

Islam on the Margins

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Islam on the Margins

Studies in Memory of Michael Bonner

Edited by

Robert Haug

Steven Judd



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Cover illustration: World Map from a manuscript of al-Iṣṭakhārī's *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik* dated 589/1193. Leiden University Library, manuscript Or.3101 (<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:1577846>) (CC BY 4.0)

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0929-2403

ISBN 9789004527829 (hardback)

ISBN 9789004527836 (e-book)

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Preface

I concentrate mainly on the early period of Islam, and it is there that my own contributions and ideas stand the best chance of being considered original, and perhaps even right.¹



As the editors of this memorial volume, it is our duty to summarize Michael Bonner's contributions to the field of early Islamic history. Considering the breadth and diversity of his work, this was no easy task. Michael's work covered a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, the Arab-Byzantine frontier or Thughūr, the theory and practice of jihad, poverty and charity in the early Islamic world, the markets of pre-Islamic Arabia, the economy of the early caliphate, geography, and numismatics. In each of these fields, Michael made many important contributions that helped shape the field of early Islamic history and our understanding of this world. This collection of scholarship from Michael's students and others whom he influenced reflects the breadth of his interests as well as his determination to instill in us a willingness and eagerness to pursue our own diverse trajectories. While the array of topics addressed herein presented certain organizational challenges for us as editors, the contributions gathered here underscore the impact that Michael's scholarship, mentorship, and meticulous attention to detail had on the broader field. As such, we believe that this volume is a fitting tribute to a scholar of immense knowledge, varied interests, and infinite curiosity.

1 The Scholarship of Michael Bonner

In the broadest strokes, Michael's research can be divided into three fields: the history of the Arab-Byzantine frontier or Thughūr and the conduct of jihad, the history of poverty and charity in early Islamic society, and the economic history of pre-Islamic Arabia and the early Islamic caliphate. Through a deep reading

¹ Bonner, *Jihad* xvii. For all references, please see "Bibliography of Michael Bonner's Publications" on page xxix.

and close analysis of a wide variety of sources that included—but was not limited to—chronicles, legal treatises, geographies, biographies, and numismatics, Michael was able to uncover the experiences of groups whose voices were often left out of the literary sources that dominate the study of early Islamic history. These voices stretched the gambit from those at the geographic fringes of the Islamic world while simultaneously at the ideological center, such as frontier warriors and the jurists who supported them, to those at the geographic center but on the social and economic fringes, such as the urban poor. In the process, Michael bridged the gap between the idealized and theoretical manner by which religious and legal scholars believed the world should operate and the way in which events unfolded practically on the ground as people experienced them. It is through his emphasis on practice over theory—though always informed by the theoretical and intellectual traditions underlying the sources—that Michael was able to bring these distinct and disparate fields together. He was able to see, for example, the ways reciprocity, gift exchange, recompense, and reward were threads that connected the practices of both warfare and charitable giving in the early Islamic tradition. In Michael's writing, an economy of Muslim piety and generosity came to light that included the expenditures of the frontier warrior, the pious donor, and the hospitable tribal shaykh, all flowing from a shared tradition of investment and return.

2 The Arab-Byzantine Thughūr

Michael's earliest work focused specifically on the Arab-Byzantine frontier, also known as al-Thughūr or 'The Frontier', a title that denotes its pre-eminence among the many frontiers of the early Islamic caliphate. Beginning with his dissertation—"The emergence of the "Thughūr": The Arab-Byzantine frontier in the early 'Abbāsīd age" (1987), written under the supervision of Michael Cook and Roy Mottahedeh at Princeton University—Michael used the Thughūr as a venue to examine not only the longstanding conflicts between the Byzantine Empire and the caliphate, but also to highlight specific issues, most importantly the changing and contested role of the caliph in Islamic society. In his work, the frontier became an arena in which the growing community of religious scholars could compete with the caliph and the state for authority over the jihad and, therefore, the frontier itself. Themes highlighted in his dissertation were elaborated in articles and books published in the decade following its completion. Michael skillfully used the history of minting and the coinage struck in the territories along the frontier to highlight the role of frontier fighting and the support for frontier warriors during the reign of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r.

170–193/786–809).² Demonstrating his interest in economics, he showed how Muslim jurists used questions of substitution and wages in warfare to shift military matters from the purview of the state into the realm of law, therefore placing these issues under the authority of the religious jurists.³ He also explored the ‘Abbasids’ response as they designated the Arab-Byzantine frontier a discrete administrative unit of the empire, thereby pulling the frontier back under their authority.⁴ Through these various projects, Michael examined the Thughūr through a combination of economic, numismatic, juridical, geographic, and administrative sources, painting a picture of the frontier as a complex space entangled in all aspects of early Islamic politics and society, not just warfare.

These studies of the frontier and jihad were brought together in two books. First, *Aristocratic violence and Holy War: Studies in the jihad and the Arab-Byzantine frontier* (1996) combined Michael’s previous work into a single study of the jihad in a historical and geographic context. Here Michael explored the jihad not as a purely juridical or theological and, therefore, hypothetical experience, but instead situated the experience of the frontier in a concrete historical setting, the Arab-Byzantine Thughūr during the early ‘Abbasid period. By tracing the political development of the frontier in tandem with the legal development of the jihad, Michael was able to successfully contextualize both within a competition between caliphs and jurists for legitimate authority over the Islamic world. The development of the jihad and the rise of the jurists as the guardians of the jihad then became the answer to the central question found in the title of the book, why did a warrior aristocracy fail to materialize on and politically dominate the Muslim side of the Thughūr as it did along European borderlands?

This approach, bringing both theory and practice together in dialogue, remained apparent in the title for the English edition of Michael’s book, *Jihad in Islamic history: Doctrine and practice* (2006). In this work, originally published in French as *Le Jihad: Origines, interprétations, combats* (2004), Michael condensed his most important theses on the history and development of jihad into a book targeted towards the non-specialist reader. His arguments here include the importance of the theme of reciprocity/gift and recompense/reward in the Quranic message and its application to military recruitment and payment, the slow evolution of the doctrines of jihad in the early centuries of Islamic history, and the important place of frontiers and frontier fighting in the rise and

2 Bonner, Al-Khalifa al-Marḍī; Bonner, The mint of Hārūnābād and al-Hārūniyya.

3 Bonner, Ja‘ā’il and Holy War; Bonner, Some observations.

4 Bonner, The naming of the frontier.

ideological program of many Islamic dynastic states. The last of these themes was the subject of a case study focused on the place of frontier warfare, jihad, and the validation of the jurists in the rise of the independent governor of Egypt and, briefly, Palestine and Syria, Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn (r. 254–270/868–883) in which Michael intertwined the doctrinal with the practical in a specific historical context.⁵

3 Poverty and Charity

Michael took a similar approach in his scholarship on poverty and charity in the early Islamic world. He identified the development of doctrines during the ‘Abbasid era alongside and within a historical context. In his earliest work on the subject, Michael proposed the development of two views of society’s obligation to the poor. This included a ‘radical’ view in which a dominant warrior elite were obligated to care for society, including the poor, and a ‘conservative’ view in which the wealthy and powerful were to maintain the poor just enough to keep an unequal society balanced and functioning. The critical moment in the competition between these two views came with the Fourth Fitna (195–198/810–813) and the destruction of Baghdad, after which the ‘conservative’ merchant community won out.⁶ Michael followed this with a closer examination of these themes in the *Kitāb al-kasb* or *The book of acquisition* attributed to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/905). In this work, al-Shaybānī argued that the poor have a claim or right (*ḥaqq*) to the surplus of the wealthy and that almsgiving is an important aspect of economic circulation as benefits accrue for both the poor who receive the necessities of life and the wealthy who receive blessings.⁷

The volume *Poverty and charity in Middle Eastern contexts*, co-edited with Mine Ener and Amy Singer, developed out of a conference held in Ann Arbor during the summer of 2000, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Both the conference and the subsequent volume attempted to shed light on the often overlooked and under documented subjects of poverty and the poor in the history of the Middle East, taking a broad historical approach from the rise of Islam to the 20th century. Michael’s contribution to the volume examined an ‘economy of poverty’ focused on a Quranic principle of return and sought to situate it in pre-Islamic Arabian traditions of

5 Bonner, Ibn Ṭūlūn’s jihad.

6 Bonner, Definitions of poverty.

7 Bonner, The Kitāb al-kasb.

generosity and wastefulness through which tribal shaykhs proved their valor by giving away or destroying their own wealth.⁸ Michael saw these practices as a response to growing poverty and economic inequality in the Arabian Peninsula in the century leading up to the advent of Islam. These same challenges were apparent in the Quran, hadith, and biographies of the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic response became the focus of Michael's next article.⁹ In this article, Michael argued for an 'economy of poverty' rooted in a Quranic economy that emphasized the circulation and purification of wealth through the process of charitable giving. The Quranic approach to the poor, in Michael's argument, was one of the appeals that helped attract followers to the new religion of Islam.

4 The Markets of the Arabs and Economic History

In his work on the Markets of the Arabs (*aswāq al-'Arab*), Michael reconstructed certain aspects of pre-Islamic trade in the Arabian Peninsula based on a long and complicated literary tradition known as the *ḥadīth al-aswāq* or 'discourse of the markets'. At the same time, Michael sought to understand the role this discourse played in the Islamic sources. These sources recount narratives of the often strange and unusual practices of buying and selling alongside competitions among local petty 'kings', tribal shaykhs, and Arab nobles that involved, among other modes of sport, displays of generosity. Across three articles, he identified a general pattern of the market tradition with an eye towards understanding the role the discourse of the markets played in shaping Islamic commercial codes. In the article "Time Has Come Full Circle," Michael focused on the calendar of pre-Islamic Arabia and the spiraling cycle of markets that traveled around the Arabian Peninsula annually, culminating at the market of 'Ukāz. Here Michael identifies a competition between the Markets of the Arabs and the pilgrimage to Mecca, both vying to be the center point of the annual migration around the peninsula, reflecting a competition between the Banū Tamīm and Quraysh who controlled the two cycles. In Michael's view, the competition between these two cycles and the world views they represented is highlighted by the shift from the intercalated lunar calendar of pre-Islamic Arabia—which fixed the passing of months to the solar seasons, thereby allowing for fairs and markets to follow agricultural seasons and the travels of Indian Ocean merchants who traded at Oman and Yemen—to the

⁸ Bonner, Poverty and charity.

⁹ Bonner, Poverty and economics in the Qur'an.

purely lunar Muslim calendar—that shifted the time of pilgrimage to Mecca between the seasons so that the patterns of markets became less viable.¹⁰ A similar struggle between pre-Islamic and Muslim traditions in regard to trade is found in “The Arabian Silent Trade.” Here Michael outlines a series of unusual practices associated with the Markets of the Arabs which, in his analysis, allowed local rulers to maintain control over foreign trade within Arabia and protected Arab nobles from shaming themselves in the competitions that played out between them at the markets and fairs.¹¹ The imposition of certain market regulations in the Islamic era—most notable being the mode of fixing prices, changing from one dominated by local lords to something closer to a liberal market economy—diminished the nobles’ control over the marketplace while simultaneously transforming the market into a Muslim space, similar in effect to the changes to the calendar system. A third article, “Commerce and Migration in Arabia Before Islam,” brought these concepts together to propose a model for how the market tradition and competition between Mecca and ‘Ukāz came to be remembered and reflected in the literature of the Islamic era. By examining the Markets of the Arabs in this manner, Michael was able to come to important conclusions about the economic, political, and social life of the Arabian Peninsula on the eve of Islam and outline some of the important points of transition into the Islamic era. These findings challenged certain dominant scholarly assumptions about the pre and early Islamic economy, particularly those regarding the place of Mecca and the tribe of Quraysh in the pre-Islamic economy. Before his passing, Michael was preparing a monograph on the economic history of the caliphate, a synopsis of which was published posthumously in the article, “In Search of the Early Islamic Economy.” Here Michael discussed his inspiration from the growing work on comparative empire and particularly the research on tributary empires, and his interest in seeing the Umayyads and ‘Abbasids integrated into these discussions as part of a continuum of Eurasian empire. Michael called for the integration of localized, on the ground economic data recovered through numismatics, papyrology, and archaeology with the narrative of the early Islamic empire found in our often problematic and contradictory literary sources to build a fuller story. This holistic approach could help contest current accounts of and debates about the early Islamic economy, most importantly the status of Meccan trade before the rise of the Islam and the conflicting image of “boom” and “bust” economic cycles under the early caliphate. This integration of documentary and literary

10 Bonner, “Time has come full circle”.

11 Bonner, *The Arabian silent trade*.

sources in order to get beyond the imagined and idealized early Islamic society follows the methodology Michael had employed in his studies of both the jihad and poverty. In his economic history, Michael employed the concept of institutional matrices to understand the dynamic and changing nature of the early Islamic economy and market while searching for a way around the impasse created by contradicting literary sources. In doing so, Michael called for scholars to see the economy not as a separate part of society as we do the modern economy, but as fully integrated within religious and political life and thought. Much like the practice of jihad, the Islamic economy did not come fully formed out of the Arabian Peninsula. Rather, Michael argues, it evolved over time with significant influence from the conquests, the incredible wealth that was obtained through these ventures, and the movement of warriors and merchants along the highways of the expanding empire.

5 Bringing Jihad, Poverty, and Economy Together

Another article published posthumously, “Asceticism and Poverty in the Qur’an,” combined many elements of Michael’s thoughts on jihad, poverty, and the economics of pre-Islamic Arabia, the latter of which shaped the Quranic environment. Here, Michael argued that training for and conduct of warfare (jihad) and generosity towards the poor and needy came together with practices of exile and separation that he included under the title *hijra* to form an ascetic “training program” for the early Muslim community. In this context, a virtuous, moral, or even Quranic economy involved both a cycle of exchange in which God’s gifts of life and sustenance as well as surplus were reciprocated through generosity towards the needy and then individual achievements in the path of the ascetic were likewise rewarded by God. These two cycles help fit the spiritual athletes of Late Antique monotheisms—which would have been familiar in an Arabia that was much more Christianized than the early Islamic sources report—into the milieu of the semi-nomadic Arabs for whom communal warfare, migration, and economies of generosity were already the cultural norm. The ascetic performed these roles at a higher level. Michael’s scholarly gift here lies in connecting the themes of warfare, charity, and economy, finding ways to read historical experiences and developments across them, and then using that new reading to interpret the behaviors and attitudes of the early Islamic community with a fresh light. While Michael’s work seems to have crossed many intellectual lines and topics, in the end, each of these threads came together into a singular view of the moral economy of the early Islamic community.

In another posthumously published article, Michael used his research into the Markets of the Arabs and the economy of pre-Islamic Arabia to help address the issues of debt and debt bondage in early Islam.¹² In “Debt, debt bondage, and the early Islamic economy,” Michael examined the problems inherent in understanding the place of debt and debt bondage in the economy—including the moral economy—of the early Islamic community, critiquing earlier studies that had focused too heavily on criticism of individual *ḥadīth* over historical inquiry. Here, Michael uses the image of the pre-Islamic Arabian economy, including traditions of generosity, that he had developed in his previous work to act as a balance to the sources for early Islamic history. The combination of the two helps Michael map out potential avenues for the development of practices and ideas about debt and debt bondage within the early Islamic community in dialogue with both Arabian and other Late Antique Near Eastern traditions. Again, a study of economy reveals more about the social, cultural, and religious life of the early Islamic community.

In addition to his extensive, wide-ranging original scholarship, Michael also applied his linguistic passion to translation, producing valuable English editions of the German works of Albrecht Noth and Heinz Halm and more recently a translation of Ibn Ḥawqal’s *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*. He also translated a number of important shorter works originally in French and Russian. Like his other works, these translations will have a lasting impact on the field, introducing important sources and theories to those less linguistically gifted than Michael.

6 Studies in Honor of Michael Bonner

This volume collects studies written in memory and in honor of Michael Bonner. The contributors include students, colleagues, and friends of Michael whose own thoughts and research have been in part shaped by Michael’s work. As such, the following essays share many of the same themes and threads as Michael’s own research. It should be noted that the contributions to this volume cover a wide geographic and chronological range, a testament to Michael’s own mastery of a wide range of subjects. The essays are therefore organized thematically and then roughly chronologically within each section. Following a brief biographical essay from Michael’s wife, Daniela Gobetti, the first set of contributions focus on questions of frontiers and jihad. The second section turns towards discussions of Islamic theological and legal matters. The

12 Bonner, Debt, debt bondage, and the early Islamic economy.

third section draws from Michael's interest in geography and the related field of ethnography. The fourth section includes studies focused on numismatics, titles, and manuscript archives.

The first set of essays harken back to Michael's earliest research, focusing on the topic of jihad and frontier warfare from both a theoretical or doctrinal and practical perspective. Steven Judd examines legal *siyar* works, upon which Michael relied heavily for his research on the Thughūr, considering whether or not these works constitute a distinct literary genre and why the term *siyar* fell out of use as a legal category. In her contribution, Alison M. Vacca uses topography and toponymy, invoking Michael's interest in historical geography, to untangle reports of the conquest of Armenia, Georgia, and Caucasian Albania found in al-Balādhurī's (d. ca. 279/892) *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*. This is not an exercise in uncovering what "really happened," but rather an attempt to understand al-Balādhurī's sources, particularly those of Armenian and Albanian provenance, and the politically charged arguments the author conveyed to his readers. Robert Haug uses a comparison Michael made in his book *Aristocratic violence and Holy War* between the Arab-Byzantine Thughūr and the Central Asian frontier as a starting point to analyze the Sāmānid frontier in Transoxiana. His analysis focuses largely on the construction of *ribāṭs* in Transoxiana, their relationship to the *dihqāns* or landed gentry and older, pre-Islamic forms of communal defense in the region, and the role the Sāmānids played in centralizing the defense of the frontier while also imbuing it with a religious, Islamic meaning in a manner that pushed out the traditional local elites.

The second section takes inspiration from Michael's approach to Islamic doctrine both as discussed among jurists and as applied to lived experiences. While Michael's work in these regards focused primarily on the doctrines of the jihad and charity, the contributions in this section look at a wider variety of topics including the reception and historical context of the Quran and the formation of Sufi practices. Karim Samji borrows from Biblical genre criticism to examine the *musabbiḥāt*, a set of suras in the Quran that glorify God. In his study, he explores how the scriptural canon of the Quran developed alongside and as a part of a communal liturgical practice and considers how these texts, each opening with a liturgical note and closing with words of wisdom, were performed as hymns and sermons in ritual settings comparable to the Judaic Psalms. Guillaume Dye investigates the function of demonology in the Quran and places it within the larger context of Late Antique religious practice, a context in which the presence of demons and spirits were a crucial concern for most people. His analysis focuses on the figures of Iblīs/Shayṭān, demons, and jinn and explores the ways demonological narratives and concepts made their way from Late Antique Christian contexts into Arabia in the sixth and seventh

centuries, became de-christianized, and were later reconstructed as part of a Quranic cosmography. David S. Powers shifts the conversation to the ninth/15th century and the response to Sufism in the Maghrib by closely examining a text that explores the tension between Sufism and Islamic law in a particular social and historical context, following Michael's practice of situating religious and legal doctrines in a particular context. In this case, Powers studies a request an unnamed group of people made to the jurist Abū al-Faḍl al-'Uqbānī (d. 851/1450) regarding the *shar'ī* or legal status of *dhikr* ceremonies that were regularly performed at the Great Mosque of Tlemcen (in modern Algeria). The text includes a summary of one such gathering and then al-'Uqbānī's judgement on 17 elements of the ceremony, offering an important window on to the process by which jurists could legitimize Sufi practices in the late medieval Islamic West.

The third section focuses on geographies and ethnographies. John P. Turner's contribution explores al-Jāḥiẓ's (159–255/775–868) epistle *Manāqib al-Turk* (The Virtues of the Turk) to examine the meaning of identity categories such as "Arab" or "Turk" in the 'Abbasid era. He invites us to put away modern conceptions of the nation and national group belonging in order to think in a nuanced way about the meaning of these identifiers in a third/ninth century 'Abbasid context and how these meanings were constructed through networks of social interactions and fluid markers of identity such as language rather than innate, inherited attributes. Kristina Richardson offers a similar discussion focused on the representation of "blackness" in medieval texts, also working closely but not exclusively with the work and life of al-Jāḥiẓ. Here, Richardson invites us to think about terminology carefully and through the thought processes of the medieval authorities we are reading, in much the same way Michael approached the topic of jihad. As a result, she argues for an expanded definition and geography of blackness in the medieval Islamic world that reaches beyond a simple marker of African descent and further calls for a reinterpretation of the Zutt, Zanj, and Qarmaṭī rebellions and the broader history of early Islamic Baṣra as a city at the confluence of the "black nations" in which the majority of the population were of an African, South Asian, and Southeast Asian underclass. Gottfried Hagen addresses the impact of spatial or geographic knowledge, mathematical cartography, and the Ptolemaic tradition on the Ottoman court. Hagen identifies two distinct periods in which the Ottomans as patrons and producers of maps and geographic texts encountered Ptolemy (ca. 100–ca. 170CE), centuries apart and with very different results. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, transformations in the form of Ottoman patronage from one focused on the entertainment and edification of the sultan or other individual patrons to one steered by the state as an institution helped drive a shift

from literary towards scientific production and Hagen shows this transformation occurring within the production of Ottoman geographic knowledge as descriptive literary geographies were replaced by Ptolemaic style maps based on a mathematical grid with defined boundaries.

The fourth set of essays delves into methods by which medieval Islamic states communicated with the populace, the granting of official titles or *laqabs* and the minting of coins, as well as private and public efforts to collect and preserve communal knowledge in libraries. Paul E. Walker presents a detailed study of *laqabs*, honorific titles, bestowed by the Fatimid Caliphate. Beyond providing a detailed, comprehensive list of titles used under the Fatimids, the author explores the evolution of the practice which was rare at the beginning of Fatimid rule and a point of derision towards the 'Abbasids and Būyids in the east but became increasingly common over the course of the fifth/eleventh century. Eric J. Hanne discusses changes in Būyid coinage in the wake of al-Qādir's installation as caliph in 381/991. He demonstrates that symbolic affirmation of the new caliph on Būyid coins was not immediate and connects delayed recognition to regional competition between Būyid elites. Rudi Paul Lindner presents us with a study in how small things can signal big changes. In his study of coins struck by the Seljuq Kılıc Arslan IV at the mint of Sivas in 646/1248–1249, Lindner questions the light weight of known specimens of this coin in comparison to other Rum Seljuq issues. By looking beyond Anatolia, he is able to make a connection to Mongol minting standards and thereby uses this small silver coin to help elaborate on the political conditions within Seljuq Anatolia and between the Seljuqs and Mongols in the mid seventh/13th century. Paul M. Love, Jr demonstrates private efforts to preserve manuscripts in the Ibadi tradition by reconstructing the private library of the al-Ba'tūrī family of Djerba, Tunisia which was lost in a fire in the 1980s. Djerba is home to many important Ibadi manuscript libraries, many of which were formed in the 16th through 19th centuries, and through the reconstruction of a single, lost library, Love is able to uncover some of the history of the Ibadi community on the island. This history includes movement of both people and manuscripts and the interconnected nature of private libraries and the families that preserve them.

Over the course of the 13 essays included in this volume, our contributors have demonstrated the breadth and depth of Michael Bonner's influence on the field of early Islamic history. While these contributions seem disparate and diverse in their content, bringing together studies of such topics as the Arab conquests, genre criticism in Quranic studies, Ottoman patronage of maps, Rum Seljuq coins, and private libraries among the Ibadi community of Tunisia—none of which were topics Michael himself engaged directly—upon

reading these essays, we believe you will see Michael's influence in the types of questions asked and approaches taken. There is an attention to the details in which the authors attempt to get beyond what the sources say and reveal how they reflect a lived, historical experience. The essays collected here ask us to look at our sources with new eyes and read across them to find the connections that uncover histories that have often been paved over.

Robert Haug and Steven Judd

Acknowledgements

Preparing a memorial volume for a teacher, colleague, and friend like Michael Bonner is a challenge in and of itself, but the completion of this volume was further complicated by the global COVID-19 pandemic which broke out just as we began. For the most part, the contributors to this volume wrote and revised their chapters in an environment of closed libraries and restricted travel, hampering their access to research materials, while facing new and daunting challenges in their professional and personal lives. We, the editors, appreciate the extra effort it took from each of our contributors to complete their incredible articles and make this volume a fitting tribute to Michael. The work and dedication shows on the page and we appreciate it.

Many of the articles included in this volume were first presented at a symposium held in Michael's honor at the University of Michigan in November 2019. We thank everyone from the Department of Middle East Studies involved in organizing that event as well as several participants in the symposium who could not contribute to the present volume. These include Michael's friend and colleague Kathryn Babayan, mentor Michael Cook, and co-author Jacob Lassner. The reflections these three gave in Ann Arbor on Michael and his work and comments made in response to the presentations given by our contributors helped shape the present volume immensely. We would also like to thank everyone who agreed to participate in a memorial panel scheduled to be held at the Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society in March 2020. While the conference was canceled due to the pandemic, some of the scheduled participants also contributed to this volume.

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Michael Bonner, 1952–2019

In the summer of 1964, the Bonner family, Francis, Evelyn, and their three young children, Michael, Alisa, and Rachel, sailed from New York to Paris, where Francis, a Professor of Chemistry at SUNY Stony Brook, would spend a sabbatical year. Michael, who turned 13 during that year, attended the *École Internationale Bilingue*. He understood that, if he could have remained in France, the following year he would have enrolled at the *Lycée Henri IV* where he would have received a classical humanistic *formation*, in preparation for becoming a student of history, which was already his strongest intellectual interest.

That could not happen, of course. Estranged from his fellow students at the suburban high school on Long Island to which he had to return, where being bullied was a quotidian experience, Michael took shelter in his love for the humanities. At 15, he decided that no one who did not know Italian could call himself a humanist. He picked up a grammar book and taught it to himself. When I met him, he spoke a correct but somewhat outdated language, shaped by his knowledge of opera. “T’amo, cor mio ...”—he would say, to which I would gently counter, “Maybe we do not say it that way, any more ... Perhaps, ‘ti amo, amore mio,’ and ‘cor’ is ‘cuore.’” By the end of his life he spoke Italian fluently, helped by our yearly visits to Torino and to the Italian Alps. Michael could read many languages—including some dead ones, as we say—and spoke an unspecified number, but French always remained his main ‘second’ language.

Besides history, Michael loved astronomy and music. He would flee from the suburbs to the Mannes School of Music in Manhattan, where he took lessons in composition and in violin playing. Music was the creative form in which he felt at home, at ease, and confident. When playing a piece with his beloved string quartet, or bantering with a musicologist friend about Josquin’s *Missa Panglingua*, he never felt something was amiss in himself, as he did as a historian of the formative period of Islam, where the ghost of the never-attended *Lycée Henri IV* hovered, to a degree incomprehensible to observers.

As is well known to scholars of classical Islam, philological rigor is the indispensable bedrock upon which they can build their historical interpretations. However, this was a necessary but not sufficient tool for Michael, who shared neither the 19th-century belief in the self-sufficiency of philological analysis, nor the deconstructionist impulse of the late 20th century. In his work, he combined a vast array of sources and mastered the methodologies necessary to employ them: pre-Islamic poetry, the Qur’an, the hadith liter-

ature and other religious texts, legal treatises, prosopographical studies, biographies, travelogues, administrative records (as few as there are), numismatics, medieval maps, market routes and practices, reconstructed in part through the tools of geographic information systems, and any other source of material culture he could lay his hands on. According to Michael, the intertwining of all these source materials and methodological approaches could yield a Braudelian social history of pre-Islamic Arabia and of classical Islam.

Such breadth and depth are apparent both in the array of Michael's publications and in his translations not only from Arabic, but also to and from German, French, and Russian, and in the itinerary of the places and institutions he frequented.

There are three salient clusters in Michael's work. The first one is the frontier, as both the location and the topos of the *jihad*, that is, the internal struggle and the military endeavors which led to the articulation of the Muslim *umma* and of its institutions. The frontier is the theme of his first book, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies on the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (1996); and jihad is the focus of his later book, *Jihad in Islamic History, Doctrines and Practices* (2008), which appeared first in French as *Le Jihad—Origines, interprétations, débats*, subsequently translated into Italian, *La jihad* (2008). The second theme addresses poverty, debt, and institutions of charity in the formation of the classical Islamic economy, through the edited volume, *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Context* (2003). And, pervading it all through the years, the attempt to reconstruct the trading economy of pre-Islamic Arabia and its transition to the mercantile capitalism of the expanding Muslim Empire. It was the last of these clusters on which he wrote the most in later years, and the one that received the most attention from the scholarly community. At the time of his death, Michael was finally putting together a book, *Markets and Trade in the Rise of Islam*, or, perhaps, more appropriately, "In Search of the Early Islamic Economy," the title of his last article, published posthumously in the journal *al-Uşūr al-Wuṣṭā* in late 2019. I will devote my organizational energy and skills to collecting Michael's writings on this topic and try to bring it to completion and publication with the help of Islamic scholars.

Michael spent his academic career at the University of Michigan, serving as Director of the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the International Institute from 1997 to 2003, and as Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Studies in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts from 2010 to 2014. As often happens with scholars, the most gratifying part of his service was working with graduate students and mentoring the next generation. One of his former students put it so beautifully, saying, "He took me on,

nourished my intellect, and opened scholarly doors I never knew existed. He never ‘held my hand,’ as I explored the pre-modern Islamic world, but I knew he always had his hand on my back.”

Zichrono Livracha, May his memory be a blessing.

Daniela Gobetti

Ann Arbor, 25 August 2021



FIGURE 0.1 Michael David Bonner, 1952–2019
PHOTO BY DANIELA GOBETTI

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