

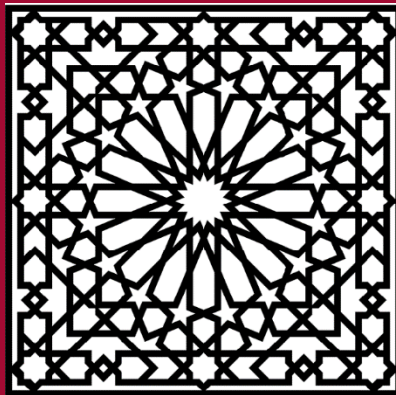


WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Charles Sturt
University

POSTGRADUATE ISLAMIC STUDIES CONFERENCE



Conference Convenors: Dr Jan A. Ali & Dr Hakan Çoruh
Organising Committee: Dr Waheed Akhtar and Mouna Elmir

Graduate Research School - Western Sydney University
Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation - Charles Sturt University

Western Sydney University - Building BA-0.5.LG.15, Bankstown
Campus

Thursday 5TH December, 2019

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RSVP by Monday 2nd December, 2019 to Dr Waheed Akhtar by
email: 18385433@student.westernsydney.edu.au

WELCOME

Christian West and Muslim East share a religious tradition that traces its history back to the Prophet Abraham. Over the centuries Western scholars have often studied Islam in different Muslim societies as an exotic phenomenon. However, the events of 9/11 have changed this approach in a radical way. Today, Islam is being studied not only within Muslim-majority nations, but also within the countries of the West, and is being researched by not solely Western scholars but people of all creeds and ideological persuasions, including Muslims themselves.

Islamic Studies is undeniably a fast-growing phenomenon in Australian universities. People from different religious and ideological backgrounds and Muslims themselves seek to study Islam in order to gain a better appreciation of this important world religion that shares its tradition in a fundamental way with Christianity and Judaism. There are multiple drivers of the growth of Islamic Studies in Australian universities; prominent among them are economic motivations related to the generation of revenue for universities from popular

courses or units, and cultural factors related to interest in Islamic Studies from Muslim students.

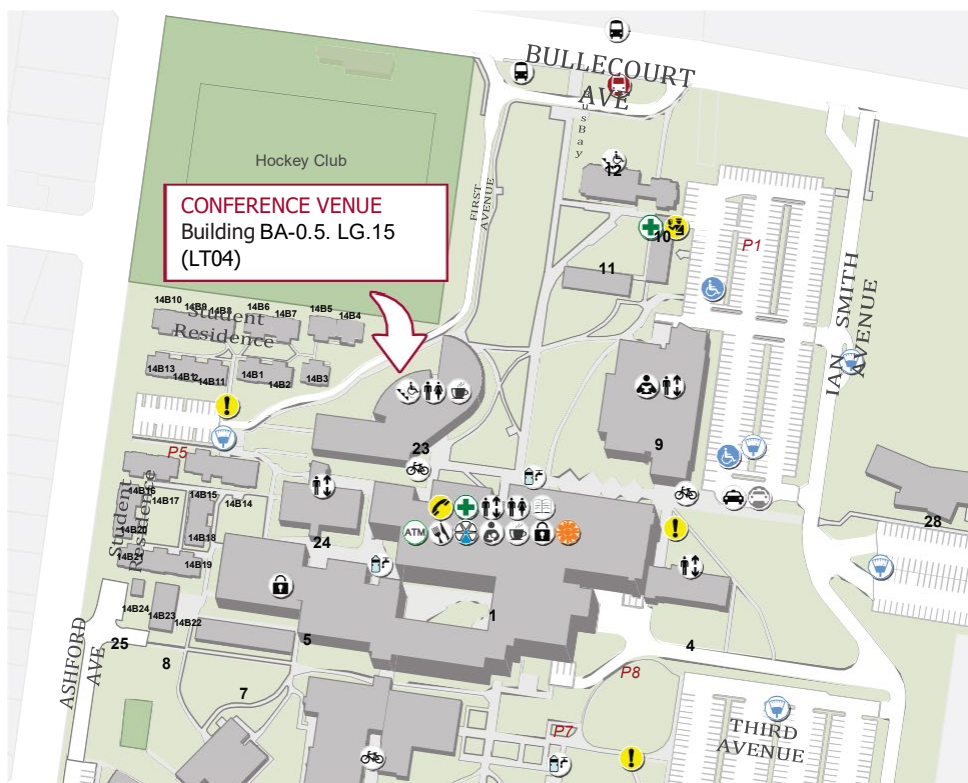
It is important to appreciate that Islamic Studies is not about the study of the religion alone, but also about its adherents. In other words, Islamic Studies in universities involves a social scientific exploration of the ways in which Muslims describe and pursue their everyday religious life. Since Islam is being interpreted and practiced by its followers in a variety of ways, understanding this dimension of Muslim everyday living is critical, particularly through higher learning, which is made possible in universities.

This conference is an attempt to look into how students in Australia are studying Islam. What is of interest is not only what aspects of Islam are being studied, although this is vital, but what methodological, theoretical, and scientific perspectival approaches taken to gain deep and analytical comprehension of Islam and its adherents in the modern globalized world.

Dr Jan A. Ali & Dr Hakan Çoruh
Conference Convenors

BANKSTOWN CAMPUS

The Bankstown campus is situated in the suburb of Milperra in the Bankstown Local Government Area on the corner of Horsley Road and Bullecourt Avenue. The campus entrance is via Bullecourt Avenue. The Bankstown campus is well serviced by public transport, walking and cycling links. Find out more about your travel options on the Getting to Uni webpage. Visit the Getting to uni page for information on how to get to each campus.



CONFERENCE PROGRAM

THURSDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2019

8:30 – 8:45AM Registration

8:45 – 9:10 Dr Jan A. Ali – Welcome Address and Acknowledgement

9:10 – 9:50 Keynote Address - Professor Ismail Albayrak

SESSION 1 **TOPIC: The Qur'an and Hadith** **CHAIR: Dr Hakan Coruh**

10:00 – 10:20 The Qur'an as a Hidden Academy for Learning Dialogue
By Mohamed Wehby (University of Sydney)

10:20 – 10:40 Use of Historical Events Whilst Engaging in Hadith Content Criticism by Abu Jafar Tahawi (d. 933) by Sadiq Ansari (Charles Sturt University)

10:40 – 11:00 Ibn Umar's Approach to Fitan: An Overview by Mursal Farman (Australian Catholic University)

11:00 – 11:30 Q&A

11:30 – 11:45 Morning Tea

SESSION 2 **TOPIC: Islamic Theology and Law in the Contemporary Context**
CHAIR: Dr Samir Mahmoud

11:45 – 12:05 Towards an Applied Theodicy: al-Ghazali and Said Nursi's Lived Experiences and Responses to Suffering by Fereshta Nawabi (Charles Sturt University)

12:05 – 12:25 The Law of Evidence in the Islamic Criminal Justice System: A Critical Appraisal in the Light of Modern Technology by Souha Korbatieh (Macquaire University)

12:25 – 12:45 Understanding jihad in Islam by Anum Sikandar (Western Sydney University)

12:45 – 13:15 Q&A

13:15 – 14:15 LUNCH & PRAYER

SESSION 3	TOPIC: Education and Community Engagement	CHAIR: Dr Jan Ali
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14:15 – 14:35	How Effective is Islamic Education in Making Better Muslims and Better citizens? by Leila Khaled (Charles Sturt University)
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14:35 – 14:55	Discourses and Practices Around Community and University Engagement in the Indonesian Islamic Higher Education by Mohammad Hanafi (Western Sydney University)
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14:55 – 15:15	Zakat in the Contemporary Context and Its Benefit to Muslims in Australia By Ali Assaad (Charles Sturt University)
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15:15 – 15:45	Q&A
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15:45 – 16:00 Afternoon Tea

SESSION 4	TOPIC: Interfaith Relations and Harmony	CHAIR: Dr Mahsheed Ansari
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16:00 – 16:20	Islam and the Dreaming: A History of Dialogue by David Sneddon (Australian Catholic University)
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16:20 – 16:40	Gendered Strategies of Resilience Amongst Australian Muslim Women: Racism and (In)visibility by Firdaws Karim (Western Sydney University)
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16:40 – 17:00	Q&A
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17:00 – 17:15	Best Paper Award by Prof Riaz Hasan, Dr Samir Mahmoud, Dr Mahsheed Ansari
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Thanks & Closing Remark by Dr Hakan Çoruh



Conference Convenors

Dr Jan A. Ali
Dr Hakan Çoruh

Organising Committee

Dr Waheed Akhtar and Mouna Elmir

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Presentation 1: “The Qur’an as a Hidden Academy for Learning Dialogue”, Mohamed Wehby, University of Sydney.

Abstract:

Conventional readings of the Qur’an focus on the divine text’s obvious discourse. The subtle features underlying the Qur’anic medium are hence rarely noticed. Similarly, regular readings of the Qur’an tend to cause a kind of wear and tear that narrows one’s capacity for renewed learning. As a result, the accustomed reader, whether academic or non-academic, misses the profound *‘ibara* (moral lessons) beneath the surface of the divine text. To address this problem, I will make explicit how the Qur’an inspires us to imagine it as an open academy despite our conventional approaches of its reading. The Qur’an hosts numerous dialogues independent of its participants’ moral and ideological positions – a key source for renewed learning and understanding. This paper will argue that ‘dialogue’ in the Qur’an is not an abstract concept conditioned by those who define it. The Qur’an’s down-to-earth guidance translates the notion of dialogue from a noun concept ‘dialogue’ into an interactive human context ‘dialogic exchanges’, describing people and their actions. In the hidden Qur’anic academy, the value of *all* dialogic exchanges is elevated to the rank of an art: ethically and aesthetically. This paper will also show how the Qur’an communicates such artistic elevation at two primary levels: justice and *ihsan* (virtue excellence). To this end, I will explain how the Qur’an *records* multiple voices (polyphonic) of dialogic exchange securing their autonomy and respect. I will also discuss how the Qur’an *accords* such voices, regardless of their moral character, with its aesthetic features such as eloquence of speech. Hence, this paper aspires to make a timely contribution to the contemporary problem of total assimilation with the hope of returning to a society of listeners.

Mohamed Wehby

Mohamed Wehby works in the fields of Sociology and Islamic studies. He is currently completing a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Sydney investigating psychological distress among university students living in the achievement society. He is also co-designing an integrative Islamic studies curriculum for

Bellfield College. The project builds on his public commitment to facilitate group discussions on important social topics.

Presentation 2: “Use of historical events whilst engaging in hadith content criticism by Abu Jafar Tahawi” (d. 933), Sadeq Ansari, Charles Sturt University.

Abstract:

How do we deal with hadith that appear to conflict with historical events? Can we reject hadiths purely based on the historical inaccuracies of its contents (*matn*). Recent research into Abu Jafar Tahawi’s (d. 933) magnum corpus *Sharh Mushkil al-Athar* has highlighted new insights into content criticism in hadith studies. How do we deal with hadith that seem to conflict with historical reports and other empirical data? Tahawi being a great defender of the hadith tradition engages with these tools and uses them to evaluate hadith without throwing out the ‘baby with the bath water’. Historical anachronisms can be used to select certain interpretations of hadith over others, prefer certain hadiths over others and at times, totally disregard some hadith (regardless of the *sanad* strength) if it appears to conflict with historical events.

Sadeq Ansari:

Sadeq Ansari has taught graduate and under-graduate courses in Islamic studies in Australia (Charles Sturt University) as well as in USA (Respect Graduate School) and has also been teaching adult education courses as well as for the Muslim community. His Masters dissertation was on the role of 'majority in Islamic theology' at the University of Sydney. For the past five years, Sadeq has traveled and lived in Egypt, Turkey and the United States of America pursuing learning Turkish and Arabic as well as studying with Muslim scholars in these countries. Sadeq is currently completing his PhD on the famous Hanafi scholar Imam Tahawi's approach to Hadith.

Presentation 3: “Ibn Umar’s Approach to fitan: An Overview”, Mursal Farman, Australian Catholic University.

Abstract:

Conflict over the Caliphate after the assassination of the third Muslim Caliph, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (d. 35/656), has remained a matter of serious concern among the Muslims. This conflict results in schism among them and causes two series of civil wars: from the year 34/655 to 41/662 and 60/680 to 73/692.

The civil wars seem to have been a conflict of approaches (theological, socio-political and tribal) towards the Caliphate by different factions of the then Arab society. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar (d. 73/693), a famous and well-respected companion of the Prophet, opted for an approach distinct from the ideal theological, socio-political and tribal approaches. During the latter half of his life, he avidly promoted peace and harmony in society. His views on the civil wars, his tactful dealing in those adverse times and his cogent argumentative approach turns him into an iconic luminary to seek and learn the tactical approach to avert war during the period of dissension. Besides his meritorious active role in restoration of peace and harmony in the society through measures like political reform and stability, religious moderation and harmony, co-existence and tolerance, conformity and conflict resolution, Ibn ‘Umar is a prominent scholar too. His command over the traditional Islamic discipline like *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *sīrah* and other contemporary Islamic disciplines is exemplary. His life, traditions, viewpoints and activities are prominently highlighted in the Islamic literature concerning *ḥadīth*, *sīrah*, biographical and historical works.

His approach and its impact upon contemporary people at large to win huge acceptance stands out as an extraordinary quality to avert war when the hysteria of war prevails.

Mursal Farman

Musal Furman is an Associate Professor, Department of Seerat Studies, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. His research interests include Islamic studies and Arabic literature with numerous publications in the field. He is also pursuing his PhD entitled: “Examining Ibn Umar’s status during the time of fitan: Re-reading his approaches to peace building and conflict resolution” at ACU.

Presenation 4: “Towards an Applied Theodicy– al-Ghazali and Said Nursi’s lived experiences and responses to suffering, Fereshta Nawabi, Charles Sturt University.

Abstract:

This dissertation reviews the major works and biographical accounts of two prominent Islamic scholars, Muhammad al-Ghazali and Said Nursi, and their responses to suffering. Although they lived in different time periods, al-Ghazali and Nursi share a similar story of suffering. Both scholars endured various hardships, including political persecution, physical illness and their inner struggle to find true knowledge. The dissertation finds that al-Ghazali and Nursi experienced a “transformative moment” whereby they produced major works with the intention to remedy spiritual suffering of ordinary believers. As a result of their lived experiences, this dissertation argues that al-Ghazali and Nursi developed a practical and spirituality-informed approach to suffering, based on their understanding of Islamic concepts including *sabr* (patience), *tawakul* (trust in God) and *rida* (contentment). The findings of this dissertation indicate that al-Ghazali and Nursi developed an “applied theodicy” through their instructive, practical and spirituality-informed approaches to suffering.

Fereshta Nawabi

Fereshta Nawabi is currently completing a Masters of Islamic Studies at Charles Sturt University. She holds a Bachelor of Business from Western Sydney University and is a Chartered Accountant. Fereshta works as a derivative analyst at the Australia Investment and Securities Commission (ASIC) and is also Chair of the Multicultural Access and Equity Committee at ASIC.

Presenation 5: “The Law of Evidence in the Islamic Criminal Justice System: A Critical Appraisal in the Light of Modern Technology”, Souha Korbatiéh, Macquarie University.

Abstract:

Sharia has continuously developed since Islam’s inception some 1400 years ago in the 7th century CE. This thesis focuses on hudud criminal law

evidentiary requirements, particularly adultery, and critically assesses the impact of modern technology on these laws. Many modern Muslim states implementing sharia or a part of it are struggling to incorporate technological advancements into their criminal evidence rules. In assessing the desirability of updating sharia proofs, this thesis establishes modern technology can be comfortably incorporated as circumstantial proof in sharia under the legal concept of *ijtihad*. Such proof however means it cannot be used to prove hudud crimes including adultery, which would contravene *maqasid* of sharia and hudud, including contravening sharia privacy principles.

Instead, modern technology, such as DNA testing, should be utilised as paternity verification at a wife's request to establish her innocence in *li'an* cases, or prove paternity under family laws to provide welfare rights to children. In a similar vein, CCTV footages may beneficially be treated as admissible evidence in establishing truth and justice in Islamic criminal law. This thesis concludes by (a) finding that while modern technology can be incorporated within sharia evidence laws there are restrictions on its use due to unique aspects of hudud and their sharia objectives; and (b) offering some pragmatic recommendations to integrate modern technology in the sharia criminal law of evidence.

Souha Korbatiéh

Souha Korbatiéh holds a BA/LLB and is a Masters of Islamic Studies graduate from CSU. She has just completed her Master of Research (Law) from Macquarie University.

Presentation 6: “Investigating Jihad in the Qur’an and Sunnah”, Anum Sikandar, Western Sydney University.

Abstract:

Since the September 11 attacks in New York, the July 2005 bombings in London and the ongoing crimes of ISIS and Al Qaeda are committed under the banner of jihad, it has become increasingly important to understand how jihad has been defined in the actual scripture and by the prominent scholars of Islam. The mainstream media has generally accepted the concept of jihad as a holy war - a war with swords – and by extension reinforced the view that

these acts of violence highlight a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West. The media commonly cite passages from the Quran and events in Muslim history as proof that the notion of jihad encourages terrorism and extremism. However, examining the concept from an Islamic point of view shows that jihad is much more than an armed struggle against an aggressor. It is more concerned with the spiritual reformation of the self, the establishment of a sound social order and harmonious social relations. Physical struggle including war also constitutes one form of jihad, but it is undertaken as a last resort in pursuit of solving a problem. Those who recognize the meaning of jihad as a holy war, detach the concept from its conceptualization in the Islamic scripture.

This research will look at the concept of jihad in the actual scripture to understand its meanings. It will then look at how different scholars of Islam have explained jihad as a phenomenon. It is important to investigate how Islam itself defines the concept of jihad because the acts of a few deranged individuals should not be taken as the mainstream religious practice.

Anum Sikandar

Anum Sikandar is an HDR student at Western Sydney University.

Presentation 7: “How effective is Islamic education in making better Muslims and better citizens?”, Leila Khaled, Charles Sturt University.

Abstract:

The welfare and education of Australian Muslim youth should be a concern to parents, educators, and society at large. In research published in 2018, Australian Muslim youth are deemed to belong to the most disliked minority group in Australia (Markus, 2018, p. 69). Additionally, half of the Islamophobic attacks reported between 2014-2015 were aimed at Muslims under the age of 18 years or at Muslim mothers with their child/ren (Briskman et al., 2017). To make matters more complex, Muslim youth have developed issues with identity and belonging, and some are involved in drugs, crime, and more recently violent extremism. The few turning to violent extremism were consistently found to be religiously non-practicing or newly practicing individuals who, with limited Islamic knowledge, misused Islam to justify violence. Conversely, most Muslim youth who practice

Islam, display resilience and a more positive attitude towards Australia (Atie, Dunn, & Ozalp, 2017). Since quality religious education plays a crucial role in addressing some of these issues, my research aims to investigate the effectiveness of Special Religious Education (commonly known as scripture) as an intervention to develop character, identity and active citizenship of Muslim students in public high schools. This could reveal a mass scale, cost-effective and more appropriate measure for preventing violent extremism, countering effects of Islamophobia, and in turn addressing the education and welfare concerns of Australian Muslim youth.

Leila Khaled

Leila Khaled has completed degrees in commerce and education; and a Master in Islamic Studies. She is currently awarded an Australian RTP scholarship for higher degree Research to investigate high school scripture for Muslim students. She has taught Islam in different settings for over 25 years.

Presentation 8: “Discourses and Practices around Community and University Engagement in the Indonesian Islamic Higher Education”,
Mohammad Hanafi, Western Sydney University.

Abstract:

This paper aims at investigating discourses and practices of community-university engagement in Indonesian Islamic higher educational institutions. The relationship between communities and Islamic universities in Indonesia is framed within a threefold mandate (*Tridharma*) of higher education: teaching and learning, research, and service. Since the service constitutes the main mandate to bear campus social responsibilities, the higher education directorate establishes institutes and centres for community services to administer public relations. The article argues shows that the practices of community service programs and the discourses that shape the formation of community engagement are dynamic. From the beginning, the establishment of Islamic educational institutions cannot be separated from the roles of community, and their relationship has undergone various transitions throughout Indonesian history. From discursive contestation in political,

social, cultural, and religious fields, there emerged three major approaches deployed by Islamic universities to engaging communities: missionary, explanatory and emancipatory. Furthermore, these approaches entail community positioning and methodological practices within the community service programs. The missionary approach, for example, makes use of local religious institutions to propagate Islamic teaching and practical rites of religious passage, and considers communities as dissemination targets; similarly, the explanatory approach treats people as objects of development, but in this case, in relation to state policy guidelines; in contrast, the emancipatory approach attempts to exert power-sharing with communities and treats them as equal agents of change. Despite these contending discourses that render different practices around community-university engagement, each approach finds its rational and theological justifications from the shared Islamic principles and primary religious scriptures.

Mohammad Hanafi

Mohammad Hanafi is a PhD student in Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University. He is also a lecturer in Arabic language teaching and Islamic studies in the faculty of Islamic education and teacher training in Sunan Ample State Islamic University Surabaya; a resource person for community-engaged scholarship in the institute for research and community service (LPPM), Sunan Ample State Islamic University Surabaya; a member of PIU in a partnership project Canada-Indonesia, Supporting Islamic Leadership in Indonesia (SILE) /Local Leadership Development; and a board member of Yayasan Pendidikan Madrosatul Alsun, Sidoarjo, Jawa Timur.

Abstract 9: “Zakat in the Contemporary Context and The Benefit It Has Brought Muslims In Australia”, Ali Assaad, Charles Sturt University.

Abstract:

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam. There exists ample literature on the traditional fiqh rulings of zakat but due to the decline of the Islamic State in contemporary times zakat has been shifted away from its primary objective of being an institute of empowerment and an office of the Islamic State treasury to a voluntary charity with no government enforcement or consequential repercussions for failure of correct payment. Zakat has been

instrumental in the shaping of 21st Century fiqh, specifically in the rulings of fiat currency, liquid assets and cryptocurrencies, the relationship between riba and zakat in the application of fiqh rulings is shared on these modern forms of wealth. The study explores the legality of the Zakat organisations in the Shariah which represent a proxy-Bayt al-Maal to mobilise the true power of zakat and harness the meaning of empowerment which the system of zakat was intended for. The study calls for regulatory change within the current proxy-zakat organisations to ensure that three steps are utilised to ensure the true potential of zakat is harnessed, the three steps are as follows; effective pooling of zakat funds, focusing on local expenditure in accordance to the majority of the madhhahib and thirdly balancing the distribution in accordance to subjective research in fulfilling the core elements of zakat of fulfilling the needs of the Muslims and strengthening Islam. The study explores various Islamic charity organisations in Australia to estimate the amount of charity that is donated and to analyse the expenditure of collected funds and provides advice of where zakat should be utilised in the Australian context.

Ali Assaad

Ali Assaad is a student of Education and Islamic Sciences residing in Sydney, Australia. He has studied under local and international scholars and regularly delivers sermons aimed at changing the community at a grassroots level. He is involved in grassroot activism in Sydney and offers Islamic Educational Consultancy to clients tailoring the dissemination of Islamic Knowledge to suit the Australian Context. He has also developed an Islamic Studies Curriculum for Markaz Imam Ahmad which aligns with the Australian context, this is delivered to approximately 200 students per year and authored a book entitled "Foundations of Islamic Knowledge: A guide for Muslims".

Presentation 10: “Islam And the Dreaming, A History of Dialogue”, David Sneddon, Australian Catholic University.

Abstract:

For many years, Australia's indigenous peoples have had a long history of contact with the various nations to the north of Australia. This preceded

European contact by many years and led to fruitful dialogue and levels of social cohesion between Muslims from the Macassan and Malay region and the Indigenous Nations of Arnhem Land and beyond. The area of contact was widespread, encompassing around 3,000 km of Australia's northern coastline, possibly from Broome, WA to the southern points of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Wellesley Islands, Qld. Initial contact was most likely with the people known as the Bajjini, followed by the Macassans, sometimes referred to as "followers of Islam". Extended contact led to the inclusion of Macassan vocabulary into Indigenous languages, a necessary component for successful dialogue, and then as dialogue matured, the transfer and absorption of technology and ideas into the various Indigenous Nations. Over time, this relationship grew, leading to levels of co-habitation, trade and social cohesion through the various sociological levels of dialogue between the Indigenous peoples and the Muslim traders and sailors. The syncretic nature of this dialogue has left a lasting legacy with many Indigenous Nations in Arnhem Land, including ceremonies and rituals reflecting certain concepts or ideas from Islam and other Macassan beliefs. Ultimately, this long-term dialogue declined following the banning of the Macassan trepang fleets in 1906, however, the legacy remains to this day.

David Sneddon

David Sneddon is a PhD Candidate - A.C.U. Nth Sydney

Presentation 11: “Gendered strategies of resilience amongst Australian Muslim Women: Racism and (in)visibility”, Firdaws Karim, Western Sydney University.

Abstract

This research investigates the ways that Muslim women deal with anti-Muslim racism in an environment where anti-Muslim hostility is likely to occur, and how potentially shared Muslim identity and spiritual beliefs might play a role in such coping. This study explores gendered experiences and strategies of resilience in this socio-political environment. Experiences and understandings of racist discrimination are considered through the fluid visibility/invisibility of Muslim women and the social and communal strategies used by Muslim women often perceived as oppressed or victimised

