

Anne H. Betteridge

Obituary

Michael E. Bonine: Professor of Geography and of Near Eastern Studies



Photograph by Mark Voss

Michael Edward Bonine passed away on 21 December 2011 in Tucson, Arizona at 69 years of age. From 1975 to 2011 he enjoyed a distinguished career as a faculty member at the University of Arizona, where he was Professor of Geography and Regional Development and Professor of Near Eastern Studies. Bonine brought the Middle East Studies Association national headquarters to the University of Arizona, and served as MESA's Executive Secretary from 1981 to 1989. He headed the Department of Near Eastern Studies from 2001 into 2011, and was founding director of the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies, established in July 2011. The arc of his career in many respects paralleled and encouraged the development of Middle Eastern Studies at the university.

Michael Bonine received his BA, MA and PhD degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, where he studied geography. Although he originally planned to do central place theorem research in three cities in Iran, he was counseled—perhaps by his advisor Paul W. English—to limit his research to one location. The fact that Michael Bonine's undergraduate roommate was from Yazd may well have influenced his decision to conduct doctoral research there from 1969 to 1971. Bonine and his

wife Marilyn drove to Iran from England in a Land Rover, in which he also traveled to Afghanistan. He returned to Iran two more times: in 1977 to do research on irrigation systems and settlement form and around 2000, apparently for the First International Symposium on Qanat, held in Yazd.

An active scholar, Bonine authored, co-authored, edited and co-edited numerous articles and books on cultural geography, urban geography, arid lands, and water resources. The range of his interests and expertise is evident in his many well-regarded publications. Among them, with particular attention to his writings on Iran, are *Yazd and Its Hinterland: A Central Place System of Dominance in the Central Iranian Plateau* (Marburg/Lahn, 1980), based on his dissertation research; "Where is the Geography of the Middle East?," *The Professional Geographer* 28, no. 2 (1976); "The Morphogenesis of Iranian Cities," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69, no. 2 (1979); *Continuity and Change in Modern Iran*, co-edited with N.R. Keddie (Albany, NY, 1981); *Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change*, co-edited with N.R. Keddie (Albany, NY, 1981), which included his article "Shops and Shopkeepers: Dynamics of an Iranian Provincial Bazaar"; "From Qanat to Kort: Traditional Irrigation Terminology and Practices in Central Iran," *Iran, Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 20 (1982); "Islam and Commerce: Waqf and the Bazaar of Yazd, Iran," *Erdkunde* 41, no. 3 (1987); *Qanat, Kariz and Khattara: Traditional Water Systems in the Middle East and North Africa*, co-edited with P. Beaumont, K.S. McLachlan, and A. McLachlan (London, 1989); "Qibla va Shahrsazi Islami" [The Qibla and Islamic City Planning], *Waqf, Mirath-e Javidan* 4, no. 1 (1375/1996); "Population, Poverty, and Politics in the Urban Middle East: An Overview," in a volume he edited: *Population, Poverty and Politics in Middle East Cities* (Gainesville, FL, 1997); "The Kurds and Kurdistan: A Commentary," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 43, no. 4 (2002); "Iran: The Pivotal State of Southwest Asia," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 44, no. 1 (2003); "Islamic Urbanism, Urbanites and the Middle Eastern City," in *Blackwell Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Y. Choueiri (London, 2005). Michael Bonine's last book, *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, was co-edited with Abbas Amanat and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (Stanford, CA, 2012) and includes Bonine's article "Of Maps and Regions: Where Is the Geographer's Middle East?"

Michael Bonine had a keen interest in the history of Iranian currency and developed an impressive personal collection of Iranian bank notes. His final publication, a monograph entitled "The Banknotes of the Imperial Bank of Persia: An Analysis of a Complex System," will be published posthumously by the American Numismatic Society.

Professor Bonine served the wider scholarly community through his preparation of annotated bibliographies: *Urbanization and City Structure in Contemporary Iran and Afghanistan: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* (Monticello, IL, 1975); and, with E. Ehlers, T. Krafft, and G. Stöber, *The Middle Eastern City and Islamic Urbanism: An Annotated Bibliography of Western Literature* (Bonn, 1994). His professional service extended to a number of scholarly organizations in addition to MESA.

From 1992 to 2011 he represented the University of Arizona as a Trustee of the American Institute of Iranian Studies, of which he was president in 1996–99. He was also active as a board member of the American Institute of Maghrib Studies (1985–88 and 2002–05) and of the American Institute of Yemeni Studies (1986–90 and 1993–97). Bonine was a founding member of the Middle East Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers, and served as president of the group in 2000–2002.

At the University of Arizona he taught a wide variety of courses, including Geography of the Middle East, The Middle Eastern City and Islamic Urbanism, History of the Iranian Plateau, The Arid and Semiarid Lands, Geography of the Middle East, and Middle Eastern Migration and Urbanization. Michael Bonine went to great lengths to assure that his many students had the advice and resources needed to succeed in their undergraduate and graduate studies.

Bonine's love of travel took him to over 120 countries, where he invariably indulged his penchant and talent for photography. His photos grace the walls of the University of Arizona School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS). He was eager to encourage others to experience the rewards of travel and, often with his colleague Donna Swaim, led study abroad trips for undergraduates and for teachers. It is particularly fitting that MENAS established the Michael E. Bonine Travel and Research Award in his honor; the awards support undergraduate educational travel to far-flung places and graduate student research abroad.

Michael E. Bonine was an exceptional scholar, colleague, mentor and friend. His life and work were celebrated at a large gathering of colleagues, students, friends, and family at the University of Arizona in January 2012 and at a MESA panel in November later that year. Michael Bonine is survived by the light of his life, his family: his wife Marilyn, his children Kevin and Kim and their spouses Angela and Eric, his grandchildren Fisher, Piper, Molly, and Summer, his brother Gary and sister Brenda, and his nephews Kuzi and Tiisai.

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