

EVENTS AND REPORTS

Visit by the CEO and the COO of IAIS Malaysia to Istanbul (29 May–3 June 2009)

Zarina Nalla, IAIS Malaysia

2nd International Ibn Khaldūn Symposium: Ibn Khaldūn Today Precursor or Alternative? (Istanbul, May 2009)

In 2008, IAIS Malaysia received a concept paper for the “2nd International Ibn Khaldūn Symposium: Ibn Khaldūn Today Precursor or Alternative?” which the Center for Islamic Studies (ISAM) and the International Ibn Khaldūn Society planned to organise jointly in Istanbul in May 2009. IAIS Malaysia decided to become a co-sponsor together with four other institutions, namely the Istanbul Foundation for Education and Research (ISAR), the Duke Islamic Studies Center (DISC) at Duke University, the Department of Malay Studies in the National University of Singapore, and the Department of Sociology at Sakarya University, Turkey.

The four-day symposium, attended by Professor Mohammed Hashim Kamali (Chairman and CEO, IAIS Malaysia) and this writer (COO and Co-Founder, IAIS Malaysia), began on 29 May 2009 and was an interdisciplinary forum that focused on applying Ibn Khaldūn to historical and contemporary issues rather than on meta-theoretical statements on his work.

The following themes were addressed: How can Ibn Khaldūn’s theory be applied to the study of modern political, economic, cultural, and religious phenomena? What is the relevance of the Khaldūnian approach to modern debates concerning the relationship between Islam and the social sciences? How can we interpret ethnic conflicts, empires and civilisations, and inter-cultural relations, alternatively using Ibn Khaldūn’s theory?

The event was also attended by Dr Bruce Lawrence (Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center), Dr Abdesselam Cheddadi (Mohamed V University of Rabat, Morocco). Two papers were presented from Malaysia: One by Professor Kamali, entitled “*Umran Hadhari, Islam Hadhari and Tajdid Hadhari*”, and the other, “Ibn Khaldūn and Urban Planning”, by Associate Professor Dr Zaid Ahmed of University Putra Malaysia.

Meetings Conducted after the Symposium

Several visits had been organised for IAIS Malaysia by the Turkish Cultural Centre. In this regard, IAIS Malaysia is grateful to Dr Fateh Uğur Ergun (Turkish Cultural Centre, Malaysia), who was instrumental in setting up the meetings.

The Centre for Islamic Studies (ISAM)

ISAM is a teaching and research institution on the way to becoming a university. We met Dr Akif Aydin, director-general of ISAM, Dr Cengiz Kallek (Deputy Director), Dr Nuri Tinaz (Research Fellow, Sociology and Sociology of Religion) and Dr Mehmet Sait Ozervarli. We discussed the content of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between our two institutions which is awaiting final decisions. Possible areas of cooperation were explored, such as contributions by IAIS Malaysia to the Islamic Encyclopedia project and exchange of scholarly articles.

The Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture

Here, we met Professor Dr Faris Kaya, the foundation's secretary and had been introduced to one of the few living students of Said Nursi, Muhammed Firinci, who is in his nineties. This most memorable meeting took place in an centuries-old *madrasah*. Plans were discussed to co-organise a joint conference in 2010.

The Kaynak Publishing Group

Kaynak Publishing Group is one of the leading publishers of books on Islamic religion, history, art, spirituality, and traditions. Based in Turkey and with offices in New Jersey, Cairo and Moscow, Kaynak generates income that helps fund the efforts of the Fethullah Gülen Movement. We met with Kaynak's chairman Naci Tosun, Fikret Yaşar (publishing coordinator), Hakan Yeşilova (senior editor of *The Fountain*, the English-language organ of the Gülen Movement), and his colleague Hüseyin Bingül. We had a tour of their impressive office building and were walked through the various work processes of their publishing business and operations. It was an eye-opening experience, as we witnessed the importance of work-flow between various units in such a large organisation. Kaynak publishes many magazines in several languages, as well as textbooks. They explained in detail their vision, as well as their current and future projects. We signed an MOU with them and explored plans for further collaboration.

The Journalists and Writers Foundation

The Journalists and Writers Foundation was established in 1994 and plays a key role within the Gülen Movement. The activities include the organising of conferences as well as publishing. They are active in the media industry, especially as they are closely connected to *Today Zaman*, one of two major English-language daily newspapers circulating in Turkey. We met with Erkam Tufan Aytav, its vice president. We agreed to an exchange of articles and the Foundation plans to translate into Turkish the writings of Professor Kamali for posting on their website and print publication in the media. We signed an MOU with the Journalists and Writers Foundation, and there are currently on-going discussions between our two organisations to co-organise a conference in 2010.

The ISM (Centre for Sciences and Arts) and the Istanbul Foundation for Education and Research (ISAR)

ISM is an impressive centre of Islamic learning in which Dr Recep Senturk, a professor at Istanbul's Fatih University, plays a major role. We met many young folks there who were apparently university students. Professor Kamali presented a lecture on "*Ijtihād* and *Maqāṣid* in Islamic Law". The question and answer session was very lively. The writer of these lines spoke about IAIS Malaysia and also her experiences as a former university student in Malaysia. Many female students came forward to speak to me and I went away realising that more women must be given opportunities to contribute to our future in visible and significant ways in order to become role models for younger members of our community.

The OIC Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)

IRCICA is a subsidiary of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and is active in research, publishing, documentation and information. Its mandate covers multifarious themes in the history of Muslim nations, the history of arts and sciences in Islam, and other areas in Islamic culture and civilisation. We met with Dr Halit Eren (Director-General) and Dr Fatih Bayram (Researcher). We were also given a tour of their newly improved library which is set in a historical building. Any future cooperation with them would need to be coordinated through Malaysia's Foreign Ministry as the relationship with IRCICA falls into the domain of government-to-government relations.

Visits by the CEO and the COO of IAIS Malaysia to Universities and Research Institutions in New Zealand and Australia (July 2009)

Zarina Nalla, IAIS Malaysia

New Zealand

*Colloquium "The Role of the Study of Islam in the Western University",
Otago University, Dunedin, New Zealand (6–8 July 2009)*

IAIS Malaysia was invited to attend the colloquium "The Role of the Study of Islam in the Western University", organised by Otago University, Dunedin, New Zealand, during which two main questions were addressed:

- What relation is there between the study of religion of Islam and the study of those cultures that have shaped and been shaped by that religion?
- What is the appropriate public role of a scholar of Islam?

The answers and the discussion that ensued were meant to assist the University of Otago and Victoria University of New Zealand in jointly establishing a Centre for the Study of Islam and Muslim Cultures (CSIMC), intended to take a lead role on Islam