

IMES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Issue 7, Summer 2016



Minaret at the Bou Inania Madrasa, Fes.
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From the Head of IMES

Dr Andrew Marsham



Welcome to the 7th issue of the IMES Alumni Newsletter, in which we congratulate the most recent graduates from the department. We wish all of you the very best for the future.

It is also a great pleasure to welcome a new colleague to the department. Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila is the new Iraq Chair in Arabic and Islamic Studies, joining us from his former role at the University of Helsinki. Professor Hämeen-Anttila has a very distinguished record as a scholar and teacher of the languages and cultures of the Middle East and we very much look forward to working with him here in Edinburgh.

There is a little more about Professor Hämeen-Anttila in staff news, on page 6. Also inside, news from Ramallah, London, New York, Geneva and Kuwait by IMES students past and present, legal reform in Morocco as observed by one of our Visiting Scholars, and a new collection of translated short stories about Khartoum, in which two IMES PhD students were closely involved. As usual, there is also news of some recent and forthcoming seminars, events, projects and competitions in the department and another instalment of IMES history by “al-Mu’arrikh”.

Very many thanks to Hester Gartrell, who has again taken on the role of assistant editor. As the incoming Head of Department, I have taken over the editorship from my colleague, Dr Tony Gorman. I’d like to record my thanks here for his hard work as IMES Head over the last three years and for setting up the Alumni Newsletter. As ever, we all look forward very much to hearing news from former students and colleagues—please do get in touch at imes@ed.ac.uk



Donkeys in the Medina of Fes.
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Issue no. 7

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Dr Andrew Marsham

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Hester Gartrell



With thanks to 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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Congratulations!

IMES graduates June 2016

(with thanks to Vivien Macnish-Porter and Iain Sutherland)

The following were awarded their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and diplomas at the graduations held in June 2016. We wish you all the best for the future.

Arabic MA Honours Programme

Henry Sutton
Layla Johansen
Emma Robertson
Beth Davis

Arabic and Business MA Honours Programme

Katharina Porenta

Arabic and Economics MA Honours Programme

Chloe Wootton

Arabic and French MA Honours Programme

Kat Millward

Arabic and French MA Honours Programme

Lucy Minihan
Alice Garrod
Laura Duff
Yette Bleyl

Arabic and Persian MA Honours Programme

Thea Hemming-Brown

Arabic and Politics MA Honours Programme

Alexa Parks
Eleanor Deacon
Alessandra Di cataldo

Arabic and Spanish MA Honours Programme

Elizabeth Heard
Katy Walsh-Glinert
Cate Pollock
Louisa Vasili
Daisy Reece

Middle Eastern Studies MA Honours Programme

Alex Toomey

Persian Studies MA Honours Programme

Eleanor Wilson
Katrin Hellat

Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies PG Diploma

Cheryl Piggot

Arab World Studies PG Certificate

Chen Mingxiao

IMES PhD Programme

Tom Aplin

'Ambivalence and the National Imaginary: Nation and Canon Formation in the Emergence of the Saudi Novel'



Undergraduates celebrate their graduation: Alice Garrod, Emma Robertson, Louisa Vasili, Kat Millward, Chloe Wootton, Henry Sutton, Thea Hemming-Brown, Daisy Reece, Elizabeth Heard, Katy Walsh-Glinert, Layla Johansen, Mrs Marwa Mouazen, Katrin Hellat, Cate Pollock, Katharine Porenta (l-r).



Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz and Dr Andreas Goerke celebrate with students following the graduation ceremony



Persian Civilisation MA Honours students celebrate with the Persian Civilisation teaching team: Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz, Thea Hemming-Brown, Katrin Hellat, Dr Azin Haghighi, Eleanor Wilson, Mr Hamed M M Sadeghi (1-r).



Prof. Carole Hillenbrand OBE and Emma Robertson, winner of the Carole Hillenbrand Prize for best undergraduate dissertation in IMES.

Staff News

Appointments, Promotions and Prizes

Dr Andrew Marsham



Vivien Macnish-Porter replaced Eleanor Birch as the IMES Administrator in January, crossing the square from the Division of European Languages and Cultures. Vivien had already worked as temporary administrator in the department, and it is great to have her return on a more permanent basis.



We also welcome the new Iraq Chair in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, who joined IMES in June. Professor Hämeen-Anttila was formerly a professor of Arabic at the University of Helsinki. He has published very extensively on the languages, history and culture of the Middle East, on subjects as wide-ranging as neo-Assyrian grammar, classical Arabic poetry, the medieval Persian epic Shahnameh and the Arabic literary form of the Maqamat in the 18th century. He most recently published an edited volume, *Case Studies in Transmission* (Münster, 2015) and is currently working on the transmission of the Middle Persian Khwadaynamag into medieval Arabic. He is also the translator of both the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Qur'an into Finnish.



Congratulations are due another new Edinburgh professor, Andrew Newman, who was awarded a personal chair in Islamic Studies and Persian this year. Professor Newman has worked at IMES since 1996, having previously worked and studied at Dartmouth, UCLA and Oxford. His most recent monograph is *Twelver Shi'ism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722* (Edinburgh, 2013).



Dr Thomas Pierret was also promoted this year, to Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Islam. Dr Pierret joined IMES in 2011 and is a specialist in contemporary Syria and in clerical-state relations in the Middle East and Africa. Besides his extensive academic publications on these and related topics, including his 2013 *Religion and State in Syria*, he is also a widely published and interviewed figure in the UK and international media. Many congratulations on your Senior Lectureship, Thomas.

Very many congratulations also to Mrs Marwa Mouazen, who was awarded the highly prestigious Ian Campbell Award for Teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the 2015/16 EUSA Teaching Awards on 21 April this year. This award is for the best overall teacher in the College of CHSS (now CAHSS) and is a real testament to Marwa's great dedication and skill as an Arabic teacher, which has benefitted all the Arabic students in the department since she started teaching at IMES in 2010. Very well done, Marwa, and many thanks to all the students who nominated her for the award.

Vivien Macnish-Porter, Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Professor Andrew Newman and Mrs Marwa Mouazen (© Mihaela Bodlovic) (top-bottom)

History of IMES (Part 7)

The PhD Student in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

By al-Mu'arrikh



Saeko Yazaki
and Songul
Mecit, IMES
PhDs 2010.



Arthur Jeffery (PhD 1929). His PhD, subsequently published as a monograph, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, in 1938 and again more recently by Brill (2007) and other publishers has become a classic of the field.

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh was launched soon after the end of the First World War as a research degree in which a 'fit and proper' subject of study could be pursued for at least a period two years. IMES was not constituted until much later in 1980 but well before that time PhD students were researching and writing doctoral dissertations on Islam, Islamic thought and the Middle East in the Faculty of Arts, Divinity, and in the Social Sciences. The first was probably J. R. Buchanan whose dissertation 'Muhammad's Idea of the last judgement and its sources' was awarded a PhD in 1927.

Over the next two decades only a small number of PhD students graduated in the field, most notably William Montgomery Watt, who submitted his thesis titled 'Free will and predestination in early Islam' in 1944. From 1950 onwards, a period that coincided with the establishment of the Persian and Turkish departments operating alongside the Arabic department, a steady stream of PhDs were minted in the period before the setting up of IMES, with ten being awarded in 1980. The subjects ranged from the Quran, Islamic law, a number of dissertations on al-Ghazali, Islamic architecture, Persian and Ottoman literature with a sprinkling of more modern topics, most often on Egypt. Each no doubt was its own personal and intellectual journey.

PhD students before 1980 were overwhelmingly international. A large number came from the Middle East, particularly from Egypt (principally Cairo, but also from Alexandria, Ain Shams, Mansura, AUC and al-Azhar), from Iraq from the mid-1960s (the majority from Baghdad), from the Sudan after 1969, as well as Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. A significant number also came from North America, some having graduated from American theological colleges.

Some of these PhD graduates went on to achieve significant academic distinction. At Edinburgh itself following the case of Watt, Pierre Cachia (1951) would teach in the Arabic Department until the mid-1970s, while Carole Hillenbrand (1979), appointed to a post in IMES directly after her graduation, would serve in IMES until her retirement almost ten years ago. Elsewhere in Britain Edmund Bosworth (1961) enjoyed a long career as Professor of Arabic at Manchester University, Christine Woodhead (1979), as a scholar of Turkish most recently at Durham University and Sylvia Kedourie (1953), longtime editor of the journal *Middle Eastern Studies*. Others achieved distinction abroad. Among many graduates from the Middle East, Majid Fakhry (1949) at the American University of Beirut and Khalid Alavi (1980) at the International Islamic University in Islamabad enjoyed distinguished careers. Father Joseph Peter Kenny (1970), a Dominican priest and missionary, taught Islamic studies for many years at the University of Ibadan.

Below is a list of the PhD students who graduated in the period between 1927-1980 (graduating in the Faculty of Arts unless otherwise noted).

1927

James Robertson Buchanan, Muhammad's Idea of the last judgement and its sources.

Cranston Earl Goddard, The origin of the Semitic alphabet.

1929

Arthur Jeffrey, MA, BD (Melbourne), The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an. [Divinity]

1944

William Montgomery Watt, MA (Edin), BLitt (Oxon), Free will and predestination in early Islam.

1949

J. Christy Wilson, BA (Princeton), Muhammad's Prophetic Office as Portrayed in the Qur'an. [Divinity]

Majid Fakhry, MA (Beirut), Causality in Al-Ghazali, Averroes and Aquinas.

1950

Mohamed El-Alaie Ali, BA (Fouad), The Influence of the Egyptian Environment on the Arabic Language, with special reference to the 'Diwan' of Bayram At-Tonosli, Part 2.

1951

Pierre Jacques Elie Cachia, BA (AUC), Taha Husayn, His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance.

Yousef Salah Eldin Namek, MCom (Fouad), The Social and Economic Aspects of the Problem of Population in Egypt.

1952

Sidney Fitzgerald Collins, BA (McMaster) MA, 'Moslem' and 'Negro' Groupings in Tyneside: A comparative study of Social Integration in terms of Intra-group and Inter-group Relations.

Abdel-Razek Mohamed Hassan, BCom (Fouad), A Comparative Study of Income Taxes in Britain, Egypt and France.

1953

Abdin Mahmoud Dajani BA (Beirut), The polemics of the Qur'an against Jews and Christians. [Divinity]

James Grant Suttie Stewart Thomson, MA, BD (Edin) BA (Oxford), The Doctrine of Man in the Qur'an. [Divinity]

Mohamed Abdel Rahman Bisar, PhD (Al Azhar), Al-Juwayni and Al-Ghazali as Theologians with special reference to Al-Irshad and Al-Iqtisad.

El-Kamil El-Sayed Mohammed El-Bagir, BA (Cairo), Al-Ghazali's Philosophy of Education with special reference to Al Ihya Book 1.

Sylvia Gourgi Kedourie (nee Haim), The Ideas of a Precursor, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1902), in Relation to the trend of Muslim-Arab Political Thought.

1954

Mohamed Fathalla El-Khatib, BCom (Cairo), The Working of Parliamentary Institutions in Egypt, 1924-1952. [Political Science]

Samha Amin Al Kholy, Mus. Bac (Cairo), The Function of Music in Islamic Culture (in the period up to 1100 AD).

Charles Pennyman Worsley, MA, The Composition of Ibn al-Athir's History of the Crusades, AH 490-516 – AD 1097-1122.

1956

Mohamed Gamal Eldin Eleish, B Com (Cairo), A Comparative Study of Housing Methods and Policy in Britain and Egypt since the First World War.

1957

Daoud Abdo Daoud, BA (Alex), Christian architecture and architectural decoration in Egypt up to the Arab Conquest.

Emel Dogramaci, Lic English Lit (Ankara), George Eliot and emancipation: a Turkish view.

1958

Mohiuddin Mohammed Ibrahim Momin, MA (Bombay), The Mughal contribution to Persian epistolography (from Babur 1526 to Shah Jahan 1658).

Najah Attar, L. es L (Syria), Abu'l-Atahiya: his life and his poetry.

1959

Saleh Hadi El-Shamma, MA (Cairo), The ethical system underlying the Qur'an.

Hassan Mahmoud Mohamed Ibrahim, BCom (Cairo), The development and performance of the Egyptian income tax system.

1960

Fawkia Hussein Mahmoud, BA (Cairo), Al-Juwayni and his doctrine of the origination of the world.

1961

Clifford Edmund Bosworth, MA (Oxon), MA (Edin), The transition from Ghaznavid to Seljuq rule in the Islamic East.

1962

Harold Spencer, A study of the dependence upon al-Ghazali's Ihya of the Introduction and the first two 'pillars' of the Persian Kimiya-i-Sa'adat .

1964

Ali Ahmed Suliman, BSc (Khartoum) Income stabilization policies for the cotton producers in the Sudan. [Social Sciences]

1965

Ghazi Rajab Mohammad BA (Baghdad), The minaret and its relationship to the mosque in early Islam.

Avril Mary Makhoul, BA (Lond), The doctrine of the Trinity in certain early Arabic Christian writers, with special reference to the influence of the Islamic environment.

1966

Saadoun Naji Al-Kishtaini, Lic-en-Droit (Baghdad), A comparative study on the Insurance Laws in Iraq. [Law]

Isa Salman Hamid BA (Baghdad), The Mesopotamian School of Painting.

1967

Moufid Mohammad Nouri, BA (Baghdad), The scholars of Nishapur, 700-1250.

Robert Charles Stade, BA, BD (Concordia Sem.), Al-Ghazali's Al-Maqasid Al-Asna and the concept of God in Islam. [Arabic]

1968

Ghassan Rayih Atiyah BA (Beirut), Iraq: a study in political consciousness, 1908-1921. [Social Science]

Tahir Muzzafar Al-Amid MA (Baghdad), The Abbasid Architecture of Samarra in the reign of both al-Mutasim and al-Mutawakkil.

1969

Khaja Gholam Aghar BA (Calcutta), MA, LLB (Dacca), The Role of the nobility during early Turkish rule in India 1210-1266.

Faiza Fouad El-Shafie BA (Ain Shams), The Gazeliyat of the 17th Century Ottoman poet, Nabi.

Nasir Elseed Mohamed, MA (Khartoum), Modern Education in the Sudan 1898-1965.

Mine Özoğul, BA (Ankara), The Divan of the 15th century Ottoman poet Mesihî

1970

Abdur Rauf Khan, MA (Punjab, Lahore), The doctrine of creation in Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd with special reference to the two Tahafuts and Al-Maqasid.

Elhiber Yousif Nur Eldaym, BA (Khartoum), The charge of Shi'ism against at-Tabari with special reference to his Tafsir.

Hasan Muhammad al-Fatih Qariballah, BA (Cairo) MA (Khartoum), The influence of al-Ghazali upon Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy with special reference to the period 1100-1400AD.

Alford Tolbert Welch, BA (Oklahoma) BD (Southern Bapt. Theol. Sem.) MA (Hartford), The Pneumatology of the Qur'an: a study of Phenomenology.

Amin Mekki Medani, LLB (Khartoum), LLM (Lond.), 'The Sudan Law of Homicide with comparative reference to Scots and English Law. [Law]

Joseph Peter Kenny, MA (Aquinas), Muslim Theology as presented by M. b Yusuf as-Sanusi – especially in his al-'Aqida al-Wusta.

1971

Ian Joseph Cairns, MA, BD (NZ), The role of theophany in the formation of scripture, in early Israel and in the Qur'an. [Divinity]

Muhammad Osman Abusaq, BA (Khartoum), MA (Abderd.), The politics of the Mihna under al-Ma'mun and his successor. [Divinity]

Aziz Fahim, BA (Cairo), Th. M (Louisville Theol. Sem.), Righteousness in the Epistle to the Romans and the Qur'an: a comparative study. [Divinity]

1972

Bahjat Kamil Al-Tikriti BA (Baghdad), MA (McGill), The struggle for power in the 'Abbasid Caliphate between 247/861 and 256/870.

Mehmet Aydin, The term Sa'ada in the selected works of al-Farabi and al-Ghazali

Mahassin Abdel Gadir Hag El-Safi BA (Khartoum), M. Litt, The Somalis in the East Africa Protectorate and Kenya Colony: 1895-1963

Aziz Abdulmohammed Esmail, BA (Makere), Satpanth Ismailism and modern changes within it, with special reference to East Africa.

Mustafa Mohammed Abdel-Majid, BA (AUB), The role of English education in the Sudan.

Abdallah Salih Al-Uthaymin, BA (Riyadh), Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: the man and his works.

Bankole Ajibabi Omotoso BA (Ibadan), 'Ali Ahmad Ba-Kathir, a contemporary conservative Arab writer – an appraisal of his main plays and novels.'

1973

Adil Najim Abbu, MA (Baghdad), The Ayyubid domed buildings of Syria, 3 vols.

Muhammad Abul Quasem, MA (Dacca), Al-Ghazali's ethics
Muhammad Al-Aroosi Abdul Qadir BA (Mecca), M. Litt, The reception and development of Malikite legal doctrine in the western Islamic world.

'Abdallah Hamid Al-Hiyed, BA (Riyadh), Relations between the Yaman and South Arabia during the Zaydi Imamate of Al al-Qasim 1626-1732.

Naji Hasan Hadi MA (Baghdad), The role of the Arab tribes in the East during the period of the Umayyads (40/660-132/749).

John Duncan Haldane, MA, A Hariri manuscript and its relevance to Mamluk painting.

Ahmet Ugur, The reign of Sultan Selim I in the light of the Selim-name literature.

Ali Ugur, The Ottoman ulema in the mid-17th century: an analysis of the Vaka'i'ü'l-Fuzala of Mehmed Seyhi Ef.

1974

Abd al-Rahman Mahmud Al-Gailani, BA (Baghdad), The origins of Islamic art and the role of China.

Farouq Omar Abdallah Al-Omar BA, (Kuwait), The doctrines of the Maturidite school with special reference to As-Sawad al-'Azam of al-Hakim as-Samarqandi.

Colin Davies, MA, British oil policy in the Middle East, 1919-1932.

Syed Muhammad Hasan-Uz-Zaman, MA (Agra) MA (Karachi), The economic functions of the Islamic state (to the end of the Umayyad period).

Imtiaz Ahmad, MA, LLB (Allahabad), The significance of Sunna and Hadith and their early documentation.

1975

Tariq Jawad Al-Janabi, BA (Baghdad), Studies in medieval Iraqi architecture.

Abdallah Sulayman Al-Jarbu, BA (King Abdul-Aziz) Martial poetry in Mecca and Medina in the late pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods.

Ali Ahmed Mohamed Babiker BA (Omdurman) MLitt, The place of reason among the 'roots' of Islamic jurisprudence.

Michael Cavanagh, BA (Leeds), On the structure of a formal grammar of literary Arabic.

James Frederick Gould, BA (Toronto) MA (AUC), A study of Two Rivalries in the UMMA (1-11AH) and their implication for the interpretation of the Sira literature.

Besheer Mohammad Osman Hageltom, BA (Khartoum) MA (Sheffield), Moral education in Islamic society as ideally conceived.

1976

Ahmed Mohamed Ahmad El-Galli, BA (Omdurman), M. Litt, The place of reason in the theology of al-Maturidi and al-Ash'ari.

Mehmet Ipsirli, Mustafa Selaniki's History of the Ottomans
Mohamed Ali Mohamed Shukri BA (Ceylon), The mystical doctrine of the Abu Talib al-Makki as found in his book *Qut al-qulub*.

Mohmed Osman Salih, BA (Omdurman) MLitt, Mahdism in Islam up to 260AH/874 AD and its relation to Zoroastrianism, Jewish and Christian Messianism.

Abdullahi Ahmed El-Naiem, LLB (Khartoum), Basic issues of Sudanese pre-trial criminal procedure in the light of English, Scottish and American practice. [Law]

Muhammad Jawad Hasan Hashim Al-Musawi, BA (Baghdad), MA (Alex), The philosophical problem of the relation between reason and revelation in the thought of the Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar.

James Norman Gehlhar, BA (Wisconsin), A stylistic analysis of the development of literary Persian and Turkish as seen in versions of *Kalila wa-Dimna*, The Fables of Bidpay.

1977

Anita Emilia Fedinand Damiani, MA (AUB), British travel attitudes to the Near East in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Ismail Erol Erünsal, The life and works of Taci-zade Ca'fer Çelebi with a critical edition of his *Divan*.

Mahmud Ramyar, PhD (Teheran), Shaykh Tusi, The life and works of a Shi'ite leader.

Joseph Givony, BA (Baghdad), The Murji'a and the theological school of Abu Hanifa, A historical and ideological study.

Abd ar-Rahman Mahmud Hafiz, BA (Shari'a College, Mecca), The Life of az-Zuhri and his scholarship in Quranic sciences and tradition (Hadith and Sunna).

Lutpi Ibrahim, BA (Baghdad), The theological questions at issue between az-Zamakhshari and al-Baydawi with special reference to al-Kashshaf and *Anwar at-Tanzil*.

Dona Sue Straley, BA (Ohio State), Perspective and method in early Islamic historiography: a study of al-Tabari's *Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l-Muluk*.

Khalil Ibrahim Mohammed Al-Kassab, BSc (Baghdad), A comparative history of industrial relations in Iraq, Egypt and Syria. [Social Sciences]

1978

Muhammad Abd ar-Rahman Al-Hadlac BA (Riyadh), M Litt, *Diya ad-Din Ibn Al-Athir* and his contribution to the science of rhetoric.

M'Hammad M'Hammad Benaboud, BA (USIU), A political and social history of Seville under Banu 'Abbad.

Abd al-Rahim Ali Mohamed Ibrahim BA (Khartoum), The literary structure of the Quranic verse (ĀYA).

Zahida Said Al-Salihi, BA (Baghdad), The career of 'Abdallah Ibn az-Zubayr with special reference to the period 61-73/680-692.

1979

Yousif Omer Babiker, BA (Cairo), The Al-Fajr movement and its place in modern Sudanese literature.

William Elliott, BA (Nebraska) MA (Creighton), The career of Ibn Qasi as religious teacher and political revolutionary in 12th century Islamic Spain.

Christopher Gaspare Ferrard, MA (Edin) MA (Wisconsin), Ottoman contributions to Islamic rhetoric.

Carole Hillenbrand, MA (Oxon), MA (Cantab.) The history of the *Jazira* 1100-1150: the contribution of Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi.

Pita Heseltine, MA, Romanticism and symbolism in the poetry of Badr Shakir As-Sayyab.

Jassim Muhawi Hussain, BA (Basrah), MA (Baghdad), The historical background of the occultation of the twelfth Shi'ite Imam.

Christine Mary Woodhead, BA (Oxon), The *Sehname-i-Humayun* of Ta'li-ki-zade Mehmed Effendi on the Ottoman campaign into Hungary in 1593-4: a critical edition of the text with introduction and annotation.

1980

Salsal Muhammad Al-Ani, BA (Baghdad), The early representation of the Prophet Muhammad with special reference to the mi'raj scenes.

Muhammad Salih Al-Tasan, BA (Riyadh), A critical edition of *Al-Araj al-Miski fi t-Tarikh al-Makki*, by 'Ali b. 'Abd al-Qadir at-Tabari, together with an introduction to the work and its author
Yasin Ceylan, Theology and Tafsir in the major works of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.

Nezam-Mafi Ettehadieh, MA (Mansoureh), Origin and development of political parties in Persia 1906-1911.

Mohammad Waris Hassan-Naqavi, A critical study of *Nahj al-Balagha*.

Muhammad Siddique Khalid Alavi, BA, MA (Punjab, Lahore), *Al-Lari's commentary to the Arba'un an-Nawawi*: a critical edition with introduction.

Iraj Tanhatan Nasser, BA (Teheran), *The Muhajir*.

Ali Asghar Halabi, BA (Teheran), The development of humour and satire in Persia with special reference to 'Ubaid Zakani'.

Ahmad al-Tayyib Muhammad al-Fatih Qariballah, BA (Omdurman), *The Washy al-Hulal of Abu-'l-'Abbas al-Labli*: a critical edition with an introductory study.

Umsalama Mohammed Salih, MSc (Khartoum), The political thought of Ibn Taymiyya.

Student Experience: MSc Arab World Studies Middle Eastern Studies with Arabic

By Abbie Mclean, MSc Arab World Studies (to become MSc Middle Eastern Studies with Arabic)



A view of Ramallah taken during Abbie's exploration of the city.

After completing my undergraduate degree in Middle Eastern History in Paris I was looking for a programme that would enable me to widen my knowledge of Middle Eastern history, politics, and culture but would also give me the opportunity to learn Arabic.

As a student in the Arab World Studies programme I have been able to choose from a wide variety of option courses ranging from modern politics to early history of the region. Our required core class focuses on a plethora of different topics from Qur'an exegesis to sectarianism in Lebanon and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Each week a different professor from the IMES department gives a lecture and leads a class discussion on his or her field of research. This class serves as a useful introduction to all the department has to offer its students.

The intensive Arabic language portion is what truly makes the programme unique and was one the reasons I choose to study at the University of Edinburgh. From day one my classmates and I, who were new to Arabic, were thrown into learning Arabic. At the beginning of the year Arabic seemed like an insurmountable feat as we went through the alphabet and struggled daily to read simple words. However, by the end of the year we had presented on art history in the National Gallery in Edinburgh and were able to discuss complex political ideas and share our opinions on them.

Another aspect of the programme that sets it apart is along with Modern Standard Arabic we also study either the Levantine or Egyptian dialects and spend a summer abroad in Palestine or Cairo. I am currently studying at Bir Zeit University near the bustling city of Ramallah in Palestine. While I attend classes for spoken and Modern Standard Arabic I also have the opportunity to use Arabic in my everyday life. Even going to the local vegetable market is an adventure.

The most rewarding part of my time in Palestine has been traveling to different cities and meeting local Palestinians. I have visited the villages around Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and the Golan Heights. During my travels the Palestinians have been extremely welcoming and friendly. One of my favourite memories is stumbling upon a small garden cafe in the old city of Hebron and discussing everyday life in the city with the cafe's owner and his family in Arabic. I look forward to seeing even more of Palestine during my next month here.

Student Experience: Living, working and learning in Ramallah

By Chloe Paterson, MA Arabic and Spanish (2015)

After a 20-hour long journey from the North of Spain and a few days in Tel Aviv, I finally embarked on my journey for Ramallah, after months of apprehension and excitement. And so with my 30 kg case, I bussed it firstly to Jerusalem, through the checkpoint before finally arriving in Ramallah. Given its Ramadan, I was pleasantly surprised to find a vibrant and busy city centre, with the smell of falafel wafting through the streets, beeping cars cutting in and out of lanes, and the roars of market vendors.



Chloe in Nablus, West Bank (Left) and taking the chance to visit the Souk in Jerusalem (Right).



The hustle and bustle was just exactly how I had imagined it; chaotic but filled with so much energy and life. Ramallah is a small and compact city. This, however, didn't stop me from constantly losing my bearings every time I would trudge through the city in blazing heat to work or to the market. Nevertheless, the upside was that it gave me the opportunity to practice some of my non-existent Palestinian dialect, which is very slowly starting to make slight sense. There are many things that are making their mark on me in such short time, the main one being the warmth and benevolence of the people by whom I have been welcomed with open arms.

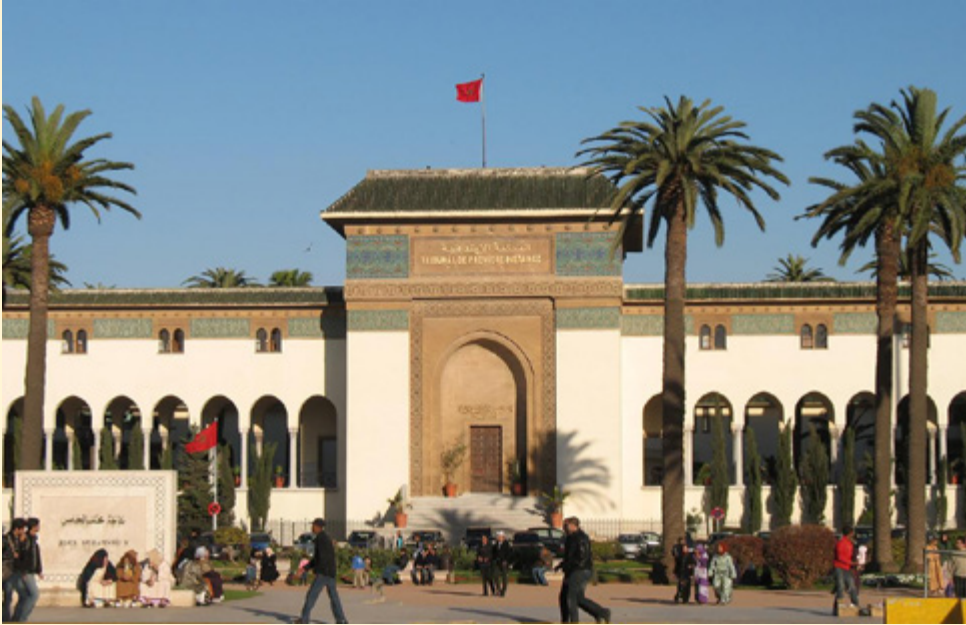
With regards to my work, I am currently interning with a local Palestinian NGO, MA'AN, which aims to create independent, self-reliant initiatives that lead to sustainable development within Palestinian communities. The work is extremely stimulating, giving me a clearer and more in-depth insight to the current situation here in Palestine as well as the dynamics within the development sector here.

Ramallah itself, is an extremely sociable city, thus making it very easy to make friends, and enjoy the cultural and night scenes. I have also been fortunate enough to be able to travel out of Ramallah to places such as Hebron, Jerusalem, Jericho, the Dead Sea and some local Palestinian villages. Despite the West Bank being a remarkably small country, there is the opportunity to discover several different ways of Palestinian life, each differing religiously, economically, socially and politically with some areas enduring a more brutal military occupation than others.

Nevertheless, despite the daily struggles and difficulties that Palestinians are faced with, they never fail to put a smile on your face with their energetic vibe and gracious hospitality. I am excited to call this place my new home for the coming months and eager to see what awaits me as I continue to travel around and immerse myself in this beautiful country.

Study on the implementation of Family Law in the Moroccan judicial system

By Mériam Cheikh, Visiting Scholar at the Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies Department



'Le Tribunal de Première Instance' in Casablanca, Morocco.

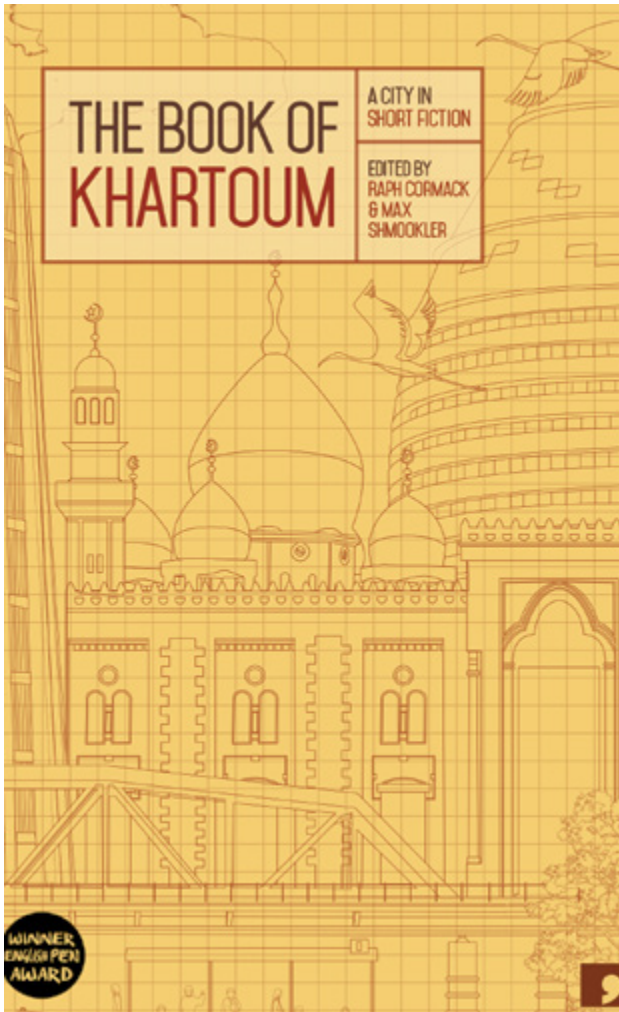
In 2004, after fierce debates and a strong polarisation of Moroccan society between “modernists” and “conservative” sides, the King of Morocco enacted a new Family Code (Mudawwana). This code aims to ensure “balanced relationship between men and women” in order to consolidate the family, ensure its cohesion and sustainability, guarantee children’s rights and safeguarding “the dignity of men.” The reform of family law was presented as part of a broader project of emancipation of the citizens that would bring about the democratic society of tomorrow, “without departing from the tolerant objectives of justice, equality and solidarity advocated by Islam.”

The research I am conducting with two colleagues aims to assess the modalities of the application of the provisions introduced with the reform of 2004. We are doing so through a study of the judiciary practices observed in the family affairs section of the first instance justice court of Rabat. By describing how the judicial decision is elaborated and what are the representations and perceptions of both the justice officials and the individuals, and by providing a critical review of the judicial decisions, we aim to understand how the judicial institutions tries to balance between the progressive aspects of the code and its conservative provisions about the need to preserve “the dignity of men”. We wish to evaluate the degree of effective application of the family law and the actual capacity of the courts -through the magistrates- to ensure the principle of equality within couples, protection of children and to enshrine women’s rights and citizenship.

Several times a week we attend the private hearings on divorce (and conciliation or sulh), the marriages of minors, legal representation or guardianship of children, and civil status (recognition of paternity, legal recognition of children born out of wedlock, transmission of nationality by mothers). After each hearing we question the judges about their decisions, their intent or the way they interpret the law according to the cases. The study is funded by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and is supported by the Centre Jacques Berque for Social Sciences Studies (CNRS).

Book of Khartoum

By Raphael Cormack, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies PhD Candidate



In April of this year Comma Press published *The Book of Khartoum*, a collection of short stories translated from Arabic about the Sudanese capital. I have written here in the past about the process of collecting stories for the book but now it is finished I can say a little about the stories included in the book.

The aim from the beginning has been to show the range and diversity of literary engagements with Khartoum and how it has been a creative inspiration for some of the most important modern writers in Sudan and South Sudan. Beyond Tayyib Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* Sudanese literature is little known in Britain. This collection aims to show some of the experimental, poetic and emotional depth of contemporary Sudanese literature.

Above all it is the city, whose complex geography and rich life these stories represent, that forms the centre of the book and question of how to represent it on the page that occupies the authors.

The collection includes humorous stories, stories of loss, and stories of hope and love. It is constructed to be a coherent whole which uses the city to think about the literary, aesthetic, and social concerns that the writers of the collection grapple with.

However, we have not tried to hide the darker sides of Khartoum's past. Hammour Ziada's tough story "The Void" shows the aftermath of Lord Kitchener's brutal conquest of the Sudanese capital in 1898. Arthur Gabriel Yak, a South Sudanese writer, gives another perspective on the city – one of political oppression and seeking refuge from the country's wars.

The ten stories by different authors have been translated by some of the best upcoming and established Arabic-English translators working today. Along with one of these translators, Edinburgh University's Sarah Irving, the book was launched on the 2nd of June at Word Power Books in Edinburgh.

Spring Seminar Series Review

By Dr Thomas Pierret

The spring semester's Monday Research Seminar was devoted to civil wars in the Arab world, an issue that has become increasingly prominent over the last years. Unlike other parts of Global South such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, Arab countries witnessed only a limited number of protracted civil wars during the Cold War and its aftermath (Yemen in the 1960s, Lebanon from 1975 to 1990, Algeria from 1992 onwards). Unfortunately, this situation changed after 2011, to the extent that the region now witnesses four simultaneous civil wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. In all cases, there seems to be little hopes of short-term resolution of these conflicts, to the extent that it can be argued that these countries are no longer going through a crisis, but have rather entered a context in which war constitutes a new political order in its own right.

In order to better understand the origins and implications of this situation, our speakers have discussed civil wars in the Arab world from various angles. Due to the nature of the topic, several of our speakers approached the topic from the perspective of political science and international relations: Yaniv Voller from the University of Edinburgh discussed the different stages of the Kurdish national struggle in Iraq; Virginie Colombier from the European University Institute in Florence provided a comprehensive survey of the domestic and international dynamics at play in the Libyan conflict, as did Laurent Bonnefoy from CNRS-CERI in Paris with regard to the civil war in Yemen. This political perspective was supplemented with other disciplinary lenses: Leila Vignal from Oxford University/Université de Rennes 2 addressed the problems of destruction, displacement and territorial change in Syria from the point of view of geography; Cécile Boëx from EHESS Paris illustrated the contribution of visual studies to the study of the topic by showing how she uses Youtube videos in order to investigate the Syrian civil war; Thomas Pierret from the University of Edinburgh discussed the Islamic State organisation (a key player in the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts) from the angle of gender studies by analysing the diaries of a female member of the group.

Although the main focus of the seminar was on contemporary civil wars in the Arab world, some speakers enriched our reflections through presentations on previous historical experiences: Benjamin White from the University of Glasgow analysed the relation between refugees, war and state-making through the example of the Ba'quba refugee camp in Iraq in 1919-21, and Andrew Marsham from the University of Edinburgh brought us back to the Umayyad era, with a discussion of revolt, rebellion and civil war under Islam's first empire.

Following an established tradition, the first and last weeks of the seminar were reserved for the presentation of the IMES doctoral students' work in progress. The first week, Ching-An Chang spoke about decision-making on relocation and resettlement among the Syrian business diaspora, and Saverio Leopardi recounted the decline of the PFLP throughout the Palestinian civil wars. The penultimate week, Ula Zeir analysed a newly discovered document about the establishment of the Ismailis city of Salamiyya in nineteenth century Ottoman Syria, then Zeynep Merve Uygun discussed the making and imagining of space among veiled women in contemporary Turkey, through the case of segregated women beaches. During the last session, Harriet Fildes presented her work on Islamic NGOs as a factor of expansion and engagement in Turkey's regional relations, and Aurangzeb Haneef discussed his research on Sufyan al-Thawri and early Qur'anic exegesis.

IMES Autumn Seminar Series 2016

The IMES Research Seminar will meet at 5.15pm on Mondays in Room G2, IMES, 19 George Square, EH8 9LD.

19 September 2016	Ayman Shihadeh (SOAS)	Body and Spirit in Early Islamic Thought
26 September 2016	Haifa Saud (KSU, Saudi Arabia)	Liberty and Coloniality in the early modern Arabic comparative criticism of Rūhī al-Khālīdī
3 October 2016	Jonathan Brown (Georgetown)	tbc
10 October 2016	Naomi Sakr (Westminster)	Untold Stories: Arab Media Provision for Children
17 October 2016	Steffen Hertog (LSE)	Arab Varieties of Capitalism
24 October 2016	Ewan Stein (Edinburgh)	International Relations in the Middle East: Social Movements and Regional Order
31 October 2016	tbc	tbc
7 November 2016	Joshua Ralston (Edinburgh)	“That Hideous Schizophrenia”: A Genealogy of Islamic Polemics against Christianity and Secularism.
14 November 2016	Nacim Pak-Shiraz (Edinburgh)	tbc
21 November 2016	Mérim Cheikh (Visiting Scholar)	Ethnographing sex work, analysing intimate lives: sexuality and respectability of working class women in Tangier (Morocco)
28 November 2016	Rasha Soliman (Leeds)	Arabic Cross-dialectal Conversations with Implications for the Teaching of Arabic as a Second Language

Alwaleed Centre

Spring News and Highlights

By Tom Lea (MSc IMES 2015)



Food with roots in over 15 countries was lovingly prepared by local Muslims for the Alwaleed Centre 'Taste of Scottish Islam' Event in January.



The spring semester has been a busy one at the Alwaleed Centre with new colleagues arriving and a number of creative events and outreach projects delivered. Below are a few highlights, but you can find a more comprehensive overview of our work in our most recent Annual Report which was published in May and is available on the homepage of the Alwaleed Centre website: www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk.

Nothing attracts a crowd like free food and, with this principle in mind, the Alwaleed Centre kicked off 2016 with a special bring and share food event celebrating the diverse culinary traditions of the Islamic World. Hosted at Nicolson Square Methodist Church (just behind Edinburgh's Central Mosque), 'A Taste of Scottish Islam' welcomed around 300 people to try food with roots in over fifteen Muslim majority and minority countries, lovingly prepared by Muslims living here in Scotland. The event was part-funded by Black and Minority Ethnic Infrastructure Scotland (BEMIS) and featured music from across the Islamic world performed by local group Duo Hyperborea. The event was a huge success and we will certainly be looking to organise a follow-up soon. More details to follow in due course.

In April, our focus shifted from food to science with an exciting pair of workshops organised as part of the Edinburgh International Science Festival. Workshop participants were encouraged to build their own astrolabe – a sophisticated astronomical device invented by the Greeks but developed and refined in the medieval Islamic world. One of the workshops was aimed at adults and took place at the Science Festival's 'Big Bang Bash' at the National Museum of Scotland. The other took place at the Festival's 'Space Day' at Summerhall which was pitched at children and young people. The workshops encouraged participants to get to grips with the science behind the astrolabe whilst considering the role Muslims played in the development of this revolutionary technology.

Also in April, but in a more academic vein, the Alwaleed Centre again played a central role in the organisation of the British Association for Islamic Studies annual conference. Following the success of the 2015 conference, we once again returned to Senate House, University of London, for two days of excellent papers representing a wide variety of Islamic Studies sub-disciplines. More than 250 delegates came together from all over the world, including a major delegation from Indonesia organised by the British Council. Amongst the many papers were three superb plenaries exploring Islamic art and architecture, medieval Islamic manuscripts and a closing plenary by writer and commentator Ziauddin Sardar reflecting on “What it means to be a critical Muslim”. Next year, the BRAIS conference will be moving to the University of Chester and more information can be found at: www.brais.ac.uk.

Since 2012, the Alwaleed Centre has partnered with the Church of Scotland and the Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association to organise Scriptural Reasoning sessions in Edinburgh reflecting on topical questions in the light of Jewish, Christian and Muslim Scripture. Our latest Breaking Barriers session was hosted at the end of May by the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community and we were delighted to welcome over forty Jews, Christians and Muslims from across Edinburgh and beyond. The theme of the session was “the haves and the have-nots” which led to some fascinating conversations about scriptural approaches to wealth and poverty. We hope to host our next session at one of Edinburgh’s mosques sometime during the autumn semester. Keep an eye on our website for more details.

Looking ahead, the Alwaleed Centre will be supporting two events at this year’s Edinburgh International Book Festival. We are excited to be welcoming Dutch-Iranian writer Kader Abdolah to Edinburgh to discuss his new book *The Messenger: A Tale Retold* - an event which will be chaired by the centre’s Advisory Board Chair, Professor Mona Siddiqui. We will also be hosting Iranian illustrator, Marjan Vafaian, whose beautiful illustrations can be found in a new retelling for children of Rumi’s fable *The Parrot and the Merchant* (published by Tiny Owl). We have a limited number of free tickets to both of these Book Festival events so please do get in touch if you would like to claim one: thealwaleedcentre@ed.ac.uk.

The Centre has also put together a comprehensive guide to all events taking place during the Edinburgh Festivals in August which have a relevance to Islam or the Islamic world. These include stand-up comedy, theatre, music and conversation events. The full list can be downloaded from the homepage of the Alwaleed Centre’s website: www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk.

Jews, Christians and Muslims come together to discuss their scripture at the latest ‘Breaking Barriers’ scriptural reasoning session.



A Growing Team

June saw the Alwaleed Centre's academic team expand as we welcomed our new Postdoctoral Fellow in Islamic Studies, Dr David Warren (MSc Arab World Studies 2009). David has just completed a year at Harvard University's Centre for Middle Eastern Studies and has joined the Alwaleed Centre to continue his research into the relationship between the networks of ulama based in the Gulf States and their colleagues in the Arab World at large. David was awarded his PhD by the University of Manchester in 2015 and, alongside training in the secular study of Islam, has studied Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) at the madrasa of Muhammad Salim al-Adud in Mauritania. In addition, he has been a student at Damascus University as well as in Sanaa and Cairo. Alongside his research, another key aspect of David's role at the Centre will be to develop a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) which will be available, for free, to students across the world. More details about this course to follow in the next Alumni Newsletter.

In April, we were also delighted to welcome back our British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr Alistair Hunter, who has been based in Paris for the last year or so. Alistair's research project is interested in how dying and death are experienced and commemorated by Muslim populations of migrant origin in Britain and France, and this is a topic which has very obvious relevance to the consultation in which the Scottish Government is currently engaged with regard to a proposed Bill relating to burial and cremation and other related matters in Scotland.

Recruitment News

Over the coming months, the Alwaleed Centre will be recruiting a Lecturer on Muslims in Europe and we hope to circulate the job advert by the end of July. This lectureship will straddle both the Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies department and the Sociology department here at the University of Edinburgh. Keep your eye on the Alwaleed Centre website for more details and how to apply: www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk.

Ziaddin Sardar delivers the final plenary at this year's BRAIS Annual Conference.



The Edinburgh Arab Festival 2015

Highlights & Reflections

By Mourad Diouri (On behalf of the EdArabFest Team)

Last year on 28-29th August, Edinburgh marked the end of the glorious International Arts Festival and IMES celebrated the launch and end of the 1st Edinburgh Arab Festival 2015 in Scotland. What an amazing festival it was! The two days were full of surprises and happy memories for everyone - and for me personally - to cherish over the years. Having envisaged this festival as a modest cultural event that will showcase what Edinburgh's Arab community has to offer, the high attendance and excitement about the event has simply exceeded all our expectations and predictions. What we witnessed over the two festive days was phenomenal and truly reflected the key message of the EdArabFest: Beauty, Diversity, Richness.

Over a four month period, and with the help of many dedicated colleagues, volunteers and students from IMES, the community and many organisations, we managed to put together something for everyone. A wide array of open and scheduled events around: art, calligraphy, storytelling, poetry, lectures on history and science, fashion, film screenings, live music, folkloric dance, photography, language taster classes, authentic traditional cuisines, food tasting, tea ceremonies, children activities, dressing-up, panel discussions, literature readings and much more. The festival can be summarised in numbers as follows:

- 913 Visitors (685 tickets issued including 250 Child Visitors)
- 30 Events & Workshops
- 18 Speakers
- 7 Poets & Authors
- 7 Artists & Calligraphers
- 50 Volunteers
- 6 Exhibitions (Art, Photography & Calligraphy)
- 800 plates of food (served within 2h over 2 days)
- 18 Food items (on the menu to choose from, each over 200 portions each day)

On a final note, I personally believe and hope that the event will continue to grow from strength to strength and remain a solid bi-annual feature of the Fringe Festival. Already we are receiving keen expressions for collaboration and partnership for the forthcoming festival from individuals and institutions eager to contribute to next year's programme. Until then, we look forward to welcoming you to the next Edinburgh Arab Festival, more details to follow in the next Alumni Newsletter.



'The festival was a wonderful way of bringing together the cultures of the Arab world in Scotland today and to counter the negative images which tend to prevail. It was vibrant and eclectic, catering for body, mind and spirit and all age groups.' **Christine de Luca**, Scottish Poet & Novelist.

Naw-Rúz at IMES

Persian Studies celebrate Iranian New Year



The Naw-Rúz Spread, known as the haft-seen sofreh.



Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz and Dr Azin Haghighi (l-r)



Students enjoying the Naw-Rúz feast.

The Postgraduate Scene

Phil Hermina, Mathew Barber, Jonathan Featherstone and Jona Fras (l-r) celebrate with the MSc Arabists.



MSc Arab World Studies and Persian Studies students at the IMES end of term party: Sybilla Kitsios, Marlene Dirven, Alex Beck.



Alessandro Columbu and Saverio Leopardi (l-r)



Dr Andreas Goerke, with MSc Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies students Barbara Jung and Hester Gartrell. (l-r)



Dr Thomas Pierret, Dr Andrew Marsham and Dr Jamie Allinson (l-r)



Arab World Studies MSc students enjoy the end of term party: David Sweetenham, Abbie Mclean and Anna Olson (l-r).

“Life after IMES” Brings Students and Alumni Together, Again

By Dr Ebtihal Mahadeen

Students listening to Sarah Irving’s advice on life after IMES



For the second year in a row IMES hosted an afternoon of careers planning and networking with alumni/ae. On April 8th, 2016 several of our alumni/ae returned to Edinburgh to discuss their career paths and to share tips and advice with current students. The speakers for this year were Tessa Grafen, Steve Robinson, Hamish Kinnear, Sarah Irving, Robert Forster, and Shabana Basheer. The discussions covered many issues ranging from social media use to CVs and interviews. What’s more, some of the speakers even shared insider information about available jobs in their sectors which turned the event into something of a recruitment fair!

Tessa Grafen (Left) with Ebtihal Mahadeen



Reflections from Kuwait on Study at Edinburgh, 2010-2015

By Faisal Alwazzan (MSc IMES 2011, PhD IMES 2015)



On a rainy day in April 2010 I arrived in Edinburgh to begin a new chapter in my life. I arrived from Kuwait with a background and a degree in History and Islamic Studies, but with little English and little knowledge of Western way of learning.

Dr Andrew Newman was the leading figure in the first phase of my studies and his course dramatically changed the way I study, write and think about history. It was rich in approaches taken from the field of history, philosophy, sociology, gender studies, political science and religious studies.

The University offered courses on plenty of languages. We were encouraged to study a relevant language to our area of interest; therefore I took that opportunity and enrolled in Persian. I later took German. This was very important to get access to primary sources and important scholarship written in languages other than English.

For my dissertation in the summer, I worked with Dr Andrew Marsham on the history of East Arabia in Late Antiquity and early Islam. After finishing the Masters, I immediately began the PhD programme in Islamic History under the supervision of Dr Andrew Marsham and Dr Andrew Newman. The project was on a rarely studied area, medieval Eastern Arabia, with very few sources available. However, the research techniques and approaches I learned, the inspiring conversations with my supervisors and the informed feedback helped a lot and opened new horizons for me to finish my thesis.

Upon graduation in September 2015, I returned to Kuwait and got my new job as an Assistant Professor at the History Department of Kuwait University, where I became close again to my previous teachers and newly graduated colleagues, some of whom had been my undergraduate classmates. I am teaching three courses on the history of Medieval Arabia, the history of the Seljuqs and historical research methods, in which I try to link Arabic teaching traditions with what I learned from my studies at Edinburgh. My memories of Edinburgh are still fresh and I am eager to pay a visit in the future to this city and meet with my teachers and friends.

In Praise of Area Studies: from IMES to SOAS

By Maia Entwistle (MA Arabic 2013)



Perhaps the danger of completing a degree in Area Studies without a particular specialisation as I did, graduating with a degree in Arabic from IMES in 2013, is that when you complete your degree you feel like something of a jack-of-all-trades. When I left IMES I was faced with the task of trying to lace together the textured, though at times disparate, knowledge that I had acquired into a personal and professional trajectory. My main concern was that I wanted to find a way to work at the intersection between visuals, broadly construed, and politics in the “region”. This interest had really taken root in the year I spent in Cairo as part of my undergraduate degree at IMES. Here I saw different aspects of the relationship of the visual to politics. I saw how Tahrir Square was rendered a site of political contestation through visual acts such as film screenings, murals and graffiti. While working at the Townhouse Gallery, I also saw how almost all of the contemporary artwork being produced in the region was saturated with its political dynamics.¹

Following my graduation, I applied for a variety of internships and was rejected from all on the basis of a lack of experience, until I finally got a job working at the 5th Edition of the Marrakech Biennale. This was a fascinating experience. However, it also underscored the fact that working in “the arts” was not for me. I found the political and financial structures that underpin

the art world particularly problematic. It was my sense of these structural problems which encouraged me to apply for a Master’s in International Relations at LSE. I wanted to better understand the broader political and theoretical panorama in which the confluence of MENA arts and politics was enmeshed.

I had certainly contemplated doing a PhD when I was studying at IMES but it was only towards the end of my Master’s that I decided to apply for one. It was through the PhD application process that I came to fully appreciate the virtues of an Area Studies degree. Language is, obviously, an invaluable resource when it comes to academic research. I have no doubt that having Arabic in my academic arsenal helped me to secure a PhD place. Secondly, the spread of knowledge that you receive as part of an Area Studies degree is of great value. Of course there is great value in disciplinary depth but I’m certain that the fact that I didn’t specialise in a particular discipline during my undergraduate degree allowed me to avoid having overzealous academic commitments which might act as a break on thinking. That IMES was oriented towards a geographic area without demanding any kind of disciplinary commitment was also crucial in helping me to develop the lateral intellectual platform which informs my PhD project. In the project’s working title, *Seeing like a Muslim: Popular Visual Culture, the Jihad and the Social Imaginary of the Muslim Ummah*, I can clearly see the influence of two courses that I took in my final year at IMES - one on the cinema of the MENA with Nacim Pak-Shiraz and the other on the relationship of Islam to modern society with Thomas Pierret.

Given my intellectual heritage from IMES, it is no surprise then that I have ended up deciding to take up a place at SOAS under the supervision of Laleh Khalili. In many ways, SOAS is like a scaled-up version of IMES. The regional orientation of the university means that is interdisciplinary in ways that other universities are not. I am very happy with this decision and impatient to start in September and, it seems to me, that much of this to down to IMES and my “Area Studies” degree!

1. The Townhouse Gallery, along with other arts institutions in Egypt, is facing increasing challenges from Sisi’s regime. After it was raided in December 2015, the gallery was required to obtain a new operational license from the governorate of Cairo. This new license as well as the threat of demolition that the gallery faced in April 2016 are indicative of the further encroachment of the state into all aspects of life in Egypt. The desire to regulate also shows how certain aspects of contemporary culture in Egypt are perceived as threatening to the political establishment.

Beyond IMES

By Antonia House (MA Arabic and Geography 2008)



Somehow my peripatetic days studying Arabic at Edinburgh have led to a fairly parochial life as an immigration lawyer in New York City, my hometown.

When I graduated from university in 2008, all I knew is that I wanted to return to Berlin—which I had fallen in love with before uni. After spending a couple months in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, working on my Arabic, I did go back to Berlin. I didn't have much of a plan beyond that, however, and quickly realized I wasn't suited to not having a plan.

With Berlin being somewhat of a bust, I returned to Middle Eastern Studies. I received a full scholarship—I think by virtue of my time at IMES—for a two-year master's program at New York University. I thought this would help me figure out if I wanted to pursue a PhD. By the end of year one, it was clear that I didn't. I wanted to do something that was more directly engaged in creating

social change. I spent the second year of the master's program working for Jewish Voice for Peace, and with other Palestine-solidarity organizations in New York City.

After completing the master's degree, I went back to the Middle East, this time to Israel. All my academic work had focused on Palestinian citizens of Israel, but I had only ever lived in the West Bank, and I wanted to see first-hand the situation inside Israel. I worked with two Palestinian civil rights organizations in the north, but I found it difficult to invest in a life there. In part, I felt spread too thin, geographically. Now, I wanted to build; to foster a community and grow roots; to invest in a place where I had a future. And that wasn't Israel, or even Palestine.

In 2012, I started law school, again at New York University. I felt confident that law school would equip me with skills that would allow me to engage directly in social change in my community, but I wasn't sure what direction I wanted to take my studies. For so long my life had been centered in—and my orientation was towards—a completely different part of the world. Sometimes I struggled with the urge to leave again, and had to remind myself of what I wanted to build here.

I ended up focusing my studies on immigration law, particularly the tragic interaction of the US' notorious criminal justice system with our draconian immigration laws. In 2015, I finished with graduations for good, and now I work for a community-based organization called Make the Road New York (MRNY). MRNY has offices throughout NYC and also one in Brentwood, on Long Island. Long Island has been one of the primary destinations for the many thousands of people who are fleeing violence in Central America. And while NYC has invested enormous resources in addressing this crisis, Long Island is starved for such resources.

Most of my work is representing people who were caught at the border and put into deportation proceedings. The work is emotionally draining, and—at least at the beginning—it felt unfamiliar. I knew so little about Central America, and knew from experience that one can study a region and its language for years, and only scratch the surface. Nevertheless, it is needed and necessary work, and that feels good.

I'll be at MRNY through summer 2017. I'm not sure what will come next, other than that my next job has to keep me within city limits. I'd like to keep representing immigrants for the foreseeable future. Hopefully, I'll find something that will finally allow me to dust off my Arabic!

Alumni News

Julia Wartmann (International Relations of the Middle East with Arabic) is currently working at the Al-Amari refugee camp where she manages the online crowdfunding as well as working on projects such as Iftar meal distribution. This summer Julia is part of a team delivering the integration summer camp for children living in Al-Amari where a 150 children are participating in excursions, learning handicrafts and taking part in an English course. If you would like to learn more about the summer camp or make a donation you can do so:

[https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/integration-summer-camp-at-al-amari-refugee-camp#/.](https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/integration-summer-camp-at-al-amari-refugee-camp#/)



Children taking part in activities at Al-Amari refugee camp.

Firdaus Mahmood (Arabic and Economics 2011) spent a few months travelling after completing his IMES degree, before joining the Economist Intelligence Unit in London. In 2012 Firdaus moved to Geneva where he has been working for the World Economic Forum in the International Organisations and Government Affairs team managing institutional relations with a number of Geneva-based international organisations. He also manages a specialised programme which convenes Heads of State and Government, Heads of International Organisations, global chief Executive Officers and leaders of academia and civil society, for private and off-the-records talks on global governance issues. Firdaus says that his IMES degree and the opportunities it provides, from studying in Damascus to an exchange year at the University of California, Berkley, has opened many doors during his professional career, and given him a unique and highly-valued skill-set.”

We are always looking for contributions to our Alumni News section, if you would like to share your experiences after IMES with us and feature in the next Newsletter please get in touch at imes@ed.ac.uk

Living Islam



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World at the University of Edinburgh invites photographers from across the UK to take part in its 2016 photography competition 'Living Islam'. We are looking for creative and inspiring images which capture the many ways in which Islam is lived and experienced across the UK.

Cash prizes will be awarded to the best photographs selected by our expert panel.

Deadline 30th September 2016

For more information including how to enter your photos visit: www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk.

Any questions? Contact us: thealwaleedcentre@ed.ac.uk

Threshold Concepts in IMES

Dr Majied Robinson, Leverhulme Fellow
majied.robinson@ed.ac.uk



A few years ago I was leading an IMES seminar. The students had submitted a short summary of an article and they had all argued that it was convincing and made good use of the evidence. In the seminar we slowly came to the conclusion that it was actually a simplistic argument founded upon crude ethnic stereotypes. I asked them to reconcile what they now thought with what they had previously written. For a few moments there was silence. “Great,” said someone as the implications of the lesson began to sink in. “You’ve ruined books forever.”

The student had learned that just because something is in a book it doesn’t mean that it is true. More important, the student understood that this would affect everything they read from that point onwards; rather than reading passively, they would henceforth read critically. This is referred to as a ‘threshold concept’—a technical term for a ‘light-bulb moment’.

It’s been argued that good teaching should be built around threshold concepts because they make permanent changes; once learned they can never be unlearned. (Factual knowledge can be forgotten and skills can become rusty.)

Designing courses around threshold concepts is not easy. Academics—who crossed many thresholds in their training—are often vague in explaining what it is that they actually do. This is because it has become second nature—the learning process itself disappears into a receding past.

The result is often a gap between the expectations of academics and the abilities of students.

In order to bridge this gap I have been carrying out a project in IMES in which I interviewed all research staff and some students to get them to outline the ways they think and practice. I am now working with colleagues to come up with a typology of threshold concepts within IMES from the 70,000 words of interview data. Early results are encouraging—patterns are emerging of a distinctive IMES approach to sources and theory and nuanced opinions about the role of language in teaching and research that I wouldn’t expect to find in many other places in the university.

But academics talking about themselves is only one part of the project. Ultimately I am most interested in what the students think of their learning experiences, especially the alumni who can look back with a different perspective to those of us still studying or teaching in the department. So please contact me with any thoughts you have on your learning experiences with us—whether they are thresholds you crossed, or lessons you enjoyed, or ways you think we could have done better—as your contributions will help us improve the design of IMES courses and programmes in the future.