi Jews. Dr. Shlomit Shraybom-Shivtiel's lecture concentrated on the syntax of the Jewish-Iraqi dialect, Dr. Geula Elimelekh lectured on the dual exile in literary products of Iraqi Jewish authors, and finally Dr. Sigal Georgy of Ben Gurion University concentrated on Shmuel Moreh's memoir, “Baghdad, My Love”, and on aspects of memory, identity and history.

The conference concluded with a panel on the history of Iraqi Jews. Dr. Esther Meir's talk “The Exodus of Iraqi Jews, 1950-1951” was dedicated to narratives of immigration and expulsion which are currently at the center of historiographic and political debates regarding Mizrahi Jews, and finally, Dr. Nethanel Avneri of Bar Ilan University lectured on Iraqi Jews during the early years of Iraq's Ba‘th regime. The conference concluded with words by Prof. Moreh.

## **2. *The Islamic Movement in Israel: Activity and Criminalization***

Cosponsored by the Nehemia Levtzion Center and the Cherick Center for the Study of Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel, this event, held in February 22, 2016, aimed at studying the activity of the Islamic Movement in Israel and the implication of its criminalization. The various speakers tackled different aspects of this dilemma and thus offered multiple perspectives. Prof. Hillel Cohen, the chair of the Cherick Center and a professor at the Department of Islamic and Middle East Studies at the Hebrew University opened the evening by presenting the main controversies surrounding the Movement's criminalization two months prior – is a democracy entitled to criminalize political rivals? Can the Islamic Movement's propaganda be justified under the protection of freedom of speech?

The first speaker was Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer, the Vice President of Research at Israel Democracy Institute presented the legal framework for the discussion, pointed to the absence of legal justifications in the government's decision to ban the movement and some of the ramifications of the decision to Israel's democracy. Dr. Roni Shaked of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University presented the history of the Islamic Movement in Israel, its ideology and its relationship with the state of Israel and similarly cautioned of the

implications of the ban on the delicate relationship between Israel and its Arab minority. Samah Salaime--Agbariye, the founder and head of the Arab Women in the Center NGO, spoke of women activism within the Islamic movement, and their capacity, in the last decade, to gain a voice within the movement. Finally, Mr. Majdi Abu Hof, the former head of the Islamic Movement student group in Tel Aviv University, talked of the Movement's activity among students and its material support of Muslim students in Israeli Universities. The evening concluded with questions from the audience, which was curious to learn more of the movement – from both insider and outsider perspectives.

### **3. *Changing the Gendered Social Order: An Optimistic Perspective***

Honoring International Women's Day, the Nehemia Levtzion Center cosponsored an academic conference which initiated and encouraged a dialogue between the academia and civil society, around questions of intersectionality and gender. The conference was cosponsored by the Minerva Center for Human Rights, the Center for the Study of Multiculturalism and Diversity, the Mineva Center for Human Rights, the Lafer Center for Women and Gender Studies, the Clinical Legal Education Center and the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations. It was co-organized by Michal Barak of the Center for the Study of Multiculturalism and Diversity, Prof. Tamar Zilber, the Head of the Lafer Center and Dr. Liat Kozma of the Levtzion Center, and was facilitated by Ms. Orna Kessler of the Lafer Center.

The conference opened with greetings by Prof. Tamar Zilber. The first panel was dedicated to social initiatives that cross communal boundaries. It was chaired by Ms. Michal Barak. Its opening lecture, by Prof. Michal Frenkel of the Department of Sociology at the Hebrew University conceptualized intersectionality and its implications on the study of women and gender in Israel. The different speakers then presented their experience of cross-sectarian struggles. Keren Shemesh Perlmutter presented “Itakh-Maaki: Women Lawyers for Social Justice” and their support of kindergarten teachers' struggle for labor rights – a struggle which combined Jewish and Arab women, secular and ultra-orthodox, across the country. Estee Rieder-Indursky spoke of ultra-orthodox women's struggle for a place in their respective political parties' candidate lists for the Israeli parliament – and the connections forged with women struggling for equal electoral representation in other sectors of Israeli society. Samah Salaime-Agbariye, the founder and head of the Arab Women in the Center NGO, spoke of the challenge of founding an organization for Arab women and the joint activities she initiated with Russian speaking women at the center. Finally, Sarit Larry from Mahpah-Taghir NGO spoke of their initiatives' ability to bring together women of different sectors of Israeli society.

The second panel was a round table, chaired by Adv. Bana Shoughry of the Clinical Legal Education Center, who presented the usefulness of international conventions, and particularly the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to promote women's rights in Israel. The roundtable was

opened by a talk by Dr. Sarai Aharoni of the Lafer Institute, who conceptualized the CEDAW, its implication and its uses in Israel. The roundtable's participants were Adv. Hila Tene-Gilad, Director of the Human Rights and Relations with International Organizations, at the Israeli Ministry of Justice, Adv. Batia Dror-Kahana, the director of Mavoy Satum (Dead End): Opening the Dead End for the Aguna NGO, Adv. Naila Awwad-Rashid, director of the "Women against Violence" NGO and Adv. Keren Greenblatt, of the Israel Women's Network advocacy director. All speakers presented their perspective of the ability of the international legal arena to promote women's rights – including women's rights within Jewish law, with the assistance and support of American Jewry, of Palestinian's women's rights with the assistance of the CEDAW, and women's legal rights more generally.

Finally, the last panel was held in Hebrew and Arabic (with simultaneous translation to Hebrew) and was dedicated to literature as a political and feminist action. The panel was chaired by Dr. Miriam Goldstein of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature. Dr. Lana Wahbi of Tel Aviv University spoke of representations of body and desire in Hamida Na'na's 1989's novel, *Who Dares to Yearn* as a feminist consciousness-raising act. Dr. Ktzia Alon of Beit Berl College spoke of representations of the Arabic language in women's Hebrew Mizrahi literature – as reflective of memory, erasure and assertion of identity. Finally, Dr. Eman Younis of Beit Berl College concentrated on representations of women's concerns and women's voices in Palestinian diaspora novels. The use of Arabic in two of this panel's talks further contributed to the multi-culturalism this day managed to represent.

#### **4. *Cultural and Social Encounters in Islamic Asia, c. 1600-1800***

The conference was held May 4, 2016, and was organized by Dr. Vikas Rathee, post-doctoral fellow at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. The conference brought together scholars of the early modern Islamic world and explored both cultural and social encounters and exchanges.

The first panel was chaired by Dr. Liat Kozma, the Chair of the Levtzion Center and focused on cultural and intellectual history of exchange. The First speaker, Ayelet Kotler of Tel Aviv University, talked of "Translation and Polyphony: the Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha's Persian translation and the reconstruction of the translators' voices". Her talk examined the multiple layers of mediation embodied in the text, which included the original author, the Sanskrit intellectuals who orally translated the text to Hindi, and then the final translation to Persian. These layers reveal not merely multiple linguistic understanding of the Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha, but also cultural and religious translation and transplantation processes. Dr. Vikas Rathee's lecture was titled "The bases of description and analysis of the religious sects in the Dabistan-i mazahib". The Dabistan-i mazahib is a descriptive meditation on the beliefs and ways of various religious sects of West, Central and South Asia. Dr. Rathee examined the epistemological and ontological reasoning with which the text saw the various mazahib of the period as comparable and questioned what criteria were chosen for

these descriptions and why? Finally, Michal Hasson of Harvard University spoke of “Love’s Malady: Health and Madness in 17th century Laila Majnun Tellings from South Asia”. Her talk explored notions of love, madness and ‘normalcy’ in several Dakani and Braj Bhasha tellings of the story by Muslims of Sufi leanings, and the ways in which these writers, by rewriting a Persianate story in the vernacular, localized ideas of madness, sanity and love into the Indian landscape.

The second panel focused on society and politics and was chaired by Dr. Eyal Ginio. The first speaker was Dr. Roy S. Fischel of SOAS, University of London, who lectured on “Muslim Rulers, Local Identities: State Control, Integration, and the Surge for Autonomy in 17th century Deccan”. His paper examined how two different Sultanates, the Bijapur and the Golkonda, handled the crisis they faced following their rapid expansion, and focused on the tensions between the Muslim rulers and the diverse elites under their rule. The second speaker was Dr. Nicholas Walmsley, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who spoke of the “The Lord of Refuge”: (Mis)informational cascades and the depiction of Jahāngīr Khwāja’s revolt against Chinese rule in Kashghar in 19th century Central Asian historiography”. His talk focused on the differences in how the revolt was depicted in indigenous accounts written in eastern Turkish and Persian in the khanate of Khoqand and eastern Turkestan over the course of the nineteenth century, as reflective of both the authors and their readers. Finally, Jennifer Poliakov of Tel Aviv University spoke of “Syncretism and boundaries of religious identities among Slavic slaves in 17th century Istanbul”. Her talk examined first-person accounts of slaves’ conversion to Islam and the persistence of prior belief systems. Her talk then examined our ability to understand slaves’ identities and experiences of enslavement.

**5. *Islam in Zion: Yosef Yoel Rivlin and His Contribution to the Study of the East in Hebrew Culture***

This conference was held in May 8, 2016, and was cosponsored by the Nehemia Levtzion Institute, the Institute for Research on Eretz Israel and the Ben Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East. It was co-organized by Dr. Hanan Harif, Dr. Liat Kozma and Dr. Michael Ebsstein of the Hebrew University, along with Prof. Eyal Ginio, Dr. Yoel Marciano and Dr. Reuven Gafni of Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi.

Israel’s President, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, honored us with his presence and spoke of his father and the lessons from his life work to Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. Mr. Yakov Yaniv, the director of Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and Prof. Eyal Ginio, the head of the Ben-Zvi Institute, then added their greetings. Mr. Yaniv presented a copy of the late Prof. Rivlin’s earlier work from the Yad Ben-Zvi collection; while Prof. Ginio spoke of the importance of the study of the Arabic language for the study of Jewish Communities in the East.

The first panel, chaired by Prof. Yfaat Weiss of the Hebrew University examined the relationship between the late Prof. Rivlin and Israeli society and academy. Dr. Amos

Noy of the Hebrew University spoke of the challenge Rivlin had posed to Jerusalem's elites and his critique of the Israeli academia; Dr. Dani Schrire of the Hebrew University spoke of his contributions to folklore studies, which were completely marginalized in Israeli academia. The second panel was chaired by Prof. Meir Bar Asher of the Hebrew University and concentrated on Rivlin's translation of the Qur'an which was, for decades, the only translation of the Qur'an to Hebrew. Dr. Joseph Witztum explored Prof. Rivlin's contribution to modern Qur'an studies and his interpretative work. Dr. Hanan Harif examined Rivlin's work within the context of Zionism and German Orientalism – and his reading and translation of the Qur'an as part of a larger project of Jewish return to the East.

#### **6. The City from Different Perspectives in Modern Discourse**

The conference was held on May 23, 2016, and was co-sponsored by the Nehemia Levtzion Center, the Center for the Study of Multiculturalism and Diversity, the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Arab Academic Education Institute at the Beit Berl College. The conference was co-organized by Drs. Tawfiq Da'adli, Michael Ebstein and Liat Kozma of the Hebrew University, and Drs. Eman Younis and Sami Mahajna of the Beit Berl College. It was the third in a series of conferences held jointly by the Nehemia Levtzion Center and the Arab Academic Institute. Like previous events, it was bi-lingual, in Arabic and Hebrew, with bi-directional simultaneous translation.

The conference opened with Dr. Younis's talk on the virtual city – and the representation of urban space in internet novels, and showed that the physical city persists even in this virtual space. The first panel addressed representation of the city from historical, literary and architectural perspectives. Dr. Johny Mansour (of the Beit Berl College)'s talk was titled "The Literary Scene in coastal cities in Mandate Palestine", and examined their interconnection and the formation of collective national consciousness. Dr. Athar Haj-Yayha (of the Beit Berl College)'s talk: "The city of yesterday and the dream: The city in Darwish poetry", reviewed the cities presented in Palestinian national poet Mahmud Darwish's poetry and particularly the place of Haifa in his work. Prof. Doron Bar, the president of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, lectured on "Muslim holy sites under Israeli rule", and discussed the fate of Muslim shaykh's burial sites under 1948. Prof. Bar mapped over 500 such sites, and presented diverse policies – between destruction, preservation and neglect. Finally, Dr. Noa Hysler-Rubin of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem presented a lecture titled "A history of urban planning of the Israeli City", which charted the possibility of incorporating non-Jewish urban planners, and their aborted and successful plans, into a hitherto Zionist historiography of the local city.

The second panel concentrated on specific cities and their literary and oral representation and was chaired by Dr. Michael Ebstein. Dr. Samir Hajj from the Beit Berl College talked about "The lost orchard", and of representation of Jaffa in Modern Palestinian poetry, which placed Jaffa's orchard as a place of loss and of corporal

memory. Dr. Amer Dahamshe, from the Arab Academic College for Education, talked about “The struggle between the city and the village: Construction and demolition of borders in anecdotes by the Galilee’s Arabs” relied on interviews and informal conversations with Palestinians residing in the neighboring cities of Sakhnin and ‘Arabeh, and examined their mutual representations of each other. Dr. Dahamshe examined the anecdote as a tool for boundary marking and identity formation. Finally, Dr. Orna Levin of the Ahva academic college lectured on “Living in between: The poetics of the political space in the work of Naomi Frenkel”, in which she analyzed Naomi Frenkel novels as embedded within the city she chose as her home.

Finally, the last panel focused on literary representations of the city of Haifa, as a locus of both Arabic and Hebrew literature. This panel was chaired by Dr. Miriam Goldstein of the Hebrew University. Its different speakers, Chen Bar-Itzhak of Ben Gurion University, Dr. Lana Wahbi of Tel Aviv University, Dr. Muhammad Hamad of al-Qasimi College and the author Yusuf al-Aila, discussed Haifa as a site of memory and of longing, conflict and at times – a city of harmony.

### ***7. A conference for doctoral students in Islam and Middle East Studies***

This nation-wide doctoral students conference brought together about 25 Israeli doctoral students from five Israeli universities. Six of them lectured, six others presented their work on posters, and all participated in lively discussions and received career advice and instruction from the conference’s co-organizers, Prof. Michal Biran and Dr. Liat Kozma. The conference was facilitated by Hebrew University graduate students Ravid Dahan, Taghreed Qa’dan and Sasha Schneidmann. The conference was co-sponsored by the Nehemia Levtzion Center and the ERC project *Mobility, Empire and Cross-Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia*.

The first panel was dedicated to the pre-modern Middle East, and was chaired by Dr. Daniella Talmon-Heller of Ben Gurion University. The first speaker was Moshe Yagur of the Hebrew University, who spoke of “Identity boundaries among the Jewish Community of Fatimid Egypt”, and focused on conversions, and conversion allegations, from the Cairo Geniza. Brigitte Ohnona of the Hebrew University lectured on “Glass tools from archeological digs in Israel as testimony of Mamluk Material Culture.” Finally, Qiao Yang of the Hebrew University lectured on “Scientific exchanges in Mongol Eurasia”, and presented the Mongol Empire as catalyst for scientific exchange throughout Asia – between the Muslim, Indian, and Chinese scientific traditions, which in turn influenced also Europe.

The second panel focused on the modern Middle East and was chaired by Prof. Eyal Ginio of the Hebrew University. Omri Eilat of Tel Aviv University lectured on “Jamal Pasha, the Arab-Ottoman Elite and the Jewish Experts”, and explored the little-known participation of the Yishuv experts in the rebuilding of the city of Damascus by its Ottoman governor. This cooperation was designed to substitute the Damascene local elite with outside technical elite that would serve the governor’s objectives without



threatening his power. Sohair Abu Ful from Bar Ilan University then lectured on political and religious aspects of Yusuf Idris and Zakariya Tamir's short stories – which offered an integrative and comparative analysis of power and authority in both authors' work. Finally, Tomer Mazarib of Haifa University examined the incorporation of Bedouins in the Galilee by presenting a long-term history of Bedouins-villagers interactions from the late Ottoman period to the present. His historical review focused on Ottoman policies toward the Bedouins, and his contemporary discussion, which was based on anthropological fieldwork, examined the mixed communities that Bedouin's settlement in the villages had created, as well as the living conditions and daily interactions between Bedouins and villagers residing in the same villages in the Galilee.

The break was dedicated to reviewing the posters, which were presented throughout the day in the Mandel building's lobby. Posters were presented by Hebrew University Students Mataniya Gil ("Economic globalization of the Mongol Period: Trade in the Ilkhanate State, 1260-1335"), Tamir Karkason ("Jewish learning in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Transformations in Jewish communities in Western Anatolia, the Balkans and Western Anatolia"), Rafi Beykhanov ("Relationship between Azarbeijan and the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1920: Culture, Policy, Economy") and Ishayahu Landa ("Imperial Sons- in-Law in Mongol Eurasia, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries"); Tel Aviv University Student Kfir Gross ("Religion, Society and State in Muhammad al-Ghazali's thinking", and Haifa University student Assaf Regev, ("Twenty Years to the Foundation of *Dar al-Ifata' al-Filastiniyya*: The Status of the Muslim Woman in the fatwas of Mufti 'Akrama Sa'id Sabri (1994-2006) and Muhammad Ahmad Husayn [2006-2014]").

Finally, Prof. Michal Biran and Dr. Liat Kozma presented various aspects of academic career planning: publication in peer-reviewed journals, the choice of post-doctoral position and the application processes, networking, and the Israeli job market and the job application processes. The students had dozens of questions and shared some of their own experience.

### ***8. Egyptian Jews: Memory, History and the Public Transmission of Heritage***

Held at the beautiful *Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem* (CRFJ) this conference was co-organized by Dr. Dario Miccoli of Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Prof. Eyal Ginio of the Ben-Zvi Institute, Dr. Liat Kozma of the Nehemia Levtzion Center, Dr. Michèle Baussant, Tenured Senior Researcher in Anthropology at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the CRFJ. It was sponsored by the CRFJ, the Ben-Zvi Institute, the Nehemia Levtzion Center, the SAJ/socio-anthropologie des joudaisme, The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Advanced Studies at the Humanities and the Ca'Foscari University of Venice.

The conference opened with greetings from two of the conference's co-organizers, Drs. Baussant and Miccoli, who mapped the state of the art in the historiography of

Egypt's Jewry and the proliferation of recent scholarship on the topic. The morning panel was titled "Egyptian Jews through History and Culture". The first talk, by Prof. Nahem Ilan, Chair of the Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Ono Academic College was titled "New Themes in the Historiography of Egyptian Jewry", and mapped developments and lacunas in the study of Egypt's Jews. The second lecture, by Liat Magid-Alon, a doctoral fellow at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, was titled "Memories of a Shared Habitus of the Jewish Egyptian Bourgeoisie between the Great Wars: Social Hierarchies and Gendered Arenas". Based on interviews with Egyptian Jewish women of their memories of growing up in interwar Egypt, she demonstrates transformations and changes in the possibilities and challenges facing women of that generation. Prof. Gabriel Rosenbaum, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem lectured on "The Spoken Language and Popular Culture of Egyptian Jews", and demonstrated specific vocabulary and dialectic variations in Egyptian Arabic spoken by Egyptian Jews, which incorporated both the Egyptian dialects and elements of Jewish culture and religion. Finally, Prof. Deborah Starr of Cornell University and a visiting scholar at the Mandel School, lectured "Jews, Class, and Nation in Egyptian Cinema" – and introduced the role of Jews, such as Togo Mizrahi, Layla Murad and Leon Engel ("Shalom") in early Egyptian cinema.

The second panel was titled "Narratives, Heritage and Presences of the Egyptian Jewish Past. Dr. Dario Miccoli spoke of "Cairo in Jerusalem: A Hebrew Literary History of Egyptian Jews, 1960s to today", and examined the blurred boundary between memory and nostalgia in the writings of first-, second- and third-generation Egyptian Jews. Michèle Baussant's talk, "Man fâat adimoh mâat? Traces and Reconstruction of the Past among the Jews from Egypt", then located present day memories of Egypt and its cosmopolitanism among Egyptian Jews living in France. Dr. Inbal Cicurel of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ashkelon Academic College lectured on "Karaites Stories: Narrating Subjectivity in a Marginal Moshav", and concentrated on intergenerational transference and tensions, the preservation of Karaite identity in present-day Israel and challenges to the community's cohesion. The conference concluded with a talk by Prof. Frédéric Abécassis of the ENS, Lyon, "The Jews in the Islamic Mediterranean Countries: Collective Memory through the Prism of the Media". Here he showed how the Jews of Egypt are presented in French media – as part of the unchanging East.

### **Book Events**

The Levtzion Center held two book events during the 2015/16 academic year, listed here in chronological order. These events were held in collaboration with the Mt. Scopus Library, and special thanks are due to Mrs. Osnat Levy, Director of Readers' Services, and Mrs. Ala Kulik, Director of the Media Department, for all their support and assistance.

Meir Hatina and Christoph Schumann (eds.), *Arab Liberal Thought after 1967: Old Dilemmas, New Perceptions*. A book event was held on January 6, 2016. Participants

were Prof. Israel Gershoni and Dr. Mira Tzoreff of Tel Aviv University, and Dr. David Govrin of Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Eyal Ginio, *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and their Aftermath*. A book event was held on May 31, 2016, and the speakers were Dr. Avner Wishnitzer of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Fruma Zachs of Haifa University and Prof. Dror Ze'evi of the Hebrew University.

### **Special guests**

#### **1. Prof. Greg Fealy**

In collaboration with the Israeli Institute for Advanced Study, The Department of Asian Studies, The Department of Comparative Religion, The Frieberg Center for East Asian Studies, and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, we hosted Prof. Greg Fealy, of the Department of Political and Social Change, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University and an expert on political Islam and terrorism in South-East Asia. On December 9, 2016, he gave a talk on "The Ethical and Scholarly Challenges of Researching Terrorism in Southeast Asia". His talk focused on his own experience of interviewing terrorists in Indonesia and the dilemmas facing a scholar working on such loaded political questions. The ethics of terrorism study and the involvement of western scholars in such research were further explored.

#### **2. Prof. Cyrus Schayegh**

In collaboration with the inter-university program, "The Asian Sphere", we hosted Prof. Cyrus Schayegh of Princeton University, who presented his new research project, titled: "Third-World Global Cities: Examining the globalization/decolonization nexus from Beirut, Dakar, and Singapore, 1940s-1970s". His lecture presented the possibility of comparatively studying these three cities which became regional hubs of globalization at the wake of their country's decolonization. His talk examined the potential of such large scale comparative research in provincializing Europe in the history of globalization and reintroducing the middle decades of the twentieth century into our histories of globalization and decolonization.

### **Collaboration with the M.A. Mayer Museum of Islamic Art**

The Islamic Art Museum, at the heart of Jerusalem, has an impressive collection of Islamic art, cultural and archeological artifacts and the Hebrew University's Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies faculty specializes in the disciplines and periods the Museum offers, but so far, collaboration between the institutions was sporadic. During the 2015/16 academic year, the Levtzion Center and the Islamic Art Museum

ran a series of six thematic gallery talks, co-organized academically with Dr. Tawfiq Da'adli of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, and organizationally with Mr. Avishai Yarkoni, the museum's marketing director. The talks were held on Friday mornings. Each encounter brought together experts in two different realms of knowledge – normally material culture and the humanities, for a discussion on a common theme, which also corresponded with the museum's temporary and permanent exhibitions.

The first event was held in 13 November 2015, and was titled: "Between the running horse and the sunflower: Women's struggle in Palestinian art and literature". Dr. Sharon Shitrit Sasson from Bar Ilan University and Beit Berl College presented Palestinian authors Fadwa Tuqan and Sahar Khalife and their critic of the status of Palestinian women. Their personal struggles, their lives as social activists and their ability to forge alternative mechanisms and challenge patriarchal society, influenced their writings and its main concerns. Dr. Housni Shehada of Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem presented the art of ground-breaking Palestinian artists such as Anisa Ashkar and Fatima Abu Rumi, who managed to combine their personal voice and social critic. This dialogue between figurative art and literature offers a unique tapestry of women's status in Palestinian society.

The second event, held December 18, 2016, was titled "Between the encrypted fabric and the enigma: A joint history of encryption" brought together Dr. Leigh Chipman of the Hebrew University and Yuval Elhanany of the high-tech industry. Cryptographs have been in military and diplomatic use since antiquity. Dr. Chipman demonstrated how encryption technologies, thought to have been invented in Europe, were in fact developed by Muslim authors from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Her talk presented encryption and decryption techniques presented by three Mamluk-period authors, natives of Mosul, the context in which they operated and the possible ways in which these technics reached Italy. Yuval Elhanany's complementary talk presented the technological basis of known encryption technics beginning from Greek and modern steganography, the Caesarian code, and the decryption Marry Queen of Scots' plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. His talk concluded with some of the underlying principles of present-day cryptography and internet security.

The third event, titled: "Time travel: On time schedules and clock towers in the Ottoman Empire". In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman leadership enacted a series of reforms in the military, administration, education system, communication, and transportation systems throughout the Empire. At the same time, the Ottoman elite endeavored to disseminate new principles, such as accuracy, efficiency and industry. One of the manifestations of such processes in public sphere was architectonic – dozens of clock towers were constructed around the empire in its last decades. Many of them still exist in the states which inherited the Empire. Guy Rak and Dr. Avner Wishnitzer examined the architectural and historical processes which transformed both public space and everyday life in the late Ottoman Empire.

The fourth event was held in February 26, 2016, and was titled: “The Sufi Shaykh in Medieval Islamic Society. Dr. Michael Ebstein and Amir Or presented the religious and political role of the Sufi shaykh, the sources of his power and prestige and his social and political influence. While Dr. Ebstein concentrated on the classic Islamic understanding of the Shaykh, Amir Or examined the role Sufi shaykhs in the Islamization of the Palestinian countryside in the Mamluk period.

The fifth meeting was held on March 11, 2016, and was titled “The King’s new clothes: Iran between East and West in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”. Eli Meron of Tel Aviv University and Dr. Sivan Blaslev, a post-doctoral fellow at the Polonski academy at Van Leer Institute examined the consequences of the encounter between Qajar Iran and Europeans. Members of the Qajar court, Iranian diplomats merchants, artists and students were increasingly exposed to European ideas, life style and artistic artifacts, and started integrating them in their everyday life. Eli Meron presented decorated pencil cases which started integrating European artistic motifs; while Dr. Blaslev will examine clothing, practices and lifestyles which challenged Iran’s traditional society.

In April 15, 2016, Dr. Tzila Bar-Zen Tzur and Ofir Haim participated in an encounter titled “One thousand years of Afghani Jewry”. Ofir Haim’s talk concentrated on Judeo-Persian texts found in North Central Afghanistan which came to be known as the “Afghani Genizah”. These texts are unique testimony of Jewish life in 11<sup>th</sup> century Afghanistan. Dr. Bar-Zen Tzur then presented oral traditions collected from Jewish Afghani women, testimonies of Jewish existence in Afghanistan in the early twentieth century.