



OCISNEWS

OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

The Duke of York Visits the Centre

HRH Prince Andrew, The Duke of York, visited the Centre in Trinity Term. He was received by the Director and given a tour of the Centre's New Building. The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, the Sheriff, the Lord Mayor and other dignitaries from the City and the County of Oxford and senior members of the University were also present for the visit. Prince Andrew viewed an exhibition of the work of the Centre and was given a briefing on its current activities. He expressed his admiration for the design and quality of construction of the new building. Upon completion the new building will provide teaching, research, accommodation, library and exhibition facilities for a residential academic community. Among its features is a garden designed by the Patron of the Centre, HRH The Prince of Wales.

As the UK Special Representative for International Trade and Investment, Prince Andrew welcomed the Centre's role as a global meeting-point for academic cooperation between the Muslim and Western worlds and encouraged it to pursue such a role within the international business community.



HRH The Duke of York with the Director

Islam and Europe

As part of the Centre's Distinguished Speaker series, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, lectured on 'Islam, an integral part of European identity'. The



The Secretary General of the OIC, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu

lecture was organized in association with the European Studies Centre at St. Antony's College, and attracted a capacity audience in the University Examination Schools. Professor Ihsanoglu emphasized that there had been an Islamic presence in Europe for centuries and that, for this reason alone, Islam was part of

the European identity. Historical encounters between different faiths in Europe did provide examples of co-existence and mutual toleration, as well as of conflict and intolerance. The Muslim presence in contemporary Europe was therefore of particular significance at a time when the achievement of greater dialogue and understanding between peoples of different cultural backgrounds was of such importance to the wider community. The Secretary-General was hopeful that such dialogue could achieve that peaceful co-existence desired by those of all faiths, and lead to the realization of that human diversity which should be celebrated as part of God's design for mankind. Professor Ihsanoglu subsequently responded to a variety of questions and the appreciation of the audience was expressed in a vote of thanks by Sir Marrack Goulding, former Warden of St. Antony's College. Before attending a dinner in his honour Professor Ihsanoglu was conducted on a tour of the new building by the Director.

Visiting Fellows

Professor Lai Olurode, Professor of Sociology at the University of Lagos, undertook research into the role of madrasahs in Africa. Professor Olurode is a former Ford Foundation scholar, who has written and published extensively on Islam in Africa.

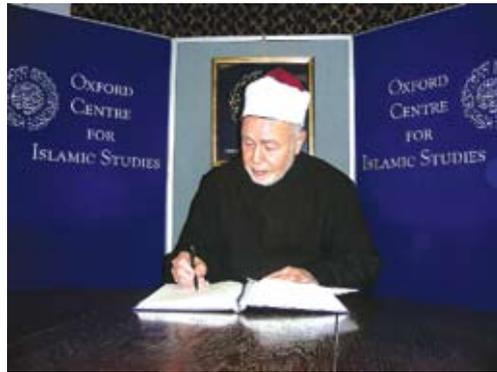
Dr Wang Lincong, from the Division on Social and Cultural Studies at the Institution of West Asian and African Studies in Beijing continues his research into the contemporary society of Turkey.

Mr Kenan Music, from the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia, undertook research into the works of the 19th Century Bosnian scholar Ali Fehmi Dzabic.

Dr Mazin Motabagani, will be a Visiting Research Associate. From King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, he is engaged in research on Western scholarship concerned with the study of Islam. While at the Centre he will be reviewing such scholarship being undertaken at a number of British Universities.

Shaikh of Al-Azhar:

Peace between Nations



HE Shaikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi

During his visit to the Centre in Michaelmas Term, HE The Grand Shaikh of Al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, addressed a large audience including members of Oxford University, the diplomatic corps, the media and representatives of different religious traditions. The subject of Shaikh Tantawi's address was the importance of inter-civilizational dialogue within the contemporary world community. There was no reason, he suggested, why people from different religious traditions and cultural backgrounds should not engage in such dialogue. He emphasized that high priority should be given to the encouragement of a more informed dialogue in order to identify shared common values as the basis for mutual understanding and partnership. At the present time world events clearly demonstrate the need for such cooperation, and all would benefit from the mutual trust and peaceful coexistence that could result.

Britain's Foreign Policy Priorities

At a Centre round-table discussion Sir Peter Ricketts, KCMG, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, reviewed the present foreign policy priorities of the British Government with particular reference to the current challenges facing Britain in Europe and the Middle East. Sir Peter also provided background to world events that occurred during the time he had been Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to NATO. The Centre regularly organizes roundtable discussions with speakers from the fields of politics, academia, journalism and civil society to discuss contemporary issues.



Sir Peter Ricketts

Development Assistance and the Muslim World

Mr Shahid Malik, Minister at the Department for International Development (DfID) and Member of Parliament for Dewsbury, spoke at a roundtable discussion on the future direction and role for DfID in the Muslim world. The Minister pointed out that although development aid was not aimed at communities on the basis of faith, many countries most in need of development assistance had significant Muslim populations. He also spoke on the subject of Muslims in Britain, and issues of community cohesion and identity. Mr Malik, who was elected to Parliament in 2005, became the first British Muslim to hold a ministerial post in the British Government when he was appointed Minister for International Development.



Shahid Malik, MP

International Contacts

India

Mr Salman Khurshid, former Minister of State for External Affairs of India and head of the Congress Committee of Uttar Pradesh, visited the Centre to lecture on democracy and the contemporary political landscape in India. Mr Khurshid, a noted politician, lawyer and writer is the author of the recently published play *Sons of Babur* which commemorates the role of Bahadur Shah Zafar in the history of India.

USA

At the invitation of the Oxford University Society of Washington DC, the Director addressed a special reception for Oxford alumni in which he provided an overview of the academic aims and activities of the Centre. Among the guest speakers were the former Bishop of Oxford, The Rt Rev. The Lord Harries of Pentregarth, Professor Margaret Macmillan, QC, Warden of St Antony's College, and Dr Sarah Thomas, Bodley's Librarian. The Oxford University Society event was attended by leading figures from across the US capital, including senior government officials, and representatives from a variety of think tanks, foundations and media organizations.

Turkey

As part of the Centre's longstanding links with the Republic of Turkey the Centre hosted a welcome lunch for Turkey's new Ambassador to Britain HE Mr Mehmet Yigit Alpogan. Turkey has generously supported the construction of the Centre's new building which the Ambassador toured during his visit. Mr Alpogan had an opportunity to meet Fellows with an interest in Turkish affairs and to discuss ways of strengthening cooperation between the Centre and institutions in his home country.



HE Mehmet Alpogan

Spain

The Director attended the first Annual Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations which was held 15-16 January, 2008 in Madrid. The Forum provided an opportunity to meet with political leaders, business executives and representatives of international bodies, civil society groups, and foundations, to discuss initiatives to promote cross-cultural dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding.

World Islamic Economic Forum:

Centre Exhibition in Kuwait

The Centre was invited to organize an exhibition of its work during the 4th World Islamic Economic Forum, held in Kuwait 29th April-1st May, 2008. This event provided an opportunity to raise



A view of the Centre's exhibition panels

awareness of the academic and outreach activities of the Centre. While visiting the exhibition, HE Shaikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister of Kuwait said that he wished the Centre well in its efforts to bring together scholars from the Islamic and Western worlds of learning. During the Forum, at a panel discussion presided over by the Kuwaiti Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Nouriya Subeih, the Director of the Centre spoke on the role of education in contemporary Muslim societies. He emphasised the key importance of education for both the successful economic development and social welfare of these societies.

Seminars at the Centre

Muslims in Europe

Aspects of Muslim presence in Europe were considered. These included issues related to identity and belonging, political activism and relations between the state and Muslim communities.

Democratization and Development in the Muslim World

The challenges of democratization in contemporary societies from across North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia were examined. Among the participants was Sir Hilary Synnott who spoke about his experiences as Regional Coordinator for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Southern Iraq.

Security and Stability in the Gulf

Speakers reviewed the role of hegemonic states in the region, and the effects of globalization and economic development in the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Three issues of the *Journal of Islamic Studies* have been published by Oxford University Press. They contain a total of ten articles on subjects ranging from Quranic and Hadith Studies, Islamic law, Arabic literature, history, anthropology and Ottoman Studies.

A total of sixty-four recently published books on different aspects of the Islamic world have also been reviewed.

New Scholarships at the Centre



Managing Director of Yayasan Khazanah and the Director signing the Scholarship Agreement

At a ceremony at Kota Bharu in March, in the presence of the Malaysian Minister of Higher Education, Datuk Mustapha Mohamed, an agreement was signed between Yayasan Khazanah and the Centre for the establishment of a new scholarship programme.

The agreement, which was signed by the Managing Director of Yayasan Khazanah, Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar, and the Director of the Centre, provides scholarships to students from Malaysia who have been accepted to read for degrees at Oxford or Cambridge

universities in a range of disciplines in the natural and social sciences.

The Khazanah-OCIS Merdeka Scholarships, have been established to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Malaysian independence. They will provide opportunities in higher education to students of outstanding academic merit who have the leadership qualities necessary to contribute to the future welfare of their country.

This new scholarship scheme will operate as part of the Centre's international outreach programme which seeks to encourage dialogue, friendship and understanding between the Islamic world and the West. Careful selection procedures have been agreed and it is intended that the first scholarships would be awarded for the academic year commencing in 2009.

It is hoped that this scholarship scheme will enable young Malaysian men and women to acquire those academic and professional qualifications relevant to their own careers and the needs of Malaysian society.