

THE ROBERTA BUFFETT CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

FACULTY & FELLOWS COLLOQUIUM

CARL PETRY

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BLOOD MONEY AND HOMICIDE LITIGATION IN MEDIEVAL CAIRO AND DAMASCUS

FRIDAY :: MAY 30, 2008 :: 12:00 (NOON) - 1:00PM
BCICS :: 1902 SHERIDAN ROAD
LUNCH WILL BE SERVED

According to classical theory in Islamic Law (Shari'a), homicide does not belong to the category of crimes unconditionally forbidden in the Qur'an (apostasy, adultery/fornication, wine drinking and theft). Homicide is formally categorized as a tort, or an offense open to negotiation over compensation acceptable to the victim's blood relatives, and was clearly derivative from long-standing tribal customs in Arabia. But how did this policy square with actual legal practice centuries after the Qur'anic revelation, in complex urban environments where tribal membership no longer served as the primary basis for social identity? During my research into criminal activity in the Mamluk Sultanate (13th-15th centuries), I discovered that payment of blood money occurred rarely. In practical fact, homicide was prosecuted by the Sultanic regime as a crime so disruptive of the social order that it was unconditionally worthy of the most extreme penalty. The presentation will discuss this issue in the context of actual cases encountered during the research project.

Carl F. Petry: Professor of History, and C. D. McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence, Northwestern University. BA, Carleton College (1965); MA (1966) and PhD (1974), University of Michigan. Research: focus on pre-modern Egypt, with emphasis on political economy. Books: *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1982); *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamluk Sultans al-Ashraf Qaytbay and Qansuh al-Ghawri in Egypt* (U. Washington, 1993); *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (S.U.N.Y., 1994). Editor and contributor, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Egypt, 640--1517 C.E.* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Thirty-five articles in various journals. Served on Board of Governors, American Research Center in Egypt (1987-90); Book Review Editor, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* (1984-92). Has served on arrangements, program and Malcolm Kerr Dissertation Award committees for the Middle East Studies Association. NEH Fellowship (via ARCE) (1980-81); U.S. Information Agency Fellowship (1985); J. S. Guggenheim Fellowship (1987-88); Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, NJ) Fellowship (1996); American Council of Learned Societies/NEH Area Studies Fellowship (2000-01). Residence in Egypt for total of five years; other travel to: Israel, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey. Currently researching book-length study of crime and criminality in medieval Cairo. At Northwestern University: faculty associate in International Studies and Willard Residential Colleges (Master at latter during 1995)

BCICS Faculty & Fellows Colloquium: A Northwestern faculty member or visiting fellow presents current research to an interdisciplinary audience of faculty, fellows, and graduate students. Each meeting lasts one hour followed by informal discussion; lunch is provided by BCICS. The series was motivated by a desire to build a greater sense of awareness of what other scholars on campus are working on, to promote interdisciplinary connections and discussions among faculty working on international and comparative research, and ultimately to develop a stronger community among BCICS affiliates. If you are interested in presenting your work in this series, please contact BCICS Associate Director, Brian Hanson bhanson@northwestern.edu.



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