UNESCO has undertaken the production of a landmark outreach publication to develop the themes of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). The 250-page book entitled “Agree to Differ” was co-published by UNESCO and Tudor Rose, a commercial publisher and information provider with considerable experience in United Nations publishing since 1999. Fully illustrated the book, content-wise, was contributed by selected authors from all over the world.

UBD-SOASCIS has been formally invited to be a lead programme partner in the production of this book which it accepted. As an institutional intellectual contributor SOASCIS was required to submit a major article to the book on the development of Muslim intercultural relations globally. The SOASCIS article was co-authored by four of its academics, namely Distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Associate Professor Dr Jabal M. Buaben, Pg Dr Norhazlin Pg Haji Muhammad, and Dr Mohamad Azmi Hj Mohamad. The article is considered a major one, since it provides a global overview of intercultural dialogue and relations between Muslim and other communities with special emphasis on the European and Southeast Asian regions.

Professor Datuk Osman, SOASCIS Director, considers the invitation as a great honour to UBD-SOASCIS and an acknowledgment of the Centre’s good reputation in the international academic community. This is because SOASCIS is the only Centre for Islamic Studies in the world to have been invited to be a Programme Partner in the Publication Project. Moreover, it has been requested to provide a report on intercultural dialogue and relations covering the whole Muslim world and Muslim minorities in the West. UNESCO itself considers this publication as prestigious. In the invitation letter sent to Professor Datuk Osman, Mr Ben Cornwell, the Project Coordinator of the publication, wrote as follows: “Invitations to contribute to such a prestigious publication are rare, and the finished publication will act as tribute, and public record of, the success of the author and his institution in tackling the challenges raised by the International Decade for the Rapprochement (2013-2022).”
On April 1, 2015, SOASCIS had the privilege of hosting a special lecture by the renowned Islamic scholar Intisar A. Rabb, Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and Director of its Islamic Legal Studies Program, on the implementation of the Sharia law in the contemporary context. Originally intended for staff and students of SOASCIS to benefit from her experiences and knowledge, the lecture turned out to be well-attended with a diverse audience. Also present were the Minister of Energy, Yang Berhormat Pehin Dato Singamanteri Col. (Rtd.) Dato Seri Paduka Awang Haji Mohammad Yasmin bin Haji Umar, the Vice Chancellor of UBD, Dato Paduka Dr Haji Zulkarnain bin Haji Hanafi, and SOASCIS Chair Professor and Director, Datuk Dr Osman Bakar. The lecture was moderated by Professor Osman.

Professor Rabb started her speech with a global overview of the modern application of the Sharia law throughout the world, noting that there are 28 institutions or states that have it as a part of their constitutions, whether it is established as “a” source of state law or “the” main source of state law. The centerpiece of her speech was revolved around the issue of reformation of Islamic law, posing to the audience the following pertinent question: In what ways should the Sharia play a role in state law in the modern world? To support her belief that time and experience play a major role in the development of the Sharia law, she highlighted the case of Morocco and its code of Mudawwana (family law), which, since its establishment in 1957 until the present time, has had major amendments in accordance with contextual changes throughout the passage of time.

Another focal point of her speech is the crucial place of the principle of doubt in Islamic criminal law, which is aptly expressed by the popular maxim of “avoid criminal punishments in the case of doubt”. The smaller portion of her speech centered on Islamic criminal law in the context of Brunei Darussalam. She first noted that Brunei is the 13th state in the world to have passed an Islamic criminal law code, joining countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and others. Then, impressed with the way in which the Islamic penal code is structured in Brunei, whereby a set of Islamic criminal
laws operates in tandem with a set of civil codes, the Professor expressed her genuine curiosity as to how this parallel existence will eventually play out and advised Bruneian Muslims to be ready for necessary adjustments as they move forward.

Professor Rabb is interested in forging research collaboration with UBD in general and SOASCIS in particular in the area of Sharia implementation in Brunei Darussalam. During her visit to the country she had discussions with the leading authorities responsible for the Sharia Law implementation.

**REPORT ON 42nd INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CONFERENCE FOR DIALOGUES AMONGST JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN EUROPE**

**ASSOC. PROF. DR JABAL M. BUABEN, SOASCIS**

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**Introduction**

The 42nd International Students Conference for Dialogue amongst Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe [JCM] was held at the Auf Dem Heiligen Berg, Wuppertal, Germany from 16th to 22nd March 2015. It was organised by the JCM Europe – Partners in Dialogue. The languages of the Conference, as it has always been, were German and English with instant translation of all presentations and discussions.

**About the Conference**

The main theme this year was *Solidarity and Dissent*. Solidarity, acceptance and understanding are at the foundation of every community. However, sometimes, due to geo-political, historical and personal influences, differences within the community become almost impossible to accommodate as before. This raises all sorts of questions. Particularly with Faith Communities, the consequences could be dire. The Conference was to deliberate on this not only from the personal perspectives but also from within the individual Abrahamic faiths themselves.

The Conference is mainly to provide a forum for the students and academics of the Three ‘Abrahamic Faiths’ to engage in dialogue to address contemporary issues. As the Website clearly states, “Each year, the Conference focuses on a central issue, which is looked at from the perspective of, and discussed amongst the three religious faiths. The methods used and the dialogue process are tried and tested ...” It offers an atmosphere of personal encounter that is distinguished by mutual consideration, trust and respect for the integrity of each faith tradition.

There are usually Three [3] Main / Plenary /Keynote Papers, one from each faith tradition focussing on the theme and from the perspective of that tradition. This year, they were four, two by Muslims. Apart from that, there were: Project Groups, Discussion Groups, Public Forums, Speaker’s Corner and Graduate Seminars. In the Graduate Seminars, for which I am always responsible, graduate students from various Universities around Europe are invited.
to give papers based on their ongoing research for discussion by participants. Most participants have found this session to be of great benefit to them in the writing up of their theses and also they offer a sort of taster for the Viva Voce Examination which is often required at the PhD level.

The Keynote Papers were:
‘By: Rabbi Mark Solomon, Rabbi of the Progressive Jewish Synagogues of Manchester and Edinburgh, U.K.; Rev. Heike Rodder, a Protestant Pastor from Cologne, Germany, Ustadhah Halima Krausen of the University of Hamburg and the Bendorfer Forum, Germany and myself. This year, the Speaker’s Corner, which I also chair, had a special status since we had delegates, Christians and Muslims, from Indonesia and Tanzania and these contributed to the highlights of the Conference.

In accordance with the policy of the Conference for all presentations, the speaker has to make his/her paper personal and practical. Hence, my paper explored my own ‘Personal Journey’ as an African Muslim travelling around the world and encountering all sorts of situations and how these have shaped my understanding and practice of my faith. Giving reflections from the Qur’an, Sunnah and Islamic History, the main objective was explain that Solidarity is a core principle in Islam but at the same time we could often face the dilemma of choosing Dissent all for the Greater Good of our own individual journeys through life but also for the general Community.

Perhaps, the Climax of the Conference was the Public Event the Team was invited to put on at the Citykirche, Elberfeld, Wuppertal, on the evening of Monday 23rd March. The event was well-attended and the discussion focussing on Dialogue and current World Events was very stimulating.

Conclusion
I have attended this Conference for over twenty years and been on the Team for over Twelve years and, each time, I learn new things regarding Theological Discourse, and the way people of other Faith Traditions Struggle to live up to the tenets of their faiths in the global village. I also learn that there are many values and concerns believers of the three faiths share as compared to those that divide us. There is hence a lot of room for collaborative research and other activities in order to create better understanding.

**SOASCIS PUBLICATIONS IN PRESS**

This book presents 25 selected papers from the International Conference on "Developing Synergies between Islam & Science and Technology for Mankind's Benefit" held at the International Institute for Advanced Islamic Studies Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, in October 2014. The papers cover a broad range of issues reflecting the main conference themes: Cosmology and the Universe, Philosophy of Science and the Emergence of Biological Systems, Principles and Applications of Tawhidic Science, Medical Applications of Tawhidic Science and Bioethics, and the History and Teaching of Science from an Islamic Perspective. Highlighting the relationships between the Islamic religious worldview and the physical sciences, the book challenges secularist paradigms on the study of Science and Technology. Integrating metaphysical perspectives of Science, topics include Islamic approaches to S&T such as an Islamic epistemology of the philosophy of science, a new quantum theory, environmental care, avoiding wasteful consumption using Islamic teachings, and emotional-blasting psychological therapy. Eminent contributing scholars include Osman Bakar, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Mehdi Golshani, Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Adi Setia and Malik Badri. The book is essential reading for a broad group of academics and practitioners, from Islamic scholars and social scientists to (physical) scientists and engineers.
With a total of five articles contributed by its academic staff and PhD students SOASCIS is the largest institutional contributor to the book. SOASCIS' contributors are Distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Associate Professor Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara, and doctoral students Awang Baihaqy Yussof and Mohamad Mubarak. Professor Osman is also co-editor of the book. Springer is the publisher of the book.

**DR GIBRIL HADDAD'S MONUMENTAL WORK TO BE PUBLISHED BY UBD PRESS AND BEACON BOOKS UK**

**Title of Book:** The Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation: *Hizb I Of al-Baydawi*’s Commentary on the Qur’an. Arabic Edition and English Translation (900 pp.++)

**Author:** Gibril F. Haddad

**Publisher:** UBD Press and Beacon Books (UK)

The author is currently Senior Assistant Professor at SOASCIS. His area of specialisation is comparative *tafsir* (exegesis) of the Qur’an, classical and modern. He is also an expert in the hadith sciences (*al-‘ulum al-hadith*).

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**GRADUATE SEMINAR SERIES**

**SOASCIS Graduate Seminars in Brief and Photos**

- **Date:** 28th February 2015
  
  **Speakers:**
  
  1) Associate Professor Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara (SOASCIS)  
  **Topic:** Comparative Epistemology in Islamic and Western Philosophy: Strengths and Weaknesses
  
  2) Distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar (SOASCIS)  
  **Topic:** Tawhid’s Indicator in Islamic Epistemology of Science
  
  3) Pg Dr Norhazlin Pg Haji Muhammad (SOASCIS)  
  **Topic:** Curriculum Design for the Integrated System between Religion and Science

- **Date:** 4th March 2015
  
  **Speaker:** Associate Professor Dr Syed Muhd. Khairudin Aljunied (NUS)  
  **Topic:** Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asian Islam beyond Violence and Conflict

- **Date:** 4th April 2015
  
  **Speakers:**
  
  1) Pg Dr Norhazlin Pg Haji Muhammad (SOASCIS)
Topic: Educational Approaches to the Teaching of Islamic Studies in the West: A Case Study of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) and the Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding (CMCU)

2) Distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar (SOASCIS)
Topic: Implementing Traditional Curriculum in Islamic Studies in the Contemporary West: the Case of the Ebrahim College, London

- Date: 25th April 2015
Speakers:
1) Pg Dr Norhazlin Pg Haji Muhammad (SOASCIS)
Topic: The Coming of Islam to Brunei Darussalam and It’s Impact

2) Dr Gubara Said Hassan (SOASCIS)
Topic: The Advent of Islam in the Malay World: General Reflections on the Theories and Influence of Islamisation

- Date: 2nd May 215
Speaker:
1) Distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar (SOASCIS)
Topic: Southeast Asian Muslims and Interreligious Dialogue in the Post-Colonial Era: An Overview

2) Pg Dr Norhazlin Pg Haji Muhammad (SOASCIS)
Topic: Religion and Modernity: Life Practices of the Bruneian Society in a Malay Islamic Monarchy

3) Associate Professor Dr Jabal M. Buaben (SOASCIS)
Topic: Islam and Interfaith Relations: An Exploration of The Scriptural, Historical and Pragmatic Rationale

- Date: 13th May 2015
Speaker:
Associate Professor Dr Jabal M. Buaben (SOASCIS)
Topic: The Viva Voce Examination and How to Survive It
NEWS ON VISITORS

SOASCIS Academics with the Ambassador of the United States, His Excellency Mr Craig Allen

Professor Ibrahim Zein from IIU Malaysia

Dr Clement M Henry of National University of Singapore

‘HE Ambassador Mr Allen receiving SOASCIS’ books from Professor Osman

Dr Syed Khairudin with Mohd Baihaqy (left) and Associate Professor Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara (right)
SOASCIS BULLETIN EDITORIAL STAFF

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Assoc. Prof. Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara
Dr Mohamad Azmi Hj Mohamad

Assistant Editor:
Awang Ahmad Raimie Hj Muhammad

Contact Info:
office.soascis@ubd.edu.bn