

Obituary In memory of Prof. Agostino Cilardo[†]

CARLO DE ANGELO, SERENA TOLINO

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Professor Agostino Cilardo, who died on July 15, 2017, after a struggle with pancreatic cancer, while we were completing this special issue, which is dedicated to his memory. He leaves behind a wife and three children.

Prof. Cilardo was born in San Prisco, in the province of Caserta, on August 19, 1947. His interest in Arabic and in Islamic studies started quite early in his life. In fact, he already knew Arabic when he begun studies at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. In 1974 he obtained his first MA degree in Political Science, with a thesis on one of the topics that would occupy his entire academic career, the origins of Islamic Law. The thesis was published in 1990 as *Teorie sulle origini del diritto islamico* (Theories on the Origins of Islamic Law, IPO – Istituto per l’Oriente “Carlo Alfonso Nallino”, Rome). In 1981 he obtained a second degree in Islamic Studies from the same university with the thesis: *Il diritto di famiglia in Egitto*, published in English as “The Evolution of the Muslim Family Law in Egypt,” in *Oriente Moderno*, 4-6 (1985): 67-124. Prof. Cilardo’s intellectual curiosity and constant search for knowledge led him to pursue a four-year course of theology at the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences of Capua (Caserta), which he successfully completed in 1993.

He has become particularly well-known and appreciated for his research on the Islamic law of inheritance, with his comprehensive publications *Diritto ereditario islamico delle scuole giuridiche ismailita e imamita*, published in 1993, and *Diritto ereditario islamico delle scuole giuridiche sunnite (hanafita, malikita, shafi’ita e hanbalita) e delle scuole giuridiche zaydita, zahirita e ibadita*, published in 1994. In all, Prof. Cilardo published 7 books, 20 articles in academic magazines, 24 articles in congress proceedings, 16 book chapters, and 14 entries in various encyclopedias; he has also edited 14 volumes and written an introduction to a book, 3 review articles and 17 reviews.

Prof. Cilardo was an educator for more than forty years. At the beginning of his academic career he worked as a lecturer at the University of Bari and at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, teaching both Arabic language and Islamic law. In 1994 he was appointed Associate Professor of “Storia e Istituzioni del mondo musulmano” (History and Institutions of the Islamic World) and of “Diritto musulmano e dei Paesi islamici” (Islamic Law and Law of the Islamic Countries). In 2005 he became full Professor at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. During his time there his diligence and devotion to the institution earned him the post of Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, in 2006. He later became Coordinator of the PhD programme on ‘Studies on the Near East and Maghreb:

Cultural Specificities and Intercultural Relations’ and also of the PhD programme on “Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean.”

It is at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” that we met him. He was our professor during our entire academic career. We attended hundreds of hours of his lessons, during which he instilled in us the love for Islamic Law.

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Prof. Cilardo was Carlo’s supervisor for both his MA and PhD thesis. Carlo felt particularly honoured when Prof. Cilardo chose him to be his assistant. They worked together for sixteen years; a unique experience from a personal, and professional/scientific point of view. To Carlo, Prof. Cilardo is not only the person who transmitted the passion for Islamic law, but also an example of correctness and intellectual honesty.

As regards Serena, Prof. Cilardo was her supervisor for her BA, MA, and PhD thesis. Serena still recalls when she asked him to supervise her BA thesis. Being overwhelmed with many BA and MA theses, he seemed reluctant to follow her research at the beginning. But he rapidly changed his mind when he saw how interested she was in Islamic Law.

In 2003 Prof. Cilardo became general Editor of *Studi Magrebini*; in 2011 the general editor of the book series *Arab-Islamic Culture* (Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Naples); and in 2016 he was elected vice-president of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants.

An expert in the Arabic language, he always encouraged his students to spend long periods of time in the Arab world because he considered mastering Arabic a priority for any scholar of Islamic Studies.

He spent extensive periods in different Arab countries, and especially in Egypt, where his mission was to trace materials difficult to access, for his work, a mission whose success was possible only because of his passion for Islamic law. Indeed, one of the things he used to remind us was how much digitalization has changed research, and how difficult it was for him to have access to original sources when he started studying Islamic law.

A lover of classical music and the opera, he was a supporter of intercultural exchanges between people of diverse cultures and of interreligious dialogue. His premature death did not allow him to conclude the impressive number of projects he was working on, projects to which he would have devoted all his time and efforts after his retirement, scheduled for November 2017.

We will miss him not only for his impressive knowledge, his love of knowledge in general and the love of Islamic Law he instilled in us, but also for his humanity, his discretion, and his honesty.