

Research grant awards

Dionisius Agius

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has awarded a grant of £233,831 to Professor Dionisius Agius for his project: "Magic in Malta, 1605: The Moorish Slave Sellem Bin al-Sheikh Mansur and the Roman Inquisition". The project will run for two years with Principal Investigator, Professor Dionisius A. Agius FBA; Co-Investigator, Dr Catherine Rider (History Department); and Research Fellow, Dr Alex Mallett.

Ideas of magic have existed in human society for millennia and are worldwide phenomena, continuing to this day through the use of amulets, crucifixes, and the evil eye, among others, in places such as the Islands of Malta, as well as more widely in Europe and the Islamic World. Over the decades much energy has been expended identifying the causes behind, attitudes towards, and consequences of the perceived practice of magic in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, and, to a lesser extent, the contemporaneous Islamic world. Yet in a few comparatively neglected places, such as Malta, these differing cultures overlapped, with the result that ideas of magic could cross cultural boundaries and so start to influence other cultures. In response to the use of magic on Malta, which was often accompanied by an Islamic influence, the Roman Inquisition on Malta, under the auspices of the Pope, attempted to prevent its practice through legal proceedings against suspected practitioners. The (Cathedral) Archives in Mdina, Malta contain manuscripts of court proceedings of the Inquisition, dating from 1561 to 1798, which cover a number of charges ranging from apostasy through possession of prohibited religious literature to witchcraft and magic. The proposed project examines the proceedings (written in Latin, Italian and Arabic) of the Roman Inquisition on Malta's 1605 trial of the 'Moorish' slave Sellem Bin al-Sheikh Mansur, who was accused and found guilty of practising magic and sentenced to solitary confinement. It will assess what these proceedings reflect about religion, society, and politics both on Malta and more widely across the Mediterranean in the early 17th century, as well as aspects of magic in both European and Islamic contexts.

Robert Gleave

Rob Gleave is the Principal Investigator for the ESRC Impact Accelerator Account (IAA) at the University of Exeter. The award is to promote the conversion of research into impact in ESRC subject areas by providing funds for Impact activities. The award will run from September 2014 to September 2018. The ESRC has awarded IAAs to the "top research universities" in order to stimulate impact through social science research. Rob will be working with Kerry Dungay and Louise Rutt in RKT to implement the IAA's aims and objectives.

Suha Taji-Farouki

Dr Suha Taji-Farouki has been awarded £5000 by The Islamic Manuscript Association for a one-year research project on 'Ibn 'Arabi's prayers of blessing upon the Prophet (Salawat)'.

Prayer that calls down blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad is an essential element of Muslim devotional life, yet it remains relatively understudied. Across Islamic history a rich literature developed around it, weaving elaborations upon it with poetic eulogies of the Prophet. Its authors were intimately associated with the Sufi tradition: Sufi motifs became prominent in such prayers, and they acquired a special liturgical presence in the Sufi orders. This project focuses on salawat composed by the Andalusian Sufi Muhyi'l-din Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), arguably the most influential thinker of the second half of Islamic history. Ibn 'Arabi's exquisite prayers distil his profound teaching on the Prophet as well as his metaphysics and vision of the spiritual path. The project aims at the first published critical edition of these prayers upon the Prophet based on a thorough survey of the essentially unexplored manuscript base, encompassing collections worldwide but with particular attention to the concentration of relevant manuscripts in Istanbul. This is the first step in a larger study of salawat in various traditions of Muslim life, thought and devotion.

Exhibitions



Songs of the Deserts 3 October – 19 December 2014

A celebration of the desert in mosaic, calligraphy and storytelling. Artists: Elaine M Goodwin (mosaic), Mohamed Abooubidi (calligraphy), and author Richard Hamilton.

Transhumances Kurdes – January – March 2015

Pictures of pastoral life in Kurdish Turkey and Iraq by Michaël Thevenin.

Conferences, seminars, workshops

Gulf Studies Conference 2014

The Heritage Boom in the Gulf; Critical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives, 1st – 2nd September, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

Centre for Kurdish Studies: Doctoral Workshop

"Middle Eastern Literatures: local and global contexts", organised by the Centre for Kurdish Studies (University of Exeter), in collaboration with the Faculty of Oriental Studies (University of Oxford). 7th- 8th June 2014, University of Exeter.

New Research Staff

Alex Mallett

Dr Alex Mallett is a historian of Christian-Muslim relations in the Mediterranean region in the medieval and early modern periods, and his research has primarily focussed on the period of the Crusades in the Levant (1097-1291) as well as relations between the two faiths in the western Mediterranean in late medieval and early modern times. He gained his PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2009, and has since worked on research projects at the University of Birmingham and the Université de Nantes, as well as holding a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at Royal Holloway, University of London, in 2009-2011. In his new position at the institute he will be working with Professor Dionisius Agius and Dr Catherine Rider (History) on the AHRC-funded project 'Magic in Malta, 1605: The Moorish Slave Sellem b. al-Sheikh Mansur and the Roman Inquisition'.

Anastasia Nosova

Anastasia Nosova Anastasia has a BA in Asian and African Studies, with the specialization in the History of Arab Countries, from St. Petersburg State University, Russia. During her undergraduate studies, and particularly after a year abroad Arabic language training in Kuwait, she became interested in carrying out research on the Gulf states, and further did her Masters degree in Gulf Studies at the University of Exeter.

In 2012, Anastasia started her PhD in Political Science in London School of Economics, Department of Government. Her thesis is dedicated to the dynamics of political participation of the business sector in Kuwait. Focusing on the last two decades of the country's history, she intends to assess the current level of involvement of Kuwaiti business community representatives in politics, looking into the means of political influence and participation they utilise. The study is aimed to provide the basis for the understanding of the modern political economy and power mechanisms at work in the oil-rentier state of Kuwait, as well as the complex socioeconomic processes and the rise of new social forces that the country has been witnessing recently.

Anastasia is affiliated with LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf, and has recently joined the Institute as an Associate Research Fellow to work on the ESRC research project 'State-Business Relations in the GCC'.

Publications

Dionisius A. Agius (2014), 'Abhara's voyages', in *The World in the Viking Age*, eds. S. M. Sindbaek & A. Trakadas (Roskilde: The Viking Ship Museum): 40-45.

Dionisius A. Agius, Timmy Gambin and Athena Trakadas (eds.) (2014), *Ships, Saints and Sealore: Cultural Heritage and Ethnography of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea* (Oxford: Archaeopress).

John P Cooper (2014), *The Medieval Nile: Route, Navigation and Landscape in Islamic Egypt*, AUC Press.

Robert Gleave and Kevin Reinhart (ed.) (2014), *Islamic Law in Theory: Studies in Honor of Bernard Weiss* (Brill, 2014), with an introduction by R. Gleave and K. Reinhart "The Spirit of Islamic Law" and an chapter by R. Gleave, "Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Early Islamic Law".

R. Gleave (2014), "Deriving Rules of Law" in R. Peters and P. Bearman, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Islamic Law* (Ashgate, 2014), pp.57-73.

Alex Mallett (ed.) (2014), *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant* (Leiden: Brill).

Tim Niblock (2014), *Security Dynamics of East Asia in the Gulf Region* (Gerlach Press, Berlin, pp. 253). With Introduction (pp 1-6), and Chapter One (pp. 7-30), entitled "The Role of East Asian Countries in the Evolving Security Dynamics and Architecture of the Gulf Region".

Mansour Nsasra, **Sophie Richter-Devroe**, Sarab Abu Rabia-Queder and Richard Ratcliffe (2014) *The Naqab Bedouin and Colonialism*, Routledge.

Sophie Richter-Devroe and Ruba Salih (2014) Special Issue: Cultures of Resistance, *Arab Studies Journal*, vol. XXII, no. 1.

Clemence Scalbert-Yücel (2014): 'Les dynamiques d'intégration d'une littérature pankurde - Réflexions à partir de l'espace turco-irakien' in Olivier Grojean and Merve Özdemir Kiran (eds), *Le Kurdistan d'Irak et la question kurde au Moyen-Orient*, CERi Papers, SciencesPo, Paris.

Clemence Scalbert-Yücel (2014): *Langue, littérature et engagement. Le champ littéraire kurde en Turquie - 1980-2010*, Paris, Petra.

Clemence Scalbert-Yücel (2014): 'Les dynamiques d'intégration d'une littérature pankurde - Réflexions à partir de l'espace turco-irakien', *Les dossiers du CERi*, no. 2014/4.

Gareth Stansfield (2014): 'The Transformational Effects of the Oil and Gas Strategy of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq' in Olivier Grojean and Merve Özdemir Kiran (eds), *Le Kurdistan d'Irak et la question kurde au Moyen-Orient*, CERi Papers, SciencesPo, Paris.

Marc Valeri (2014), 'State-Business Relations in the Gulf. The Role of Business Actors in the Decision-Making Process in Bahrain and Oman', in M. Hudson & M. Kirk (eds), *Gulf Politics and Economics in a Changing World* (Singapore: World Scientific), pp.55-76.

Marc Valeri (2013), 'Ibadism and Omani Nation-Building since 1970', in A. Ziaka (ed), *On Ibadism* (Hildesheim [Germany]: Georg Olms), pp.165-176.

PhD awards

Mohammed Ahmad, *From Blueprint to Genocide? An analysis of Iraq's Sequenced Crimes of Genocide Committed against the Kurds of Iraq* – supervised by Gareth Stansfield.

Abdullah Alnajdi, *Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabbah, 1895-1965* – supervised by James Onley and Marc Valeri

Zamira Dildorbekova, *Dynamics of Islam and Democracy in Tajikistan* – supervised by Suha Taji-Farouki and John Heathershaw (Politics)

Massimiliano Fusari, *Post-Produced Cultures, Meta-Images, Aesthetics and the Hawzas* – supervised by Robert Gleave

Emad Hamdeh, *The Emergence of an Iconoclast: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his critics* – supervised by Robert Gleave. Dr Hamdeh was awarded the PhD through the Hartford-Exeter scheme, in which IAIS participates with Theology in HUMS.

Colleen Keyes, *The Significance of Edward Said's Notion of "Secular" Criticism in his Work on Islam and the Problematic of Palestine-Israel* – supervised by Ian Netton and Professor Mahmoud Ayoub (Hartford)

Sümeyye Parıldar, *Intentionality in Mulla Sadra* – supervised by Sajjad Rizvi and Ian Netton

Ash Rossiter, *Britain and the Development of Professional Security Forces in the Gulf States, 1921-71: Local Forces and Informal Empire* – supervised by James Onley

Marta Saldana, *Rentierism and Political Culture in the United Arab Emirates. The Case of UAEU Students* – a co-tutelle award between Exeter and the Universita Autonoma in Madrid (UAM, Spain), supervised by Marc Valeri (Exeter) and Ana Planet (Madrid)