

# From Cordoba to Kashgar

## Islamic Cultures and the Wider World

Walk through the palaces of the Alhambra in Granada in air perfumed from their gardens. Stand in the vast *maidān* in Isfahan overawed by the brilliant tiles of the Imam Mosque. Hear the *Mu'adhan* call mid-day prayers in the great court of the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. Climb the stairs to the 'jewelled' tombs of the Timur and his descendants in Samarkand. Wander the courts and chambers of the Topkapi in Istanbul, wondering at the treasures they hold. Within these places you are surrounded by the glories of Islamic culture.

These sites are among the outstanding examples of Islamic culture that will be discussed in their general context during a series of lectures in July and August 2016.

NEAF has for a number of years presented weekend lecture series in which our aim has been to provide general background to those interested in Western Asia and its areas of influence. For the past five years our lectures have concentrated on the influence of this area on the development of Western Civilization. We have also presented Study days on the current situation in the Levant and its implications for the study of the past in this area.

We are now presenting a six week lecture series examining Islam and its interaction with the cultures of the non-Islamic world.

In this series of lectures we aim to give an overview of the different Islamic cultures that have influenced the West over almost 1500 years. It will explore the various aspects of the material culture of different areas following the arrival of Islam and how these have influenced the non-Islamic cultures that co-exist with them. These influences may be in the architecture, the sciences, the decorative arts and in technology.

This series will start Saturday, 16 July 2016 and run for six weeks. The format will be starting at 10 am with a coffee/tea break at 11.30 then resume at 12 noon and finish at 1.30 with a glass of wine and a chance to talk informally with the lecturer.

### Date

16 July 2016 and each following Saturday to 20 August 2016

### Place

CCANESA: Level 4 of the Madsen Building at the University of Sydney

### Cost

Whole Series                \$150

Individual lecture        \$30

**Saturday 16 July**

**SHOCK AND AWE  
THE FORMATION OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD**

**Dr John Tidmarsh**

Within a century of the death of the Prophet Mohammed in 632 CE the territories under Islamic control (*Dar al-Islam*) stretched from the Atlantic to the Oxus River and beyond. This was accompanied at the expense of two of the greatest empires—the Byzantine and the Sasanian—of Antiquity.

This morning we will consider the beginnings of Islam, the Arab conquests, and the formation and florescence of the Arab-dominated Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, whose quest for knowledge underpinned the later European Renaissance.

We shall also examine the spread of Islam to southern Arabia, known to the Romans as *Arabia Felix*, and explore the lucrative (and relatively little known) Indian Ocean trade which emanated from its shores.

**Saturday 23 July**

**THE CRUSADES AND THE WEST**

**Dr Stephen Bourke**

The Age of the Crusades has been viewed variously as ‘the last of the Barbarian invasions’ (Runcimann) or ‘the beginnings of Mass Spiritualism’ (Riley-Smith). It certainly marks a significant departure in the relations between Western Christianity and the Islamic world. Over the course of nearly 150 years of near-continuous warfare, the Christian west was shaped by its conflict with the mature civilization of the Islamic east, itself infused with a distilled knowledge of the Late Antique world.

This lecture will chart the history of the six major crusading movements into the Middle East (1096-1292 CE), and later Crusading activities surrounding the rise of the Ottoman state. It will consider the nature of the Crusading states that briefly flourished in the first two centuries of crusading activity in the Levant, and the effect this hybrid civilization had on the evolving civilization (both military and secular) that strengthened in western Europe in the two centuries leading up to the Renaissance.

The robust naval technology of the 15th Century CE, forged in the fires of two centuries of naval conflict with the Ottomans in the central Mediterranean, enabled western European explorers to reach out to east and west seeking trade and political advantage against their Islamic foes. The Spanish discovery of the New World (and its rich cod banks) and the Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean (and its spices) fueled the final chapter in ‘the rise of the west’.

**Saturday 30 July**

**TO THE WEST  
NORTH AFRICA AND IBERIA IN 1<sup>ST</sup> AND 2<sup>ND</sup> MILLENNIA CE**

**Maree Browne**

As Islam spread outward from Arabia into the Levant and Western Asia it also moved into Africa, along the Nile and the Mediterranean Coast crossing the Straights of Gibraltar and into Southern Europe. In this lecture we will first examine the early conversion of Egypt and the establishment of modern Cairo as its capital under the Fatimids at the end of the first millennium then its flowering as one of the great cities of the Islamic world under the Ayyubids and the Mamluks. Further west, the city of Tunis gained supremacy over its Roman rival, Carthage. With this movement came vast building programs and engineering projects, particularly in the field of hydrology along the North African coast.

In the second lecture we go further west to Iberia and the arrival of Islam in 711 CE and the subsequent flowering of an amazing and tolerant culture often referred to as the Moorish culture. The palaces and mosques of this period in Cordoba, Seville and Granada still stand today as monument to this period. The Islamic period in Spain ended with the Reconquest by the Christian forces of Ferdinand and Isabella.

**Saturday 6 August**

**THE MONGOL EMPIRE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

**Ben Churcher**

Genghis Khan as the 'wrecker' is vaguely known to many, however, this gifted leader, warrior and administrator ushered in a period of Central Asian dominance that was to fundamentally shape much of the second millennium.

Admittedly brutal when required, Genghis Khan also ruled an empire from faraway Karakorum: an empire that had to be started from scratch including the building of a capital, the introduction of a script for the Mongolian language, commissioning written histories and writing codified laws. In a few years of his death in 1227, his successors ruled from the China Sea to the Euphrates where the Yuan Dynasty unites China and Mongolian princes calculate equinoxes from Iranian observatories.

One hundred years later, other leaders, such as Emir Timur in Uzbekistan, call on the greatness of Genghis Khan to establish their own far-flung empire administered from distant Samarkand. The rise of Central Asia at the hands of individuals such as Genghis Khan and Emir Timur will be examined during this lecture as we recall the role this region had in shaping the world around us today.

**Saturday 13 August**

**THE PEARL OF ISLAM  
IRAN IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> AND 2<sup>ND</sup> MILLENNIA CE**

**Dr John Tidmarsh**

In the early years following the Muslim conquests, the Islamic world was dominated by the Arabic-speaking dynasty of the Umayyads which looked west to the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean world as regards cultural influences.

The overthrow of the Umayyads in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent rule of the Abbasid caliphs saw the Islamic capital transferred from Damascus to Baghdad, resulting in a markedly increased Persian influence on the Abbasid court and on Muslim cultural practice in general.

However it is with the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, to be followed by the remarkable Safavid dynasty in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, that Persian art, architecture, poetry and philosophy finally attained the brilliance which continues to entrance scholars and travellers alike.

**Saturday 20 August**

**THE SUBLIME PORTE: THE OTTOMANS**

**Dr Kate da Costa**

This dynasty, founded in 1299 upon the fall of the Seljuks, gradually expanded across the emirates of Anatolia, until the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by Mehmet II ushered in the period of Empire. At its height, in 1683, the Ottoman Empire reached from Algiers to the Caspian, and from Budapest to Yemen. In the late Middle Ages, the Ottoman navy dominated the Mediterranean and Red Seas, and its shipyards could produce a warship a day. Western European nations could not access the Silk Road or the overseas routes to the east, a situation which encourage exploration westward across the Atlantic. Although after the defeat at Vienna in 1683 the Ottoman Empire was essentially defensive and in decline, it still comprised a huge area, with over 30 million inhabitants. Although much reduced in size in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Sultanate did not come to an end until World War I.

We will concentrate on the changing relationship between the Ottomans and Europe, from Ottoman dominance in military and academic spheres (combining Arabic, Classical and Chinese sciences and engineering), Ottoman religious tolerance, and mutual engagement through art, music and design in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.