Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations

■ Khalil Andani [PhD]

Revelation in Islam: Qur'ānic, Sunni, and Shiʿi Ismaili Perspectives
This dissertation is an intellectual history of Muslim understandings of Qur'ānic revelation from the first/seventh century to the fifth/eleventh century as presented in the Qur'ān, Sunni *ḥadīth,* Qur'ān commentary, Sunni *kalām*, Imami Shiʿi *ḥadīth*, and Shiʿi Ismaili philosophical theology. The study conceptualizes diverse Islamic theologies of revelation through an analytical framework featuring three hierarchical dimensions: 1) a revelatory principle representing differing conceptions of God's speech (*kalām Allāh*) and writing (*kitāb Allāh*); 2) a revelatory process describing various modes of divine/angelic sending down (*tanzīl*) and inspiration (*waḥy*) through the Prophet Muhammad; and 3) revelatory products, including Qur'ānic recitation, scripture, the prophetic Sunna, and the Shiʿi Imamate. The dissertation argues that Sunni and Shiʿi Muslims understood Qur'ānic revelation through competing and often mutually contradictory models constructed within different historical and theological contexts. The revelatory models that developed through the fifth/eleventh century fall into four types: 1) the "Qur'ānic model" in which the Prophet formulates divinely inspired Arabic *qur'ān*s and prophetic guidance as adaptations (*tafṣīl*) of God's transcendent writing; 2) the "scriptural models" from Sunni *tafsīr* in which the Qur'ān as God's book preexists in heaven and is then sent down to earth; 3) the "theological divine speech models" in Sunni *kalām* that center on God's uncreated/created speech and its manifestation as the Arabic Qur'ān and the prophetic Sunna; and 4) the "divine inspiration models" in Imami Shiʿi *ḥadīth* and Shiʿi Ismaili thought that frame the Qur'ān as a divinely inspired composition of the Prophet that manifests God's transcendent word and requires the imams' revelatory hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) to be comprehended.

The dissertation's argument culminates by highlighting and contextualizing Imami Shiʿi and Ismaili understandings of revelation espoused by certain Shiʿi imams and Ismaili *dāʿī*s (missionaries)—including Imam al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), Imam al-Muʿizz (d. 365/975), al-Rāzī (d. 322/934), the Brethren of Purity (fl. fourth/tenth century), al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971), al-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974), al-Kirmānī

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(d. after 411/1020), al-Mu'ayyad (d. 470/1077), and Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. ca. 481/1088). It demonstrates that Ismaili models in particular constitute a unique alternative to Sunni views of revelation by offering competing and vastly different accounts of the revelatory principle, process, and products.

Adviser: Ali Asani

◼ AnnMarie M. Bridges [PhD]

Blindness, Imagination, Perception: Calvin's 1559 "Institutes" and Early Modern Visual Instability

Although studies of visual culture continue to privilege visible artifacts, and especially images, it is also the case that visual habits are imagined and inculcated through texts. This project reinterprets John Calvin's 1559 *Institutes of the Christian Religion* against the backdrop of sixteenth-century visual instability—a hitherto unexamined dimension of the work's historical context. This research is made newly possible by a recent burgeoning of scholarship on early modern European sensory cultures. Situating the *Institutes* against this backdrop reveals that "perception"—a term I employ as a shorthand for the sixteenth-century process whereby visual experience is conditioned by the imagination even before it becomes the basis for conscious thought—is a previously unrecognized but central organizing concern of Calvin's magnum opus. Underappreciated dimensions of the *Institutes* come to light when we reexamine its striking perceptual motifs (from sinful "blindness" to clarifying lenses, mirrors, and marks) in light of the contested status of vision and visual epistemology in early modern Europe.

This research reveals that both the *Institutes*' theological teachings and its distinctive form are designed to intervene in its readers' perceptual habits. In chapters one through four, I show how three of the text's major themes—the knowledge of God, accommodation, and idolatry—appear in a fresh light when approached in terms of the *Institutes*' concern with perception. In chapters five through seven, I show how interpreting the text as centrally concerned with problems of perception can illuminate both well-understood and still-puzzling features of its Latin prose style. Ultimately, this dissertation offers a case study, not only of a distinctively Reformed visual piety, but also of how perceptual habits might be cultivated through texts. In so doing, it makes good on the intuition, expressed by many scholars, that Protestant leaders were not rejecting but "reforming" the role of the senses in religious life. Finally, by reinterpreting Calvin's *Institutes* explicitly from the perspective of visual culture, this project also begins to redress the relative absence of sustained theological analysis in studies of visual culture, whether in early modernity or beyond.

Adviser: Charles M. Stang

■ Mary Beinecke Elston [PhD]

Reviving Turāth: Islamic Education in Modern Egypt

This dissertation investigates a contemporary education movement led by Muslim religious scholars (*'ulamā'*) from Egypt's al-Azhar—the preeminent institution of Sunni learning located in Cairo. This movement is seeking to revive *turāth* (literally, heritage or tradition) in order to reconnect contemporary Muslims to their "authentic" heritage and disseminate a "centrist" (*wasaṭī*) understanding of Islam. Based on two years of ethnographic and archival research at al-Azhar, the dissertation examines the discourses, practices, texts, and institutional efforts that constitute *turāth* within this revival. It situates the revival within Egypt's political context, as well as in relation to a history of education reform and debates about knowledge in Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Part one (History through the Lens of *Turāth*) examines the history of Islamic education in Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter one explores the relationship between al-Azhar and the new schools established during the rule of Muḥammad ʿAlī (r. 1805–1848). The chapter also revisits the writings of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (1766–1835) and Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873) to consider their connection to Islamic modernism. Chapter two analyzes the reforms from 1865–1961 that sought to transform education in al-Azhar.

Part two (Reviving *Turāth*) investigates the contemporary *turāth* revival movement at al-Azhar. Chapter three explores the concept of *turāth* through the writings of Ali Gomaa (1952–), the former grand mufti of Egypt, who is a prominent representative of the *turāth* revival. For Gomaa, *turāth* refers to Muslim intellectual production (texts, practices, theories, and concepts) in the classical and postclassical periods, which he conceptualizes as an ethical and intellectual ideal. Chapter four investigates Gomaa's efforts to revive *turāth* by reestablishing the study circles at al-Azhar mosque in the 1990s. The chapter introduces the "parallel Azhar sector," a network of institutions that teach the Azhar approach (*manhaj*) to Muslim youth, foregrounding the competing notions of *turāth* that underlie this sector. Chapter five provides an ethnographic portrait of the practices and discourses that constitute *turāth* in the study circles at al-Azhar mosque. The chapter demonstrates the primacy of form over content in the way that the students and teachers experience and revive *turāth*, while it also argues that reformed education in al-Azhar (i.e., "official" Azhar), and not "extremism," is the foil against which this community understands *turāth*. Chapter six explores the ʿulamāʾs use of social media to promote the *turāth* revival. The chapter examines the discourses and concepts that official *'ulamā'* have developed to differentiate between authoritative and sound practices of Islamic knowledge transmission and those of social media. The chapter demonstrates that gaps exist between the ʿulamāʾs "discourse of differentiation" and the way that students conceptualize social media and its relationship to *turāth*.

<div align="right">Adviser: Malika Zeghal</div>

◼ Mariam Goshadze [PhD]

The Noise Silence Makes: The Ghanaian State Negotiates Ritual Ban on Noise Making in Accra

Every year, between the months of May and July, the Ga traditional community in Accra inaugurates a four-week period of sonic fast in preparation of a harvest festival, Hɔmɔwɔ. This ritual restriction of noise, commonly known as the "ban on drumming," applies to practically all neighborhoods in the city and is meant to honor the Ga deities who come down to ensure a bountiful harvest. According to Ghana's 1992 Constitution, the Ga are the official custodians of Accra's lands and are authorized to freely practice their customs. Superimposed against the ascendance of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, the "ban on drumming" escalated into a matter of national concern in the late 1990s as the former refused to subdue their spirited worship in order to honor the Ga festival guidelines. On several occasions, the outraged Ga community members attacked the transgressing churches, destroyed their property, and engaged in physical confrontations with the members.

This dissertation tackles two questions pertinent to the confrontations surrounding "the ban on drumming," perceptively dubbed as the "Drum Wars" in the media. First, it reaches back to the late nineteenth century to observe the transforming patterns of strategic noise regulation in Accra designed to mediate the relationship between various sociocultural groups. It argues that the Ga command of sound abatement regulations in Accra signals a novel paradigm, wherein a traditional group not only dictates the standards of noise production but also advocates for silence—conventionally a marker of "progress" and "modernity"—in the face of a Christian group that insists on its right to "noise," historically a trait of the "barbarous" "other." In this framework, sound is recognized as historically contingent, expanding and retracting, shifting and transforming in shape and form in relation to the tangled power dance between those who produce it and those who monitor it. In the thick of the global recognition of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity as the most formidable player in the religious market of Africa, the dissertation suggests that the aptitude of African traditional religion to prescribe the aural template of a megapolis like Accra is an unmistakable pointer of the latter's unacknowledged weight in Ghana's sociopolitical affairs.

Second, the dissertation posits that the response of the Ghanaian state to the tensions surrounding the "Drum Wars" sheds light on the little studied properties of Ghanaian secularism, wherein the state unofficially collaborates with the traditional religious authorities in the administration of the Accra municipal area, yet publicly grants a superior status to Christianity and Islam compared to traditional religion. Constitutionally a secular state, Ghana has maintained a dual legal model akin to several other sub-Saharan countries. If Christianity and Islam are constitutionally recognized as "religions," indigenous religion is labeled as "culture" and is protected under the auspices of the customary law. In the framework of the "Drum Wars," the juxtaposition of "culture" and "religion" is utilized by the state to develop

methods of mediation remarkably different from what we find in the Western secular model. I propose that the present arrangement echoes an amalgamation of factors: precolonial sociopolitical structures, gradual dissociation of traditional religion from Christianity and Islam under the cloak of "culture," and lasting convergence of customary and statutory law.

Adviser: Jacob K. Olupona

■ Catherine Anne Hartmann [PhD]

To See a Mountain: Writing, Place, and Vision in Tibetan Pilgrimage Literature
Buddhist thought diagnoses human suffering as the result of a fundamental misperception of reality. As such, Buddhists have developed practices that aim to replace or improve ordinary ways of seeing the world. In Tibet, one such practice is pilgrimage to holy mountains. This dissertation explores this application of the Buddhist project to restructure perceptual experience.

Tibetan pilgrimage is structured around the idea that the holy mountain is actually a wondrous palace for an enlightened deity. Of course, most people do not typically see it in that way, but the goal for pilgrims is to learn to see the mountain as a sacred palace through the transformation of their perception. This project asks how Tibetan texts attempted to transform perception, and it explores the role of poetic language, as well as the physical landscape itself, in doing so. The project engages a number of different types of pilgrimage texts—songs and letters of advice for pilgrims, founding narratives of pilgrimage mountains, polemics about the nature of pilgrimage, pilgrimage guides to specific holy places, and a pilgrim diary—which span a time period from 1200 to the 1950s. In each case, it asks how these works approach the problem of training people to see the holy place's theoretically invisible wonders.

This dissertation argues that Tibetan pilgrimage texts treat perception as an active process that is malleable and subject to reframing and reinterpretation, and that they develop techniques whereby the pilgrim works with the material world in order to transform perception. Such techniques, which I refer to as "practices of seeing," include specialized forms of reading the landscape for signs, practices of writing and reading, and an imaginative juxtaposition of physical and idealized landscapes. These practices facilitate what I call "co-seeing," a state in which the pilgrim sees the site in two ways at once; that is, they see it in one way with their ordinary perception and in another quite different way in their mind's eye. Practices of seeing thereby help the pilgrim to elide the gap between ordinary perception and extraordinary vision, thus creating the conditions for potentially transformative religious experiences.

Adviser: Janet Gyatso

◼ Eric X. Jarrard [ThD]

"Remember This Day on Which You Came out of Egypt": The Exodus Motif in Biblical Memory

This dissertation is a study of the systematic repetitions of the exodus motif in the Hebrew Bible. I argue that the textual enmeshing of the past exodus event within the biblical legal material is both innate to the fuller expression of the exodus tradition and further developed in the Hebrew Bible for the strategic purpose of shaping the future identity and covenantal obligations of its receivers.

The dissertation itself is composed of three case studies. The first (chapter 2) addresses the enmeshing of sea and Sinai through constructed monuments in the Former Prophets. Specifically, it examines how these monuments became *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory) that mark epochs within a helical model of time—a historical slinky—capable of memorializing covenant renewals through allusions to the exodus event. I argue that each of these monuments functioned to signify what I refer to as parallel loops of a temporal slinky. The second case study (chapter 3) scrutinizes how the temporal slinky articulated in chapter 2 is subsequently codified within the prophetic literature. This chapter demonstrates how allusions to portions of the Holiness Code—specifically, Leviticus 18–20—in Ezekiel's so-called revisionist history (Ezekiel 20) function to reemphasize the relationship between the redemption schema of the exodus event—both its past and future iterations—and the legal obligations tied to that experience. In the third case study (chapter 4), I argue that the Chronicler recasts events not previously understood to be cyclical as a later iteration—or loop—of the temporal slinky. This chapter establishes Josiah's death in 2 Chronicles as an inversion of the exodus, a significant departure from 2 Kings 22–23. The conclusion considers this habitual pattern of associating the legal corpora with the exodus event through allusions to both traditions. What precisely is gained by repeatedly combining these two phenomena? Ultimately, the practice demonstrates an ability to reimagine the past constructively for the purpose of shaping the identity of its future receivers.

Adviser: Jon D. Levenson

◼ MEI Hualong [PhD]

"Nation" and Empire as Two Trends of Political Organization in the Iron Age Levant

The subject of this dissertation is the development and characteristics of two trends in Iron Age Levantine domestic and international politics: the emergence of what may be labeled as ancient "nations" in the Levant, on the one hand, and the rise of universal empires that dominated the Levant and the wider Near East, on the other. A deeper understanding of the features and the interaction of the two political phenomena will help us make sense of their conceptual common ground as two types of expansive, transregional political entities.

In order to define the subjects of examination better, I integrate theoretical considerations into the study of ancient phenomena and concepts. With regard to "nation," which is often considered an exclusively modern concept, I propose that one not cling to one specific definition and prioritize one particular people/polity as a classical example of a "nation." Instead, while not dispensing entirely with the term "nation" as a referent to a sociopolitical entity, I suggest that we explore different degrees and kinds of influence of ethnic and cultural commonness on collective political identity within and beyond one polity's boundaries. With regard to the universal empire, I note that imperial universalism, which views the world as a hierarchical system with the empire as the center, is sometimes ideological and rhetorical in nature, and that historical circumstances often remind the powerful universal empire of the limits of its authority.

Building upon these theoretical discussions, the subsequent sections of the dissertation should be classified as a study of important concepts illustrated by terminologies attested in different sources and languages. These terminologies include, for instance: native terms translatable as "people" and "nation" (e.g., עם and גוי in biblical and other West Semitic sources); proper nouns (e.g., the meaning and the intended extent of such terms as "Israel," "Aram," and "Assyrian"); appellations and titles (e.g., "king" versus the nisbe or the gentilic as a royal title in Assyrian sources); metaphorical terms (e.g., "brother" in international relations) and other phrases illustrative of one polity's perception of another (e.g., "a large land"); and the relationship between different political actors (e.g., "to serve," "tribute," "bow down to the feet of"). Accompanying this terminological study is an analysis of the textual and historical contexts of ancient terms and concepts.

Two major issues emerge from this collection of relevant terms and concepts, which I then examine. The first is the ancient Levantine conception of ethnocultural commonalities as a source of political cohesion in translocal political entities, as well as the extent and limits of such culturally and ethnically derived political identity. Here, I focus primarily on Israel, Judah, Transjordanian polities, and the Aramaeans, with the survey of the interaction between ethnocultural characteristics and political identity in other cultural groups in the Iron Age Levant (e.g., the Philistines, the Phoenicians, and the Luwians/Neo-Hittites). Second, with regard to the universal empire, a polity that often claims to know no limits and borders, I investigate the awareness of its limits that was heightened as the universal empire—here the Neo-Assyrian Empire is my principal concern—came into close contact with other political actors, including powerful rivals in the region and minor polities in the Levant. In addition, there are the situations in which a universal empire like the Neo-Assyrian Empire presents certain common cultural characteristics in addition to political ones that may in effect contribute to an Assyrian "identity," just as, under some circumstances, an ancient "nation" can extend either its political authority or the influence of its cultural attributes (e.g., the "national" god) beyond the limits of its political identity. A case in point, which I analyze in the final chapter of the

dissertation, is the transformation in biblical sources of the "national" god Yahweh into a universal god who controls the world and receives the homage of all nations, like an imperial ruler.

The present study contributes not only to our understanding of certain key political terminologies and concepts in the Iron Age Levant and the wider ancient Near East, but also to wider debates in political science in general. The parallel study of "national" and "imperial" ideologies is particularly meaningful. In the modern context, nation and empire are often viewed as two categories of political organizations that stand at two opposing ends—that is, empires subsume nations and nations grow out of and assert their own identities over against the multiethnic empires. But in reality, on the conceptual level, nation and empire share much in common. Both national and imperial ideologies function as the ideological support to justify translocal and transtribal political organization. Both national and imperial polities may exhibit the tendency to expand beyond a local political center, yet the principles by which they expand differ. While a national polity relies on the belief that people sharing common sociocultural attributes should form one political entity, an empire aims to maximize one political center's control over resources, trade, and manpower and justifies its expansion by claiming its ability to bring peace, order, and prosperity to the conquered peoples. More importantly, in this study I find that, under certain circumstances, one type of polity—either the national polity or the empire—may appeal to the strategies, principles, or ideologies of the other in order to justify, reinforce, and adjust its own translocal political identity or, in effect, transform itself into the other. The conceptual transformation of the one into the other is closely related to the political entity's consciousness and interpretation of "limits," political and cultural, real and imagined. In the end, the human effort to establish and consolidate transregional political unity is essentially a dynamic process of setting up and tearing down limits.

Adviser: Peter Machinist

■ Jason William Smith [ThD]

Tacit "Tirukkuṟaḷ": Religion, Ethics, and Poetics in a Tamil Literary Tradition
This dissertation examines the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, a poem composed in Tamil around the fifth century CE that is today attributed to an author named Tiruvaḷḷuvar. The poem consists of 1,330 verses arranged into 133 chapters of 10 verses each, which are then divided into three thematic sections on "virtue" (*aṟam*), "wealth" (*poruḷ*), and "pleasure" (*iṉpam* or *kāmam*). This project focuses on two closely related questions about this text. First, what vision of human life does the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* articulate to its audiences? I argue that the poem imparts a vision of human life as marked by the inward cultivation of virtue accompanied by the outward expansion of human relationships, in which both of these processes mutually enrich and reinforce each other and culminate in the attainment of a complex and fulfilling marital life. This vision of human life is never described explicitly, but there are subtle literary

strategies operating throughout the text that tacitly convey this vision to the reader. At the same time, the text constantly destabilizes this vision of human life in order to illustrate that the path to attaining it is anything but simple and to invite the reader to grapple with the tension between that ideal and the reality of human life.

Second, how does the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* convey this vision to its audiences? I argue that the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* communicates its vision by working upon audiences at three different structural levels inherent to the text: the section (*pāl*), the chapter (*atikāram*), and the verse (*kuṟaḷ* or *pāṭam*). It is only by attending to all three levels together that we can fully understand what the *Tirukkuṟaḷ* is saying and how it operates as a work of literature to engage its audiences in specific modes of reflection on the nature of human life. These structural levels also provide the organizational framework for this dissertation, in which each chapter is dedicated to one of the three levels mentioned above: chapter 2 focuses on the text at the level of its sections, chapter 3 at the level of its chapters, and chapter 4 at the level of its verses.

<div align="right">Adviser: Professor Francis X. Clooney, S.J.</div>

◼ Peng Yin [PhD]

Persisting in the Good: Thomas Aquinas in Conversation with Early Chinese Ethics
This dissertation addresses the question, How do we persist in the good when the world's contingency, fortune, and evil are not hospitable to virtue? Drawing on the legacy of Matteo Ricci, I put Thomas Aquinas in dialogue with *Mencius*, Xunzi, and *Laozi* to address three related questions on ethical formation: 1) How does the claim about the existence of an innate moral capacity, conceived of as a divine endowment, serve as an antidote to counter the deleterious effects of evil on the moral life? 2) In cultivating virtue, what is the role of ritual, understood as a subjunctive space, to remedy the abject moral possibility outside it? And 3) How does one's fundamental cosmological disposition to the world shape one's attitude toward the good?

In this study I propose a corrective to the recent revival of virtue ethics through these texts. By highlighting their Aristotelian features and discarding their theological and cosmological contexts, virtue ethics risks attenuating the potency of the texts' full person-forming capacity for alternate modes of subjectivity. Thanks to their intense metaphysical speculation—often posited as an implicit frame beneath quite mundane-looking disputations, injunctions, aphorisms, anecdotes, verses, and ritual prescriptions—the texts as a whole, I submit, counsel a radical world transformation, as opposed to simply lifting up potentials latent within an already replete, coherent, and self-contained world. In the face of constitutional limits both in the self and the world, they appeal to a fuller, higher good to drastically reshape the patterns by which we pursue more quotidian goods.

<div align="right">Adviser: Mark D. Jordan</div>