



Imagining the future:

Climate change, health and food security in Muslim societies

Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the impacts of climate change on Muslim societies. The Centre's 'Public Health, Science and Technology' project organized a Science Roundtable in partnership with the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) to motivate the global community to imagine a more climate-resilient future for the Muslim world. The Roundtable was attended by around 50 participants from the UK, Malaysia and worldwide. As well as the private sector, the participants included academics and policymakers, and representatives of prominent organizations such as the World Health Organization, The Wellcome Trust and Nature Publishing. In the inaugural address, HM The Queen of Johor and Chancellor of UTM, outlined the very severe challenges facing humanity. She urged all parties to move beyond rhetoric and translate concepts and general policy goals into practical steps to adapt to, and to mitigate the effects of climate change. In the plenary session, key leaders in the field from the UK and Malaysia addressed historical, societal, ethical, technological and communications aspects of the issues. The roundtable sessions addressed



HM The Queen of Johor with conference participants

three main areas – technology and ethics, health, and food security. In the final session, The Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change, Malaysia, reviewed his government's policies and commitment to the necessary adaptation and mitigation policies. This session also recapitulated the discussions and summarized the steps ahead.

The Azlan Shah Lecture:

Islamic finance in English law: a level playing field?



Lord Briggs of Westbourne

overseas financial transactions. Lord Briggs acknowledged the inherent synergies between Shariah, a set of principles

In April Lord Briggs of Westbourne, Justice of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, gave a lecture under the title 'Islamic finance in English law: a level playing field?' He argued that there are two key reasons why the UK values Islamic finance: the principle of respecting people of faith and the role of Islamic finance in mediating

rather than a uniform legal system, and UK law, specifically highlighting the common law principle of equity. He outlined particular areas of alignment – provisions against market manipulation, anti-competitive practices, misrepresentation, deceit, and concealment – while recognizing that the Shariah encompasses elements beyond English common law, such as the former's prohibition of gambling.

The flexibility of English law enabled parties to incorporate Shariah terms into the contracts it governed, the lecturer explained. He provided examples of measures undertaken in England to support Islamic finance, such as equitable treatment regarding Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT). In conclusion, Lord Briggs underscored the coexistence of Islamic and conventional finance within the framework of English law, affirming the compatibility of legal principles under the two systems alongside their distinctiveness.

Visiting Fellows

Visiting Fellowships reflect the Centre's thriving collaboration with scholars from states and institutions across the world.

Initiated in 1994, this programme has since become the largest of its kind in Oxford. Over the years the Centre has welcomed 300 scholars to pursue their research in advanced study of Islam and Muslim societies in global context. They have enriched the Centre with experiences and perspectives that reflect the diversity of their background and disciplinary traditions. 30 Visiting Fellows are expected during 2023/24. They are from over 20 home countries (7 of them EU), with several coming from Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt, Jordan, USA and Uzbekistan.

The Centre very much looks forward to their work on richly diverse research fields from classical Islamic sciences to modern social and life sciences, from pragmatic, applied studies (finance and economics, sustainability and environment, the arts) to more conceptual faith-oriented and cultural themes including mysticism in Islam, Qu'ran interpretation, and comparative studies such as British perspectives on Shariah.

International contacts

Iraq

In May the Centre received the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Iraq, His Excellency Dr. Nadeem Al-Aboudi, who had expressed interest in learning more about the Centre's activities and expertise. The delegation from Iraq included the Deputy Minister for Scientific Affairs, the Presidents of the Universities of Baghdad and Anbar, the Dean of Al Nahrain University, and the Iraq Cultural Counsellor. After touring the academic facilities, the Minister expressed his delight in visiting such an important and ambitious institution, and his desire to enable collaborations with Iraqi higher education institutions in the future.

Turkey

In March the Centre welcomed Professor Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the former Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Co-operation, and internationally renowned scholar of the history of science in Islam, at a lunch in his honour. He is a well-known academic, diplomat, and politician, whose advocacy of intercultural dialogue and co-operation is widely respected.



Professor İhsanoğlu

Establishment of the King Faisal Lecture Series



Dr. Abdulaziz Alsebaile

Dr. Abdulaziz Alsebaile, formerly Saudi Arabia's Minister of Culture and now Secretary-General of the King Faisal Prize, visited the Centre to formalize establishment of a regular series of King Faisal Lectures at the Centre. An MOU was signed to that effect. The series will feature lectures from recipients of the King Faisal

Prize. There are five prize categories (Service to Islam, Islamic Studies, Arabic Language and Literature, Medicine, and Science) awarded each year to honour scholars and scientists whose work has contributed significantly to advancing knowledge in these fields for the benefit of all humanity.

The inaugural lecture will be held on Wednesday, 1 November at 5 pm and will feature the art historian Professor Robert Hillenbrand, winner of this year's King Faisal Islamic Prize. He will speak on 'The significance of the dome in Islamic architecture'.

Collaboration with Sarawak Launch of the Sarawak sabbatical programme



Premier of Sarawak with the Director

On 8 May, the Centre had the honour of welcoming HE Tan Sri (Dr.) Abang Abdul Rahman Zohari bin Tun Abang Haji Openg, Premier of Sarawak, and accompanying delegation, to

launch the Sarawak sabbatical programme, the Centre's collaboration with Sarawak. The Ministers of State in the delegation expressed interest in the potential of Centre Fellows' expertise to inform particular projects. They and senior members of the Centre discussed adapting and expanding the Special Sabbatical Programme and developing a short programme for senior civil servants, from a range of ministries including education, science, technology, economy, and culture.

ICG President lectures on East Africa Negotiating violent terrain



Dr. Comfort Ero

the Sahel and Somalia'. She highlighted the limits of military-led counter-insurgency

On 7 June 2023, Dr. Comfort Ero, President of the International Crisis Group, gave the Centre's annual Keith Griffin Lecture. For her presentation, Dr. Ero chose the title 'Negotiating violent terrain: political engagement in

campaigns in conflict zones and emphasized the need to address deep-seated grievances and to foster political engagement with the insurgents. Focusing on the conflicts in the Sahel and Somalia in Africa, she argued that while counter-insurgency efforts may well have succeeded in curtailing some insurgent groups' capacity, military means alone are unlikely to resolve these conflicts. There should be a broader strategy of engagement that provides for renegotiation of the social contract and the taking of concrete steps to attend to local grievances and the need for social inclusion. The lecture was followed by an extended engagement with the audience.

Former Indonesian Foreign Minister lectures on ASEAN and geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific

Former Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Dr. Marty Natalegawa, gave a lecture on 'ASEAN: navigating geopolitical turbulence in the Indo-Pacific'.

Dr. Natalegawa described the essential diplomatic role the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plays for its twelve member states as a consensus-based hub for dialogue and communication. ASEAN is vital to maintaining political stability in the region, particularly during periods of increased tensions between the global superpowers. As

a regional collective the ASEAN grouping enables its member states to work effectively to achieve security goals. By standing together, they have managed regional and extra-regional interests so as to sustain their non-aligned stance.



Dr Marty Natalegawa

Curating the past - Crafting medieval Spain: the Torrijos ceiling



Dr. Mariam Rosser-Owen

Torrijos ceiling in the Victoria & Albert Museum'. Dr. Rosser-Owen is an expert on the material culture of the

On 5 June, Dr. Mariam Rosser-Owen, Curator for the Middle East Collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, delivered the Library Lecture titled 'Crafting

medieval Spain: the

medieval Mediterranean, and especially that of al-Andalus and the Maghreb. In her lecture she explained the V&A's ongoing interdisciplinary project focusing on four monumental wooden ceilings, dating to the 1490s, from the lost Gothic-Mudéjar style Torrijos palace, near Toledo.

Besides addressing issues of display, conservation and restoration, Dr. Rosser-Owen explained how Islamic techniques were adapted to Gothic taste and also how artistic heritage came to be dispersed in the 1900s.

Digital humanities

Professor Dominik Lengyel (Brandenburg University of Technology) led a seminar on 2 May, 'The visualization of archaeological hypotheses with digital technologies: an architectural view on Islamic and other heritage'. Professor Lengyel discussed the challenge of how visual representations often fail to reflect the state of science or the core intent of architectural design. The intent of design may be much better conveyed by a proper imaging of selected elements, alongside explanatory text.

Journal of Islamic Studies

Issue 34 Number 2, May 2023

This issue carried 17 book reviews and the following articles:

Kamal Gasimov

Muslim saints contested: Ibn Taymiyya's critique on Qāsim al-Qushayrī's Risāla;

Alexander Thurston

Clerical independence and the religious field in post-colonial Mauritania.

Issue 34 Number 3, September 2023

The latest issue of the JIS carried 15 book reviews and the following articles:

Samy Ayoub

Creativity in continuity: legal treatises in Islamic law;

Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz and Godefroid de Callataÿ
Following the steps of the Ikhwān al-Safā' in the Ottoman world;

Yousef Casewit and

Sam Jaffe

The Blessed Tree in the works of Ibn Barrajān of Seville.

Recognition for Centre Fellow

Dr. Muhammad Meki, the Centre's Sultan Hassan al-Bukhari Fellow in Islamic Finance has recently been appointed Associate Professor at the Oxford Department of International Development. His research focuses on the effect, on micro-enterprises in developing countries, of equity-like microfinance contracts. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Pakistan, in Kenya and in Bangladesh.



Professor Muhammad Meki

Senior diplomat appointed Centre's Registrar



Mr. Jon Wilks

After a long and illustrious career in the diplomatic service, Jonathan Wilks CMG has been appointed as the Centre's Registrar. He will assume office at the start of 2024. Mr. Wilks, who is fluent in Arabic, has been connected to the Middle East since the beginning of his career at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, when he was appointed as Assistant Desk Officer Iran. He has represented the UK as Ambassador to Yemen (2010–2011), Sultanate of Oman (2014–2017), and the Republic of Iraq (2017–2019). He was also the UK Syria Envoy (2012–2014). His most recent appointment was as British Ambassador to Qatar (2020–2023).

New Fellow to lead research on Islam and Environment

Professor Adil Najam has been appointed to the Mahathir Mohamad Visiting Fellowship at the Centre. Professor Najam – President of WWF International, and Professor of



Professor Adil Najam

International Relations and of Earth and Environment at Boston University – was a co-author for the Third and Fourth Assessments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). His research has focused on issues of global public policy (especially as related to climate change, South Asia, Muslim countries), environment and conservation, and human development. Professor Najam will be pursuing his work on Islam and the environment in an expansion of the existing PHST project.

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