



Sir John Major opens

Centre Exhibition in the House of Commons



Sir John Major (with the Director) visits the Centre's exhibition at the House of Commons

The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies mounted an exhibition in the House of Commons in the last week of February to update and brief parliamentarians on its wide-ranging programme of academic activities. Members of both Houses and all parties visited the exhibition, which

was in place for a week. Centre staff were on hand to answer questions and take visitors through the exhibition. A brochure was prepared for the occasion with an account of the Centre's academic activities.

The exhibition was inaugurated on Monday 24 February by the former British Prime Minister, Sir John Major KG CH, who also serves on the Centre's Strategy Advisory Committee. In his speech Sir John highlighted the importance of the Centre's work in spreading knowledge about Islamic culture and civilisation. He urged renewed effort to promote dialogue between cultures and stressed the need to work to resolve prejudice and misunderstanding.

Guests at the inauguration included Rt Hon Alan Duncan MP, Minister of State at the Department for International Development, Rt Hon Andrew Smith, member of Parliament for Oxford East, the former Bishop of Oxford, Rt Revd Richard Harries, as well as diplomats and others who have supported and participated in the Centre's work.

Remembering Nelson Mandela

Ahmed Kathrada speaks on Nelson Mandela's Legacy

In February the Centre held a special screening of Nelson Mandela's 1997 lecture "Renewal and Renaissance: Towards a New World Order" at the Grove auditorium, Magdalen College. The screening was introduced by the Centre's Nelson Mandela Fellow, Dr Basil Mustafa.



Mr Mandela lectures in 1997

Lord MacDonal, Warden of Wadham College; Rt Hon Andrew Smith MP; and Mr Anthony Smith, President Emeritus of Magdalen College also spoke. The film of President Mandela's 1997 lecture was then watched by an appreciative audience.

The lecture was also screened as part of the Oxford Literary Festival in March, in the

Sheldonian Theatre (the venue of the 1997 lecture). The screening was introduced by the Director of the Centre and the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela were later discussed by Mr Ahmed

Kathrada, a prominent anti-apartheid activist, who shared a prison cell with him for more than 20 years, and Mr Alec Russell, news editor of the Financial Times and author of the book *After Mandela: The Battle for the Soul of South Africa*. The screening was a popular feature of the Literary Festival, an annual event of growing importance in the Oxford calendar.



Mr Ahmed Kathrada and Mr Alec Russell discussed the legacy of Nelson Mandela

Atlas Project Appointments

In Hilary Term 2014, two Junior Research Fellows joined the Atlas Project Team at the Centre. Dr Fouzia Farooq (from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad) and Ms Megan Robb (who completed her DPhil and MPhil in South Asian Studies at the University of Oxford).

They join Dr Moin Nizami (Senior Research Fellow) and Ms Grace Fussell (Designer) as part of the Atlas Team working on bringing the project to a conclusion.

Fellow in Medieval Islamic History

The Centre has appointed Dr George E. Malagaris (DPhil, MPhil Columbia University, New York) as Research Fellow in Medieval Islamic History.

Dr Malagaris will be working on a project focussed on the preparation and analysis of a catalogue of manuscripts dealing with the life and works of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni.

Appointment of Centre's Imam

The Centre has appointed Maulana Ibrahim Amin Gajara as Imam. He took up the post in January 2014.

Maulana Ibrahim will oversee the running of the Centre's mosque and will address the needs of the congregation.

Rt Hon Baroness Warsi speaks on Issues and Challenges Facing Faith Communities and Others in the UK

On Thursday 6 March the Centre hosted a visit to Oxford by the Rt Hon Baroness Warsi, Minister for Faith and Communities, and Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Baroness Warsi addressed an invited audience of academics, students and the wider community in Oxford on a range of issues and challenges facing faith communities and others in the UK. This was followed by a lively question and answer session lasting more than an hour and chaired by the

Centre's Director, Dr Farhan Nizami.

Themes included the balance between integration and respect for specific ethnic and religious traditions and considerations relating to education, social cohesion, encouraging dialogue and cooperation between faith groups.



Rt Hon Baroness Warsi

Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers speaks on The Elastic Jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights

Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, former President of the UK Supreme Court, delivered a lecture on 12 February 2014 on "The Elastic Jurisdiction of the



Lord Phillips

European Court of Human Rights" in the Examination Schools. Lord Phillips, the inaugural Sultan Azlan Shah Fellow, was

introduced by the Director. Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Principal of Mansfield College, gave the vote of thanks and hosted a dinner at Mansfield College, also attended by HRH Raja Dr Nazrin Shah.

This was the first in a series of lectures which Lord Phillips will be giving as Sultan Azlan Shah Fellow. Since assuming the fellowship, he has also been granted a visiting Professorship at the University of Oxford. This is the Centre's first senior appointment in law.

Sir John Jenkins speaks on Saudi Arabia and its Neighbours

Sir John Jenkins, British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, gave a well-attended seminar on 28 February 2014 on "Saudi Arabia and its Neighbours" in the Examination Schools. The seminar was introduced by Mr Richard Makepeace, the Centre's Registrar, and a vote of thanks was given by Sir Alan Munro, former Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sir John spoke of the progress of internal reform and also the challenges which Saudi

Arabia was facing at the regional and international levels, not least because of the wave of change and upheaval in many Arab countries.

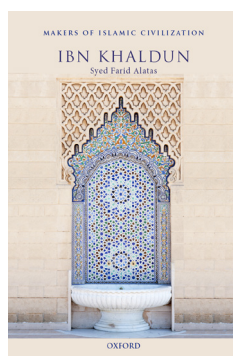
He underlined the importance of Saudi Arabia's role in the region and internationally as well as stressing its significance bilaterally for the UK.



Sir John Jenkins

Two volumes published in the *Makers of Islamic Civilisation Series*

Two new volumes in the *Makers of Islamic Civilisation* series have been published by



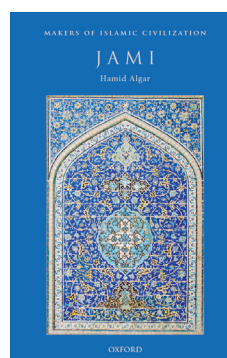
Oxford University Press. The first is a study of Ibn Khaldun by Dr Syed Farid Alatas, Associate Professor at NUS, Singapore.

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) founded

the science of human society, and a new methodology for writing history. He emphasised the need to understand the causes of events. His ideas had initially little impact on the development of Muslim thought but they hugely impressed European thinkers from the nineteenth century on – some of them proclaimed Ibn Khaldun a progenitor of sociology and modern historiography.

The second volume is a study of *Jami* by Dr Hamid Algar, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley.

‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414–1492) is a towering figure in Perso-Islamic culture, whose reputation and influence have endured undiminished throughout the eastern Islamic world. Primarily celebrated as a poet, Jami was also an accomplished Islamic scholar and Arabist, a Sufi of great standing, and an acerbic polemicist and social critic. He was most closely associated with the Timurid dynasty; but his international renown made him a favourite also of other political powers of the time.



Dr Atiku Abubakar Visits the Centre

The former Vice-President of Nigeria, Dr Atiku Abubakar, visited the Centre in October. After a tour of the New Building, discussion over lunch covered a range of issues including the role of Islam in the history of West Africa, the current political climate in the region, and the state of educational institutions in Nigeria.

Merdeka Scholarships

The Centre renewed its Merdeka Scholarship agreement with Yayasan Khazanah (a foundation established by Khazanah Nasional Berhad in Malaysia) for another five years.

The Khazanah-OCIS Merdeka Scholarship Programme supports up to five full scholarships per year for Malaysian graduate students studying for degrees at the University of Oxford.

The Centre hosted a visit from the foundation in March to discuss the programme and the welfare of the 12 Merdeka scholars in residence in Oxford during academic year 2013/14.

The programme continues to attract outstanding applicants to the University of Oxford, to the benefit of Malaysia and of academic life in Oxford and at the Centre.

Seminars: Introducing Islamic Manuscripts

The Centre's regular weekly seminar series this Hilary Term was organised in partnership with the University's Oriental Institute and designed to provide an accessible introduction to issues surrounding working with and researching into Islamic manuscripts. The topic proved of interest to specialists and non-specialists alike and attracted large audiences.

The series began with an assessment of the specificities of working with Islamic manuscripts, introduced by Professor Jan Just Witkam (Leiden). Dr Muhammad Isa Waley, (British Library), took the discussion on to illuminate the challenges of navigating collections and their catalogues. Subsequent seminars examined materials and technologies, with Ms Evyn Kropf (Michigan), Arabic

Papyrology with Dr Marie Legendre (Oxford) and Dr Lucien Feinfandt (Universität Wien) and Ornamentation and Illumination with Professor Anna Contadini (SOAS). The final sessions addressed transmission history, with Dr Konrad Hirschler (SOAS) and Manuscript Production and Culture, with Professor Francois Déroche (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris).



Professor Wadad Kadi (Chicago) and Dr Judith Pfeiffer (Oxford) rounded off a highly successful series with a joint presentation on the Challenges of Editing Medieval Manuscripts of various periods and languages – and a challenge

to the audience to take their interest further and try their own hand at editing Islamic manuscripts.

The latest issue of the Journal of Islamic Studies includes articles by Ayman Shabana on *Islamic Law of Paternity between Classical Legal Texts and Modern Contexts*; and by Jacob Høigilt and Frida Nome on *Egyptian Salafism in Revolution*.

The issue also contains 19 book reviews, providing scholarly evaluation of some of the most important recent publications on a variety of topics related to different aspects of Muslim culture and civilisation and the contemporary Muslim world.

5th OCIS - SC Roundtable

Endowments and Human Development

The Fifth Securities Commission Malaysia-OCIS Roundtable on Islamic Finance took place in Kuala Lumpur on 22-23 March 2014. More than seventy international delegates were welcomed to the event by Datuk Ranjit Ajit Singh, Chairman of the Securities Commission, and by the Director of the Centre.

The keynote address was delivered by HRH Raja Dr Nazrin Shah, Financial Ambassador of the Malaysian International Islamic Financial Centre, who was also the guest of honor at the gala dinner for delegates and senior invited guests.

The theme of this year's discussion was the issue of Islamic endowments (*waqf*)



HRH Raja Dr Nazrin Shah on stage with Datuk Ranjit Singh and Dr Farhan Nizami

and delegates discussed the challenge of managing endowments in accordance with Islamic law and the wishes of the benefactors, but also in ways which maximised the benefit to, and reflected the needs of, modern Muslim societies.

New website and Facebook launch

The Centre has launched a new website and Facebook page. With enhanced functionality and a clean modern look the website and Facebook page will

help to promote the Centre's academic and outreach activities and develop relationships around the world. Visit www.oxcis.ac.uk for more information.