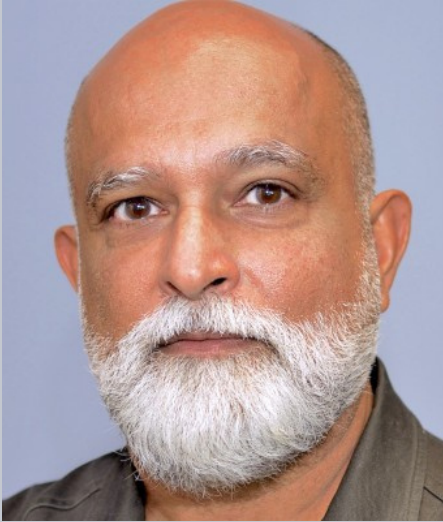




University
of Victoria

Centre for Studies in
Religion and Society

Distinguished Lecture in Islam



Zulfikar Hirji



Hidden Heritage: Decorated Qur'ans from Coastal East Africa

Between the 18th and 19th centuries local scribes and artists from coastal East Africa made highly decorated and beautifully written Qur'ans. War, dispersal, prejudice, decay, and neglect obscured the existence of these remarkable manuscripts and the histories of the Swahili Muslims who produced them. Drawing on more than two decades of research, this illustrated lecture brings to light this hidden heritage and considers its local and global significance.

Zulfikar Hirji is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at York University. His research explores the creative production of knowledge by Muslims in historical and contemporary contexts with a focus on East Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Image: Folios from first volume of a four-volume Qur'an copied by 'Abd al-Karīm b. 'Umar al-Nawfalī (d. 1857/8) in Faza, Pate Island. Collection of the Imam Nour Al Din Al-Salimi Library, Bidiya (Oman) (MS. AS:008). Open access at World Digital Library: <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021667312>

March 19, 2026
David Turpin A110
5:00–6:15 pm PT

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