

AL-HAKIM FOUNDATION

ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE (AISC)

MAY 2016 NEWSLETTER



CULTURAL EVENTS

Jenny Lewis: *Finding My Father in Mesopotamia*

This cultural event was held on 21 May 2016 and featured a talk by Jenny Lewis of Oxford University about her father's time in Mesopotamia during the British Army's campaign of 1914-1918, as we are marking 100 years since the events of the First World War.

In fact, May 2016 marked 100 years exactly since Jenny's father was sent to Mesopotamia with his regiment. Jenny shared several photographs of her father in Mesopotamia, together with artefacts from this time. Jenny gave a very personal presentation about her quest to find her father's history in Mesopotamia.

This event was well received by the Iraqi-British community, and it was covered by the main Iraqi TV channels and newspapers.

May 2016

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Jenny Lewis (centre) presenting her father's journey in Mesopotamia at AISC's offices



**Sayed Ali Al-Hakim:
Muslims in the West ... Foreign
communities or Western citizens?**

This cultural event was held at AISC's offices on 24 May 2016, featuring a presentation by Islamic scholar Sayed Ali Al-Hakim. Dr Al-Hakim is also Director of the Lebanese Al-Hakim Foundation in Beirut.

During his presentation Dr Al-Hakim outlined his approach to the issue, which is that Muslims living in the West should play an active role in Western society whilst practising their faith. This gave rise to a very active discussion with the audience about living as full citizens, and not feeling "foreign" or different from others.

This event forms part of AISC's efforts to integrate Iraqi-British communities irrespective of religion, ethnicity or political beliefs.



Sayed Ali Al-Hakim presenting to Iraqi-British citizens at AISC's offices, 24 May 2016



Guests at the presentation of Sayed Ali Al-Hakim, 24 May 2016



AISC Invitation to Safi Cultural Conference, Morocco

Nadeem, AISC manager, travelled to Morocco for this cultural conference, held in the Atlantic coast city of Safi between 26-29 May 2016.

This conference was organised by the Union of Moroccan Creators (UMC), the Moroccan Solidarity Association (MSA) the local authority of Bougidra, a local town near Safi. The theme of this conference was *"to build modern, democratic societies which stands against violence, extremism and terrorism"*.

Palestine was the guest of honour at this conference. The icon of this conference was the Moroccan poet Mohammed Benisse, who was at the conference where his life and works were celebrated. Nadeem gave a speech at the conference's welcoming ceremony on 26 May 2016.

On the morning of 27 May 2016, the delegates toured the city of Safi and were then invited to lunch at the headquarters of Bougidra Local Authority. In the afternoon, the conference officially opened as part of the Bougidra Spring Festival which included traditional Moroccan horse warrior displays attended by a large audience. The official opening included speeches from the organisers, the icon of the conference poet Mohammed Benisse, the representative of Palestine as the guest of honour, and a speech by Nadeem Al-Abdalla and speeches from other delegates.



Nadeem, AISC manager giving a speech at the welcoming event, 26 May 2016



27 May 2016: Delegates touring Safi on the Atlantic coast before the official opening of the conference later in the day



27 May 2016: Delegates at the official opening ceremony, Bougidra/Safi



On 28 May 2016, the conference workshops started. There were three workshops:

- Culture facing the challenges of terrorism;
- Culture and the challenge of establishing democracy in the Arab world;
- A modern approach to major issues facing the Arab world.

Nadeem was asked to open the workshops with a speech covering some of the themes above.

On 29 May 2016, some of the delegates gathered to create a new forum under the name of "Union of International Creators".

It was great to be a part of this conference, which included 90 delegates from ten countries across Europe and the Arab world including Morocco. The discussion was open and healthy, and aims to create a more comprehensive international body to promote culture.



Nadeem speaking at the opening ceremony, 27 May



Nadeem opening workshops, 28 May 2016

AISC OUTREACH VISITS

- 13 May 2016: Attending the Warden's Annual Public Engagement Awards Ceremony at Goldsmiths, University of London. At this ceremony, Jenny Lewis of Oxford University was honoured for her public engagement work, among others
- 16 May: Attended a meeting organised by the Muslim Youth Association (MYA) to welcome some visitors who were in London for the Islamic Unity Conference. At this meeting, Sheikh Khaled Mulla from Iraq discussed the misrepresentation of moderate Islamic speeches and values by extremists
- 20 May: The AISC team – Ihsan, Ali and Nadeem - attended the ninth international conference organised by the Islamic Unity Forum (IUF) in London, which aims to enhance dialogue among faiths. The themes of this conference were: religion, identity and citizenship. This conference, including workshops which expanded on the above themes and discussed challenges facing communities in the West, was attended by tens of scholars and academics from the UK and abroad.



Professor Chris French, Jenny Lewis, Nadeem Al-Abdalla and Dr Stephen Knight at Goldsmiths ceremony, University of London



Ali Al-Mousawi, Ihsan Muhsin and Nadeem Al-Abdalla at the MYA event



AISC team attending the International Islamic Unity Conference in London

FROM OUR LIBRARY THIS MONTH

"Ur Excavations: The Royal Cemetery"

Published in 1934, this is one of the most comprehensive books, providing detailed accounts of the archaeological excavations which took place in Ur, southern Iraq, between 1922 and 1932. A wealth of information and photos accompany this detail.

The book was written by Charles Leonard Woolley (1880-1960), a British archaeologist who became best known for his work on the Ur excavations during the 1920s. Before the First World War, Woolley had worked on the excavations at Carchemish. In 1922, he went to Iraq to head up the Ur excavations which were carried out in partnership between the British Museum and Pennsylvania University.

Many of Woolley's finds from Ur are now in the British Museum, and some can be found in Pennsylvania University's Museum of Archaeology and the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad. Woolley's most famous finds are the lyres of Ur (pictured) and the jewellery of Pu-Abi, a Sumerian queen who had been buried in one of Ur's tombs.

Whilst many British archaeologists worked on the excavation sites in Iraq, Woolley remains one of the best-known and most authoritative. This is due to the standard of his work, and the amount that his finds tell us about life in Sumerian Ur in ancient Mesopotamian times.



Site of the Ur excavations and some of Woolley's findings from the site



ANGLO-IRAQI PAINTINGS

**From the artist
James Boswell
(1906-1971)**

James Boswell (1906-1971) was a British painter, who served as an army major and unofficial war artist in the Second World War. After his death in 1971, his paintings of Iraq during this time were donated by his widow to the Tate Gallery, London.

Boswell's famous wartime paintings of Iraq are of the Iraqi desert. In these paintings, Boswell attempts to capture the spirit of Iraq's desert. Indeed, his drawings of the Iraqi desert whilst on duty as a British army major were showcased during the war. His wife hosted an exhibition of his work in London in May 1944.

Although most of Boswell's artistic works were satirical and political in nature, his paintings in Iraq represented a notable departure from this. His widow Ruth said his time in the desert had left its mark on him, and this shows in his paintings of the time.

Due to his political leanings, and his Communist/Marxist background, Boswell was not appointed as an official war artist. However, he produced a number of paintings as an unofficial war artist during the Second World War in Iraq.



Scenes from the Iraqi desert, published 1942-1943 by the artist James Boswell (shown below)



مركز الدراسات الإنكليزية العراقية
ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about the AISC project, our activities and services, please visit our website at:

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