Welcome to the first Newsletter of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies

The Department was created in 2007 to include Arabic, Hebrew and Persian which in the past existed as autonomous or semi-autonomous units. The creation of the new Department coincided with the renaming of the Faculty of Oriental Studies as the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and the gradual replacement of the old Tripos, which all of you know, with a new one.

You might be thinking that it is all change at Cambridge. Yes, and there has been more change, including the arrival of new members of staff, such as myself, the launch of new courses on the modern Middle East, as well as a big expansion in the number of students studying Arabic. It is not unusual these days for some Part I courses to have over fifteen students.

And the ground floor of the Faculty building has been given a face-lift. The Common Room has been decked out with a drinks machine, which includes water too for our more health-conscious staff and students. The Faculty offices have moved to the front of the building, as you might expect! The colour red dominates the entrance to the Faculty. Rumour has it that some of our colleagues in Chinese have chosen it for our aesthetic enjoyment!

In spite of change, things remain the same, so there is no need for you to feel out of place when, as we hope you do, you come and visit us during the 800th anniversary celebrations. In fact, it would be great if some of you planned a reunion dinner so that we can all meet to renew old relationships and establish new ones.

The Department has seen many successes over the past year and a half. The generous gift of £8 million by HRH Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal to endow the Centre of Islamic Studies is one of the biggest in the humanities in the history of Cambridge. The Department achieved the highest result in its field in the Research Assessment Exercise in 2008 to be rated as the top department in the UK. Graduate student numbers are growing. An Annual Graduate Students Conference was launched with resounding success last October, and the second is scheduled for this coming October. You can read about these and other stories in this issue.

‘In this issue,’ I hear you say! Yes, ‘this issue’ for we are planning others in the future. So please contact us with your stories and adventures, and let us help you share them with all our graduates wherever they are. Like us, I am sure they would be delighted to hear from you.

Yasir Suleiman
Head of Department
Cambridge and Edinburgh Universities announce new Centres for Islamic Studies

The University of Cambridge, the University of Edinburgh and HRH Prince Alwaleed bin Abdulaziz Alsaud (pictured), Chairman of the Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation have announced plans to create two new research centres for Islamic studies.

Funded by a £16million endowment by Prince Alwaleed which will be shared equally by the two universities, the new centres will aim to carry out both research and public engagement designed to enhance understanding between the Muslim world and the West.

The agreement was formalised at a signing ceremony at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday 7th May 2008, attended by both Prince Alwaleed and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who is Chancellor of both universities.

The Cambridge-based HRH Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies will enable the development of a "constructive and critical awareness of the role of Islam in wider society", initially through research programmes on Islam in the United Kingdom and Europe, and Islam and the media.

It will also run various public programmes, such as public lectures, conferences and summer schools, designed to promote understanding of Islam in the wider world. Policy-makers and other public figures will be invited to become visiting fellows at the Centre and take part in its research programmes.

Professor Yasir Suleiman, Director of the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge said: "The aim of the centre will be to foster a deeper understanding between Islam and the West through the twin paths of high-quality research and an energetic outreach programme."

We intend to create a world-class cadre of researchers and build partnerships with other centres and members of the European Muslim community to advance tolerance, mutual understanding and cross-cultural dialogue between Islam and the West."

Prince Alwaleed said: "I am pleased to support the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge and the Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World at the University of Edinburgh. It is paramount for both Islam and the West to reach mutual ground for pro-active dialogue, respect, acceptance and tolerance. We are determined to continue building the bridge between Islam and the West for peace and humanity."

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Professor Alison Richard said: "This new Centre at Cambridge will quickly establish itself as a major force for research, teaching and public understanding.

"By providing a clear, central focus for studying Islam in the contemporary world, as well as engagement with the wider community outside the University, it will harness the richness and variety of Cambridge’s contributions to research and teaching on Islam to make the whole far greater than the current sum of our parts."

Research

Religious Broadcasting in the Middle East

The Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies has received a research grant of circa £102,000 from the International Development Research Centre, Canada to work on religious broadcasting in the Middle East. The project will provide a comparative study of broadcasting on Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The project is headed by Dr Khaled Hroub, Director of Cambridge Arab Media Project (CAMP), which is an affiliated project of the Centre.

CAMP has run high profile conferences on the media in the Arab context. In 2007/8 a conference under the title ‘Broadcasting in their Language’ dealt with Arabic and English media broadcasting in France, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and Qatar (Aljazeera). The conference, jointly run with the University of Edinburgh, was attended by theorists and practitioners.

Contextualising Islam in Britain Project

This project is sponsored by the Department of Communities and Local Government. It aims to investigate what it means to be British and Muslim. The project is built around a number of meetings in
which a cross section of leading Muslim scholars from the UK and Europe debate a set of topics and themes aiming at producing a final report for wider dissemination.

The project is convened at the University of Cambridge with participation from a number of leading British universities. Professor Yasir Suleiman, Director of the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and Head of Middle Eastern Studies at the University leads the project.

Abbasid Studies

The School of Abbasid Studies, originally founded as a cooperative venture by scholars at the Universities of St. Andrews and Glasgow in Scotland during the 1980s, is a joint enterprise involving SOAS, Cambridge and Leuven. It aims to promote, foster and cultivate the academic study of the Abbasid dynasty in the round, seeking to bring together around the one table scholars working in areas of Abbasid Studies who would not customarily meet in the standard academic fora available. So experts in the Islamic sciences share insights with those working in philosophy, and scholars of poetry engage with the concerns of the study of jurisprudence (and vice versa, of course!). With some eighty members, the School encourages the study of the Abbasid period (750-1258 CE) and boasts an ever-growing number of graduate members, signalling that academic study of the Abbasids is on the increase.

Folio from a Koran (8th – 9th century), Abbasid dynasty, Near East or North Africa

The fourth meeting of the School was held in Cambridge at the Centre for research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) from the 7th - 9th of July 2008.

The occasional papers of the third and fourth meetings of the School will be published by Peeters of Leuven, edited by Hugh Kennedy and James Montgomery. The Directors of the School acknowledge the support of the fourth meeting provided by the Department of Middle Eastern Studies and CRASSH.

Interfaith Relations in Medieval Islam: Religious minorities under the Almohads

One of the many research initiatives currently underway in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies is a joint project sponsored by the British Academy and the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas (CSIC) in Madrid exploring the way the twelfth century Almohad dynasty treated religious minorities in North Africa and Islamic Spain. Researchers, Dr. Amira K. Bennison (Cambridge) and Dr. Maria Angeles Gallego (CSIC), are combining their expertise in Arabo-Islamic and Judaeo-Arabic texts to re-assess the traditional picture of the Almohads as a fiercely anti-Jewish regime. This involves a close reading of relevant works in Arabic, Judaeo-Arabic and Hebrew to see what the sources actually say about Almohad ideology and their policies towards Jews, Christians and non-Almohad Muslims. It also involves a reconsideration of much of the secondary literature to see why so many scholars have insisted upon consistent Almohad intolerance, despite the relatively small amount of proof for this view. As part of the project, Dr. Bennison and Dr. Gallego organised a workshop in Cambridge at Newnham College in December 2008 which attracted several academics from Spain as well as many UK specialists in the history of Islamic Spain and North Africa.

Kutubiyya Minaret, Marrakesh

AHRC-funded project on the North Eastern Neo-Aramaic Dialects

The research team consists of two full-time Research Associates (Eleanor Coghill and Roberta Borghero), one part-time web-developer (Mark Wilding) and Professor Geoffrey Khan. In this project they have undertaken fieldwork on approximately sixty dialects, many of them highly endangered, spoken by Christians and Jews. They have carried out fieldwork in Aramaic-speaking diaspora communities throughout the world, in Europe, the Middle East, USA, Canada, Australia and the Caucasus. The project has created a state-of-the-art electronic dialect atlas and database that will be launched on-line shortly.
The Gulf Research Centre

The Gulf Research Centre (GRC) [www.grc.ae/] is an independent privately-funded non-profit, non-governmental research institute located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). This neutral think tank, education service provider and consultancy specialised in the Gulf region was founded in 2000 by Mr. Abdulaziz Sager, a Saudi philanthropist and businessman.

The GRC is a centre for knowledge involved in more than 50 research programmes including politics, economics, social, defence and security issues about the Gulf – i.e. the countries of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Since its inception, the Centre has grown considerably and it currently has a staff of 80 full time employees and 50 external contributors, all supported by a worldwide network of expertise. It has so far published over 100 books, papers and other publications and has over 50 Cooperation Agreements in place with leading institutions.

As part of its international outreach and strategic development the Gulf Research Centre Foundation (GRCF) was officially established in Geneva, Switzerland in 2007. The GRCF aims to cooperate and collaborate with relevant academic and research institutions throughout the world in order to advance research addressing Gulf-related issues. Accordingly, the GRCF in Geneva plans to establish representative offices in key capitals and regions – UK, Brussels, Singapore, Washington, etc.

In 2008, the GRCF launched a UK representative office in Cambridge. The Gulf Research Centre-Cambridge (GRC-Cambridge) is affiliated with the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The GRC-Cambridge is headed by Dr. Abdullah Baabood, who is a Cambridge graduate and who is familiar with both the Gulf and Cambridge. The Gulf Research Centre-Cambridge aims to develop cooperative working relationship with relevant centres, departments and faculties in Cambridge to support GRC differing interests and activities.

GRC-Cambridge aims to enable, amongst other things, cooperation and collaboration in developing academic networks, joint studies and research, consultancy, publications, conferences, workshops, seminars and executive training, etc. GRC-Cambridge will support and facilitate the exchange of PhD students, post-doctoral researchers and visiting scholars specialized in Gulf affairs and offer internships. It also aims to develop academic networks between Gulf-based academic and research institutions and Cambridge as well as other UK academic and research institutions.

The First Gulf Research Meeting (GRM) will be held at Robinson College, Cambridge on July 8 - 11th, 2009. The Gulf Research Meeting features a number of workshops and it seeks to provide an academic environment to foster Gulf studies and to promote scholarly and academic exchange among scholars working and/or having familiarity with the Gulf region. The Gulf Research Meeting seeks to identify issues of importance to the Gulf region and provide a basis for academic and empirical research into those fields. Particular emphasis will be given to encourage young scholars to engage in the debate and take part in research collaboration.

List of Workshops

1. Financial Markets in the Gulf
2. EU-GCC Relations
3. Gulf-Africa Relations
5. Natural Resources, Accountability and Democracy
6. Formal and Informal Mechanism of Political Participation
7. The Role of the Private Sector in Promoting Economic and Political Reform
8. Environmental Policies in the Gulf
9. Higher Educational Policies in the Gulf
10. The Development of the Media in the Gulf region
11. The Impact of Migration on Gulf Development and Stability
12. Developing an Agenda for Security Studies in the Gulf

Publications

Hebrew Graduate Publications

Two of the more recent PhD dissertations produced in the faculty have been accepted for publication in a subseries (The Hebrew Bible and its Versions) published by Continuum and edited by Robert Gordon. To date, the series deals mainly with the Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Anwar Tjen’s syntactical study of protatic clauses in the Septuagint and Rodrigo de Sousa’s study of messianism and eschatology in the Septuagint of Isaiah join earlier volumes by David Baer on translation and theology in the Septuagint of Isaiah 56-66 and Andrew Shead on Jeremiah in its Hebrew and Greek recensions. Andrew Turkanik’s study of the translation technique of the Gamma/Gamma section of the Septuagint books of Kings has recently been published by Mohr Siebeck of Tübingen.

Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics

Professor Khan is now the principal editor of the Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics (to be published by Brill), collaborating with an international team of associate editors. The encyclopedia will consist of approximately 1,000 entries on many aspects of the Hebrew language, in all its traditions throughout its history.
Professor Yasir Suleiman joined the Department in March 2007 as His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Professor of Modern Arabic Studies. He is Head of the newly-formed Department of Middle Eastern Studies and Director of the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. Before joining the University Professor Suleiman was the Iraq Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh, Head of Department and Head of the School of Languages Literatures and Cultures.

Professor Suleiman’s research covers the cultural politics of the Middle East with special focus on identity, conflict, diaspora studies and modernization in so far as these issues relate to language, modern Arabic literature, translation and memory. He also conducts research in Arabic grammatical theory and the Arabic intellectual tradition in the pre-modern period.


Dr Lori Allen joined the Department as University Lecturer in Contemporary Middle Eastern Politics and Society in October 2007. She is an anthropologist whose primary research interests centre on human rights, nationalism, violence, visual culture, political emotion, and the Middle East.

“I received a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Chicago in 2005. I subsequently enjoyed postdoctoral fellowships at Brown University’s Pembroke Center, and at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies.

I have investigated the ways in which understandings of pain and suffering and the ethics of violence play out in Palestinian politics, in particular through the activities and discourses of human rights in the occupied territories. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Palestine among human rights activists, other former and current political activists, victims of rights violations, and refugees during the height of the second intifada, the results of which I am publishing in a number of articles that explore what happens when violence becomes routine, part of the everyday.

Building on this work I am currently conducting archival research for my book project, Suffering for Rights: A Genealogy of Palestinian Nationalism, which is a historical-ethnographic inquiry into the political practices and discourses framed by the concepts of rights and suffering in Palestinian politics, from the 1920s to the present. I am particularly curious about how suffering and victimhood have become central to Palestinian nationalism as it developed in dialectic tension with Israel’s legacy as a refuge for the Jews. Suffering for Rights examines this history as a key aspect of the development of a global politics of suffering and human rights, which emerged partially in response to World War II and the Holocaust. In the midst of this, I hope to do more writing about aesthetics and violence, language ideology and politics, as well as Palestinian film.

I am a founding member of the Task Force on Middle East Anthropology, a group dedicated to increasing the relevance, visibility, and application of anthropological perspectives on the Middle East www.meanthro.org, a member of MESA’s Committee on Academic Freedom, www.mesa.arizona.edu/about/academic.htm, and an emerita Editorial Committee member for Middle East Report.”

In October 2008 Alinda DAMSMA took up an appointment as Research Associate on a project on Languages in Contact, funded by the Newton Trust and the Golden Web Foundation. This project will initially focus on Aramaic and its contact with other languages.

Dr Marta Marzanska-Mishani joined the Department as Kennedy Leigh Lecturer in Modern Hebrew in January 2008, following the much-regretted loss of Dr Risa Domb in January 2007. Dr Marzanska-Mishani is a graduate of FAMES/Oriental Studies and wrote her PhD under Dr Domb’s supervision. For two years she taught in the University of Warsaw where she became a Senior Lecturer. Following maternity leave, she has returned to Cambridge to teach modern Hebrew literature.

Dr Amal Marogy joined the Department as Arabic Lector in September 2008. Dr Marogy is a bilingual Arabic-Aramaic speaker from Iraq. She has a BA from the University of Mustansiriyya in Baghdad and a PhD in Oriental Languages and Cultures from the University of Ghent. Her doctoral thesis dealt with the Kitab Sibawayhi and more specifically with inversion, definiteness and case assignment in verbless nominal sentences in the Kitab.

She hopes to become an active contributor to the intercultural and inter-religious dialogue to promote peaceful coexistence between peoples and religions because she believes that language is in the first place a means to build bridges between civilizations. She is a Belgian citizen and a Dutch speaker.

Dr Amy Rowe will be joining the Department on 1st April 2009 as an ESRC Post-doctoral Fellow to work with Professor Yasir Suleiman. Dr Rowe obtained her PhD in Anthropology from Cambridge in 2008. Her project is entitled ‘Maronite Identity and Relatedness across the Lebanese Diaspora’. For her PhD thesis, Amy conducted fieldwork with Lebanese Maronites (second and third generation) in rural towns across New England. Her thesis examined social and legal aspects of ethno-racial identity with special attention to discourses of assimilation and invisibility. For her project she will apply a further level of analysis to her existing ethnographic data by examining the broader diasporic context. In particular, the ways in which a specifically religious Maronite identity is crafted and how it signifies participation in a diasporic network will be of central interest.

Dr Ashraf Abdelhay will also be joining the Department at the beginning of April to work with Professor Suleiman. He obtained his PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2008. His ESRC funded project is entitled ‘The Politics of Language Planning in the
Sudan: The Case of the Naivasha Language Policy. The aims of his Fellowship are to publish and disseminate the findings of his PhD research on the politics of language planning in the Sudan with a research focus on the Naivasha language policy. The policy is contained in one of the peace protocols signed between the southern opposition (represented by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army, SPLM/A) and the government of the Sudan (represented by the National Congress Party, NCP) in the Kenyan town of Naivasha on 26th May 2004.

DMES staff

Hebrew & Aramaic Studies
Teaching and research staff

Dr Eleanor Coghill
Research Associate: Neo-Aramaic Project

Prof. Robert Gordon
Regius Professor of Hebrew

Prof. Geoffrey Khan
Professor of Semitic Philology

Prof. Nicholas de Lange
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Dr Marta Marzanska-Mishani
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Affiliated Staff

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Mr Brian Mastin
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Lecturer in Contemporary Middle Eastern Politics and Society

Mrs Nadira Auty
Senior Language Teaching Officer in Arabic

Dr Amira K Bennison
Senior Lecturer in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Dr Kate Fleet
Newton Trust Lecturer in Ottoman History

Dr Rachael Harris
Senior Language Teaching Officer in Arabic

Dr Amir Khosravi
John Cooper Memorial Fellow

Dr Amal Marogy
Lector in Arabic

Prizes

World Prize for the Book of the Year,
Islamic Republic of Iran

We are delighted to announce that Dr Christine van Ruymbeke, Ali Reza and Mohamed Soudavar Lecturer in Persian Studies, has been awarded a World Prize for the Book of the Year, Islamic Republic of Iran for her work Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia, the Botany of Nizami’s Khamsa.

One of the winners in the Iranian Studies field, the book considers the verses of Nizami Ganjavi, one of the foremost figures in Persian poetry who lived in Azerbaijan in the second half of the twelfth century. His reputation is that of a difficult and refined poet, who introduced into his verse vocabulary, expressions and allusions to the then-known sciences. Through the exploration of his use of botanical imagery the work illuminates the extent of the education of medieval poets and their readership.

The award ceremony was held on 7th February 2009 in the presence of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The R.A. Nicholson Prize 2008

The Department of Middle Eastern Studies is pleased to announce that Fraser Clark was awarded the R.A. Nicholson Prize. The Prize is awarded annually by the Examiners for Part II of the Oriental Studies Tripos for distinguished work in the examination in Arabic and/or Persian.

From Fraser’s dissertation:

“Over the course of my reading of the Shahname, time and again I have enjoyed vignettes of delicately crafted emotional intricacies, embedded in all the hallmarks of high literary expression: wit, sympathy, irony, metaphor etc. I have come to believe that Firdausi’s unreal epic landscape is no reason to question his acumen for crafting distinct, genuine individuals inhabiting this environment.”

Fraser’s reflections on writing and study:

“It was this observation which fired the intellectual boilers of my dissertation, propelling it towards the accolades of the RA Nicholson award. Over the course of some 12,000 words I investigated the
character arc of the Shahname’s headlining hero, the mighty Rostam. Ferdowsi’s genius is in full flow as he writes of Rostam, portraying a character whose life crosses from the epic to the romantic, via the great tragedy of his life, his unknowing filicide.

The depth to which I mined Ferdowsi’s thousand-year-old text would not have been possible without the well-crafted final year of the tripos. During this I was able to investigate any course-related subject attracting my attention, and to pursue those investigations at some length. This brilliant opportunity was the high point of my undergraduate degree, representing the culmination of all that had come before.”

Undergraduate Dissertation Prize in Middle Eastern Studies

The Department recently instituted the Undergraduate Prize in Middle Eastern Studies, which will see an award of £150 and a great deal of glory bestowed on the winner in acknowledgement of writing the best fourth-year dissertation. To be considered for the prize, dissertations must display a high level of scholarship and research, linguistic facility and originality.

The decision will be made at the annual departmental Tripos Examiners’ meeting in June. Decisions will be based on the reports of the internal and external examiners. Two prizes may be awarded in a single year if more than one dissertation is judged exceptional. In addition to the prize, with permission, recipients will have their work published on the FAMES website.

Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Awards 2008

Former DMES student Mark Dickens received Honorable Mention in the Humanities category of the Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Awards 2008 for his PhD Dissertation entitled Turkye: Turkic Peoples in Syriac Literature Prior to the Seljuks.

He is currently working as a Research Assistant on an AHRC-funded project based in the Department for the Study of Religions at SOAS. The aim of the project is to catalogue all the Christian manuscripts in Syriac script that are contained in the Turfan Collection in Berlin. Dr. Erica Hunter is heading up the overall project, as well as the cataloguing of the Syriac manuscripts. Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams is responsible for cataloguing the Sogdian manuscripts in Syriac script and Prof. Peter Zieme of Berlin is responsible for cataloguing the Old Turkic (Uyghur) manuscripts in Syriac script. The manuscripts in question have remained uncatalogued in the century since they were brought back to Berlin from Turfan in NW China. In particular, the 300 Syriac manuscripts have received very little attention. It is hoped that the project will contribute to a better understanding of the profile of the Christian community in the Uyghur Kingdom between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, as well as the links between Christians in Turfan and the patriarchate of the Church of the East in Baghdad. Further details about the project can be found at the following address: www.soas.ac.uk/ceoc/turfan/
Conferences and events

Arabic on Campus and Beyond, April 2008

The main aim of the conference was to enable students and teachers of Arabic at UK institutions to share perspectives and experiences of the way Arabic is taught. It brought together teachers of Arabic and other “hard” languages from universities, schools, and other professional environments from across the country and beyond. The conference was the result of an ongoing collaboration between the Centre for Advanced Study of the Arab World, University of Edinburgh and the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at Cambridge.

The first session of the day considered students’ different reasons for studying Arabic. Participants considered whether it was helpful to distinguish between motivations that were “instrumental” (i.e. related to a specific purpose such as a job) and those that were “integrative” (i.e. connected to a general interest in a subject, culture or people). Students’ motivations were in many cases linked to a personal, religious or political orientation towards the subject of study. For example, some students wanted to study Arabic because of an active engagement with political issues in the Arab world. In these cases, the experience of learning Arabic in the Arab world could serve to develop or strengthen such a motivation. The issue of student motivation led to the question of what type of Arabic educational institutions should be teaching. Should they focus on literature, culture and religious texts, or on teaching spoken dialects of Arabic? The gap between these two approaches was a particular issue because of the diglossic structure of Arabic: the distance between the spoken and written languages.

Students also described a variety of attitudes they encountered from various quarters while studying in the Arabic-speaking world. These ranged from hospitality to harassment, and from trust to suspicion. In many situations students found that they were welcomed and integrated into local networks; in some situations they encountered the desire to “instrumentalise” them or use them for particular purposes. Thus, people’s attitudes towards students (like students’ attitudes towards their subject) could be classed as either integrative or instrumental. Finally, this session considered how language teaching could itself inculcate either instrumental or integrative attitudes among students. Participants discussed how the Israeli state school system oriented Jewish-Israeli children towards Palestinians and Arabs through the way it taught Arabic. The narratives used to teach a language could be used either to exclude or to integrate: to perpetuate stereotypes or to challenge them. While language was a potential tool for integration and knowing the other, the educational framework in this case saw knowledge of Arabic as a tool that should serve the state’s military-security agenda.

The second session focused on the resources and methodologies used in teaching Arabic in the UK. The distance between formal written Arabic and spoken dialects was seen to pose a major challenge for both teachers and students, and the conference considered different strategies for dealing with this. However, it was also suggested that the academic bifurcation of Arabic into formal and dialectical languages was problematic, since most Arabs communicated somewhere in between these two extremes. For example, advertisements were increasingly being written in dialectical Arabic, and dialect expressions were creeping into print media. It was important to engage with this reality when teaching Arabic. In the light of this point, the conference considered the strengths and weaknesses of one of the most commonly used Arabic textbooks: al-kitaab. It also discussed a range of other resources and the importance of exploiting and supplementing them in an engaging and imaginative way. In particular, ‘e-learning’ internet-based materials presented exciting possibilities, such as being able to use podcasts, mobile devices, wiki-spaces and virtual books to support traditional classroom teaching.

The third session considered the different ways that Arabic was taught beyond university campuses – in institutions such as schools, adult education language centres, and the military. Discussion
covered a number of issues such as the need for common standards, collaboration and coordination (particularly between schools and universities), as well as the methods and resources used to engage students outside universities. Several speakers emphasised the need to develop a set of agreed standards, and to develop Arabic A-level and GCSE examinations that responded better to students’ needs. One speaker said that there was no clear guidance or policy on how to teach Arabic in schools and that consultation was needed to establish an agreed curriculum. The conference considered the increasing popularity of Arabic within secondary schools, and the implications of this for universities. It asked how university departments should cope with increasing numbers of university students who had studied Arabic at school and therefore did not need to be taught \textit{ab initio}. Arabic language trainers from the Defence School of Languages added a military perspective to these issues, describing their own purposes for teaching Arabic and the methodologies and assessment framework that they used.

The final session compared the perspectives of Japanese, Chinese and Arabic teachers. Since these were commonly said to be difficult languages, speakers addressed the question of what made each language hard for students and teachers. The nature of the difficulties differed for each language, ranging from unusual vocabulary, style and morphological rules, to the subtleties of tone and register and the difficulties posed by diglossia. In conclusion it was suggested that what made a language hard was not any inherent difficulty but its distance from one’s native language. This distance could be either structural – a question of unfamiliar grammar and vocabulary – or cultural.

The conference was held at the University of Edinburgh in April 2008. It was convened by Professor Yasir Suleiman of Cambridge and Paul Anderson of Edinburgh University (who compiled this report).

\textbf{Broadcasting in ‘their’ language: Middle Eastern and Western TV networks and their audiences}

\textbf{Held on 3rd November 2007 at Emmanuel College, Cambridge}

The aim of the conference “Broadcasting in ‘Their’ Language” was to consider why European media organisations such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle and France 24 are choosing to broadcast TV news and other output in Arabic, and why media organisations based in or with some link to countries in the Middle East such as al-Jazeera and Press TV are choosing to broadcast in English. Key questions raised included the particular objectives of each organisation, and the extent to which they enjoy editorial freedom or follow a foreign policy line dictated by government.

The conference was organised into four sessions. The first two considered the phenomenon of European media organisations broadcasting in Arabic. The third considered the reverse phenomenon: stations which were based in or had some affiliation to the Middle East broadcasting in English. The final session was a plenary discussion considering the implications of satellite broadcasting in “their” language for the local, regional and global media scene.

A number of themes emerged in the course of the discussion and question and answer sessions. These themes can be broadly grouped under the following topics:

- audiences: who constituted current and target audiences; the changing ways in which audiences consumed media; the implications of increasing “consumer choice”; the ways in which broadcasters got to know and interacted with audiences; the ways in which different channels perceived their competition and aimed to distinguish themselves from each other;

- objectivity: what “objectivity” and “fairness” meant in practical terms in the newsroom; whether stations choosing to broadcast in foreign languages were answering to a political agenda or simply responding to changing audience demands; what role media organisations should or could play in discussing or “promoting” democracy and human rights;

- the framing of information: the role of terminology and images in framing debates and shaping political opinions; the extent to which particular terminologies “migrated” from one language or country to another, and the effect of this; the way in which the culture of different newsrooms could affect the way that assessments of credibility and newsworthiness were made;

- political impact: the extent to which satellite broadcasting could bring a new dynamic to globalisation, with information and ideas flowing from “South” to “North” rather than vice-versa; whether the proliferation of channels meant that information was being “democratised” and leading to improved inter-cultural dialogue; whether intensive satellite news broadcasting enabled or stymied political participation;

- the future of satellite journalism in the Middle East: whether an ethic of independent journalism had been permanently established in the region, or whether it remained dependent on the will of a small group of individuals; whether constraints on journalistic freedom in the Middle East were increasing or decreasing; and whether the relative freedom of some satellite broadcast stations might translate into political freedoms on the ground.

This conference was jointly organised by the Cambridge Arab Media Project, under the directorship of Dr Khaled Hroub and the Centre for Advanced Study of the Arab World at Edinburgh University. The organisers gratefully acknowledge the support provided by sponsors: Deutsche Welle, France 24, the BBC, and the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World.

\textbf{The Centre for Modern Hebrew Studies}

Speakers at the Centre during 2008 included Eshkol Nevo, a popular Israeli author, who spoke about his novel \textit{Homesick} on 26th February. A special event was also held on 18th February, celebrating the translation of S.Yizhar’s controversial novella, \textit{Khirbet Khizeh}. The screening of the adaptation of the novella was followed by a discussion, led by the translators Professor Nicholas de Lange and Yacob Dweck. The seminars organized by the Centre also featured Dr Jordan Finkin (Oxford), Dr Nir Cohen (UCL), Dr Gideon Bohak (Tel Aviv), and Dr Colin Shindler (SOAS).

A total of 27 students have been attending the open classes in Modern Hebrew run by Rachel Williams on Wednesday afternoon, with sessions at beginner, intermediate and advanced level. Mrs Williams also organizes the Israeli Film Club which shows films on different topics each term. In Lent term 2008 the topic was ‘The IDF (Israeli Army) in Israeli Cinema’. Among the films shown was ‘Beaumont’ (the war in Lebanon) and ‘One of Us’. In Michaelmas Term 2008 the topic was ‘Coming to a New Land’. Among the films shown were ‘Live and Become’ (Ethiopian Jews), and ‘Yana’s Friends’ (the new immigrants from Russia).

\textbf{Cambridge Symposium on Middle Eastern Studies: Knowledge and Language in Middle Eastern Societies, University of Cambridge, 17-19th October 2008}

The symposium was the result of a one year process that originated from the seminal graduate meetings of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Cambridge. The generous financial contribution of the Department and the financial and logistical help provided by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
(CRASSH) allowed the organising committee to convert an idea into an academic reality. A call for papers was released in January 2008, and by late March, more than 170 abstracts were received from all over the world.

The symposium was conceived as an event organised by graduate students to create a space in which established scholars and young researchers alike could meet together to share, discuss and exchange ideas in the fields of Language and Knowledge in the Middle East. The topic was kept broad especially to attract contributions from a variety of research fields (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkic, History, Politics, Social Sciences, etc.) in order to encourage interaction between its respective specialists, who do not often have the chance to exchange and compare approaches, themes and findings. In selecting the abstracts for each of the 6 panels, the committee strived to achieve a balance between the topics, languages, geographies, and historical periods explored. The speakers came from Cambridge, other parts of the United Kingdom, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas.

The symposium lasted for three days. On Friday, 17th October, Prof. Geoffrey Khan opened the symposium with an Inaugural Lecture on “The historical importance of the modern spoken dialects of Semitic languages”, held at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. Over the weekend, the participants presented their papers at CRASSH’s excellent conference facility. There were 5 papers in each panel, each of which lasted for 20 minutes. A 35 minute discussion period followed. The papers presented were of an extraordinarily high quality, and generated lively discussion. In the feedback received from the participants, the highlighted positives were the excellent standard of the lectures, the links and similarities that were identified between seemingly disparate fields during presentations and discussions, and the warm and friendly atmosphere. Some participants kindly expressed that this was the best symposium that they had ever attended.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the participants for their splendid contributions, as well as the Department of Middle Eastern Studies and CRASSH for supporting this event. Without all of them, the symposium could not have been the success it was. We also thank all those scholars and graduate students who responded to the call for papers. Finally, we look forward to establishing this as an annual Cambridge event.
Palestine Variations: Contrapuntal Themes in History Religion and Culture

Saturday, 24th May 2008, King's College

The symposium, organised by Dr Lori Allen, brought together a diverse group of scholars, with the aim of giving researchers, filmmakers, and their audiences opportunities to raise their various voices, consider together the state of scholarship on Palestine, and what role it might play in the formation of a more just future.

The title of the symposium draws from Edward Said's call for a contrapuntal reading of colonial history, one which takes account of multiple and intermingling voices, of that which is forcibly excluded from privileged narratives. Attention to those who fly below the radar of spectacularizing news media, and recognition of their unique experiences of the primary tragedy of a nation, and ongoing efforts to redeem it, may challenge the standard privileging of high-political stories and nationalist histories. Hearing these voices may, for example, alter understanding of the ways in which minorities, soldiers and poets belong to the national community or shape it from outside. The scholarship that records and interrogates the conditions of production of political knowledge and creative representation may challenge the terms of the debate, so often framed by “reasons of security.” Rescuing such counter-narratives without political organization and international intervention will not be enough to see Palestinian claims to justice and the right of return realized, no matter how many stories are narrated, lives recorded, histories filmed and archived. But it is part of the long historical process. Edward Said's scholarship, and his career as an indefatigable public intellectual - a gad-fly and creative critic - have inspired and encouraged countless writers, artists and activists to continue speaking truth to power, an even more vital activity as the sounds of war attempt to drown out those voices.

80th Birthday Celebrations

Professor John Emerton, Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University from 1968 to 1995, celebrated his eightieth birthday on 5th June, 2008. His colleagues marked the occasion by organizing a symposium and a lunch at St John’s College where Professor Emerton has been a fellow for many years. Four longstanding friends read papers relating to the Old Testament: Ora Lipschitz (Israel), and Professors Bertil Albrektson (Sweden), Rudolf Smend (Germany) and Arie van der Kooij (Netherlands). A second Festschrift volume in honour of Professor Emerton and incorporating these and other papers is in preparation.

Persian Literature in Multilingual India: Genres, Contexts, Styles, 16-18th June 2008

Department of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, Department of the Languages and Cultures of South Asia, SOAS.

Convenors: Francesca Orsini (SOAS), Stefano Pello (University of Venice) & Christine van Ruymbeke (University of Cambridge).

After the historical surveys by Ghani and Bausani, scholarly work on Persian literature in India has been limited to a few individual authors (Amir Khusrau, Faizi, Mas’ud Sa’d Salman) or, at best, to regions (e.g. Gujarat). Due to its “peripheral” position vis-à-vis scholarship on Persian poets in Iran, and to the decline of Persian literary studies in the subcontinent, barring a few significant exceptions, Persian poetry in India existed within a context that was multilingual and socially layered, and in locations that included the royal court, regional and local elite circles, Sufi khanqahs, etc.

The conference programme included sessions focusing on Indo-European Encounters, courtly norms, social history of the Persian language, shaping a literary culture and translations and rewriting. Speakers from the USA, Canada, India and Europe participated in the event, which was organised with the generous support of the Soudavar Foundation and the British Academy.

Hebrew-Aramaic ‘Away Day’

A very successful ‘Away Day’ was held on 20th June 2008 at St Catharine’s College when nine FAMES researchers working with Professors Gordon and Khan read papers on Arabic translations of the Pentateuch, the characterization of the Assyrians in Isaiah, verbal morphology in a Karaite text, semantic development in a Hebrew root, the history of Eastern Aramaic, demonstrative pronouns in the Qur’an, the Septuagint and Vulgate versions of Genesis 4.7, verb-form in Hebrew Maskilic prose fiction, and intertextuality in the Septuagint. A fine lunch was laid on for paper readers, and it is hoped to repeat the experience in June 2009.

Society of Biblical Literature

The meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature meets annually in USA just before Thanksgiving and currently brings together about 5,500 attendees interested in biblical and related matters. In 2008 the meeting was held in Boston, MA, and several members of the Hebrew postgraduate body attended. Seulgi Byun and Myrto Theocharous read Septuagint-related papers at seminar sessions. The Cambridge connexion, numbering about twenty and involving past and present researchers and several prospective ones, met for dinner with Robert and Ruth Gordon on the Saturday evening, 22nd November, at the Bangkok City Restaurant in Massachusetts Avenue.

2009 Risa Domb Memorial Lecture

The inaugural Risa Domb Memorial Lecture organised by Dr Marzanska-Mishani, was held at the Faculty on 3rd March. The lecture, given by the leading Israeli author A.B.Yehoshua, was entitled “From Mythology to History: My later novels”. We would like to express our gratitude to the speaker and thank him for delivering an additional lecture for our students entitled ‘Jew, Israeli and Zionist: Honing the Concept’.

2009 Tyrwhitt Lecture

The Annual Tyrwhitt Lecture, entitled ‘The apocalyptic community, the matrix of the teacher, and rewriting scripture’ was given on 4th March 2009 in the Runcie Room, Faculty of Divinity by Professor George Brooke, University of Manchester. The Lecture is supported from the Tyrwhitt Fund which was established over a century ago to fund scholarships awarded on the basis of a postgraduate examination in classical and rabbinical Hebrew and Aramaic and which now also supports teaching and research in Hebrew and Aramaic more generally.
Dates for your diary

Omar Khayyam, Edward FitzGerald and the Rubaiyat (University of Leyden and University of Cambridge)

8-10th July 2009, at Trinity College, Cambridge (Winstanley Theatre).

This planned conference is also, in a more innovative way for our faculties, an opportunity to show how the past of our University meets the future generations, at the same time illustrating how comprehension and knowledge of cultures foster art which transcends boundaries. This conference shows how the work of a famous member of the Cambridge University community, who has contributed towards bridging the gap between East and West in Victorian England, can be revived today and can have an impact on today's schoolchildren's interest and awareness of other cultures.

The planned conference in 2009 will mark the Bicentenary of the birth of Edward FitzGerald (1809) and the 150th Anniversary of the publication of his Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. The year will be an opportunity to celebrate this Trinity student's (1826-30) unique contribution to world literature, in the form of his poem based on the verse of the 11th century Persian, Omar Khayyam. The Rubaiyat has become perhaps the most widely known poem in the world. It has been republished virtually every year from 1879 (the year of FitzGerald's fourth version) to the present day, and translated into over 80 different languages.

In collaboration with the Faculty of English at Cambridge, the Cambridge Victorian Study group and the Persian Department at the University of Leyden (The Netherlands), we are organising a five-day conference which will examine both the work and persona of the Medieval Persian author (in Leyden, 6 and 7th July 2009) and the work and persona of the Victorian English author (in Cambridge, 8, 9 and 10th July 2009). Cambridge will host a two-day conference, consisting of public sessions by academics of international standing. This will be the hub around which several other events at Cambridge will revolve: an (earlier) exhibition at the University Library (showing relevant Persian manuscripts and FitzGerald papers and editions of the Rubaiyat), an exhibition at Trinity's Wren Library, (partly on FitzGerald himself and partly on the Omar Khayyam Club, of which Trinity possesses substantial archives) and the culmination of a year-long project at three Cambridgeshire 6th Form Secondary Schools. The latter will include a music and dance performance and an art exhibition by Cambridgeshire schoolchildren (with prizes (a book on FitzGerald's Rubaiyat), voted by the conference participants).

For further information please contact Dr Christine van Ruymbeke (cv223@cam.ac.uk)

Cambridge-Edinburgh international symposium

A joint Cambridge-Edinburgh international symposium on prophecy in the Neo-Assyrian period is planned for 11-12th December 2009. The symposium will take place in New College, Edinburgh. For further information contact R. P. Gordon (rg1000@cam.ac.uk).

Alumni spotlight

Samuel Green, Trinity, 2002

I remember telling my parents I was considering studying Hebrew. They asked me what practical use it would be. I wasn’t really sure how to answer, but reassured them that university was an opportunity to develop the mind and acquire transferable skills (I discovered this latter, very useful phrase in the prospectus) regardless of discipline, and that many people did not use knowledge gained at university directly in their career.

How wrong I was! After graduating in 2006, my first job was as Director of FZY, the UK’s largest Jewish youth organisation. My Modern Hebrew enabled a fabulous relationship with the Israel office (none of my predecessors could speak it). Furthermore I was in a unique position to develop educational programming through my knowledge of post-Biblical texts, Israeli literature, cinema and music. I even ran a couple of sessions on some of the finer points of Biblical Hebrew grammar, which were surprisingly well received!

With my year in office over, I decided to explore the world of marketing, and since January have been living in Geneva, working for Procter & Gamble. My studies are of less direct use, but still come in handy – last Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) the service officiator lost his voice; I was in the unique position to be able to take over a significant portion of his role, and made sure to point out to my parents the practical application of my degree!

I have very fond memories of my time in the faculty; we were (a select?) few, and therefore had an intimate feeling of family. I had a great relationship with fellow students and faculty staff, and am extremely grateful for the inspiration and support received. I dabble in rapping, and when for the first time I attempted some Hebrew lyrics, the draft was rapidly passed around the staff, who eagerly offered their feedback! The final version ended up being released and has been a big hit (as far as raps in Hebrew go).
No words on my time in Cambridge would be complete without a mention of Dr. Risa Domb (z”l). Risa's passion for her subject was infectious; her classes fascinating. She took a keen interest in each student, and was deeply concerned with our welfare and outside interests. She had a fascinating background – how many academics' fathers managed a football club to UEFA cup success? Despite falling ill, she was highly supportive throughout my finals, and hid the severity of her condition to all but a few. Her passing was a huge shock, and she is greatly missed. She lives on in each of her students in whom she inspired and nurtured a passion for Modern Hebrew literature.


At the end of schooling in 1962 as a King Edward's School Birmingham Foundation and State Scholar, I was lucky enough to be pointed in the direction of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge by my formidable sixth form Careers and French and German master, Victor Biggs. His Eighth Army experiences sparked my interest in reading Arabic and Turkish.

In 1964 there were just 8 of us undergraduates that year, and Modern Languages were oversubscribed, so the Faculties were content with this switch, especially as I had spent what is now called a gap year in Lebanon at the Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies. As an undergraduate in the States, I had studied journalism while taking Arabic courses on the side. Both were my passions, but I didn’t know how to meld them together. I thought, perhaps, that I would go into academia, and so I applied for the Masters programme at Cambridge. The M.Phil...
program allowed me to take three taught courses, which was particularly helpful for someone with limited knowledge of the field. The courses I chose ranged from modern Middle Eastern history to medieval Arabic philosophy. I was particularly interested in the Islamization of modern states, and so I chose to write my thesis on the institution of Islamic criminal law in Pakistan. In between reading Sayyid Qutb and Maududi, I interned at the BBC World Service in London. I worked at the radio program - "News Hour" during Christmas break to maintain my journalism skills. Upon returning to the states, I moved to Washington D.C. where I now work for National Public Radio, sort of the American version of the BBC. I’m an overnight producer for the morning news show, so the hours aren’t ideal, but the experience is priceless. Although NPR reports on international issues, I’ve keen to use my Arabic skills more on a daily basis, and so I’m currently in the midst of applying for a CASA fellowship to Egypt. It’s a remarkable program mostly geared toward aspiring academics, but in my limited experience as a journalist, I’ve realized there’s a genuine lack of understanding in the media about the Middle East. While there are undoubtedly talented journalists who work in the Middle East, there are far too many news organizations that parachute reporters into the region with little knowledge of the culture or language. I believe a lack of linguistic and cultural familiarity is the root cause of the all-too pervasive superficial coverage of the Arab world. Through the CASA fellowship, I hope to improve my Arabic and thereby develop the skills to contribute to more factual, nuanced coverage of the Middle East.

Mario Kozah, Queens’, 1965

I was born in Lebanon in 1976 at the beginning of the Lebanese civil war. At the age of eight and due to the war I moved with my parents to England and continued my schooling at primary and secondary school levels in London.

Musallam as my supervisor and gained my B.A. degree with first class honours after three years. I decided to continue my education at PhD level at Cambridge with Professor James Montgomery as my supervisor and successfully defended my thesis in 2002. I also gained a Junior Research Fellowship for three years at Trinity Hall in this same year. During my postgraduate years at the (then) Faculty of Oriental Studies I had the opportunity to teach undergraduate courses in Modern Arabic Literature (comparative/postcolonial), Middle Eastern and Islamic Literature and Medieval Arabic Literature. I frequently visited Lebanon at this time and began to review the manuscript holdings at the Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik (USEK). My interest in this research and many other reasons led me to move back finally to Lebanon in 2004, taking up teaching Syriac language and literature at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and continuing with my research at USEK as a full-time Associate Professor in Comparative Literature.

I currently teach Syriac language and Syriac literature in English translation as a part-time lecturer at AUB in the Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages. The courses that I give introduce students to Syriac language and also provide them with a knowledge and understanding of the greatest works of Syriac literature by many of its greatest historians, philosophers and poets in the original Syriac and through English translations. I believe that I have inspired students to learn about a rarely taught but fundamental aspect of Lebanese and Near Eastern culture. It is no exaggeration to state that AUB is now probably the only university in the world that teaches Syriac language and literature on an annual basis to so large a number of undergraduate students.

I look back on my life at Cambridge with mixed feelings but mostly happy ones. I wish to thank all those who taught me at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, especially Dr Basim Musallam, and I am particularly grateful for the invaluable opportunity I was given as a graduate to teach courses in literature and supervise undergraduate students in Arabic language. Finally, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Professor James Montgomery without whose steadfast support, prudent advice, brilliant inspiration, and so much more, my studies would have certainly ended with a B.A. and my career would not have taken the happy and fruitful course back to Lebanon that it has.

Adam Silverstein, Trinity Hall, 1995

I took a BA in Arabic and Persian (Robinson College) in 1999 and decided to do something adventurous for my PhD, so I moved ... to Trinity Hall. To atone for past sins, I forced myself to write a doctoral thesis on postal systems in the first two centuries of Islamic history. I worked under the supervision of Prof. Tarif Khalidi (now at the AUB), and it turned out to be quite an enjoyable project. Unfortunately, this meant that I was not yet absolved of past transgressions, so as a final punishment I pursued the topic backwards and forwards in time, expanding its chronological scope from 200 to 2000 years (from the ancient Near East to the Mongols and Mamluks). This was done between 2002 and 2005, when I held a British Academy post-doctoral fellowship in what was then called the Faculty of Oriental Studies (no college attachment - bold!). The result of all this is a book published in 2007 by Cambridge University Press in their series ‘Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation’.

After a gap year which I spent in Morocco, I was admitted to Queens’ College in 1995 to read Oriental Studies with Dr Basim
Students

Since then, I’ve moved to Oxford, where in 2005-7 I was Lecturer in Islamic History and from 2007 until now I’ve been University Research Lecturer in Oriental Studies (Islam & Judaism). I’m a lecturer at The Queen’s College and a Fellow in Jewish-Muslim Relations at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. My research and teaching has moved on a bit since my Cambridge days. I now focus on the interaction between cultures in the Islamic world, and between pre and early-Islamic civilizations. Recent publications include articles on Jewish merchants in China (Journal of Jewish Studies), the Babylonian background to the Biblical Book of Esther (BSOAS), Haman in Islamic Tradition (JSAI), and a forthcoming article on lot-casting in Near Eastern history (Journal of Semitic Studies), as well as book chapters and encyclopaedia entries on Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew geography, Pharaoh in the Qur’an, and the transmission of ancient Near Eastern motifs into medieval Persian literature. Not a postal system in sight!

None of this would have happened had I not spent ten formative years in Cambridge. Without the encouragement and inspiration of my teachers (and classmates) in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, I would never have turned to academia, which has brought me intellectual wealth and financial poverty - for both of which the Faculty is responsible!

The printed edition of the Hadith Encyclopaedia is supplemented by a CD-ROM and a website (www.ihsanetwork.org). These allow for the full text of the printed edition to be searched according to various criteria. The website, which is entitled IHSAN, an acronym for International Hadith Studies Association Network, is also a virtual forum where scholars of hadith can share their research.

Currently, the next published work of the Sunna Project is in press: a 14 volume edition of the Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the most comprehensive hadith collection. The Foundation’s edition of the Musnad contains almost 300 hadith that have never appeared before in any printed edition of the work, but are present in manuscripts with distinguished provenances. The release of this edition of the Musnad will be a landmark event in Islamic scholarship and Islamic book publishing.

The second of the Foundation’s projects affiliated with the Centre, the Islamic Manuscript Association, is an international organization working to develop standards and guidelines for best practice in the areas of cataloguing, conservation, digitization, and publishing so that Islamic manuscript collections may be preserved for posterity and also made more accessible. The Association encourages scholarship on Islamic manuscripts, particularly the care and management of Islamic manuscript collections, and provides a platform for presenting current research at its annual conference at the University of Cambridge, which is co-hosted by the Centre. It also organizes an annual training workshop on Islamic codicology in cooperation with Cambridge University Library.

Since the inception of the Association’s grant scheme in 2007, over £70,000 in funds have been awarded to individuals and institutions. This support has made possible the purchase of a vacuum packing machine by the Istanbul Muftiate Library and Archives, the publication of selected proceedings from the 2007 Congress of German Oriental Studies in a book entitled From Codicology to Technology: Islamic Manuscripts and their Place in Scholarship, the cataloguing of 400 previously uncatalogued manuscripts at the Mamma Haidara Library in Timbuktu, the digitization of a Shahnama manuscript at the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, and the conservation of a 13th century Seljuq Qur’an manuscript at the Konya District Manuscript Library.

The Fifth Islamic Manuscript Conference will be held at Christ’s College from 24 - 27th July 2009. The call for papers, as well as additional information about the Conference and the Association, may be found at www.islamicmanuscript.org.

Inquiries about the Foundation and its work may be addressed to:

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The Faculty

In March 2007, the former Faculty of Oriental Studies was renamed the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES) to better reflect its geographical scope and teaching and research focuses, and two new departments were established. The Department of East Asian Studies encompasses Chinese, Japanese and Korean Studies. Hebrew and Aramaic, Arabic and Persian Studies now constitute the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. Sanskrit and South Asian Studies are currently offered at graduate level only and the study of the Ancient Near East has been reassigned to the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The Faculty building has been refurbished and we now have a much more welcoming reception area and state-of-the-art lecture rooms. We organise many events throughout the year and we would be delighted to welcome you back. All events are publicised on the ‘News and Events’ pages of the website at: www.ames.cam.ac.uk/news_events/

Stay in touch

We hope you have enjoyed reading the first edition of the newsletter. We plan to produce issues regularly to keep our friends and members up-to-date with our activities so if you have any suggestions or contributions for future issues do get in touch.

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Media links

If you are a journalist seeking an expert on topics related to the teaching and research areas of the Department you may find the Guide to Expertise a useful resource.

Managed by the University’s Office of Communication, the Guide is an online directory of experts willing to be contacted by the media and includes many of the Faculty’s staff. The database can be searched by keyword or context to help find an academic with the necessary expertise. For further details visit www.admin.cam.ac.uk/news/ and click on the ‘Find an expert’ link. Do contact the Department and let us know which projects, programmes or publications you are working on too. Send an email to enquiries@ames.cam.ac.uk.

Join us

Following the enormous success of last year’s Festival of Ideas - the University’s festival of the arts, humanities and social sciences - we are delighted to be participating again in 2009. It will be held from 21st October until 1st November.

Last year’s events were extremely well attended and the programme included lectures on medieval Muslim travellers, Persian miniature painting, China’s role in World War II and East Asian Film. Hands on activities included an Arabic calligraphy workshop, a Magic Lantern show and Chinese paper cutting session for children. Plans for a bigger and better line-up are already underway so we do hope you will join us.

Visit the Festival website for further details: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/communications/community/ideasfestival/