

IMES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Issue 2, Winter 2013

Art and Resistance in the Middle East: History and Change

Syrian artist Tammam
Aziz superimposes
Klimt's *The Kiss* on a
photograph of a
bombed-out building



From the Head of IMES

By Tony Gorman



This is the second issue of the *IMES Alumni Newsletter*. Thanks to all of you who responded so positively to our inaugural edition, both recent graduates and those from the more distant

past. We hope you will enjoy this one as well.

This issue continues some of the features of the first. This time we mark the postgraduate graduations of last November, further staff news, a piece from our in-house IMES historian and another 'Taste of Arabic' from Jonathan Featherstone. (Fortunately we have no obituaries this time.)

We have significantly expanded the size and scope of the newsletter. You will find details of the last and current seminar series, now a well-established feature of Monday evenings during the semester. You will also learn of some of the exciting things happening in the Persian programme, including a new MSc in Persian

Civilisation to be launched in September.

Other contributions cover conferences and workshops that have gone on in IMES over the last few months.

From our alumni we have David Smith reporting on his time in Oman and an interview with Hind Bensari on her documentary work.

We would be very pleased to hear from you and would particularly welcome any contributions to feature in our next issue, which will appear in the summer. Please get in touch with us at imesalumni@ed.ac.uk.

Finally, my special thanks to Fayaz S Alibhai for putting this issue together, and Sarah Irving for her contributions.

And best wishes for 2014!

Issue no. 2**Head of IMES**

Dr Anthony Gorman

Editor and Designer

Fayaz S Alibhai

With thanks to

Dr Susan Babaie, Jonathan Featherstone, Eleanor Humphrey, and all our contributors.

The IMES Alumni Newsletter welcomes submissions, including news, comments, updates and articles. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity. Please email imesalumni@ed.ac.uk

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The Simurgh returns Zal to his father Sam. Courtesy of British Library, IO Islamic 3682, f.38r. Available at <http://bit.ly/BL-17thC-Shahnama-Simurgh>.

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Congratulations! IMES' latest crop of graduates

(with thanks to Linda Grieve)

The following were awarded their postgraduate degrees at the graduations in November 2013. We wish them all the very best for the future.

IMES MSc Programme

Abdullah Eissa Abd al-Rahman Sirhan Abdullah
 Mohammed Hussin Bakr Abed
 Emma Margaret Green
 Merve Kara
 Emese Lorencsics
 I-Wen Su
 Neil George Thornton (PG Diploma)

Arab World Studies MSc Programme

Sarah Rosalind Irving (Distinction)
 Julija Dornik
 Jona Jan Fras
 Jack McGinn
 David Peter Smith
 Sarah Covington (PG Certificate)
 Brooke Noele Orist (PG Certificate)

Middle Eastern Diasporas MSc Programme

Katherine Athina Poseidon (Distinction)
 Reem Abu-Hayyeh
 Beatrice Miriam Ghislaine Odierna

IMES PhD Programme

William Oakes, Jr (PhD title: 'The Cross of Christ: Islamic Perspectives'; supervisor: Professor Carole Hillenbrand)

1. A beaming Arabic Instructor, Jonathan Featherstone, is flanked by newly-minted Arab World Studies graduates, David Smith, *left*, and Jack McGinn, *right*.
 © Susan Matheson.

2. Katherine Poseidon, *left*, and Beatrice Ghislaine, *right*, part of the first cohort of Middle Eastern Diaspora graduates.

Staff News

January 2014



Phil Hermina

New Appointments

In September **Farah Aboubakr** took up the position of new Arabic Teaching Fellow in the postgraduate programme. She is chiefly responsible for the Arabic courses that make up the new MSc Advanced Arabic degree.

Farida el-Keiy was appointed a temporary Arabic Teaching Fellow to take up duties in Arabic 1 and Arabic 4 during **Richard Todd**'s absence at the American University of Sharjah.

A number of part-time Arabic tutors also joined us in September to work on the burgeoning Arabic language programme in IMES: **Zakariya Berrada** and **Sohaib Saeed** (both Arabic 1); **Abla Oudeh** and PhD students **Sarah Irving**, **Jona Fras** and **Alessandro Columbu** (all PG programme). **Phil Hermina** continues as a tutor, now on the postgraduate programme, and teaches Introductory Arabic (part of the Languages for All programme).

Ebtihal Mahadeen was appointed a Chancellor's Fellow in IMES from September. She recently completed her PhD at the University of York, titled 'The Hymen and Beyond: Critical Feminist Readings of Virginity in Online Jordanian Media' and is preparing it for publication.

The new Atatürk Teaching Fellow, **Serpil Özdemir**, arrived in November and immediately took up her duties teaching sub-Honours Turkish language.

Comings and Goings

Nacim Pak-Shiraz has just returned from research leave in the first semester.

Marilyn Booth is on REF leave during the second semester. **Tony Gorman** is on research leave during the 2nd semester (**Andrew Marsham** takes over as Head of Subject Area in the interim).

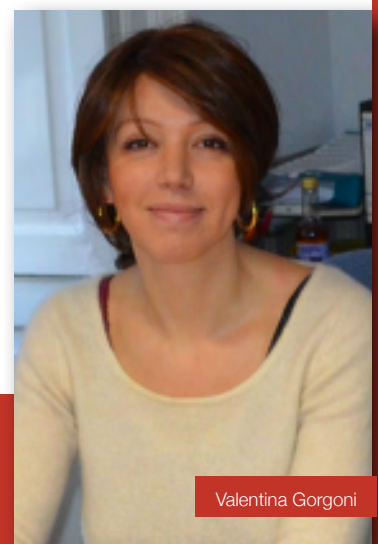
Sevim Inal, our Turkish Teaching Fellow for the last four years, returned to her university in Çannakale in October. **Valentina Gorgoni**, part-time CASAW Administrator for the last two years, leaves us at the end of this month to take up a full-time post elsewhere in the university. After nine

months as Administrative Secretary in the IMES office **Paulo Nunes de Moura** left in November to take up a position in Classics. Best wishes to them all.

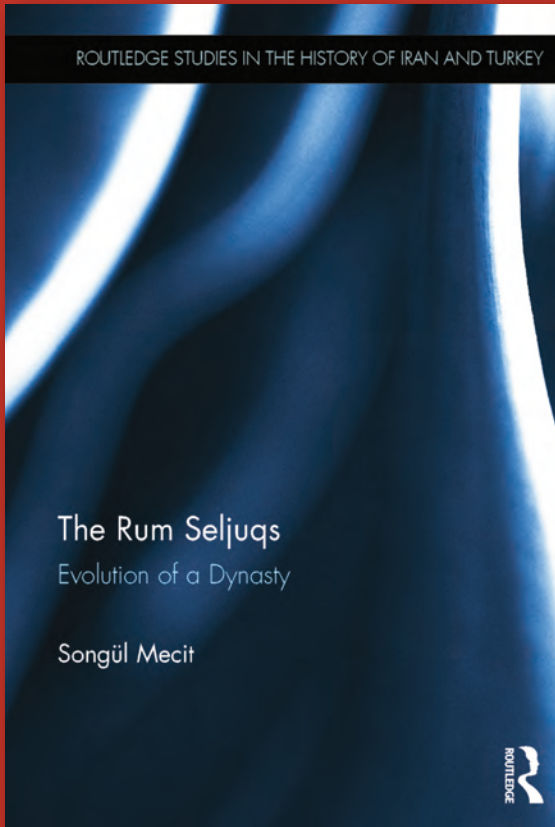
Eleanor Humphrey has this month been appointed as IMES Administrative Secretary following the vacancy made by **Rhona Hajcman**'s resignation.



Sevim Inal



Valentina Gorgoni

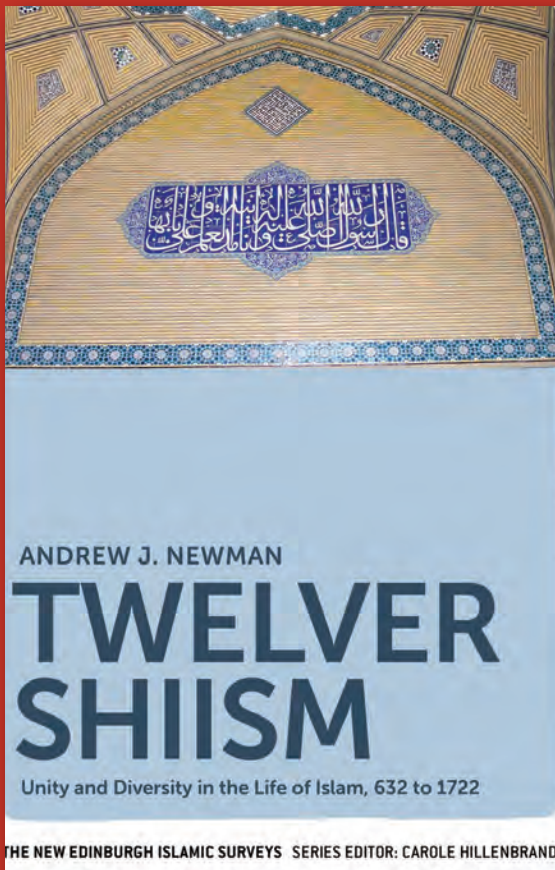


Publications

Songül Mecit

The Rum Seljuqs: Evolution of a Dynasty,
Routledge Studies in the History of Iran
and Turkey, London and New York 2014.

‘Charting the expansion of the Rum Seljuqs from rulers of a small principality to a fully-fledged sultanate ruling over almost the whole of Anatolia, this book demonstrates how ideology, rather than military success, was crucial in this development.’



Andrew J. Newman

Twelver Shiism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722, Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

‘Charts [the] history [of Twelver Shi‘ism] and the development of the key distinctive doctrines and practices which ensured its survival in the face of repeated challenges.’

A Taste of Arabic

Learning plurals

By Jonathan Featherstone

We often find learning plurals tricky due to the number of different patterns.

An interesting case is when certain male plural nouns actually end in *ta marbuuta*, which make them look as if they are feminine singular! One can notice several groups of such nouns. I am giving just a few examples and you may be able to find more yourselves.

Pattern 1

This is an interesting collection of nouns, the masculine plural form of which ends in *ta marbuuta* as can be seen below:

teacher/ teachers	أَسَاتِذَة	أُسْتَاذ
doctor/doctors	دُكَاثِرَة	دُكْتُور
Moroccan/ Moroccans	مَغَارِبَة	مَغْرِبِي
African/Africans	أَفَارِقَة	إِفْرِيْقِي
Zionist/Zionists	صُهَيْبَة	صُهَيْبُونِي

Pattern 2

This is an unusual pair which shares the same pattern:

priest/priests	كَهَنَة	كَاهِن
student/students	طَلَبَة	طَالِب

Pattern 3

Interesting that the following two share the same pattern:

commander/commanders	قَادَة	قَائِد
gentleman/gentlemen	سَادَة	سَيِّد

Pattern 4

This is one of my favourite patterns because it involves the *جي* ending in the singular which is of Turkish origin. These words are particularly common in Egypt and the Levant. Here are a few examples:

postman/postmen	بُوسْطَجِيَة	بُوسْطَجِي
coffee boy/coffee boys	قَهْوَجِيَة	قَهْوَجِي
falafel seller/falafel sellers	طَعْمَجِيَة	طَعْمَجِي
gangster/gangsters	بَلْطَجِيَة	بَلْطَجِي

History of IMES

The Iraq Chair in Arabic and Islamic Studies

By al-Mu'arrikh

(Part 2)

In 1979 an Agreement of Cooperation was signed between the Universities of Edinburgh and Baghdad. Its main provision was for the establishment of a Chair at Edinburgh in the (then) Department of Arabic with the aim of furthering the study of Arabic language and culture, Islamic history and religion.

Funded by £250,000 from the University of Baghdad, the new chair replaced the personal chair of **Professor Montgomery Watt**, who was retiring at that time after more than 30 years of distinguished service at the University of Edinburgh. Indeed, the endowment was also said to have been in part testimony to the reputation of Watt's work for promoting a tradition of fostering good relations and cultural ties with the Muslim world.

The ink was well and truly dry on the agreement when after a lengthy selection process (which involved some input from Baghdad) the first appointee to what became known as the Iraq Chair in Arabic and Islamic Studies was made in 1983. **Professor J Derek Latham** was a graduate of Oxford and scholar of Islamic Spain who had taught for many years at the University of Manchester. Known in some quarters as the 'Visiting Professor' because of his habit of commuting from Manchester and maintaining a short working week in Edinburgh, he served in the post for five years before retiring in 1988.

After a short hiatus, he was succeeded by **Professor Yasir Suleiman** in October 1990. A relatively young appointment, Suleiman was a native of Jerusalem who took his first degree in English Literature in Jordan and subsequently attended the University of St Andrews. There he graduated with a PhD in Linguistics and turned his attention to Arabic sociolinguistics. After 17 years in the post, during which he showed himself to be a gifted fundraiser and organiser, Suleiman departed for Cambridge in 2007 where he took up the Sultan Qaboos Bin Sa'id Chair in Modern Arabic Studies.

He was succeeded by the incumbent **Professor Marilyn Booth**, an American-born graduate of Harvard and Oxford. She brought with her a well-established reputation as a scholar of women in the modern Middle East and as a translator of modern Arabic literature. Booth took up the Iraq Chair in January 2009.



Persian Studies Updates

Funding, events and programmes

By **Nacim Pak-Shiraz**

Two PhD Scholarships in Iranian Studies

Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Edinburgh is delighted to invite applications for up to two fees-only PhD scholarships in the areas of Iranian Studies and pre-modern Islamicate History, Religion or Culture (Arabic or Persian).

Research proposals dealing with contemporary expressions of Iranian art, film and material culture, as well as all periods of Iranian history in the Islamic period and Shi'i Islam in Iran, are particularly welcome.

The scholarships will be funded by IMES and will cover tuition fees at the Home/EU rate (currently £3,900 p.a. for 2013-2014).

Applications can be made via the online admissions portal at the website below, and should be completed by 3 February 2014. Informal enquiries are welcome and should be directed to **Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz** (Nacim.Pak-Shiraz@ed.ac.uk).

For more details please visit: <http://bit.ly/UoE-IMESPhDScholarships>.

Symposium on New Directions in Persian Studies

The University of Edinburgh will host a symposium on 19 February 2014 to showcase the latest research of its scholars working on Iran and the Persianate world. One of the strengths of Persian Studies at the University of Edinburgh is the diversity of disciplines in which leading scholars in the field teach and research on Iran from pre-Islamic to contemporary times. Further details will be available soon on the IMES website.

MSc in Persian Civilisation

In September 2014 IMES will launch a new taught MSc programme in Persian Civilisation. This will be an interdisciplinary programme that combines elements from a number of fields of study, including Ancient History, Middle Eastern Studies and Islamic Studies, and will draw on the expertise of scholars from both within IMES and from the School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

The MSc in Persian Civilisation will introduce students to the sweep and complexity of Persian history and culture from the pre-Islamic period — when the Achaemenid dynasty ruled the largest land empire up to that time — to the period after 1979 when, with the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty, Iran established itself as a theocratic Islamic Republic. It will examine the remarkable record of Persian influence on world civilisation and will allow students to explore the political, cultural, religious, and social make-up of this strategically vital area of the Middle East.

A particular feature of this degree is that it will introduce students to the arts and culture of Iran, ranging from the architecture and iconography of the ancient and medieval periods to the performing arts and film of contemporary Iran.

For those who wish to engage fully with the full breadth of Iranian history, religion and culture from the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods this degree offers a great opportunity. More than that, it provides students the chance to combine their research projects at postgraduate level with specialist methodological, theoretical, literary, and historiographical training.

For more information, please visit <http://bit.ly/UoE-MScPersianCivilisation>.

Lust, Tragedy and War: The Shahnameh in Theatre, 18-19 February

Magical horses, supersized heroes, and consuming passions abound in this world of romance, lust, tragedy and war. Here, fathers and sons may be strangers in battle; beauty can be both a gift and a curse, and femme fatales condemn young men to journey through fire.

Aerial artiste of the spoken word, **Xanthe Gresham**, dives headlong into the majestic mythology of Persia, to perform sections of the *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings*, accompanied by the remarkable Iranian musician, **Arash Moradi**.

The *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings* is a 10th-century Persian masterpiece and Iran's national epic. Its significance exceeds its impressive literary achievement for it remains the only text that has preserved Iran's myths and ancient history.

To keep up-to-date with the Shahnameh event, and Iranian Studies and the Persianate world at the University of Edinburgh more generally, please visit the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/UoEPersianStudies.



Glimpses of the Gulf and British India

Stirling family generously donates photographic archive

By Tony Gorman

IMES recently received a donation of photographs from the collection of **George Stirling** (b. 1895), a member of the British Armed Forces during the First World War. A native of Aberdeen, Stirling served in Muscat, Bushire and Rawalpindi, during which time he took or acquired a number of photos.

The photographs presented here (with their original captions) comprise only a selection from the archive, which offers some fascinating glimpses into the Gulf and the western frontier of British India in the second decade of the 20th century.

We wish to thank **Mrs Yvonne Stirling**, George's daughter-in-law, for this wonderful gift. The archive will soon be available for viewing in its entirety in the IMES Library.

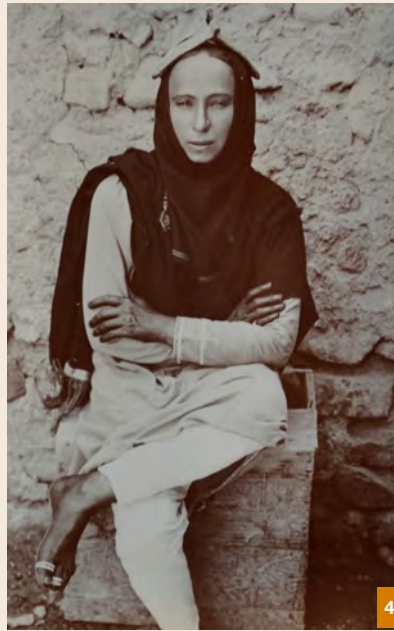
Notes:

Photographs 1 and 2 depict **Taymur bin Faysal bin Turki**, the Sultan of Muscat and Oman from 1913 until his abdication in 1932. Especially during the First World War, he relied on significant British support to maintain his position. The statement in the caption about his married life seems exaggerated since he appears to have had 'only' six wives. The small boy may be indeed be **Sa'id bin Taymur** who succeeded him and was subsequently deposed by his own son, the current **Sultan Qaboos**.

No. 6: A British Residency was established in Bushire in the 18th century and from that time served as an important outpost first for the British East India Company and then subsequently the British Government. It was maintained until the early 1970s.

1. The Sultan with two of his Ministers and the heir to the throne. The old gentleman has twenty two wives but I could not say which one was the heir's mother.
2. His Imperial Highness the Sultan of Muscat. He is the recognised King of Arabia.





3. An Arab belle with her face mask on to keep off the evil eye of the White Devils.
4. The same woman with her mask off. The order of things is reversed here; her wedding rings are on her toes.
5. H.I.H The Sultan of Muscat with his body guard on a hunting tour. (That is him sat in front.)
6. The Guard at the British Residency, Bushire.





7



8



9

- 7. The Fox's Field Gun's Crew, returning to the Residency, Bushire after driving out the insurgents out of the old fort
- 8. A general view of Muscat City and the Harbour.
- 9. Questioning captured spies.



10



11

- 10. Snake charmers at work.
- 11. A camel caravan from Afghanistan came to take a load of smuggled rifles. But the [unclear] was one too many for them.
- 12. The Sultan's bodyguard.



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A Bird Is Not A Stone 'Keeking' Palestinian culture to new places

By Sarah Irving

Pure chance is, perhaps, an under-rated method of organising.

At the end of 2012, a Glasgow arts worker called **Henry Bell** wrote to IMES Head of Department **Tony Gorman**. Henry had been the organiser, that summer, of a trip made by several Scots poets, including the Makar (poet laureate, of sorts) **Liz Lochhead**, to Palestine earlier that year.

At a meeting at Beit al-Shi'r (the House of Poetry) in al-Bireh, a group of Scottish and Palestinian poets came up with a plan:

To take a collection of poetry by contemporary Palestinian writers (including **Zakaria Muhammad**, **Maya Abu al-Hayyat**, **Taher Riyadh** and **Murad al-Sudani**) who were, as yet, largely unpublished in English. To translate that poetry using the 'bridge translation' or 'versioning' method, which entails literal translations being made, and then turned into poetic 'versions' by non-speakers of Arabic. And for the 'versioners' to be a team of well-known Scots poets.

Tony forwarded that initial email on to me and later sent it round various departmental email lists. By chance, I already knew Henry from work in Palestine, and at first I volunteered to be one of the bridge translators. But one night in January, when we happened to both be online and the first project meeting was rapidly approaching, Henry sent me a panicked message. After various delays in delivering the manuscript of Palestinian verse, he had received a bunch of PDFs from al-Bireh. But they were entirely in Arabic, which he doesn't read. Could I look them over and give him an idea of the contents?

Out of that coincidental instant of cooperation, I somehow turned into the project's translation co-ordinator. A few months later, when the parameters had been set and we were ready to go, Henry also sent me the various emails he had received from people who wanted to volunteer as linguistic 'bridges' between the Palestinian and Scots poets. To my surprise — given that Edinburgh is hardly the only university in Scotland to teach Arabic (and translation), and that there are people other than academics who might have this skill — all of the volunteers bar two came from IMES.

So, a year after that first serendipitous contact, where are we? The answer is: excitingly far down the line. Thanks to the labours of **Lloyd Randle**, **Lauren Pyott** and **Telche Hanley-Moyle** (IMES MA graduates); **Cate Pollock** (a second-year Arabic and Spanish student); **Shabana Basheer**, **Danielle Kiedaisch**, **Luke Barrington** and **Sandra Ernst** (MSc Arab World Studies graduates); **Jona Fris** (a current PhD student and Arabic tutor) and **Abla Oudeh** (Arabic tutor), the translated and proofed bridge manuscript is now with the team of Scots

'...it has been gloriously exciting, and we hope, with IMES' continued help and support, that this will be a significant contribution to the availability and reach of Palestinian poetry to English- (and Shetland-) speaking readerships.'

poets. That group includes **Liz Lochhead**, **John Glenday**, **Jim Ferguson**, **Kathleen Jamie** and many other stars of the national poetry scene. In an exciting development, Shetland poet **Christine de Luca** is also versioning the poems she is working on — mainly those by **Maya Abu al-Hayyat** — into Shetland dialect as well as English.

The title of the collection is *A Bird Is Not A Stone*, the title of a sculpture built in 1968 by Scottish artist **George Wyllie**. Wyllie's piece was made to 'keek' over the Berlin Wall, challenging the isolation imposed by the authorities in both East and West — the artist's archive sums up the sculpture thus: 'As everyone in Germany knows "ein vogel ist kein stein" which means "a bird is not a stone", George Wyllie loved "Burds" as "Burds" can claim their freedom.'

The teams in both al-Bireh and Scotland all felt that this spirit was embodied in the collection, which helps contemporary Palestinian culture to 'keek' into new places and hopefully reach new people. Publication (by Glasgow-based Freight Books) is scheduled for summer 2014, and with fingers and toes crossed we are planning launches and readings — if visas allow — including Palestinian poets visiting Scotland and the rest of Britain. The journey so far has been full of chances and challenges, and no doubt there are more surprises to come. But it has been gloriously exciting, and we hope, with IMES' continued help and support, that this will be a significant contribution to the availability and reach of Palestinian poetry to English- (and Shetland-) speaking readerships.

For more, please visit www.abirdisnotastone.wordpress.com



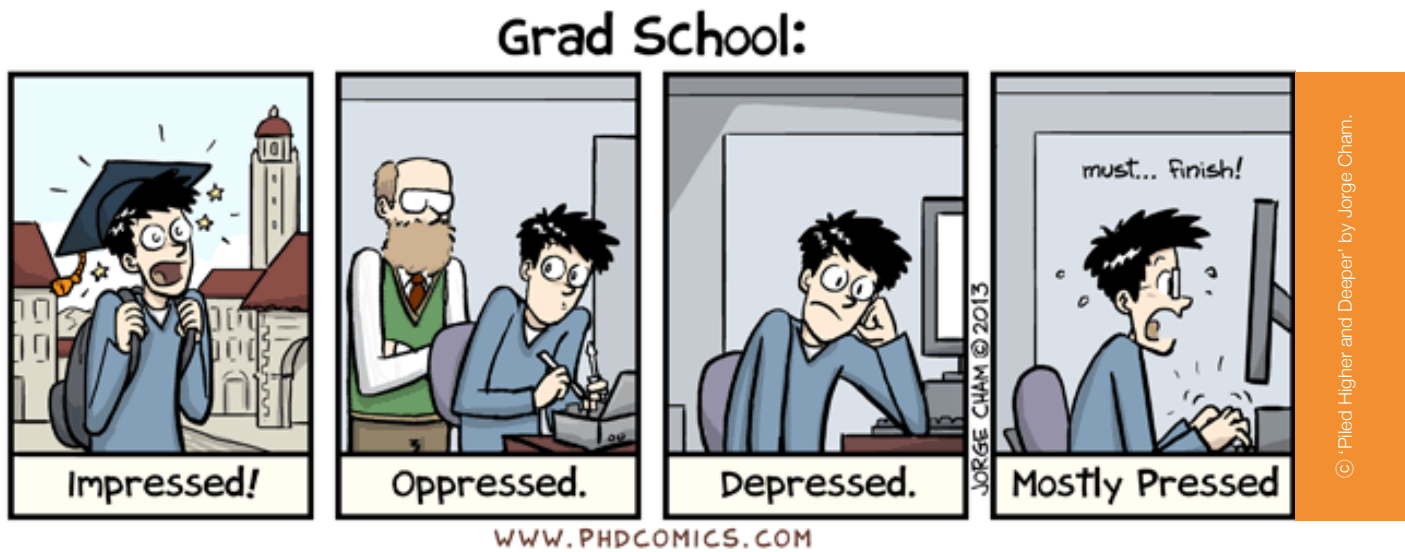
BEAR

MAYBE A WEEK MAYBE LONGER
THEY'VE GOT THE GUNS BUT WE'VE GOT

Excitement, Frustration, Confusion

Reflections on doing a PhD

Compiled by Fayaz S Alibhai



I felt 'mostly pressed' in early December, while around me everyone else appeared incredibly calm and sanguine. The elation I felt when I started the PhD remained only a rapidly fading memory and so I thought soliciting a few pithy, raw and gut-driven reflections by cohort on doing a PhD might help provide some perspective. And to remember that while fear and uncertainty accompany most paths less travelled, when we arrive at our destinations we are invariably transformed and grateful. Undertaking a PhD is rightly a journey, not a jaunt.

Year 1

'I came in with this lovely set-out blueprint of what exactly to do, and have now seen three months go by and it feels like I'm still on square one. But, I've enjoyed every hitch so far. Hope it carries onto Years 2 and 3: the enjoyment that is, not the hitch.' (**Yahya Barry**)

'Phd? What Phd? After my first semester of teaching Arabic, I just want to go and hibernate!' (**Sarah Irving**)

Year 2

'These words came out from my subconscious: A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind. This one a long time have I watched. All his life has he looked away... to the future, to the horizon. Never his mind on where he was. Hmm? What he was doing. Hmph. Adventure. Heh. Excitement. Heh. A Jedi craves not these things. You are reckless.' (**Francesco Stermotich-Cappellari**)

'I still don't know exactly what I am doing. Hope this confusion will not last by the end of the third or fourth year.' (**Yaser Mirdamadi**)

Year 3

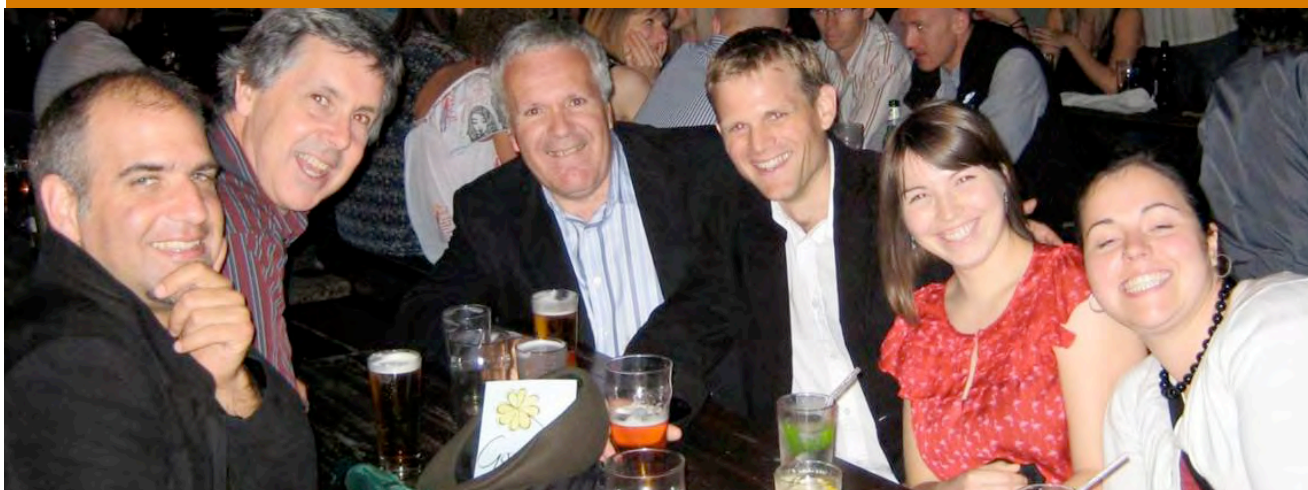
'My current, essay marking-induced statement would amount to something like "shoot me now" or "God, please make it stop", but I'm not sure that's appropriate, even for a 3rd-year PhD student....How about "I love my project, but I'm ready to never work on it again!"? That about sums it up for me at the moment... :-). Sorry for not being more positive!' (**Hannah-Lena Hagemann**)

'In childbirth, people identify the stage of "transition" between early to active labour as intense, painful, and scary. Having completed my fieldwork, I am currently experiencing transition as I realise there's nothing left but me, the data I have, and the unfinished chapters between here and submission. As a father, I won't say they are the same, but I see plenty of comparisons.' (**Michael Munnik**)

Year 4

'I'm thinking about what comes next, career wise, which means the end is near — at least in my mind! It's been an enjoyable experience (for the most part!), and when I finally do finish I will also have mastered the art of procrastination.' (**Jehan Saleh**)

Left to right: Kamran Rastegar, Tony Gorman, Jonathan Featherstone, Andrew Marsham, Rhona Hajcman and Sophie Lowry at a late night IMES staff meeting, Summer 2009.



‘Ask Rhona!’ 10 years in the IMES engine room

By **Tony Gorman**

For almost ten years this familiar refrain was heard along the corridors of IMES, usually in response to a query about some particularly difficult administrative matter. The Rhona of course was **Rhona Cullen** (now **Hajcman**) who began working in IMES in 2003 and quickly proved an essential port of call for staff and students seeking information, clarification or administrative salvation.

Called upon to deal with all sorts of situations, from navigating the difficult terrain of the university bureaucracy to helping **Professor Hillenbrand** unlock the secrets of using the photocopier, Rhona was an indispensable source of support to making the department function, often working late when required (especially just before the Exam Boards), anticipating difficulties before they arose and maintaining her good humour (mostly). Every Head relied on her for unfailingly good advice and commitment which was always well beyond her pay grade. Along the way she managed to pick up an MA Middle Eastern Studies degree, a new surname and an enviable knowledge of the workings of the University.

In December 2012 Rhona accepted a secondment to work in Admissions for 11 months. It was no surprise that her worth was quickly recognised there and she was marked down for promotion. She formally resigned from IMES in November 2013 and took up the post of UG Admissions Officer in the College of Humanities and Social Science.

We wish Rhona the best in her post-IMES life, and trust that she has as pleasant memories of working with us, as we have of her. She is certainly not forgotten — and I from time to time I still find myself thinking when faced with a particular dilemma, ‘I’m sure Rhona would know....’

‘Rhona was an indispensable source of support to making the department function. Every Head relied on her for unfailingly good advice and commitment’

Islamic Civilisation and the Islamic Tradition: Past and Present

IMES Spring Seminar Series

Join us this semester, for the new IMES Research Seminar Series, which is framed around the theme 'Islamic Civilisation and Islamic Tradition: Past and Present'. It will be held on Mondays at 5:30pm during the teaching semester, usually in room G2, 19 George Square.

For further details, please email **Dr Andrew Marsham** at Andrew.Marsham@ed.ac.uk. The full programme and any updates may be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/1cb1D69>

13 January	Andrew Marsham <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	Burning heretics and rebels in Umayyad Iraq: law, politics and historical memory in Islamic late antiquity
20 January	Songül Mecit <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	The Rum Seljuqs and their neighbours
27 January	Mona Siddiqui <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	From Islamic law to lawyers' law: a personal experience
3 February	Harry Munt <i>University of Oxford</i>	Pre-modern Arabic and Persian local historiography: genre and readership
10 February	Saeko Yazaki <i>University of Glasgow</i>	Zionism and the Judaeo-Islamic tradition: A.S. Yahuda and his Andalusian vision
17 February	Emanuele Intagliata <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	Late antique and early Islamic Palmyra: an archaeological and historical reassessment
24 February	Robert Hillenbrand <i>Universities of Edinburgh & St Andrews</i>	Light in Islamic architecture
3 March	Carole Hillenbrand <i>Universities of Edinburgh & St Andrews</i>	The history of Orientalist scholarship on jihad
10 March	Tim Greenwood <i>University of St Andrews</i>	Christian communities in pre-Islamic Mesopotamia: the Armenian connection
17 March	Sarah Bowen Savant <i>The Aga Khan University</i>	Iran's conversion to Islam and history writing as an art for forgetting
24 March PhD presentations	Yaser Mirdamadi <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	Can (and how does) God talk? The problem of revelation in the modern Jewish and Muslim philosophical theology
	Francesco Stermotich-Capellari <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	The Spiritual in Islamic calligraphy: a phenomenological approach to the contemporary Turkish calligraphic tradition
31 March PhD presentations	Georgios Rigas <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	Hamas's Government and Mubarak's Egypt
	Thibaut Clamart <i>University of Edinburgh</i>	The madina of Anjar: a claim to kingship



Highlighting Impressive Research

IMES Autumn Seminar Series

The IMES Autumn seminar series offered a varied and impressive range of research from speakers from Edinburgh and abroad.

The programme was bookended by presentations from IMES staff. **Professor Marilyn Booth**, recently returned from a year of research leave, opened the semester with a talk on the representation of Arab women at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. **Dr Thomas Pierret** concluded proceedings by untangling some of the complexities of the Syrian opposition in the current conflict.

The parlous situation in Syria had already been taken up earlier. In late September in response to the continuing instability in the Middle East a roundtable titled 'Syria, Egypt and the International Response' was organised (with the Global Justice Academy) where **Drs Michelle Burgis-Kasthala**, **Thomas Pierret** and **Ewan Stein** offered their thoughts on a very fluid situation to a packed Hugh Robson Theatre.

Other speakers came from further afield addressing both contemporary and historical subjects:

Professor Philip Marfleet (East London) discussed the Arab Spring and its impact on Europe; **Dr Susan Babaie** (Courtauld Institute of Art) took us through the streets of Safavid Isfahan to consider its domestic architecture; **Dr Nora Lafi** (ZMO, Berlin) brought to life the anthropology of violence in late Ottoman cities; **Dr Jim Anderson** (Goldsmiths, London) spoke on some of his initial findings of multilingual digital storytelling Arabic pedagogy; **Professor Jihane Sfeir** (Free University, Brussels) spoke of the potential of oral testimony in Palestinian history.

Two talks were presented in conjunction with the Alwaleed bin Talal Centre. **Professor Humayun Ansari** (Royal Holloway) spoke on Muslim reactions during the First World War and **Professor Yasir Suleiman** returned to Edinburgh to chair a panel on 'Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain'.

The full programme for the current series is framed around the theme 'Islamic Civilisation and the Islamic Tradition: Past and Present', and may be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/1cb1D69>

It is held on Mondays at 5.30pm, usually in room G2, 19 George Square.



The House of Marta Peters, a courtyard facade, New Julfa, Isfahan © Dr Susan Babaie.



Professor Attilio Petruccioli discussing Safavid garden design at the Royal Botanic Gardens © Alwaleed Centre.

Alwaleed Centre Events Focusing on Islamic civilisation and Britain

By Professor Hugh Goddard

The Alwaleed Centre ran two lecture/seminar series during the autumn. The first, on different aspects of Islamic civilisation, saw talks in various city venues on Safavid and Mughal gardens (at the Royal Botanic Garden), music (including some performance, in St Cecilia's Hall), early modern Iranian poetry (in the Poetry Library), and on translating the Qur'an (in the Playfair Library).

This series was oriented towards a city audience, as an element of the Centre's outreach programme, and the talks were video-recorded, so that, with most of last year's series, they may be viewed online.

The second series, which was more oriented towards a university audience, as part of the Centre's research programme, focused on Muslims in Britain, and saw talks on the history of the Muslim communities in Britain up to 1918, female conversion to Islam in Britain (based on a report on this topic by our sister Alwaleed Centre in Cambridge), educational policy in England in the 1960s and 1970s, and the experiences of Muslim women in Scotland.

These talks were audio-recorded, and are also available on the Centre's website.

Plans for the spring semester include the launching of a series on 'Global Islam', whose main focus will be on Muslim communities beyond the boundaries of the Middle East. Talks are planned on Muslim communities in Sri Lanka, and Norway.

The Centre's series on Inter-Religious Relations, which began in 2013, will continue with a session on the Dialogue between Roman Catholic Christians and Shi'i Muslims on Wednesday 5th February (in UN Inter-Faith Harmony Week), with **Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali** from Qom and **Dr Anthony O'Mahony** from Heythrop College in London; and a talk by **Professor Oddbjorn Leirvik** of the University of Oslo on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Norway.

All Alwaleed Centre events are open to all, including students past as well as present, so all are welcome.

For further details, please visit www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk.



Holy Places in Islam Early Islam and the search for a model

By Andreas Görke

The International Network for the Study of Holy Places in Islam (INSHPI) began successfully with its inaugural conference held from 5-7 December 2013 in Edinburgh.

The conference focused on the early development of holy sites in Islam. It brought together scholars from several countries (Germany, Israel, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. Unfortunately, the participants from Iran and Egypt did not receive their visas in time and thus had to cancel their participation). The delegates shared their views on the persistence, emergence and destruction of holy places in the first centuries of Islam and the different discourses that emerged to foster and legitimise or dismiss the holiness of particular sites.

The papers presented at the conference focused on specific sites (Medina, Kufa, Damascus, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Kathisma church near Jerusalem, the House of Mary near Ephesus), regions (the Hijaz, Jordan), figures (Khidr), architectural features (columns as repository of sacredness) or concepts (appropriation and rejection of holy sites, the idea of sacred space in Islam, and changing views on visitation of tombs).

Despite the conference being titled 'Early Islam and the Search for a Model', one of the main results was that there was no single model that could explain why certain sites were accepted as holy places while others were not, and that several different processes were in place that influenced discourse on the holiness of specific sites. With regard to the often unclear use of the terms 'sacred', 'holy', 'blessed', or 'religious' for specific places, it became clear that this is not necessarily due to an uncritical or unreflected use of terminology, but also results from the different perceptions that individuals may have had of these places.

The interdisciplinary approach that the network adopted proved particularly beneficial. The conference included scholars from various disciplines (history, Islamic studies, religious studies, Judaic studies, art history, philosophy, and archaeology), which led to very fruitful discussions and prompted several of the participants to review the sources they used, taking into consideration new approaches brought up at the conference.

A second conference is scheduled for early September 2014. The project website can be accessed at www.imes.ed.ac.uk/research/inshpi.

Left to right: Amelia Gallagher, Ute Versteegen, Mattia Guidetti, Najam Haider, Amikam Elad, Rina Avner, Andrew Newman, David Edwards, Erica Ferg, Harry Munt, Andreas Görke, Suleiman Mourad, Nancy Khalek, Alain George, Arietta Papaconstantinou, Francesco Stermotich-Cappellari, Oliver Leaman, Konstantin Klein, and Samar Mashadi, attendees and delegates at the conference.



Art & Resistance in the Middle East History and change

By Sarah Irving

In just part of what seems to be a blossoming of postgraduate activity at IMES, in November 2013 the department hosted 'Art & Resistance in the Middle East: History and Change', a conference exploring the intersection between culture and politics in the Middle East.

Taking a historical perspective, the papers ranged from Iranian passion plays and their role in identity formation from the seventh century, to the place of dance music in the self-expression of contemporary Palestinian youth. Two IMES doctoral students — **Lovisa Berg** and **Sarah Irving** — presented papers, but other speakers hailed from as far afield as Scandinavia, Iran and Oman.

'Art & Resistance' was the first in what will hopefully be a series of regional graduate conferences organised in cooperation with the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES). As such, thanks is due to **Louise Haysey**, BRISMES administrative officer, for her help and support. The conference was also the first IMES event to be live-tweeted; thanks go to **Raph Cormack**, **Fayaz Alibhai**, **Ania Gaboune**, **Hamish Kinnear** and **Kevin Moore** for that!

The conference was, of course, a chance for Edinburgh students from across the Schools of Languages, Literatures & Cultures and Social & Political Sciences to hear fresh research. It was also a space for IMES postgraduates to gain hands-on experience of everything from sifting through the submissions to finding a caterer to supply 50 lunches. As one of the organising committee, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues **Jona Fras**, **Ania Gaboune**, **Kevin Moore**, **Zara Shad** and **Megan Stark** for their time and effort, and for being wonderful to work alongside.

Left to right: Elham Mahootchi, Lovisa Berg, Raph Cormack, Rob Forster, Jona Fras, Imogen Block, Sarah Irving, Philippa Raphet Meeng, Peter Cherry, Kevin Moore, Laura Kandle, Megan Stark, Anahi Alviso-Malvino, Zara Shad, some of the organisers and presenters from *Art & Resistance* with Elham Mahootchi's timeline of Iranian political posters in the background.



475: Break the Silence

Hind Bensari on her documentary

Interview by Fayaz S Alibhai

After the death of **Amina Filali**, a 16-year-old girl who killed herself after she was allegedly forced to marry the man who raped her, **Hind Besari** left her job in London to embark on a journey back to her country of origins to carry out a personal investigation into the representation and perception of rape in Morocco, a country where rapists are offered to marry their victims as a means to save the 'honour' of the family. We ask Hind to tell us more about her resulting documentary.

What is it about?

By liberating the voices of the victims of rape in Morocco, *475: Break the Silence* gives an unprecedented view of family ties, the meaning of love and relationships, marriage and honour in urban, yet deprived areas of a country seeking to find its identity between modernity and tradition.

'475' refers to Article 475 of the Moroccan penal code, which was directly inherited from the Napoleonic penal code during the French protectorate of Morocco. It translates as follows:

'He who, without violence threats or fraud, abducts or deceives a minor under 18 years of age, shall be punished by imprisonment of 1-5 years, and a fine of Dh 200 -500 [approx. £15-35].

If the minor who was removed or deceived marries her abductor, he can no longer be prosecuted except by the persons empowered to demand the annulment of the marriage, and then only after the annulment has been pronounced'.

Judges in Morocco have repeatedly used this article as a means to absolve a rapist from his crime, or at the demand of the victim's family who believe that marriage is the best reparation that their daughter can get.





Why did you get interested in the subject?

When I heard about the suicide of the young girl who was allegedly forced to marry the man who raped her, and the demand of feminist and human rights groups to abolish Article 475 of the Moroccan penal code, I had two observations:

Firstly, Article 475, does not actually mention 'rape'. So why do judges use it for rape cases? There was a sociological reason that the media were not addressing and that I was curious to know more about.

Secondly, the reaction of the government led by the moderate Islamic party at the time (the Party of Justice and Development) was revolting. They were only concerned with justifying that the judge had done his job by marrying **Amina Fillali** to her boyfriend and not her rapist and thus that the judicial system could not be blamed for her death. This tragedy did not prompt them to initiate debate and reforms on the judicial system to grant more protection to victims of abuse.

I felt that the gravity of the situation required action; I could have simply written an article, but with Moroccans being still vastly illiterate (40 percent of the population can't read or write), I felt that image would be a more effective way of attacking the issue of marriage as a solution to rape.

What were some of the challenges you faced in filming, particularly given the prevailing societal attitudes, even amongst

women themselves about the role of women in society?

I found that people were actually very happy to be given the opportunity to talk about this issue. Rape victims were also always willing to talk about what had happened to them, but more reluctant to be filmed. I had to work on creating a trust relationship with my subjects by being extremely available to answer to the best of my knowledge any questions or doubts that they may have had, and also by letting them get to know me as well.

With regards to the views that people had on the issue of rape, or the status of women in society, I never censored or judged the reaction of people while I was filming them. I felt it was important to listen to what they had to say and, most importantly, to try to understand where ideas like 'a woman is looking to be raped' or 'women should stay at home' actually come from. Religion was never mentioned once as the reason to justify that women who are raped should marry their aggressor for instance. People justified this practice with economic and social norms: a woman who was raped has no chance of getting married to another man, and since she doesn't work she should get married to her aggressor in order to have a second chance in life. If he goes to jail she is both dishonoured and has no hope of making a decent living.

What was more fascinating or shocking is that I realised that most Moroccans I filmed understood rape to be a sexual relationship

outside the institution of marriage. Many referred to accidental or forced rape and consensual rape. When prompted about the fact that it wasn't the same thing they responded either that 'the girl loses her honour in both cases so it's essentially the same thing', or that 'it didn't change the fact that they would need to get married afterwards because the harm was done.'

How did your studies at IMES contribute to or otherwise enhance your skills in making this film? Can you tie in specific works or authors (Mernissi springs to mind):

My studies at IMES helped me analyse the issue more effectively. It helped me avoid the Orientalist trap and look deeper into Moroccan society. Prior to filming I worked with **Dr Pratiksha Baxi** who had done extensive research on gender issues in India, and shared her work with me, most importantly, that 'We must resist the cunning of judicial reform' (1) following the death of the young woman who was gang-raped on abuse in India, and **Dr Ziba Mir-Hosseini** who had written a very interesting paper called 'Criminalizing Sexuality' (2), which helped me understand the different interpretations of religious texts which varied from one jurist school to another and thus the importance of cultural phenomena.

What channels has it aired on, do you have a sense of viewing figures?

So far it has aired on Morocco's most viewed public channel 2M and it will also air on La Chaîne Parlementaire Française (The French Parliamentary Channel).

What other projects are you working on?

I have started working on two new documentary projects: one looking into Paralympics champions from developing countries and how they have managed such an achievement with close to zero resources, and the second looking into sorcery and witchcraft practices in some of the world's most religiously conservative countries.

Notes

1. See Pratiksha Baxi, 'We must resist the cunning of judicial reform', www.kafila.org, 29 December 2012. Available at <http://bit.ly/L3zP8a>.

2. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, 'Criminalising sexuality: Zina laws as violence against women in Muslim contexts', <http://www.arsrc.org/features/criminalising-sexuality.html>.

Hind Bensari graduated in 2009 with a BA in Humanities and Social Science. Her documentary, 475: Break the Silence can be viewed at exclusively at <http://vimeo.com/76854530>. The password is 475Bts.

1. View from a rooftop of Casablanca, 'the white city' © Hind Bensari.
2. Houda Lamqaddam talks about her rape uncovered © Hind Bensari.
3. Malika Slimani, plaintiff against Hassan Arif, a member of parliament, who is accused of raping her. The trial has been ongoing for almost four years now. © Hind Bensari.
4. Two girls living in one of Casablanca's slums describe how it feels to grow up as women in their neighbourhood. © Hind Bensari.





Spotlight: Samy Ayoub

Moving west

Samy Ayoub is a PhD candidate at the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS) at the University of Arizona where he has studied human rights law, statutory interpretations, international law, gender and law, and constitutional law at the James E. Rogers College of Law.

After having obtained a BA in Arabic and Islamic studies from Al-Azhar University in Cairo where he was trained in Islamic jurisprudence and received a systematic instruction in Hanafi jurisprudence, Samy came to the University of Edinburgh in 2007 and graduated with an MSc in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies the following year.

Samy specialises in Islamic law, law and legal theory and his research covers the history of Islamic law and judicial processes in the late Ottoman Empire. His work on Islamic law has led to several papers presented in a number of places, including at the VII Islamic Legal Studies Conference of the International Society for Islamic Legal Studies in Ankara, Turkey, in 2012, where his paper was titled, ‘The Egyptian Inheritance Statute: The Irrelevance of Territoriality?’ His work on the concept of territoriality in Islamic jurisprudence was published in March 2012 in *Contemporary Islamic Studies*. His interest in the debate on the role of Islamic law in the Egyptian legal system is highlighted in his commentary and translation of the Egyptian judge Tariq al-Bishri’s *Shari‘a and Contemporary Positive Law in Egypt*, which is currently under review with Yale University Press.

On the specifics of his dissertation, Samy says:

It explores the ‘late Hanafi’ tradition until its codification in the late 19th century. It specifically examines how the Ottoman state had a recognised legislative role within the legal discourse. The relationship between the Ottoman state and Hanafi jurists was not limited to mutual cooperation. In fact, I show through case studies how the Ottoman state doctrinally changed key Hanafi doctrines. So, to put it simply, my research falls within the intersection of religion, law, and

the state and explores the impact of the state on the legal and social order. As for my work, I am currently in the final stages of my doctoral degree. I hope to be able to graduate in the spring. [After that] I would like to get experience in the United States but I am open to other options as well.

‘My research falls within the intersection of religion, law and the state and explores the impact of the state on the legal and social order.’



Anglo-Omani Scholarship students 2013 on tour in Salalah, South Oman © Khalil al-Rahbi.

Six Weeks in Oman

From learning Arabic to turtle-watching

By David Smith

There are currently around one hundred Omani students in Edinburgh some of whom I got to know during my two-year MSc postgraduate Arab World Studies course, which involved a very intensive Arabic language program.

I travelled to Oman this August on an Anglo-Omani Society scholarship to join nine other Arabic language students from different British universities for a six-week programme that involved everything from well-taught Arabic grammar lessons to watching turtles dig their nests on a beach underneath a moon and starlit night.

From the moment of arrival I received the warmest hospitality I could imagine. The school teachers were enthusiastic and welcoming and in the modern classrooms we had discussions in Arabic regarding the media's reporting of the Arab Spring. Other classes in poetry and one dedicated to the Omani dialect and culture introduced us to Omani traditions, such as the rules of how to sit politely at formal meetings and a trip to a local primary school to see how children are taught Arabic and how to play Omani children's games.

We were given lectures by Oman's top thinkers, including **Assistant Grand Mufti Kahlan al-Kharusi** presenting a fascinating intellectual insight into Oman's independent political, religious and historical vision.

We met regularly with language partners, which gave us the opportunity to build relationships with Omanis of our own age.

Highlights were our weekend trips around the country, including a visit to the stunning opera house and armed forces museums in Muscat, the lush green mountains of Salala in the south, a protected turtle beach in eastern Sharqiyya and a picnic with delicious, locally-grown pomegranates on the mountain plains of Jebel Akhdar. These trips opened our eyes to a beautiful country.

Our school held a cultural open day with lots of dancing, music, food attended by hundreds of Omanis of all ages. The British students were asked to set up a stall about British culture with pictures of Buckingham Palace and the Queen. I wore my kilt and was left to try and explain in Arabic my

A massive picture of **Sultan Qaboos** overlooks the shaded courtyard of Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers in Manah, about an hour and a half drive inland from the capital Muscat.

The British Ambassador to Oman **Jamie Bowden** pointed the other way towards a sand coloured, rocky topped hill jutting out from the desert into the bright blue sky.

‘The Cameronian Highlanders took that hill while fighting for the Sultan’s father when he was uniting the country in the 1950s. During the night the Highlanders sneaked up there and positioned machine guns so they could out flank the **Imam Ghalib Bin Ali**’s men, and force them to retreat, giving the town of Nizwa up without a fight.’

Since then, the Omani-Scottish connection has remained vibrant. The young **Sultan Qaboos** after graduating from Sandhurst in the 1960s served as an officer in the Cameronians and today the Omani army boasts its own pipe bands.

1. Manah Open Day at Sultan Qaboos College with Omani guests listening to me in the Kilt explaining the Scottish national dress. © Khalil al-Rahbi.
2. Graduation day for UK students with Omani teachers and language partners. I am under the Sultan Qaboos photo in the blue shirt. © Khalil al-Rahbi.



‘Scottish clothes’ to the guest of honour, a senior Omani military officer, leaving me grappling to find vocabulary to explain why we put knives in our socks, and in these modern days our mobile phones in our sporrans. But, I spent most of a very enjoyable evening having my photo taken with dozens of Omanis, including a young kid who had just come back from a holiday in Edinburgh and was overwhelmed with joy to discover a kilted Scotsman wandering round his home town.

The six weeks at the end of my MSc course at IMES were the perfect way to finish my degree before heading into the world of work. Oman and Omanis will forever remain in my thoughts.



The Last Word

News and views from alumni

Notes from the field

John Davison (MA 2008) is 'Agence France-Presse correspondent for Israel and Palestinian Territories at the moment (just started here). Never a dull moment at least!' (April 2013)

Valeria Mariani has 'been working with The Crossway Foundation (<http://crossway-foundation.org>) and Edge of Arabia — <http://edgeofarabia.com> — since graduating in 2010. We have just opened a new exhibition and events space in Battersea, so do come and visit if you're ever in London.' (April 2013)

Christian Henderson has 'very positive memories of IMES, and the skills that I learned there during my Masters course have served me very well. When I left in 2000 I went to work as a journalist in Lebanon and then later worked at *Al Jazeera* in Qatar. Since 2006 I have worked as a political risk consultant serving corporate clients who work in the Middle East. I am now interested in taking my career in a different direction and have just completed my first year of a PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the Development Studies department. My research will be on the Gulf investment and influence in Egypt.' (April 2013)

India Stoughton 'miss[es] being part of such a welcoming and warm community [at IMES]....'

'I owe my job as well as my location to IMES. I moved to Lebanon after graduating in 2011 and now live in Beirut where I'm a reporter for Lebanon's national English-language newspaper the *Daily Star*. I write mostly for the culture page, reviewing books about the region or by regional authors and covering art exhibitions and concerts. I am also frequently asked to conduct interviews and review plays written in Lebanese Arabic, which is a bit of a challenge, as I'm sure you can imagine! I love the work and using my language skills, however, and have also found that many of the other IMES courses have come in handy — from Modern Middle Eastern History (a necessity for working as a journalist in a country with a political system as insane as Lebanon's!), to Early Arabic Historical Texts and Marilyn Booth's course on Harems in Literature, both of which have proved very useful when reviewing books on overlapping subject matter.' (May 2013)

On the Summer 2013 newsletter

I hope this newsletter will be our medium for each other. I have got much information from it, especially the in memoriam column.

Dr Ian Howard was my brilliant supervisor when I did my PhD there. I was very surprised at the news that he had died. That was a good remembrance between me and the late Dr Howard. Likewise the late **Professor Bill**. He was a very fluent speaker of Malay. Both of them are always in my memory. I put them as my father while I was there.

— Dr Abdul Mohamed Basir (August 2013)

Thanks for this great newsletter. I read every word of your newsletter and I was very deeply moved by the articles, especially about my former supervisor **Dr Ian Howard**.

I have lots of unforgettable memories with the late Dr Ian Howard. I can recall what he said to me about his life and what he had regretted, but I said to him; 'But sir, you have your great students with you....' I was with him from 1992 - 1996 and I am sure all his students will agree with me with the word 'Kaslan' a title given to motivate us more and more.

Rest in peace to our beloved **Dr Ian Keith Anderson Howard**.

— Dr. Ahmad Bin Che Yaacob
Associate Professor, Academy for
Contemporary Islamic Studies (ACIS)
(August 2013)

I was very pleased to receive the first departmental newsletter ...31 years after I graduated but much better later than never! Very much look forward to receiving more!

— Patrick von Aulock (1978 -1982)
(August 2013)

*News, comments, updates and articles are all welcome.
Submissions may be edited for space and clarity. Please email
imesalumni@ed.ac.uk*