

# IMES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Issue 5, Summer 2015



## From the Head of IMES

By Anthony Gorman



Welcome to the 2015 summer issue of the IMES Alumni Newsletter. As is customary this marks the most recent crop of IMES graduates, both undergraduate and postgraduate. Congratulations to all on your achievements and our best wishes for the future.

The last few months have been busy in IMES. We feature here coverage of some of the notable occasions, including the visit of Dr Nawal al-Saadawi from Egypt and of Prof. Muhammad Al-Turaihi from Baghdad, the convening of the third of the Holy Places conferences, as well as reports on our regular research seminar series and updates on Iranian studies and our postgraduate programmes.

And there is more to come! At the end of August the inaugural Arab Festival will be launched – all are welcome (see details above). Once the academic year begins we resume our regular Monday evening research seminar series. In October we will be staging a special programme of lectures and an academic colloquium to mark the 50th anniversary of Montgomery Watt's inaugural lecture as Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Arabic pedagogy continues to be a primary focus for IMES. In addition to Jonathan Featherstone's regular Taste of Arabic column, we feature Lucy Johnson's review of the Arabic teaching training sessions. Dr Richard Todd, long-time shaykh of undergraduate Arabic in IMES, looks back even further on the history of Arabic language teaching in Britain.

We are also pleased to include a number of alumni contributions, reporting on what paths they have taken since leaving IMES. Some are from more recent graduates but we also carry a moving piece from Abdulrafi O. Omotosho, who graduated as a PhD student more than 30 years ago, and who serves as our guest contributor in the History of IMES series.

Once again, we look forward to hearing from you. If you wish to submit something for our next newsletter, want to be put on the mailing list, or just want to say hi, please drop us a line at [imeasalumni@ed.ac.uk](mailto:imeasalumni@ed.ac.uk)

Join us for the  
Edinburgh  
Arab Festival  
2015



Nasrid Palace  
Alhambra,  
Granada  
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Haneef

## Issue no. 5

### Editor and Head of IMES

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### With thanks to

Aurangzeb Haneef for his photos, and to all our contributors, especially Lucy Johnson

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](mailto:imesalumni@ed.ac.uk)

The views expressed in the newsletter are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect that of IMES.

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# Congratulations!

## Latest crop of IMES graduates

(with thanks to the IMES office)

The following were awarded their postgraduate and undergraduate degrees at the graduations in July 2015. We wish you all the very best for the future.

### IMES Undergraduate Programme

#### Arabic

Joakim Bjornestad  
Frederike Gardiner  
Annie Hamill  
Michael Hutchison  
Polina Polyakoff  
Anastasia Prusakowski

#### Arabic and French

Judith Atwell  
Rachel Bryson  
Zoe Roberts  
Isla Winchester

#### Arabic and Persian

Dodie Shoshan

#### Arabic and Politics

Keziah Berelson  
Louisa Maxwell

#### Arabic and Social Anthropology

Simen Holm

#### Arabic and Spanish

Chloe Paterson

#### Middle Eastern Studies

Dagmar Angelovicova  
Ivan Bernal Palli  
Jirapon Boonpor

### IMES PhD Programme

Hannah-Lena Hagemann

'History and Memory: Kharijism in Early Islamic Historiography'

Lina Mohamad

'The Burden of Valour: The Hero and the Terrorist-Villain in Post-9/11 Popular Fiction'

Michael Munnik

'Points of Contact: A Qualitative Fieldwork Study of Relationships between Journalists and Muslim Sources in Glasgow'

### Undergraduate Prize Winners

The **Irene Crawford Prize** for the best final year student was awarded to: Annie Hamill (Arabic)

The **Carole Hillenbrand Prize** for the best undergraduate dissertation was shared:

Keziah Berelson, 'Feminism and Sites of Resistance in Nawal el Saadawi's *Twelve Women in a Cell*'

Dodie Shoshan, 'Contextualising Sex Reassignment Surgery: An Analysis of Heteronormalisation in Iran'



Student and staff celebrating the graduation of 2015





(Below) Michael Hutchison celebrates with family and Dr Andrew Newman



(Left) Worthy Prize Winners:(LtoR) Keziah Berelson, Dodie Shoshan, Annie Hamill



Graduates, staff and families celebrating the occasion

# Staff News



Left to right. Andrew Marsham, Andrew Newman, Songul Mecit, Serpil Özdemir, Anthony Gorman

## Comings and Goings

In September Andrew Marsham and Thomas Pierret are due to return to IMES after a period of research leave with expectations of publication. Meanwhile in turn Andrew Newman begins a full year of leave in 2015/16 in order to work on his volume on al-Shaykh al-Saduq (d. 991). Majied Robinson (IMES PhD 2013) took up residence in the department as a Levehulme Postdoctoral Fellowship in May.

After two years of teaching Turkish in the department, Serpil Özdemir has now left IMES to return to Turkey. We marked her departure at a nearby café (left) and wish her well as we await the arrival of the next Atatürk Fellow. Farewell also to Jade Scott-Meikle, CASAW Administrator, who served most capably in her post; she has been succeeded by Marie McPherson. We welcome Alaa Sulaiman who will be joining us during the first semester as a CASAW Teaching Fellow.

## IMES in Print

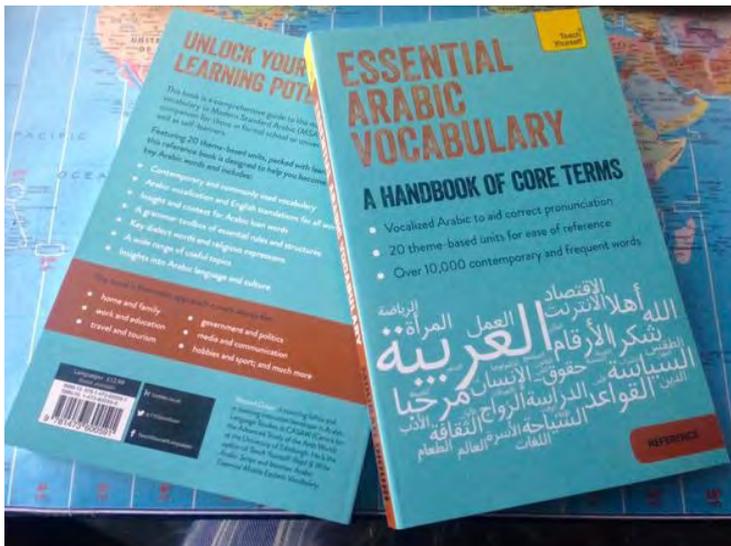
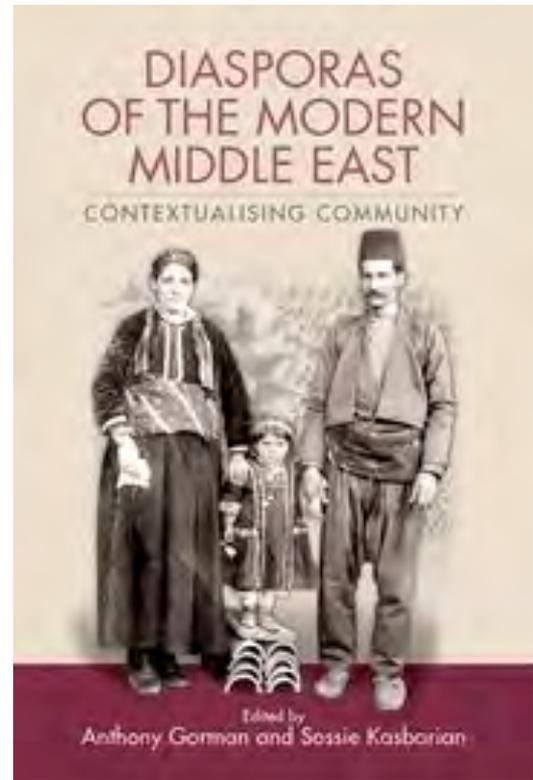
The last 6 months have been a productive period for IMES scholarship (see pp. 7-8). In books alone we have an impressive record. Congratulations to Ines Aščerić-Todd on the publication of her monograph with Brill; and to Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (former CASAW postdoctoral fellow at Edinburgh) on their edited volume, *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East* (EUP). Andreas Görke's four volume anthology of articles on Muhammad has appeared, as has Mourad Diouri's *The Essential Arabic Vocabulary*. Finally an Arabic translation of Anthony Gorman's *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth Century Egypt* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) was recently published in Cairo under the imprint of the Ministry of Culture.



Farah Aboubakr at her PhD graduation ceremony, University of Manchester

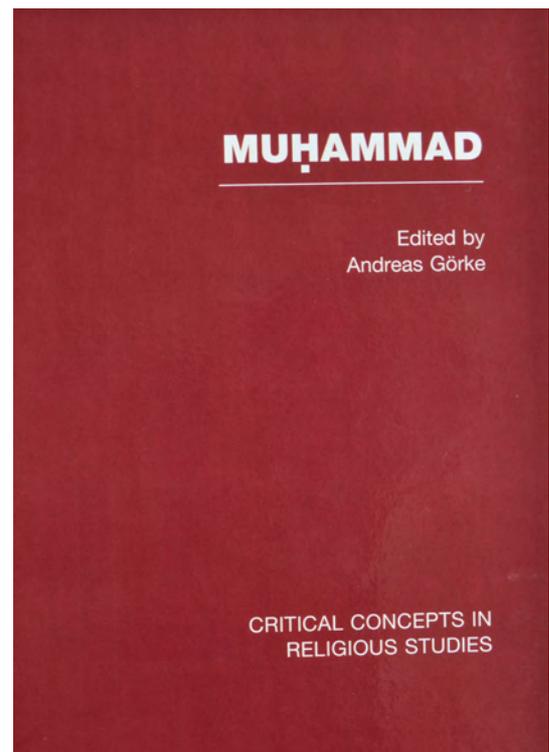
# IMES Publications

**Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (eds.)** *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualising Community*.  
Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2015.



**Mourad Diouri.** *The Essential Arabic Vocabulary: A Handbook of Core Terms*.  
Hodder Education, 2015.

**Andreas Görke (ed.)**.  
*Muhammad: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*.  
London: Routledge, 2015.





**Ines Aščerić-Todd.** *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia: Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society.* Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Congratulations to all the authors on the publication of their books.



**Anthony Gorman.** *al-Mu'arrikhun wa al-dawla wa al-siyasa fi misr al-qarn al-'ashrin, hawla tashkil huwiyya al-umma,* Cairo, 2015. (Arabic translation of *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth Century Egypt: Contesting the Nation.* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).



# A Taste of Arabic Roots

By Jonathan Featherstone, Senior Arabic Teaching Fellow

## Mind your Root!

One of the most distinguishing factors of Arabic and all Semitic languages is the three letter root system which, according to Arabic teachers, makes the language very logical to learn. They explain to learners that knowing the root can help in understanding a new word not encountered previously.

A good example of this is the root: ج - م - ع j-m-‘

This root throws up many words which are semantically related and relatively clear to see from the root as can be seen in the table below:

| جامعة      | اجتماع   | مجتمع    | مجموعة     | جماعة   |
|------------|----------|----------|------------|---------|
| jaami'a    | ijtimaa‘ | mujtama‘ | majmuu‘a   | jamaa‘a |
| university | meeting  | society  | collection | group   |

There are nonetheless a number of roots which often surprise learners by throwing up a word which on first glance appears to have very little to do with the basic meaning of the root.

Even one of the common roots such as: ك - ت - ب ك - ت - ب (writing) can surprise us by giving us the word katiiba/kataa'ib كتاب / كتبية which means army regiment which on the surface at least does not appear to have anything to do with books and writing.

Another type of surprise often occurs due to loan words. Loan words can often puzzle learners because they often share the same main letters of a root which has a totally different meaning.

Two interesting examples of such loanwords are:

- 1) sifr / asfaar أسفار / سفر (book of the Bible) This is unrelated in meaning to words such as safar سفر, safir سفير and sifaara سفارة travel, ambassador and embassy. In this case the word has probably entered Arabic from Hebrew.
- 2) kaniisa/kana'is كنائس / كنيسة church plus its masculine version kaniis/kunus كُنُس / كنيس synagogue are unrelated to the Arabic verb kanasa كُنَس to sweep, miknasa مكنسة broom. However, the root k-n-s in Hebrew means to assemble, hence the Hebrew word kneset is not only the parliament but is also technically a place of assembly which makes it likely to have influenced the Arabic.

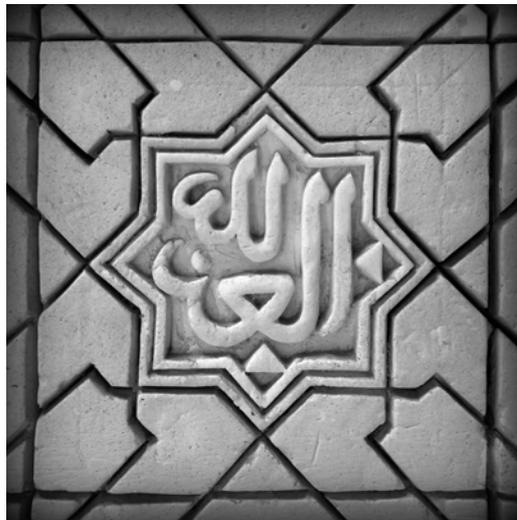
There are also a number of Arabic roots which are used for more than one main concept. Below are a couple of examples of this:

- 1) q-r-n ق - ر - ن The Form 3 verb qaaran/yuqaarin يقارن / قارن has little in common with qarn/quruun قرون / قرن which interestingly means century as well as horn.
- 2) q-T-r ق - ط - ر This root has a wide range of uses such as:

|                    |             |                        |
|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| quTr/aqTaar        | قطر / أقطار | region, sector         |
| quTr/aqTaar        | قطر / أقطار | diameter of a circle   |
| qiTaar / qitaaraat | قطار / ات   | train, train of camels |
| quTra/quTur        | قطرة / قطر  | droplet                |
| istiqTaar          | استقطار     | distillation           |
| qaTar              | قطر         | The state of Qatar     |

A particularly interesting root is l-H-m ل - ح - م which we associate with the word lahm لحم *meat*. We need to remember that the verb laHHama/yulaHHim يلحم / لحم means *to solder* and therefore laHHaam لحم is used to mean a *butcher* as well as a *solderer*! Finally the word malHama means *epic* or *fierce battle* and is used as the standard word for *war* in Hebrew.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the root system helps in increasing Arabic learners' ability to enrich their vocabulary. This is not only due to the connections roots provide but also due to the fascinating exceptions which can often be found.



Honour Belongs  
to God. Tile work  
in Fez, Morocco.  
© Aurangzeb  
Haneef

# History of IMES (part 5)

By Abdulrafi Oyewumi Omotosho, PhD University of Edinburgh (1984)



## BRIEF NOTE ON MY LIFE IN EDINBURGH AND AFTER

My name is Abdulrafi Oyewumi Omotosho and I registered for my PhD on 24 November 1978. After about 12 months as a supervised postgraduate student, I was upgraded to PhD candidate status and was supervised by Dr. Ian Keith Anderson Howard. At the time I joined the Department, Professor William Montgomery Watt was the Head of Department. He retired shortly afterwards in June 1979 and Professor Elwell-Sutton took over until his retirement. Professor Derek Latham came from England to head the Department and was there when I graduated in 1984.

Other academic staff in the Department at the time included: Dr. MacDonald, Dr. C. Hillenbrand, Dr. Zaburi Tabrizi and others whose names I cannot remember. I can still remember some of my colleagues: from Nigeria we had M. A. Abubakar who is now a Professor of Arabic Language at Bayero University, Kano; Nura Aliyu who later rose to the rank of Ambassador in the Nigerian Foreign Office. Khalid Aliv, Qibla Ayas and Sulaiman all from Pakistan, Abdullah Aliv Hassan from the University of Malaya, Malaysia with whom I still maintain regular contact and who is now a Professor in Islamic Law. Others were Marzuq Timbawi and Adnan from Saudi Arabia, and Umm Salama and Muhammad Mahdi from Sudan.

### My Experience in Edinburgh

I spent almost seven years in Edinburgh. It was quite an exciting and memorable period and I enjoyed the goodwill of everybody from the university management and Department to my colleagues. I had come straight from Saudi Arabia immediately after my LLB from the Islamic University of Medina. My background in English was very poor but the Department assisted me to overcome that challenge. I came as a private student (non governmental) and the following year after my registration, the Conservative Party won the election and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. She increased school fees for foreign students. The situation was serious enough for me to withdraw but my supervisor prevailed on the university to give me preferential treatment by reducing my school fee to an affordable level. For months the accommodation office used to pay my landlord on my behalf pending arrival of my money. The understanding shown by everybody went a long way to help me complete my programme.

Above: The scene as Montgomery Watt retires from more than 30 years' service at the University of Edinburgh in 1979. Those identifiable are, from the left in the foreground, Umm Salama (Sudan); in the centre besuited from left to right, Dr John R. Walsh, Prof. Laurence Elwell-Sutton and Prof. Montgomery Watt; directly to the right of Watt is Khalid Alvi (d. 2008) and Durrashawar Sayyed (both from Pakistan). Omotosho, a PhD student at the time, is further right behind her.



Apart from that, I enjoyed my stay in Edinburgh. (The city was much quieter than what I met when I came in August 2013 though the volume of the people around then may have been due to the Edinburgh Festival.) I love the city and I always dream of it. I stayed in different parts of the city. On arrival I was hosted for about a week by the close friend of my brother who was heading the Edinburgh office of the Nigerian High Commission. He was staying on the hill behind Morningside. Later on I moved to 24 Rankeillor Street and later stayed in Pollock Halls for 2 years. After more addresses, I finally moved to East London Street and remained there until I defended my PhD on 4 July, 1984 and left Edinburgh in August 1984. Since that time, I have been dreaming of visiting Edinburgh and I wasn't able to do that till August 2013.

### **Life After Graduation**

I returned to Nigeria in September 1984 and went straight to the Headquarters of the National Youth Service in Lagos to register for the mandatory year of National Youth Service. My qualifications gave them no other option but to post me to a University. I was posted first to University of Ilorin about 300km from Lagos. At the time the University had no provision for me as an expert on Islamic Law so I was redeployed to the University of Lagos which had no position for me but retained me for the remaining ten months of my service period after 2 months at Unilorin.

Before I left Edinburgh, I had responded to an advert from the University of Jos, about 950km to Lagos and 800km from my State. Because of the distance, I didn't pay attention to the application but the university did. They wrote to all addresses indicated in my application. Miss Crawford forwarded me the one sent to Edinburgh. The University persuaded me to come and I visited their campus in August 1985, where the interview was conducted and the appointment letter was issued to me the same day.

I took up the appointment reluctantly with the hope that I would move to the south within five years. I ended staying there for about 24 years. I rose from the rank of Lecturer II at the time of appointment to Professor in 2008. In December 2008, I moved to University of Ilorin in Kwara State. Throughout my stay in Jos I taught and supervised. Apart from that, I coordinated my unit for some years. On arrival in Ilorin, I was asked to head my department and 4 months later, I was also asked to start the Centre for International Education (International Office). I managed the two offices concurrently until I was relieved of the headship of department in August 2010. After the expiration of my tenure in the Centre in August 2011, I was requested to start another Directorate, namely the Unilorin Archives and Documentation Centre. When my tenure expired in August 2013, I was able to go back to my department but that only lasted for one session.

In August 2014, I was appointed to head another directorate called the Centre for Affiliated Institutions. My tenure in the Centre may last till 2017. In Ilorin and in all Nigerian Universities, an appointment as Dean or Director does not relieve you of your teaching load no matter how busy the office is. The best your head can do for you is to reduce your teaching load if possible.

Apart from the Universities of Jos and Ilorin, I have also had contact with Nasarawa State University. The University was established in 2003 and in January 2004 I was requested to start a Department of Religious Studies. My University granted me sabbatical leave to carry out the assignment. I was there for 13 months. At the end of my visit, the University appointed me Visiting Professor, a position I still maintain up till present.

# Iranian Studies Updates

## Why Edinburgh is One of the Best Places for Iranian Studies

By Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz, Senior Lecturer in Film and Persian Studies

### Degree Programmes

Persian has been studied at Edinburgh for over 100 years. We are one of the few universities in the UK that offer a single honours programme in Persian Studies in addition to a number of exciting and challenging joint degree programmes including Persian and English Literature; Arabic and Persian; Persian and Philosophy; Persian and Politics; Persian and Social Anthropology, and Persian and Middle Eastern Studies. Since her arrival in 2012 our Persian Language instructor, Dr Azin Haghighi, has set an enviably high standard for the teaching of Persian language that is the basis of these degrees.

We are very excited to launch our new **MSc in Persian Civilisation** this September. This MSc will introduce students to the grand sweep 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 post-Revolutionary era when Iran established itself as a theocratic Islamic Republic.

One of the unique features of this programme is that unlike other Persian/Iranian studies programmes, which focus on the history and politics or literatures and languages of the region, the MSc in Persian Civilisation will go beyond these approaches to introduce students to the arts and culture of Iran, from the architecture and iconography of the ancient and medieval periods to the performing arts and film of contemporary Iran.

It provides a wide-ranging academic training and learning experience, unique in the field of Persian Studies, particularly for those who wish to engage with both the pre-Islamic and Islamic cultures of Iran, and for those wishing to combine research projects at postgraduate level with specialist methodological, theoretical, literary, and historiographical training.

For further details please visit:

[http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees?id=773&cw\\_xml=details.php](http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees?id=773&cw_xml=details.php)



*A Few Kilos of Dates for a Funeral* (2011), directed by Saman Salur, one of the films screened at the Iranian Film Festival in Edinburgh, 2015

## Academic Staff

Edinburgh is home to a number of leading international scholars in the field of Iranian studies and associated fields: Dr Andrew Newman (Shi'ism and Safavid Iran); Prof. Carole Hillenbrand (medieval Persian texts); Prof. Robert Hillenbrand (Islamic art and architecture); Prof. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (Achaemenid Iran); Prof. Eberhard Sauer (Archaeology of Sasanian Iran); Dr Alain George (Islamic Art, including the art of pre-modern Iran); and Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz (Iranian film).

We are passionate about studying Iran and not simply within the traditional academic environment. In addition to teaching and research, IMES has promoted a better understanding of Iran through its collaborations with other institutions and organisations. Recent events and activities relating to Persian and Iranian Studies include:

### Dr Newman's Shii News and Resources

Dr Newman's 'Shii News and Resources' website, at [www.shii-news.imes.ed.ac.uk](http://www.shii-news.imes.ed.ac.uk), is an outgrowth of his 'Shii News' listserv which was launched in 2009 with some 70 members; it now comprises more than 635 members worldwide. Postings cover Shi'i affairs in the diaspora as well as academic events and publications on all aspects of the history and culture of all forms of Shii Islam. Those interested in joining the list can register on line at the site above.

### Edinburgh Iranian Film Festival (Feb 2015)

Curated by Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz, the Iranian Film Festival was held at the Filmhouse Cinema and included 8 feature films a number of which were UK and Scottish Premieres.

### The Visual World of Persianate Cultures: From Antiquity to the Present (Oct 2014) (see *Newsletter* no. 4 for a report)

Co-organised by Drs Yuka Kadoi, Nacim Pak-Shiraz and Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, this three-day international conference brought together scholars speaking on various aspects of the visual culture in Iran.

### Edinburgh International Film Festival (June 2014)

Organised by Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz, 'With the Filmmakers: Continuities and Discontinuities in Iranian Cinema', was a rare occasion in which Iranian filmmakers and leading academics in the field were brought together to offer their insights and opinions on the process of filmmaking, and discuss the socio-political statements made by many of these films. Among those involved in discussions were the distinguished Iranian filmmaker Ebrahim Golestan as well as Mania Akbari and Sara Rastegar. In addition, Dr Pak-Shiraz introduced 12 films and chaired Q&A post-screening discussions including with filmmakers Niki Karimi and Mehran Tamaddon.

### Lust, Tragedy and War: The *Shahnameh* in Theatre (February 2014)

A thrilling performance by Xanthe Gresham of section of *The Shahnameh* – the epic Persian masterpiece *The Book of Kings*.

### Rashid al-Din's *World History* (see *Newsletter* no. 3)

2014 was the 700th anniversary of the production of a copy of the *World History* of Rashid al-Din - one of the masterpieces of medieval Persian manuscripts. From August to October an exhibition of the Rashid al-Din manuscript was held at the Edinburgh University Library, a collaboration between the Alwaleed bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World and the Centre for Research Collections, University of Edinburgh.

### Library

In addition to holding a comprehensive collection of books on Iran and Iranian Studies, the library is also home to some very important Persian manuscripts, most notably a copy of the *World History* of Rashid al-Din.

## Last Word

We end with a quote from our external examiner's report this year:

'...based on the evidence of student performance, material provided and discussion with the teaching staff, the standards of teaching are as high as the top universities offering degrees in Persian Studies... Overall the Edinburgh Persian is among the best in the UK.'

What more can we say!

For events relating to Iranian studies at the University of Edinburgh, please Like our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/UoEPersianStudies>



## Shedding Light on Hidden Places

By Lucy Johnson, MA Arabic and Spanish (2009)

Saudi Arabia is mainly known for one reason in terms of cinema and film: the complete absence of cinemas throughout the country. Unlike nearby Egypt and Lebanon, there is little home-grown cinema (with the notable exception of *Wajda* and a burgeoning, lively group using YouTube as their medium). Seasoned professionals Nancy Paton (director, producer, actor) and Danae Hatzaki (production director, artist and illustrator) expected their time in the Kingdom to be film project free, but after a chance meeting in Riyadh, they formed a productive, unexpected working relationship. *Postpartum* (2015) is their second short film collaboration together, and their first produced in Riyadh.

Finding themselves in Riyadh, Nancy and Danae teamed up with acclaimed Saudi photographer Marwa AlMugait to bring a script recently written by Nancy to life, through a series of beginner film

workshops with entirely female participants of all nationalities and backgrounds. The central concept of *Postpartum* is portraying the isolation and depression experienced by one wealthy mother, Claire, after the birth of her son James. Her acute disconnection from day to day events is emphasised by the setting: a luxurious Riyadh compound, a bleak setting which becomes the backdrop for Claire's deteriorating sense of self.

*Postpartum* is Nancy's first attempt at building an all-female film crew in Saudi Arabia. (A previous attempt to work with an all-female crew in London was only partially successful due to difficulty finding suitably qualified professionals). Nancy carefully guided all the participants through a well-designed introduction to film techniques, then assigned each participant a key role in the filming that followed. Danae was to comment many times that she felt that the crew were as hard-working as professionals, and the experience was empowering and positive for everyone involved, from sound re-recording mixer Sara to talented stills photographer Ghada al-Osaimi.

There was a professional and focused atmosphere throughout, as Nancy juggled multiple responsibilities alongside her moving portrayal of the principal character. Matthew Gallivan played Claire's husband, who turns in a tense performance as the partner who is unable to break through the layers of sadness which eventually overwhelm Claire. Despite the heavy shooting schedule, Nancy is already poised to leap into her next projects, which are likely to focus more explicitly on Saudi women's issues, which are merely glimpsed in this short. It is also on the cards that this concept will become a yearly or twice-yearly project in Riyadh.

One of the primary aims of the workshop was to empower the women involved to follow up on their creative instincts, in whichever field most speaks to them. It seems likely that the professionalism of Nancy, Danae and Marwa will inspire those involved to continue with projects old and new, and each participant can also feel justly proud when the film appears at numerous international film festivals, beginning with the Dubai International Film Festival in December 2015.

This film offers a rare glimpse of a world that is seldom depicted on screen, and we can hope to see great things from the Saudi women involved in the production in the future, whether in terms of creative projects, or in terms of carving out spaces in the professional sphere which are not usually open to women.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4693316/>

<http://www.marwahalmugait.com/>

*Postpartum*,  
Directed by  
Nancy Paton  
2015.

# Cabbalists, Calvinists, and the Genesis of Arabic Studies

By Dr Richard Todd, Teaching Fellow (Arabic and Turkish)

Those of us who have ever been made to feel that studying Arabic is somehow novel or odd should take heart in a simple but often overlooked fact: Arabic has been taught at the top universities of Europe and North America for far longer than the vernacular tongues – English, French, German et al – and their literatures. Professorial chairs of Arabic were first founded at Paris in 1539, Leiden in 1613, Cambridge in 1632, and Oxford in 1636, predating the creation at those institutions of chairs in modern European languages by some two hundred years at least; and Arabic has been taught at Harvard since the middle of the seventeenth century, and at Edinburgh since the middle of the eighteenth.

The reasons for Arabic's formal admission into the Western academic canon of classical tongues – alongside Greek, Latin, and Hebrew – are numerous. Although partly connected with the traditional theological curricula of Western universities, they also reflect the religio-political dynamics of Reformation Europe. Due to its close family resemblance to Hebrew, Arabic (like Syriac, Chaldaic and Ethiopic) was valued by students of theology, especially Protestants, for the light it could potentially throw on the original language of the Old Testament. In addition, it was hoped – ostensibly at any rate – that knowledge of Arabic would prove useful in efforts to convert Muslims to Christianity, especially at a time when the burgeoning sea powers of the Netherlands and England were coming into contact with the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.



Though studied primarily by students of Christian theology, Arabic was often of interest to humanist scholars, who sought to rediscover the literary classics of non-Christian cultures. The foremost Greek classicists of their day, the sixteenth-century Calvinists Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon, actively encouraged their students to study Arabic, of which Scaliger himself had acquired a good command.

The religio-political rivalries of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe also led to diplomatic overtures and rapprochements between the Protestant states of the north and their potential allies against Catholic Hapsburg Spain, namely the Ottomans and the sultans of Morocco. Indeed, perceived parallels between Islam and the teachings of Luther were adduced on all sides of the divide to suit the purposes of rapprochement or polemics. One seventeenth-century Moroccan ambassador in particular, Ahmad al-Hajari, played a key role in aiding and instructing Europe's pioneering Arabists whilst resident in Paris. His support, though, was not always given due recognition. The illustrious Thomas Erpenius, whom al-Hajari had assisted in a translation of Arabic proverbs (and who would go on to become Leiden's first professor of Arabic), famously referred to al-Hajari as 'some Moroccan merchant' who 'could in no way help me in [Arabic] grammar, but freely acknowledged and admired my mastery thereof.'

It was within the framework of nascent diplomatic relations, too, that some of the foremost early Arabists undertook their expeditions to the East. This is true of the first holder of the chair of Arabic at Paris – the oldest of its kind in Europe – Guillaume Postel. Postel spent years in Istanbul and the Levant, initially in the service of a French diplomatic mission to the Ottoman sultan. There he studied the languages, history, religion, and thought of the Muslim world; and the broad knowledge he acquired of those disciplines is reflected in the large, discerning collection of Islamic manuscripts that he brought back with him to Europe and which now forms the core of the Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscript collections housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Postel was famed for his wide-ranging talents, with interests extending from comparative religion and philology (he is the author of the first textbook of Arabic grammar in a Western language) to cartography and astronomy. His esoteric leanings also mark him out as belonging to that peculiar brand of Renaissance or Reformation scholar influenced by the blend of Cabbala, Hermeticism and Neoplatonism that coalesced under the patronage of the Medici family in fifteenth-century Florence.

As skilled in Hebrew as he was in Arabic, Postel was especially interested in the Jewish esoteric tradition or Cabbala and translated into Latin some of its seminal works. It would appear that he was also influenced – in his choice of titles for his books at any rate – by Islamic mysticism, as the title of his work *Abconditorum Clavis* was almost certainly inspired by the Arabic *Miftah al-ghayb*, a generic title (of Koranic origin) often encountered in Sufi literature.

How did Europe's first professor of Arabic end his days? He was declared insane by the Inquisition and spent the rest of his life in seclusion. Again, in the broad context of Western academia, nothing novel or odd about that.

# Islamic Studies in Scotland

## Marking the Life and Work of W.M. Watt



AN OCCASION TO MARK THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE INAUGURAL LECTURE OF WILLIAM MONTGOMERY WATT AS THE FIRST PROFESSOR OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES IN SCOTLAND IN OCTOBER 1965

*'ISLAMIC STUDIES IN SCOTLAND: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT'*

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 6 – 8 pm, Playfair Library, Public Event

The programme will be:

**Professor Carole Hillenbrand**, Professor Emerita of Islamic History, University of Edinburgh  
'Montgomery Watt, the Man and the Scholar'

*A reflection on Watt's role in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies both before and after his retirement in 1979, the development of Islamic Studies in Edinburgh during his time in the Department, and an overall assessment of his scholarly achievements on early Islam as well as his more popular writings on Islam and interfaith issues.*

**Professor Fred Donner**, Professor of Near Eastern History, University of Chicago  
'The Study of Islam's Origins since W. Montgomery Watt's Publications'

*An assessment of Watt's work and then the response in the light of the 'revisionist wave' of the 1970s with a review of the current state of scholarship of the study of Islam's origins and the Qur'anic text.*

**Dr Richard Holloway**, FRSE  
'Committed Openness: a Glance at William Montgomery Watt's Religious Life'

*Prof Watt's contribution to the discussion of wider religious questions in Scotland, through both his publications and his role as a priest of the Scottish Episcopal Church.*

Professor  
William  
Montgomery  
Watt  
(1909-2006)



## ACADEMIC COLLOQUIUM: REPRESENTATIONS OF MUHAMMAD

On the following day, Saturday, 24 October, we will be holding an academic colloquium which will bring together scholars from both Edinburgh and abroad. The list of speakers is as follows:

Chair: **Dr Andrew Marsham**, University of Edinburgh

**Dr Andreas Goerke**, University of Edinburgh  
Muhammad and the Biblical Tradition, The case of Zaynab bint Jahsh

**Dr Christiane Gruber**, University of Michigan  
Muhammad among the Great Men of the World: Enlightenment, Nationhood, and Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Iranian Carpets

**Prof. Wilferd Madelung**, Institute of Ismaili Studies  
Muhammad, Khadija and 'Umar

**Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz**, University of Edinburgh  
Representing Muhammad on Screen

**Dr Nicolai Sinai**, University of Oxford  
Muhammad and the Prophetology of the Medinan Qur'an

**Dr John Tolan**, University of Nantes  
The Ecumenical Turn: Massignon, Watt, and 20<sup>th</sup>-century European Scholarship on Muhammad

This promises to be a most memorable occasion and will provide a unique opportunity not only to assess the state of the field since Watt's pioneering work but also to hear about the latest scholarship on the subject. It also makes clear the continuing importance of Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

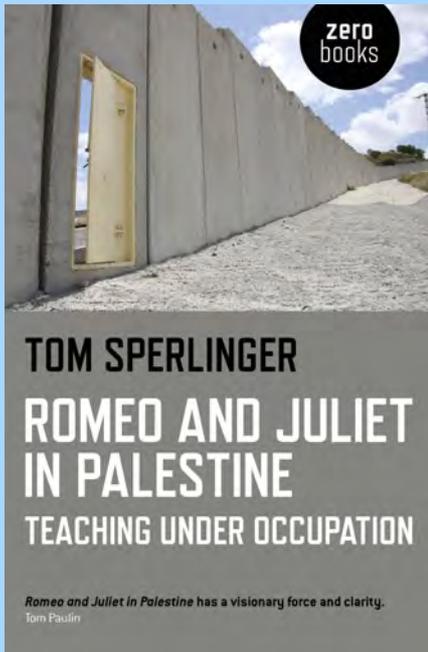
Both events will be held in the Playfair Library at the University of Edinburgh. Further details will be advertised in due course.

1. Iranian Carpet, *Great Men of the World*, detail, prophet Muhammad (no. 18). With thanks to Christiane Gruber

# Focusing on Palestine

## IMES Spring Seminar Review

By Sarah Irving, PhD Candidate IMES



The IMES lecture series for the spring semester of 2015 focused on Palestine. Thanks, perhaps, to the topical subject – aided and abetted by a more ambitious use of social media than is usual from the department – most of the lectures saw the usual venue of G02 packed out, and many new faces joining the audience. The organisers of the series were a group of postgraduate students and junior staff, namely Abla Oudeh, Saverio Leopardi, Sarah Irving and Farah Aboubakr.

A rather last-minute cancellation meant that instead of Crusader history, the series kicked off with Tom Sperlinger of Bristol University reflecting on his experiences teaching English literature at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. This fantastically popular talk was perhaps the only time that IMES has encountered Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* blended with colloquial Arabic and Scouse slang to see Romeo dubbed a 'beenie' and 'Ju' a 'sloobag' who has been consorting with 'a soft lad in a Merc.' Tom's book, on which the lecture was based, is now out with Zero Books.

By some unexpected blessing, all of our other speakers arrived in place and on time, and delivered discussions of a broad range of topics. Events on literature and film were especially popular, with great responses to talks from Jumana Bayeh of Macquarie University in Australia on the figure of the Palestinian in Lebanese diaspora novels; Anna Bernard of King's College London on documentary films about Palestine and their role in solidarity movements; and IMES' own Farah Aboubakr, freshly graduated with a PhD from the University of Manchester (congratulations Farah!) speaking on Palestinian folktales.

On the gritty reality of Palestinian life, we heard Glenn Bowman of the University of Kent on 'an Israeli logic of ethnic cleansing'; Chris Harker from Durham on consumer debt amongst the modern population of Ramallah; and Sarah Marsden from St Andrews on the history of Israeli terrorism and the extremist leader Meir Kahane.

As seems to have become a tradition in recent years, Professor Carole Hillenbrand closed the series with a standing-room-only lecture on Saladin's victory over the Crusaders, and the sad disarray into which his Ayyubid heirs rapidly descended. For anyone wishing to know more about the speakers and the subjects of their talks, the series website is still available at <https://edinburghpalestinelectures.wordpress.com/>



Dr Anthony Gorman introducing Prof. Carol Hillenbrand before her talk on Jerusalem under the Ayyubids.

# Showcasing New Research

## IMES Autumn Seminar Series 2015

The IMES research seminar for the coming semester is not fully finalised but below we list the scheduled presentations. The programme covers a broad range of subjects but offer some focus on Shi'ism, and a platform for our promising PhD students.

|              |  |  |
|--------------|--|--|
| 21 September | Thomas Pierret<br><i>University of Edinburgh</i>   | Farewell to the Vanguard: Syria's Ahrar al-Sham Islamic Movement and Wartime De-radicalization   |
| 28 September | <i>PhD Presentations:</i><br>Sarah Irving<br><br>Jonah Fras<br><i>University of Edinburgh</i>    | 1) Nathan al-Hakim: Elias Haddad and 'German Enlightenment values' in Mandate Palestine<br>2) Facebook Counts and Mourning the Martyr: Remediation and Media Ideologies in Jordanian Radio |
| 5 October    | Prof. Janet Watson<br><i>University of Leeds</i>   | Documenting Endangered Languages: The case of Modern South Arabian with a focus on Mehri and Shahri (Jibbali)  |
| 12 October   | Dr. Ahmed Khaleel<br><i>University of York</i>   | One of a Kind: The Cinematic Style of the Poetry of Ahmed Matar  |
| 19 October   | Dr Stephen Burge<br><i>Institute of Isma'ili Studies</i>   | The 'Hadith Literature': What is it? And Where is it?  |
| 26 October   | Prof. Wilfred Madelung<br><i>University of Oxford</i>  | The Origins of the Conflict between Sunni and Shi'i Islam  |
| 02 November  | Simon W. Fuchs<br><i>Princeton University</i>  | Transnational Shi'ism and the Endangered Promise of Pakistan: Rethinking Sunni-Shi'i Sectarianism in South Asia  |
| 09 November  | Dr Helen Pfeifer<br><i>University of Cambridge</i>   | Title to be confirmed.   |
| 16 November  | Francesca Fuoli<br><i>School of Oriental and African Studies</i>                                 | Afghanistan Shia Minorities: Politics and Sectarian tensions during the second Afghan war (1878-1881)  |
| 23 November  | tbc  |  |
| 30 November  | Dr Toby Matthiesen<br><i>University of Oxford</i>  | Sectarianism in International Relations: The Saudi-Iranian Rivalry since 1979  |
| 7 December   | <i>PhD Presentations:</i><br>Alessandro Coulmbu<br>Lovisa Berg<br><i>University of Edinburgh</i> | Neo-patriarchy and Sexuality in the Stories of Zakariyya Tamir<br>Title to be confirmed  |

# University of Baghdad Visitor Prof. Muhammad al-Turaihi

The original endowment for the Iraq Chair made in 1979 (see *Newsletter* no. 2) included provision for a programme of cultural cooperation between Universities of Edinburgh and Baghdad. In January earlier this year, Professor Muhammad al-Turaihi, the Dean of Islamic Sciences at the University of Baghdad, visited Edinburgh to discuss the possibilities for collaboration and exchange between the two universities, more than thirty years after the agreement was first signed. It is hoped that circumstances will allow this cooperation to finally begin with a visit of a Baghdad colleague to Edinburgh during the next academic year.



Renewing the Cultural Cooperation Agreement between  
Edinburgh and Baghdad  
L to r: Prof. Muhammad al-Turaihi and Dr Anthony Gorman

Discussing the possibilities of collaboration  
L to r: Jonathan Featherstone, Andrew Newman, Mourad Diouri,  
Muhammad al-Turaihi, Richard Todd, Nacim Pak-Shiraz



L to r: Muhammad al-Turaihi, Jonathan Featherstone, Anthony  
Gorman

# Arabic Teacher Training in Edinburgh

## Striving for Excellence in Arabic Pedagogy

By Lucy Johnson, MA Arabic and Spanish (2009)

There are numerous challenges that arise when teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, and these challenges are compounded when the question of providing professional development to teachers arises. Edinburgh's CASAW seeks to overcome many of the issues that teachers face by offering regular workshops which are aimed at meeting the gap in Arabic pedagogy.

Despite the community offered by the Internet and active forums on the topic, teaching Arabic can feel like a lonely business, as teachers struggle with a lack of appropriate resources and support. I was fortunate enough to attend CASAW's April 2015 workshops. Over eight days, I attended a series of sessions, which for me were just as much about learning from the experience of the other teachers as from the expertise of the teacher trainers, Mourad Diouri and Jonathan Featherstone.

Teaching Arabic can resemble exploring without a map, and figuring things out after the event. How do you overcome old-fashioned resources, the cultural gap between students and a complex, varied culture, and the utter tedium of most of the Arabic shows available? Well, with everything you've got, plus as many tips and tricks that you can pick up along the way.

Mourad handles these issues with aplomb. Throughout his two-day workshop he was generous with his knowledge and unfailingly positive and enthusiastic in working towards successful learning strategies. Mourad has built up a library of techniques to support the learning of languages with technology, although he was careful to emphasise that he uses classtime to build on, activate and extend students' knowledge, rather than strictly focusing upon technology use in class.

Participants in the workshop were given the opportunity to put the different technologies into practice, including different online tools such as Wordle, Quizlet and different education tools. The course embraced a wide variety of teaching styles and methods, taking in best practices in the use of technology in general along the way. One of the most useful parts of the course for me was seeing how much students could benefit from carefully targeted technology use, and the variety of projects students could participate in, from podcasts to microblogging.

Jonathan Featherstone's course on Communicative Arabic Teaching was a complete contrast to the first session. Participants were immediately put in the position of language students ourselves, as we grappled with some of the most difficult issues that face learners of Arabic. Jonathan guided us skilfully through a course that had plenty of twists, turns and surprises, revealing some of the trade secrets behind his many years of successful teaching. The attendees were by turns beginner language students, visitors to an art gallery, and evaluators of the efficacy and appropriacy of different learning activities.

Jonathan frequently set up communicative activities that resulted in extensive use of the target language, then gave us tips and tricks on how to achieve the same result with minimum effort. It was especially impressive how the participants engaged in an initial Spanish session given by Jonathan, and how some participants who had limited teaching experience acted on Jonathan's model to deliver engaging microlessons to two different groups of students.

If in my future classes I manage to apply a quarter of what these two expert teachers had to share, I will feel that I've gone a couple of steps closer to ensuring that my students find Arabic as enjoyable and accessible as students of English, French or Spanish.

<http://www.casaw.ac.uk/learning-teaching/workshops-2/>



Left to right: Anita Husen, Nadim Mahjoub, Lucy Johnson, Mourad Diouri, Maha Saliba Foster, Hesham Elmofty.



Jonathan Featherstone with class at the Arabic Teacher Training course



Professor Andrew Rippen (University of Victoria) at the BRAIS conference

## Alwaleed Centre Events News and Updates

By Tom Lea

### News from the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World

The last six months have witnessed a significant period of transition for the Alwaleed Centre. In May 2015, we said goodbye to Rosie Mellor, one of the founding members of the centre's core team. Rosie brought tremendous enthusiasm and competency to her role as Administrative and Outreach Officer and was key to the establishment and success of the centre in its first five years. Rosie will be sorely missed but we wish her all the very best in her new adventure teaching English in Colombia. We are delighted to announce that Lilly Jenkins has been appointed as successor to Rosie and Lilly joined us as Administrative and Outreach Coordinator in June 2015.

The centre also wished farewell to one of its first PhD students, Michael Munnik, who successfully completed his thesis exploring the relationship between the media and the Muslim communities of Glasgow. Michael graduated in June 2015 and quickly secured a lectureship at Cardiff University's prestigious 'Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK'. Congratulations to Michael and we wish him a happy relocation to Wales.

As one of our PhD cohort departed, so another arrived and we were delighted to welcome Karim Mitha to the centre in January 2015. Karim's project, provisionally entitled 'The impacts of faith, identity and acculturation on the mental health/wellbeing of young British Muslims' is being jointly supervised by the centre's Director, Professor Hugh Goddard, and Dr Sumeet Jain

(Social Work, School of Social and Political Science).

We were also delighted to welcome Dr Alistair Hunter to the Alwaleed Centre team. Alistair won a highly prestigious British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship to work on an innovative project entitled: 'Burying our differences? Negotiating faith and space in contexts of death and diversity.' The British element of Alistair's project will have to wait, however, as he was successful in securing a further grant allowing him to spend a year in France researching issues of death and diversity amongst the Muslim communities of Paris. We look forward very much to Alistair's return in January 2016.

We also look forward to welcoming back our Muslims in Britain Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr Khadijah Elshayyal, who has been away on maternity leave this past year. Khadijah will return in the autumn semester, 2015, to continue her research and teach a course on Muslims in Britain which we hope will attract a good number of honours and Masters students from a range of departments.

Although transition has been the hallmark of the last six months here at the centre, we have also managed to maintain a full programme of events and activities. As the administrative hub for the British Association for Islamic Studies ([www.brais.ac.uk](http://www.brais.ac.uk)) the Centre was pivotal to the delivery of the Association's second annual conference which took place at Senate House, University of London, from the 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> April. Over 300 delegates attended and more than 270 papers were delivered on a broad range of topics. Plans are already underway for next year's conference which is scheduled for the 11 and 12 April 2016, again at Senate House.

We were delighted to work with PhD students Peter Cherry (Comparative Literature) and Sybil Adam (English Literature) to deliver a unique seminar series between January and March 2015 entitled 'Representing Muslims in Scotland and the North East.' This series of four seminars reflected on the work of British Muslim poets, novelists and filmmakers and involved contributions from Dr Claire Chambers (University of York), Aberdeen-based novelist Leila Aboulela who gave a preview reading of her new novel *The Kindness of Strangers*, readings in Arabic and English by Scottish-Palestinian poet Iyad Hyatleh and a special screening of Tina Gharavi's documentary *Last of the Dictionary Men* followed by a Q&A with Tina herself.

The centre continued to engage with schools in Scotland, branching out to deliver some memorable sessions for pupils in Selkirk

(Scottish Borders) as well as hosting a group of thirty senior pupils from Aberdeen who joined us for a whole day of activities exploring Islam – including lunch at the Mosque Kitchen. We intend to prioritise work with schools over the next few years and hope to deepen our engagement with both pupils and teachers across Scotland.

At the time of writing, the centre is half way through a series of four seminars organised for the Scottish Government's International Strategy & Reputation Team reflecting on various aspects of Islam in the contemporary world. In February, Dr Thomas Pierret (IMES) delivered a timely seminar exploring the rise of the Islamic State organisation in Iraq and Syria. This was followed by an overview of the relationship between the world of Islam and the West by Professor Hugh Goddard, Director of the Alwaleed Centre. Both seminars attracted around forty civil servants and were greatly appreciated. Two more seminars will follow in August and October 2015, focusing on the economies of the MENA nations and the politics of the Gulf region.

In the immediate future, we are very much looking forward to the visit of Chinese-Muslim calligrapher Haji Noor Deen who is widely regarded as one of the greatest living calligraphy masters. Noor Deen will be delivering events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (15 August), the Edinburgh Just Festival (16 August) and Edinburgh's Central Mosque (19-21 August).



Q&A at the BRAIS Conference © Alwaleed Centre



## Holy Places in Islam 3

### The Final Conference and Roundup

By Dr Andreas Görke, Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies

#### Third conference on Holy Places in Islam held in Edinburgh University

The International Network for the Study of Holy Places in Islam (INSHPI), launched in December 2013, hosted its third conference from 15 to 17 June 2015 at the University of Edinburgh. While the first two conferences had focused on the emergence of holy places and on holy places in medieval Islam, respectively, the third conference amongst other things shed light on the processes involved in the contestation and re-interpretation of holy places. It brought together scholars from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain and Italy.

The presentations and discussions centred around topics such as newly discovered stone inscriptions in Arabia, the highly contested religious history of sites such as the Great Mosque of Cordoba or the Parthenon, the significance and characteristics of Islamic holy places in Nubia, Central Asia, China, Turkey, Iran, and Cyprus, the question of ‘unholy’ places, as well as the destruction of shrines and relics by radical Islamist movements.

The Final Conference of the “Holy Places in Islam” in June 2015, brought to an end a rich series of conferences. The organisers would like to thank all the participants for their contributions to make all the conferences a success.

It is planned to publish the proceedings of all three conferences and to further develop the website and the database of holy places, which can be accessed at: [www.imes.ed.ac.uk/research/inshpi](http://www.imes.ed.ac.uk/research/inshpi)

This conference marks the end of the funding by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), but we hope to keep the network going and to have future conferences on the topic.



Left: Sarah Hopkins in conversation with Dr al-Saadawi while Abla Oudeh looks on with interest

## Dr Nawal al-Saadawi Visits the University of Edinburgh

By Jonathan Featherstone, Senior Arabic Teaching Fellow

The renowned Egyptian medical doctor, writer and feminist, Dr Nawal al-Saadawi visited Edinburgh University in March earlier this year. In addition to giving a fascinating lecture and fielding questions on patriarchy to a packed audience, she held a more informal seminar in Arabic the following day. This was aimed at students on our two-year Masters Intensive Arabic programmes (Arab World Studies and International Relations of the Middle East with Arabic), as well as students on our one-year MSc Advanced Arabic.

This was a unique and historic opportunity for students to interact “live” in Arabic with an Arabic-speaking thinker whom they have both read about and whose recorded interviews they have followed during their Arabic studies. It was wonderful to see students who had only been studying Arabic for 18 months engage intellectually in Arabic with Dr al-Saadawi, making the visit to IMES a truly memorable occasion both for students and staff alike. Our thanks to CASAW and the Alwaleed Centre for co-sponsoring the event with IMES and Jade Meikle-Scott for handling the logistics.



Dr al-Saadawi with from left to right: Farah Aboubakr, Abla Oudeh, Jonathan Featherstone

# Postgraduate Study at IMES

## A Wide Selection of Programmes

IMES now offers for MSc taught postgraduate degrees.

### **MSc Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies**

Our longstanding one year Masters programme that provides a thorough grounding in Middle Eastern culture and society with options.

### **MSc Arab World Studies**

Our successful two years Masters that combines intensive Arabic language study and Middle Eastern studies training.

### **MSc Persian Civilisation**

A new interdisciplinary programme that draws on a number of fields of study, including Classics, Ancient History, Middle Eastern Studies and Islamic Studies (see p. 13).

The fourth degree is the **MSc Advanced Arabic**, a degree for those with Arabic who wish to take their language to the next level to improve your spoken and written fluency. In the words of a graduate of the programme,

Students in the MSc Advanced Arabic programme receive rigorous training in translation and interpretation and are superbly prepared to work as translators or interpreters in either their home countries or in the Middle East. Most importantly, they are communicators who, like highly-education native speakers of Arabic, have mastered the dialect of the intelligentsia and all the shades of formality and informality that lie in between *fusha* and *ammiyya*—a truly rare achievement for non-native speakers. Graduates of the MSc Advanced Arabic programme not only finish the degree with this profound fluency in the language, but possess a rich, nuanced understanding of the Arab world, its history, its people, and current events (Rebecca Wolfe MSAAA, 2014).

So for those of you that already hold an undergraduate Arabic degree from Edinburgh (or elsewhere) but want to develop their language skills further, this is the degree for you. The programme is not being offered in 2015/16 but will resume in 2016/17 with applications being accepted from this September.

Whatever postgraduate degree you choose to do, at IMES you will be part of an academic community that provides high quality instruction and academic support but also holds regular social occasions with staff and colleagues, work-in-progress (WIP) seminars, focused reading groups and visiting guest speakers.

For more information, please check out our website at

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/islamic-middle-eastern>

or email Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz ([Nacim.Pak-Shiraz@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Nacim.Pak-Shiraz@ed.ac.uk)), our Postgraduate Officer.

# PG Party, the WIP and Study Abroad

At the IMES PG Social at the end of the semester; (l to r): Alice Wyman, Matej Kovarik, Alex Beck, Ann-Christin Wagner, Helena Thomson



Top: Raphael Cormack speaking at one of the IMES PG WIP (work-in-progress) sessions.  
Left: Postgraduate students Rina Moss and Laura Boehm recently arrived in East Jerusalem and on their way to Bir Zeit to do their Arabic study abroad.

# IMES Obituary

## Professor C. Edmund Bosworth (1929-2015)

By Prof. Carole Hillenbrand

Professor C. Edmund Bosworth, a celebrated alumnus of our Department at Edinburgh University, died on 28 February this year. He was certainly the finest historian of the medieval Arab and Iranian worlds in the last sixty years.

After gaining a first-class degree in modern history at St John's College, Oxford in 1952, Edmund Bosworth studied Arabic, Persian and Turkish here in Edinburgh and wrote a doctoral thesis on the Ghaznavids of Iran under the supervision of Professor Montgomery Watt. He was Lecturer in Arabic at St Andrews University from 1956 until 1967. He became Professor of Arabic at Manchester University, where he remained until his retirement in 1990. From then on until last year he published an immense amount of high-quality scholarly work with undiminished enthusiasm and passion for his subject. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1992. He much enjoyed being affiliated from 2004 as a Visiting Professor at Exeter University.

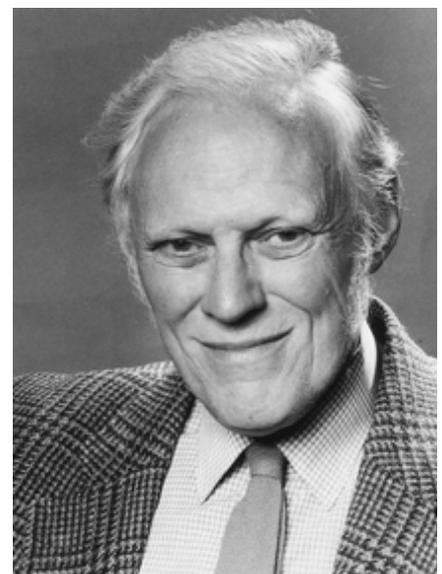
Bosworth was not always just interested in the grand sweep of Islamic history and high culture at the courts of caliphs and sultans. His desire to discover new facets of medieval Middle Eastern history led him to examine little-known byways of Muslim society, such as his translation of a fascinating work in Arabic by al-Tha'alabi (d.1038) called *The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information*.

Bosworth's enthusiasm was also aroused by travellers' tales. He often 'relaxed' by writing about intrepid British visitors to the Middle East, such as the 17<sup>th</sup> century traveller William Lithgow from Lanark in Scotland. Indeed, Bosworth's very last book, published in 2012, is entitled *Eastward Ho! Diplomats, Travellers and Interpreters of the Middle East and Beyond, 1600-1940*.

Bosworth did much more than work on his own research and teaching. He laboured quietly and with admirable devotion to his field in a wider sense. For many years he was one of a small phalanx of internationally renowned scholars charged with editing the second edition of the prestigious *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Simultaneously he co-edited the *Journal of Semitic Studies* and for an incredible forty years he was co-editor of the journal *Iran*. He was, moreover, generous in sharing his knowledge and helping young scholars, both at home and abroad. He was very happy to come back regularly to Edinburgh to act as external PhD examiner for postgraduates working on Islamic history.

Within the academic field of medieval Islamic history Bosworth's contribution was stellar; he was, for example, at home when writing the regional history of small dynasties in Afghanistan and Southern Iran; in meticulous studies of medieval Arabic culture and administration; in compiling comprehensive genealogical tables of Muslim dynasties; and in tackling the complicated topic of the coming of the Turks to the Islamic world. He wrote eighteen books, over a hundred articles and chapters in edited volumes, as well as more than three hundred contributions in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

Edmund Bosworth will be remembered with affection and admiration by the numerous students from across the world whom he taught.



Prof. Edmund  
Bosworth  
(1929-2015)



## Discovering UNESCO: Suzanne Compagnon

In 2014, I had the opportunity to do an internship at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. I spent three months working in the Museum section on two projects linked to the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. The first one was an initiative to refurbish and revitalise the Museum for Islamic art on the Haram al-Sharif. The museum had fallen into a state of disrepair and had been closed to visitors since 1997. Working with international experts, UNESCO refurbished the building and designed an exhibition space up to

international standards, as well as restoring some of the objects of the collection and training local staff which would be responsible for running the museum after the project's end. The second project I was involved in concerned the Manuscript Centre, also located on the Haram al-Sharif. The Al-Aqsa complex houses an extensive collection of manuscripts, which until then had not received the attention it deserved and was rapidly deteriorating. Two previous projects had already taken place during which conservation equipment was bought, and people were trained to restore and manage the manuscripts, but political and economical issues led the Manuscript Centre to once again be in need of qualified staff. Based on the lessons learned from the previous projects, UNESCO decided to train a new group of young Palestinians, following a comprehensive study plan which would include theoretical classes taught by European experts, practical workshops in restoration and conservation, and internships in European conservation institutes aimed to heighten the students' involvement, and their lasting commitment.

Having graduated from the University of Edinburgh with joint Honours in Arabic and History of Art in 2013, these endeavours were extremely interesting for me, and right in my field. I could see myself mulling over conservation issues, museography and doing research about the objects in the museum. I soon realised that I had completely misunderstood, both what was expected of me, and what UNESCO actually did. I spent most of my internship writing drafts, letters, e-mails, power-points, presentations, contracts, budgets and website articles. I also collected a lot of data, which I had to format to be easy to use, including by people that were not familiar with the projects. I learned the importance of bureaucracy and patience. For example, I was in charge of answering official letters. I would write the first draft, which by the time it came back to me, had been corrected by an average of eight people, making our answering rate one letter per month. More importantly, I learned what people actually did at the UNESCO Headquarters. I finally understood that the UNESCO's role was to obtain funding for projects, and manage the funding and all the different actors involved. They provided the financial and operational backbone for projects. The things I wanted to do (museography, research, conservation issues, etc) were done by consultants that were recruited and monitored by the UNESCO for the length of a project.

Although I did not use my Arabic as much as I had hoped - all communication had to take place in English, even though Arabic is one of the official languages at UNESCO - it still helped when I was looking for local contacts, or checking official documents in Arabic. I also realised that UNESCO was all about politics: the local politics which delayed or hastened a project's completion, the politics involved in certain governments funding certain projects, the HR politics, as people tried to survive the reorganisation UNESCO was going through having lost almost a third of its budget due to, once again, politics. After working there, I read the official statement of purpose of the organisation with brand new eyes, understanding the implications of its diplomatic formulation.

The last thing I would like to mention might seem trivial in comparison to the above three paragraphs, but was actually an important part of my experience as a UNESCO intern in Paris: lunchtime. Lunchtime was when everyone gathered on the sixth floor of this building neighbouring the Eiffel Tower, and you got an opportunity to chat with people from very different backgrounds, who were all involved in very interesting projects. Taking the elevator you would more often than not hear four or five languages in the space of a couple of floors. Not only was it amazing for someone like me who was fascinated by languages, but it really anchored the words 'international organisation' in my brain. I met other young people just as motivated and international as I was, and I got to network with equally international members of the permanent staff.

So there it is. If you get the opportunity (or create the opportunity yourself) I highly recommend doing an internship at UNESCO. It will teach you things you never expected to learn and allow you to make your own opinion of a major actor in the international politics of culture, education, and science.

*Suzanne Compagnon graduated with an MA honours in Arabic and History of Art in 2013*

# Spotlight: Coco Burch

I graduated from Edinburgh in June 2012 with very little idea of what I wanted to do, or where the next few years would take me. I hadn't applied for any jobs and had barely even thought about 'the future' until after the results were in and I knew I'd actually passed my degree.

However, having studied Arabic and Spanish and always enjoyed travelling, it seemed natural that after graduating I might live abroad or travel. I enrolled on a month-long English teaching course so that I could guarantee finding a job wherever I went. My degree prepared me well for the intensity of the course and I loved it. I made some great friends and found that I loved teaching, and was quite good at it. With this qualification, and the passion that I developed for Arabic and the Middle East throughout my studies at Edinburgh, I decided to move to Beirut in January 2013.

Two days after arriving in Beirut I had joined a colloquial Arabic language class, and a month later I was volunteering to work with children of migrant workers, tutoring in English and helping with their homework. I taught English for a while, privately and at a language school both in Beirut and in the Beqaa valley, which involved a gruelling four-hour round trip for three hours of teaching some of the naughtiest children I've ever met. Finally in May 2013 I was introduced to Unite Lebanon Youth Project - ULYP - and I haven't looked back since. I started at ULYP as a part-time intern (I was still volunteer tutoring, teaching a private English student, and teaching my classes at the language school – it was a busy time!) ULYP then was a very small organisation – there was the 3-strong management team, someone in charge of BRIDGE (scholarships and SAT preparation), a shared-accountant, and the intern – me. That summer some more interns and volunteers came on university exchanges to help with specific summer programmes. It was really fun and we all got stuck in wherever we were needed. The office was very small and we were often up to 6 sitting around one table in a small room. Beirut gets hot and incredibly humid in the summer so it was interesting! After the summer the volunteers left and a few months later we upgraded, moving 3 floors up into a big spacious office and I got my own desk!

ULYP is a Lebanese NGO that provides educational programmes to underprivileged children and youth in Lebanon. Unlike many NGOs here they work with anyone – Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, Muslim, Christian – and try to bring participants from different communities, refugee camps, or schools together on their programmes. I have loved (almost!) every minute of my two years at ULYP. The mission of the organisation is inspiring, the leadership team are incredibly passionate, have achieved so much and remain so humble. The people are amazing and it is truly a family, where everyone supports and helps everyone else. It is female-led and almost all office staff and interns are women – maybe this explains why we are so productive?!

During my time at ULYP I have gained experience and being given responsibilities in so many areas – programme coordination, communication, budgeting, event planning, managing interns and teaching staff, proposal and report writing – and the list goes on. The organisation has more than doubled in size, I have grown personally and professionally, and it has made me certain that I want to pursue a career in development – most likely focusing on education for development.

Beirut hasn't been the best place to practise my Arabic, as nearly everyone speaks near fluent English or French (or both), but my Arabic has improved greatly and I use it a lot at work now, both in the office with Lebanese and Palestinian colleagues and in the field talking to students.

It was a difficult decision for me to leave Beirut and ULYP, and I put off applying to my masters degree back in the UK for a long time. I have been lucky that my family has been very supportive of me being here, and various members have visited several times, but there is only so much they can take! I know that when I leave Beirut in a few months that I will look back and think of ULYP as home.

I am excited to be starting a new stage in life doing my masters in development, and I look forward to the new career opportunities it will offer. And I may well come back to Lebanon – who knows?

*Coco Burch graduated with an MA honours in Arabic and Spanish in 2012; She will be starting an MA in International Development Studies at the University of Sussex*



# Life After IMES

## News and views from Alumni

### 'Life after IMES:' A Unique Careers Event Capitalising on Alumni's Expertise

By Ebtihal Mahadeen, Chancellor's Fellow IMES

IMES hosted an afternoon of careers planning and networking featuring several members of our alumni/ae network; Cloe Clayton, Sarah Irving, Dr Majied Robinson, David Smith, Steve Robinson, and Simon Atkins. The event took place on February 16 and was open to all IMES students, intended to help them plan their professional careers by drawing on the wealth of expertise that our featured speakers had to offer. Speakers from fields as varied as education, translation, journalism, development, and government reflected on their career trajectories and how they maximised the impact of their IMES degrees, and also shared practical tips and advice with current students. This was a relaxed, informal event that aimed to bring alumni/ae and current students together. The discussions covered many issues ranging from networking and social media use to interviews and self-marketing, and the wine reception at the end certainly kept the conversation flowing! 'Life after IMES: Crafting Your Future' was organised by Dr Ebtihal Mahadeen, with support from Dr Anthony Gorman, Jonathan Featherstone, and Dr Richard Todd.

#### Life After IMES feedback:

'I thought the event was an overall positive step for IMES into helping its graduates and future graduates network, and become informed about opportunities after IMES. I liked the breadth of speakers, which gave a good impression. The most helpful was the Steve Robinson who presented actual skills that we could use with LinkedIn. Maybe it should be held at a time after dissertation deadlines, or even in the first semester next time.

I think it was really interesting. Encouraging and discouraging at the same time. It gave me some nice ideas... my future employment depends on me taking a more independent and proactive role. My future is now slightly clearer, which is good. I think most of the interventions were really interesting, and some of the advices they gave were particularly useful (never work for free, start your own projects - blogs-, try to learn and practise languages, research LinkedIn, it does not matter if you don't have a career plan, be flexible). Attending the session was a good use of my time.

'I thought it was good. The timing of the presentations and breaks was good, and the presenters themselves were interesting. However, I would suggest sending out contact information and presentation info summaries to those who are interested afterwards. Also, there is a need for more presenters who work outside of Britain as I am an international student so many of those jobs do not apply to me. The event overall was quite useful though, and I really appreciated it!'

'The event was very helpful. It was great having a wide variety of people speaking about different jobs. Having their positive and negative experiences openly shared was so useful. The time to chat with them afterwards was also great to exchange emails and go into specific careers in more depth. I really was pleasantly surprised about how good it was. The break in the middle was needed. Having members of the department present was a good touch as well. It made it feel very important and it seems as if the tutors are interested in our careers.'

**IMES hopes to arrange more events such as 'Life After IMES' over the coming year to help students consider their future career plans. We would like to thank our speakers for their participation and also for the feedback from the attendees.**

