

THE ARAB WORLD & OXFORD



October 2013



Hanging lamp, 1299 - 1340, commissioned by Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qala'un (Ashmolean Museum)

Our aims in the Arab World

Oxford aspires to play a leading educational and research role in the ongoing development of the Arab World.

As the region grows and changes, our departments are proud to be providing consulting and training services, allowing Middle Eastern institutions to draw on our world-leading expertise in education and research as they establish themselves internationally.

Recent years have seen the launch of several new universities across the Middle East. With the new institutions come new ways of thinking about learning. In this fertile environment Oxford continues to seek new links and further opportunities for collaboration.

At the same time, we are continuing to expand our research into the region. The Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, one of the leading centres for the study of the Middle East in the English-speaking world, will be expanding into a new landmark building by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid in 2014.

Oxford has long been a home for the most able minds in the world, and we will continue to recruit the most excellent students in the Arab World to study at undergraduate, postgraduate and research levels. We are very proud of the achievements of our alumni in the region and we hope that we will continue to grow our alumni body by producing able students who can contribute meaningfully to the future of the Middle East and North Africa.

The future of collaborative scholarship and education

Oxford and its Middle Eastern partners are pushing forward the frontiers of research and education with new links across the Arab World.

New collaborative research projects, academic posts, scholarships and training programmes for university leaders have been established to advance medicine, development, environment, energy, water and human rights. This activity builds on more than 400 years of ties between the University and the region, demonstrating how historic links can remain relevant in a changing world.

Many of Oxford's partnerships in the Middle East link our leading research and teaching centres to governments concerned with the impact of rapid development in the region.

Collaborative research projects include work to study water flows and inform water policy, developing mathematical models to plot the movement of sand dunes, and the launch of a joint Petrochemical Research Centre with the King Abdulaziz City of Science and Technology (KACST) in Saudi Arabia. Other research focused on the region includes work on relations between the Islamic world and the West, in partnership with the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies.

Oxford has been fortunate to benefit from the generosity of many donors in the region, as well as the support of our Arabian alumni. We look forward to entering an exciting new era of collaboration together.

Oxford highlights in the Arab World:



Libya:

First post-Gaddafi opinion survey on perceptions of the future carried out in 2012.

Saudi Arabia:

KACST-Oxford Petrochemical Research Centre exploring ways to make oil cleaner. Maths research into the movement of sand dunes and volume of oil reservoirs.

Qatar:

Qatar Foundation funds chairs in Islamic Art and architecture, Contemporary Islamic Studies.

UAE:

Geographers contributing to Abu Dhabi's water plan and water and food security across the region.



Student profile:
Asil Sidahmed, *Sudan*

Course:
MPhil in Development Studies

The Oxford Experience:
Oxford is cosmopolitan, international, stimulating, eventful and engaging. My favourite thing about the University is the great resources students have access to – as a social scientist, I can try a different library every day.

Aspiration:
I would like a career that mixes policy and academia through research. Oxford has provided me with rigorous research training and taught me to engage with sources and contextualise authors in a way I hadn't done previously. I feel like I am a better researcher now than I was before.

Centres of learning for Arabian culture

Scholars at Oxford are able to draw on the University's exceptional range of Arabic and Islamic research and resource centres.

The Middle East Centre

Founded in 1957, the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College is Oxford's hub for the interdisciplinary study of the modern Arab World.

In 2014 the Centre will expand into a new, landmark building by Zaha Hadid. The Softbridge Building will form a bridge between two older buildings, reflecting the Centre's role as a bridge of understanding between the Arab and Western worlds. It will house a 125-seat lecture theatre together with the Centre's Library and Archive. The Archive, with particularly strong collections on Oman and the Palestine Mandate, is part-funded by the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives in Saudi Arabia.

The Griffith Institute

For more than 70 years the Griffith Institute has been at the heart of Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Now situated in the Sackler Library complex, the Institute holds some 30,000 volumes on Egyptology and Middle Eastern studies, including excavators' records from the tomb of Tutankhamun.

The Khalili Research Centre

The Khalili Research Centre is Oxford's centre for the art and material culture of the Middle East. Its major ongoing projects include "Ancient Arabia: Languages and Cultures", which will build a single portal for ancient Arabian resources, creating a global database for the region's ancient languages and cultures.



An artist's impression of the new Softbridge Building at the Middle East Centre. Credit: ©Zaha Hadid Architects

Historic Arabian treasures in Oxford's museums and libraries



Sitarah made for the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina, 1791 - 1792, Egypt (probably Cairo), 268 x 164 cm (detail) (Ashmolean Museum)

Generous donations from the late HRH Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia and Saudi entrepreneur and philanthropist Yousef Jameel have helped to create the Jameel Centre, a new home for the extensive Islamic Art collection at the **Ashmolean Museum**. These gifts have also established an online resource for the museum's Eastern Art collections, making the Ashmolean's ancient and modern treasures accessible around the world.

The Islamic World has a long tradition of innovation in scientific instruments. Today, meticulously designed astrolabes, globes and qibla indicators comprise one of the most important historical collections of Islamic scientific instruments, on display at the **Museum of the History of Science**. Treasures on display at the Museum include the oldest complete geared mechanism in the world – an astrolabe made by Muhammad b. Abi Bakr in Isfahan in 1221/2.

The **Pitt Rivers Museum** has worked closely with Middle Eastern partners to make its collection of 5,000 Wilfred Thesiger photographs available in the region. Its collaborations include working with the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage on a permanent exhibition at Jahili Fort, Al Ain. The images document Thesiger's 1940s crossings of the Rub' al Khali (the Empty quarter), the Kurdish regions of Iraq and the Yemeni Civil War.

One of Europe's oldest libraries, the **Bodleian Library** has been acquiring Arabic manuscripts since its inception – founder Sir Thomas Bodley was keen to encourage the acquisition of Arabic and Islamic writings. Today the Bodleian has one of the most important collections of Middle Eastern manuscripts in Europe, with more than 5,000 literary classics, philosophical tracts, medical texts and mathematics books. In 2002 the Bodleian acquired an illustrated manuscript of a hitherto unknown Arabic cosmographical treatise, known as the *Book of Curiosities*. The Book, which contains an incredible early world map, is regarded as a key text for the history of science.



Research and policy development

Informing water policy

Dr Rachel McDonnell, a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Geography, is leading a project partnering Middle East and North Africa government organizations, international research centres and NASA. The project will generate new data on water resources, crop production and climate change impacts. It will combine satellite observations with leading edge modelling to aid decision-making on local water and food security issues.

Dr McDonnell has been heavily involved with Middle Eastern water issues for many years. She helped write the Abu Dhabi water master plan and then the UAE Water Conservation Strategy which have both led to many important changes in water management and policy development.

Applying mathematics to the advancement of science, the economy and society

Now in the fifth and final year of its \$25m grant from King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia, the Oxford Centre for Collaborative Applied Mathematics (OCCAM) has demonstrated how mathematics and scientific computation can deliver economic and social benefit for the region.

OCCAM is a hub for more than 50 researchers who have focused on outstanding mathematical and scientific problems as well as economic issues that concern Saudi Arabia. Through collaboration with KAUST scientists, progress has been made in areas as diverse as dune motion, oilfield reservoir modelling, and water filtration and bioinformatics.



The Book of Curiosities (Bodleian Library)

Staying at the forefront of innovation in petroleum and petrochemical research

The KACST-Oxford Petrochemical Research Centre is a research centre, created by the Oxford Department of Chemistry and the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) – the Saudi Arabian national science agency and laboratories – to drive forward petrochemical research.

In August 2013 the Centre received a new gift of £1.5 million from KACST, allowing it to expand to include colleagues at Imperial College, Cambridge and Cardiff universities, creating a network of world-leading petrochemical researchers.

The Centre is working in a number of areas vital to future petrochemical use, such as the development of materials that will allow the clean combustion of fuels and the challenge of turning carbon dioxide into fuel. The Centre will allow new innovative petrochemical technologies to be adopted more widely and will help in the education and training of leading research staff.

Understanding post-Gaddafi Libya

Researchers from the Institute of Human Sciences, working with colleagues from the University of Benghazi and Oxford Research International, carried out the first national survey of Libya in the post-Gaddafi era, in 2012.

The face-to-face survey of more than 2000 Libyan men and women painted an optimistic picture of the country's future, with citizens looking ahead to improving lives and rating health services, education and the environment as priorities for Libya's future.

Publication of the survey – the results of which were widely covered by press around the world – has been followed by a workshop on human rights, displacement and asylum, held collaboratively by Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre, the UNHCR and hosts the University of Tripoli.



Tracking and predicting the movement of sand dunes is a mathematical challenge with a very practical application.

Faculty posts funded by Arab World donors

Oxford has been fortunate to benefit from the generosity of a number of Arab world donors who have funded key faculty posts at the University.

One of the largest gifts, made by the Qatar Foundation, created the Ieoh Ming Pei Professorship in Islamic Art and Architecture. The professorship is named for architect IM Pei, who designed the stunning Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, which opened in 2008.

The Qatar Foundation also created the His Highness Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani Chair in Contemporary Islamic Studies, currently held by Professor Tariq Ramadan (see below).

These professors and other Oxford faculty engage in teaching and research exchanges with the Museum of Islamic Art and the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies.

Other important posts endowed by Arab World donors include:

- The Khalid bin Abdullah Al Saud Professor of the Contemporary Arab World
- The King Mohammed VI Fellowship in Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies
- The Dubai Ports World Professorship or Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Said Business School
- The Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Lectureship in Islamic Studies

HH Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani Chair in Contemporary Islamic Studies

Named by TIME magazine as among the 100 most influential thinkers of the 21st Century, Professor Tariq Ramadan has written and lectured widely and contributed substantially to debate on the issues faced by Muslims in the West and the Islamic revival in the Muslim world.

His latest books are *The Arab Awakening: Islam and the New Middle East* (2012), *The Quest for Meaning: Developing a Philosophy of Pluralism* (2010), *What I Believe* (2009), *Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (2008).



Oxford-style learning for Gulf region executives

The Executive Education Team of Said Business School has built extensive links with the Gulf Cooperation Council region. In recent years custom programmes have been developed and delivered for a wide range of audiences including:

- A leadership development programme for senior executives of the Qatar Foundation, delivered jointly in the UK and Qatar. The programme aims to enhance the expertise of top tier managers and improve efficiency across the organization.
- The Saudi Advanced Management and Leadership Programme, supported by the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, an intensive four-week executive development programme offered to leaders from a range of public and private sector organisations across the Kingdom.
- For Abu Dhabi, the Executive Education Team has run 16 Leadership Development programmes for top civil servants, training a total of more than 300 people.

Students and staff from the Arab World

More than 90 Arab students from 14 different countries and regions currently study at Oxford.

Outside of their studies our Arabian students socialise through vibrant student societies including the Oxford University Arab Cultural Society, the Oxford University Islamic society and numerous national societies.

The University also employs 23 members of academic staff from the region, mostly in research posts.

Scholarship opportunities

Graduate students from the Arab World who are considering studying at Oxford are able to apply to several significant fully-funded scholarship schemes.

The Clarendon Scholarships are the largest University-run scheme for postgraduate students coming to Oxford



Greg Smolowski / Oxford University Images

from anywhere in the world, with 100 scholarships awarded every year for excellence in any academic field. The Weidenfield Scholarships and Leadership Programme, also open to students from most Arab countries, provides graduate scholarships and access to a comprehensive programme of leadership development, long-term mentoring and networking.

Scholarships reserved for students from or studying the Arab world include the Said Foundation Scholarships for Master's or DPhil students from Syria, Jordan or Lebanon. The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Scholarships support postgraduate students from Muslim countries undertaking study in fields relevant to the needs of Muslim societies.

Oxford alumni help shape the region

More than 650 Oxford alumni live in the Middle East and North Africa. More than a quarter of these live in the United Arab Emirates, but there are also large numbers of alumni in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Alumni groups are active in eight countries in the region.

Oxford graduates have gone on to impressive careers across a range of fields in the Arab World. Our most impressive graduates include:

- Government leaders such as HH Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak

Al Nahyan, the UAE's Minister for Culture, Youth, and Social Development and former Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research, HH Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, Oman's Minister for Heritage and Culture, and Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Governor of Saudi Arabia's Madinah Province.

- Academics and civil society leaders, such as Rashid Khalidi, the Palestinian-born Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University, and Farah Al-Daghistani, Executive Director of the Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development.
- Senior business executives, such as Mohamed El-Erian, CEO of PIMCO, one of the world's largest bond funds.

Oxford's Arab World in numbers

94
students from the Arab World

23

members of staff from the Arab World

652
alumni in the Arab World

The Arab World & Oxford: a timeline

