



International conference on Science in Muslim Societies: Past and Present

The Centre, jointly with the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, held an international conference on 'Science in Muslim Societies: Past and Present' at Ditchley Park in May 2012.



Participants during the conference at Ditchley

The discussion addressed three key areas of scientific thought in Muslim societies: historical achieve-

ments during the 'Golden Age' of science; the philosophical and ethical basis of science in Islam' and the state of science in contemporary Muslim societies. A number of important recommendations were made to encourage progress in scientific research and innovation for the future.

The Conference was attended by over forty participants. It was opened by HRH Raja Zarith Sofiah Idris, Chancellor, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The speakers and the chairs of plenary sessions and working groups included Dr Adnan A. Shihab-Eldin (Director-General, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science), Professor Dato' Zaini Ujang (Vice Chancellor, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia), Professor David Clary FRS, (Chief Scientific Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Professor Roger Davies (President of the Royal Astronomical Society) and Sir Crispin Tickell (Former UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations).

Seminars on Islam in Europe

The Centre held a series of seminars on 'Islam in Europe' during Hilary Term. The series addressed the perceptions of Muslims in Europe and the issues and responses that are generated. Various speakers elaborated on the difficulties of observing and reporting interactions between faith, reason and religion. In an officially secular public sphere it is by no means easy to establish a stable and level space in which those interactions can take place to the benefit of all. The danger is that exposure to others can give rise to suspicion and hostility as well as mutual respect and tolerance.

Seminar speakers included Professor Jørgan S. Nielsen (University of Copenhagen) on 'In Europe, who is Muslim?'; Professor Jonathan Githens-Mazer (University of Exeter) on 'Thinking beyond Radicalisation and Extremism: Disaggregating Security and Islam in Europe'; Professor Leif Stenborg (Lund University, Sweden) on 'Muslims in Sweden'; and Professor Ayhan Kaya (Istanbul Bilgi University) on 'Islam-

phobia as a Form of Governmentality: Unbearable Weightiness of the Politics of Fear'; Professor June Edmunds (University of Cambridge) on 'Have human rights failed European Muslims?'; Dr Sara Silvestri (City University, London) on 'Europe's Muslim



*Kiswa donated to the Centre by
Tan Sri Rashid Hussain*

Women: Beyond the Burqa Controversy'; and Professor Mary Hickman (London Metropolitan University) 'On Being 'Suspect': The impact on Irish Communities and Muslim Communities in Britain 1974-2007'.

Visitors to the Centre

Chairman of the Equality Commission

Mr Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, visited the Centre on 27 March. He was briefed on the Centre's outreach and scholarship programmes, promoting wider access to Oxford.

Principal Private Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales

Mr William Nye, Principal Private Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall visited the Centre on 2 April. Mr Nye has accepted an invitation to join the Centre's Strategy Advisory Committee.

Former Lord Chief Justice

Lord Woolf discussed academic projects of the Centre with senior academics in the field of law at a lunch hosted in his honour by the Director. He later visited the Centre's new building.

Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

The Centre welcomed Mr Simon Fraser, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, on 12 April. Among the subjects discussed was the continued success of the Chevening Visiting Fellowship scheme.

President of United Nations General Assembly lectures on United Nations and Global Challenges

On 1st March, HE Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al Nasser, President of the Sixty-Sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, visited the Centre and lectured on 'Global Challenges and the role of the UN at the dawn of the 21st Century'. Drawing on his long experience as a diplomat, culminating in his current appointment, Ambassador Al Nasser offered his reflections on the complex challenges facing the United Nations, and on the role of the General Assembly, the only body in which all UN member states are represented. He emphasised the importance of international action to prevent and resolve con-

flict, and to meet humanitarian needs across the world, calling on all member states to support fully the vital work of the United Nations. In discussion he commented on a range of issues that the UN currently faces including the need of reform.



HE Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al Nasser speaking at the Examination Schools

International Contacts

Bosnia



The Rector of University of Sarajevo with the Director after signing the Memorandum of Understanding

On 1 February the Rector of the University of Sarajevo visited the Centre. Accompanying Professor Faruk Caklovica were the Dean of Islamic Studies, Professor Ismet Busatlic, and the University Librarian (and former OCIS scholar) Mr Asim Zubcevic. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed as the basis for strengthened academic cooperation between the Centre and Sarajevo University.

Malaysia

The Centre hosted a delegation led by the Crown Prince of Perlis, HRH Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Universiti Malaysia Perlis as the basis for a range of co-operative research and teaching activities.



The Crown Prince of Perlis and the Vice Chancellor of UniMAP with the Director

India

The Centre was happy to receive two senior visitors from India. Dr Jaimini Bhagwati (seen here signing the visitors book), the recently appointed Indian High Commissioner to the UK, visited the new building where he was received by the Director.



Mr Suresh Goel

The Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Dr Suresh Goel, had previously visited Oxford to explore ways to co-operate with Centre activities and projects.

Brunei

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Brunei, Dato Dr Zulkarnain Hanafi, and the Assistant Vice Chancellor, Dr Anita Abdul Aziz, visited Oxford to discuss opportunities for future collaboration between the Centre and the University of Brunei Darussalam. A number of proposals were considered, including joint research, teaching and publication projects, visiting fellowships and scholarships for Bruneian nationals studying at the University of Oxford.

President of Andrew W. Mellon Foundation speaks about Challenges Facing Higher Education

On 6th March, the Centre hosted a lecture at the Examination Schools by the President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Dr Don Randel, on 'Higher Education in a World of Inequality and Conflict'. Dr Randel spoke on the importance of a broad university curriculum and cautioned that learning should not be driven solely by market forces. He gave several striking examples of trends in the United States. He argued that non-vocational studies should be especially encouraged, and support provided to attract students of all financial backgrounds.

Dr Randel explained the need for investment in the intellectual life of a society to enable both economic advantage and fairer communities with richer, more open cultural attitudes. He expressed his disappointment that repeated funding

cuts were threatening education in the humanities, resulting in a situation where undergraduates were not offered the same opportunities to understand the languages and cultures of other parts of the world as they once had. He argued that this was both intellectually regressive and could possibly damage global development.



Dr Don Randel at the Examination Schools

New Scholars to join the Centre

The Centre received 85 applications for Visiting Fellowships and 93 applications for Visiting Research Fellowships for the academic year 2012-13. The following appointments were made:

Professor Ron Geaves, currently Professor of the Comparative Study of Religion at Liverpool Hope University; Dr Ousman Kobo, Assistant Professor of African History at Ohio State University; Professor Siham Al-Fraih, Professor of Arabic

Language and Literature, Kuwait University; Dr Degang Sun, Senior Researcher at Shanghai International Studies University; Mr Murat Umut Inan from University of Washington; Dr Abdillah Noh, Lecturer at the University of Malaya; Ms Kathrina Binti Dato Paduka Mohammad Daud, Universiti Brunei; Dr Norhazlin Muhammad, Lecturer at Universiti Brunei; and Mr Haekal Talib bin Abdul Talib, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Graduate Colloquium

A Graduate Colloquium was held in February with postgraduate students presenting their research to an audience of their peers and Centre Fellows. The following presentations were made: Khair Othman (Wolfson), "Image analysis of early life"; Aaron Michka (Campion Hall), "Bridewealth in contemporary Egypt"; Tania Saeed (St. Antony's), "Islamophobia? The narratives of Pakistani and British Pakistani female students in universities in England"; Pegah Zohouri Haghi-an (St. Antony's), "Interaction between

reformist Muslim intellectuals and the Western-European media (1989-2009): the British case"; Thomas Gilligan (Worcester), "Teaching Islam in Schools"; Emanuel Schaeublin (Lincoln), "Anthropology of Zakat"; Laurence Deschamps-Laporte (Magdalen), "Islam, Fertility and the Marabouts"; Melanie Sindelar (Linacre), "An anthropology of oil in Muslim societies"; Yasser Bhatti (Said Business School), "Frugal Innovation: When doing less is new"; Shireen Walton (St. Antony's), "Persian Letters' re-envisioned".

Visiting Fellows Research Roundtable

This final Fellows' Seminar took the form of a Visiting Fellows' Research Roundtable. It gave Members of the Common Room an opportunity to hear and discuss the on-going research of the Centre's current Visiting Fellows.

Presentations were made by Dr Mehrdad Fallahzadeh (Uppsala University, Sweden) on 'A new critical edition of *The Gift from India (Tuhfat al-Hind)*'; Dr Mohd Asri Zainal Abidin (Associate Professor, University of Science Malaysia) on 'The importance of *ijtihad* for discovering *sabab wurud* in order to understand jurisprudential hadiths'; and Dr Muhammad Arshad (University of Pennsylvania) on 'Response of the Ulema to the English language in South Asia, 1803-2002'.

Scholarships

For the academic year 2012-13, 485 post-graduate applications for the OCIS-Oxford Scholarships scholarships were submitted to the University. Of those applicants, 88 were offered a place by a department and therefore eligible for consideration for the Scholarships.

Interviews for further postgraduate and undergraduate awards are scheduled for July. Two Khazanah -OCIS 'Merdeka' Scholarships (for Malaysian students) were awarded after interviews in Kuala Lumpur in March.

The latest issue of the *Journal of Islamic Studies* contains articles by Yasin Dutton on “Orality, Literacy and the *Seven Ahruf* in Hadith”; C. Jonn Block on “Philoponian mono-physisitism in South Arabia at the advent of Islam with implications for the English Translation of *Thalatha* in Qur’an 4.171 and 5.73”; and Nabil Matar’s ‘Note on Alexander Ross and the English translation of the Qur’an’. The issue also contains 18 book reviews of some of the most recent publications about Islam and the Muslim World.

Chairman of the Indonesian House of Representatives Mr Irman Gusman visits the Centre

On 10th April Centre welcomed HE Mr Irman Gusman, the President of the Indonesian House of Regional Representatives. He had been briefed by the Director on the Centre’s activities during a visit to Jakarta and decided to include Oxford on a subsequent visit to the UK to see something of the Centre’s work for himself. A tour of the new building afforded an opportunity to see the progress being made in its construction, but also to discuss the thinking behind its architecture, and how the Centre’s work is developing within the wider pattern of academic activities at Oxford.

Back at the Centre’s current premises His Excellency was able to discuss the Centre’s aims and objectives in more detail, to interact with Centre Fellows and staff, and to assess the potential for enhanced cooperation with Indonesian academic institu-



Mr Irman Gusman and the Director viewing the exhibition at the New Building

tions. It was clear that there was a mutual determination to ensure that Indonesia plays its full part in the work of the Centre, a part commensurate with its importance in Islamic culture and civilisation, and its contemporary role in regional and international affairs. The visit concluded with a lunch hosted in His Excellency’s honour.