

## MELCOM (U.K.)

Minutes of the **75th Meeting** held at the Institute for Ismaili Studies on Wednesday 11th January, 2006.

The meeting was preceded by an illustrated talk by Paul Auchterlonie on *Libraries in Kurdistan*

### Present

Ahmed Abu Zayed	Exeter
Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Paul Auchterlonie	Exeter
Jasmine Ansari	Al-Furqan
Heather Bleaney	SOAS
Simonetta Calderini	Roehampton
Peter Colvin	SOAS
Delia Cortese	Middlesex
Shah Hussain	Institute of Ismaili Studies
Nadeem El-Issa	Joppa
Shellina Karmali	Institute of Ismaili Studies
Alnoor Merchant	Institute of Ismaili Studies
Martyn Minty	Oxford Oriental Institute
Meline Nielsen	Birmingham
Eric Ormsby	Institute of Ismaili Studies
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Geoffrey Roper	Institute for Study of Muslim Civilizations
Stefan Seeger	Institute for Study of Muslim Civilizations
Waleed al-Shubaki	Manchester
Roderic Vassie	Microform Academic Publishers
Colin Wakefield	Bodleian Library

### 1. Apologies for absence

Yasmin Faghihi, Anne Poulson, Kathy Lazenbatt, Colin Baker, Debbie Cox, Mastan Ebtehaj, Humeyra Ceylan, Mamtimyn Sunuodula, Muhammadlsa Waley, Waseem Farooq

### 2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Corrections to minutes of previous meeting included the incorrect spelling of Neilsen and the extension of the exhibition mentioned in item 9 to 2 October, not December. Mingana had been incorrectly beatified.

Geoffrey Roper was the assistant editor for the Middle Eastern Section

In response to an enquiry made at the previous meeting Colin Baker reported by e-mail that the British Library donated the IDC Microfiche publication *The creation of Modern Iraq*, British India Office Files, c 1914-1921, and a number microfilms of older Iraqi publications held in the BL that were selected by the Iraqi National Library.

### 3. The accounts were presented by Nadeem el-Issa.

As requested by the meeting in Durham £500 had been transferred to the Reserve account from the current account. The current sums were:

Current account: £742.19

Reserve account: £2,776.49

#### 4. Publishing and preserving Middle East Collections.

Roderic Vassie gave a power point presentation on the work of "Microform Academic Publishers" in preserving and publishing collections of papers, records and documents and printed works on microform and in digital form. He stressed the fact that a great deal of extra value was added to a collection by making it available to a large number of researchers by these means, and that royalties earned by sales can be ploughed back into the preservation of the collections themselves.

Having worked in microform academic publishing since 2004, after a career that included time in the Arabic Section of the British Library and work in the Persian Gulf setting up a library, Roderic is on the look out for the following areas to expand into:

Oriental manuscripts, colonial administrators' papers, missionary records, early printed books and periodicals, and travellers and explorers accounts.

He also started a discussion on the relatives merits of microform and digital means of preservation, pointing out that the former was a tried medium with an already long history, while the latter was still untested and already faced difficulties of the constant changes in programmes, and the fact that items of information were always lost in the digitisation process.

#### 5. Annotated Bibliography Project

Geoffrey Roper introduced a new project of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations that he is editing. This is intended the bridge the gap between scholarship on Islam produced in the West and in the Muslim World itself "by providing systematic bibliographic indexes and abstracts of works concerning Muslim civilisations, published in most of the languages and countries of the world...The first phase (2006-07) will be a substantial and comprehensive annotated bibliography of modern encyclopaedias on and from the Muslim world...Later phases of the project will cover in turn the main fields of the humanities and social sciences: history, law, philosophy, theology, education, literatures, the arts, geography, anthropology, sociology, economics, politics, etc."

#### 6. Possible implications for Middle Eastern Studies of the Current Terrorism Bill 2005-6

Ahmad Abu Zayed started a discussion on the threat to libraries of certain sections of the government's bill on terrorism, and in particular the clauses on the criminalizing of the disseminating of materials on terrorism.

In view of the fact that the bill was in the process of passing several readings and was about to be presented to the Lords for the second time in a few days, it was agreed that the Chairman would write to associate MELCOM UK with the letter written by CILIP, and expressing its particular concern as representing collections full of materials on the Middle East, including materials on terrorism.

#### 7. Pearson Memorial Lecture

The Chairman said that a speaker had been approached and had agreed to deliver the next Pearson Memorial Lecture, but that a title had not yet been agreed upon.

#### 8. MELCOM International Conference

The 28<sup>th</sup> MELCOM International Conference will be in Istanbul from 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June 2006 and the hosting institution is the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre in the historic neighbourhood of Galata.

#### 9. BRISMES Council

Ian Netton would be asked to report to the next meeting by e-mail, if he will be unable to attend in person.

#### 10. Developments in member libraries and reports on periodicals

##### Birmingham

The Mingana Collection gained the MLA's Designated status as 'an outstanding collection of national and international significance'. This has prompted the development of a strategic plan which includes improving access to the collection in terms of plans for digitisation of the printed catalogues, full text digitisation, possibly from the microfiche of the collection, online cataloguing of the manuscripts, website development and conservation; improved relationships with academic departments to make better use of the collection, and collaborative activities with institutions that hold similar collections; and its general promotion to a wider audience.

##### Cambridge

Yasmin Faghihi will be on maternity leave until ca. mid July. For any queries you can contact Catherine Ansoorge [caa1@cam.ac.uk](mailto:caa1@cam.ac.uk) who, will together with Dan Davies, will replace her during this time.

Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation (Cairo and Cambridge) - summarised by Dominique A-S.

1. The centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge agreed to host The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA) as an affiliated project; 2. Negotiations over next year's Islamic Manuscript Conference in Istanbul are underway; 3. More libraries have offered their full support to TIMA (including the National Library of Austria, Royal Library of Denmark, the Vatican library, and others libraries in Hungary, Iran, Saudi Arabia and India); 4. Charles Melville (Cambridge) has volunteered to study inter-institutional relations and grant writing on behalf of TIMA; 5. The Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation has agreed be responsible for the cataloguing and conservation of the 60,000 mss of the National Library and Archives of Egypt, and this project - called TIF-DAK Conservation Project - will be an affiliated project of TIMA; 6. TIMA is considering the purchase of a Kasemaker CXD box maker as part of its effort at cleaning and boxing manuscripts. Any member institution of TIMA will be able to purchase the finest quality acid-free archival boxes from TIMA at cost; 7. A detailed model for the constitution of TIMA will be presented at next year's conference and a draft has already been circulated to be submitted to the approval of the last year's conference attendees; 8. The Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation is currently working on designing a TIMA website where TIMA members will have access to a forum, a newsletter, a database of Islamic manuscripts libraries, and other resources.

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##### Exeter

Has acquired 1300 volumes from the Departmental Library of Bristol University, which are mainly primary texts in Shii studies.

##### Leeds

Has taken out an online subscription to "Index islamicus". Roderic Vassie's company "Microform Academic Publishers" is planning to microfilm some of Leed's manuscripts.

##### London

#### Roehampton

The University Library had suffered some flooding.

Delia Cortese of Middlesex University and Simonetta Calderini of Roehampton University reported that their book "Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam" which has been published by Edinburgh University Press.

#### British Library

"On the Arabic books side there is nothing major to report; things are going along as normal (and I will still be doing some selection work while I'm off, so there won't be a noticeable break on that side.) We recently bought 8 or 9 long runs of periodical titles offered by Prof. Adel Freijat in Syria (which may have been offered to other libraries also). Also, if anyone is interested, the paper I presented at last year's MELA Conference on Arabic Collection Development in the British Library is now on-line in MELA Notes no. 78 at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/area/Near.East/MELANotes78/toc78.html> . Since then we have been buying more material from Iraq and also selecting a limited number of books through the Library of Congress MECAP scheme to give us access to some material from countries where we did not previously have a reliable supplier. We have yet to evaluate how successful this has been. We have also been buying acquisitions records with books from Sulaiman's (Beirut) as a means of streamlining our processing of these books, but we only had a limited amount of funding to do this and this will be on hold for a while until we sort out further funding. If anyone wants to know more about this they are welcome to contact me (Debbie.Cox@bl.uk).

#### Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations.

Stefan Seeger reported that the Institute is moving to new and larger premises in Bedford Square next to their current premises.

#### Institute of Ismaili Studies.

An intensive project has been started to tidy up the catalogue in preparation to mount the catalogue on the internet.

#### Joppa/Adab Books.

"Daphne Roper of Adab Books and Nadeem Elissa of Joppa Books Ltd. Have decided to merge their businesses and share their bookselling expertise and customer base developed over a total period of nearly fifty years."

The joint venture will be based in Byfleet in Surrey in the premises owned by Joppa Books Ltd.

#### SOAS Library.

SOAS Library's problems with library staffing and funding have been partially solved with the restoration of two members of library staff who were made redundant, and the setting up of a Library Strategic Review Group, made up of two external librarians and external and internal academics.

#### Manchester

The late Professor Derek Latham's collection is up for sale. This includes some rare books, and some 1,500 books, many on Islamic Spain. (200 of his offprints have been donated to Manchester University Library. A new extension to the Library is being built. Philip Sadgrove is no longer the Head of the Department, which has been taken over by a Persianist.

#### Oxford: Bodleian

The restructuring in Oxford is continuing. The Bodleian will be moving to a new site now

occupied by the Radcliffe Hospital. Lesley Forbes will retire in two and a half years time, and the post of Keeper of the Oriental Collection will be abolished.

11. Any other business.

The Conference on the Digitization of Arabic-language Book in Alexandra was discussed. It appeared that many of the librarians present had been invited, but that none was going to be able to attend for various reasons. It was thought that Colin Baker and another librarian from Oxford would be attending and that Colin should be asked to express the support of MELCOM UK for the project and ask him to report back on the results of the Conference.

12. Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 26th July 2006 at Birmingham University.