

Seminar on Ibn' Arabi



The Seminar on “Ibn ‘Arabî: The Relevance of His Thoughts In The Quest for Sustainability” held on 24th June 2009 was organised by Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya and the Cultural Counsellorship, Embassy of Iran, Malaysia. The seminar was officiated by Professor Datuk Dr Jamil Maah, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation). The seminar was deemed important because Ibn Arabi’s philosophy contain a wealth of knowledge and information which, if articulated and researched properly, among others can give insights to how spiritual intelligence, a fast developing subject in the field of psychology, can be enhanced. Thus far, works on Ibn Arabi have come mainly from the west. As such the seminar aims to highlight the works of Iranian and Malay-

sian scholars that can add to the richness of the scholarly literature on Ibn Arabi. The objectives of the seminar include: to gather the results of research carried by Iranian and Malaysian scholars on the works of Ibn Arabi; to understand how the ideas of Ibn Arabi are relevant in some of today’s concerns especially in the area of ethics and human spiritual development; and to look at contemporary applications of Ibn Arabi’s thoughts and ideas. Among topics explored through the seminar were ‘Basic philosophy and ideas of Ibn ‘Arabî in the context of human development’, ‘Malaysian and Iranian scholars’ works and commentaries on Ibn ‘Arabî’, and ‘Case-studies of the relevance of Ibn ‘Arabî’s thoughts in the contemporary world’. Key elements of the papers presented included: Ibn

Arabi’s ideas hold key concepts in the formulation of the much needed new holistic epistemology which could balance the current dominant materialistic epistemologies & which had led to unsustainability issues; Ibn Arabi’s ideas, and philosophy teaches many lessons for the promotion of interreligious/civilisational harmony. Examples exemplified in the conference include dialogue between the Islamic and Christian civilizations; mechanisms and principles for spiritual training which is one of the fundamentals of civilisational growth which is richly covered in Ibn Arabi’s work of *Fusus al-Hikam*, for example.

Activities	1
• Seminar on Ibn Arabi	2
• Seminar on Sustainability	
• Sixth Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)	2
• Public Lecture Mdm Suraya Sintang (Univ. Malaysia Sabah)	4
• Public Lecture Prof James Higham (New Zealand)	5
• Public Lecture Dr. Vinoth Ramachandra (Sri Lanka)	6
• Public Lecture Mr Yusof Ma (China)	7
• Dialogue by Dr. Akram Nadwi (United Kingdom)	8
• Visit by Muslim Students’ Association of Sri Lanka	8
Visiting Scholar	
• Prof Dr Paul Morris (Univ Victoria New Zealand)	9
Research	
• Inter-cultural Dialogue in Malaysia	10
• Muslim Women NGO in Malaysia	11
• Bioethics and Intercultural Dialogue in Malaysia	12
Associated Events by Members of the Centre	13
University of Malaya UNESCO Club	14
Miscellaneous	15
Publications	16

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

EDITORIAL

Professor Datin Dr. Azizah Baharuddin
Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Osman Bakar
Assoc. Professor Dr. Raihanah Abdullah

CONTRIBUTORS

Chang Lee Wei, Zazren Ismail
Siti Rukiah Othman, Sumitra a/p Rajan
Jasni Nakman

LAY-OUT & DESIGN

Mohamed Azmi bin Mohd Rasheed Khan

ADDRESS & CONTACT DETAILS

Centre for Civilisational Dialogue
2nd Floor, Siswaroma Building
University of Malaya,
50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: 603-79675697
Fax: 03-79675692
E-mail: dialog@um.edu.my

Website: <http://civilisationaldialogue.um.edu.my>



FUTURE DIRECTION ON SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE RESEARCH

A seminar on Future Directions On Sustainability Science (SuSci) in Malaysia was held on 29th April 2009. This event was jointly organized by the Sustainability Science (SuSci) Research Cluster UM, Centre for Civilization Dialogue and the Department of Science & Technology

Studies, Faculty of Science. This one-day seminar aims to provide a platform for SuSci members to exchange views, participate in constructive debates and finally, to reach some level of agreement on the future directions of this cluster, and the ways in which members can work together as a group. The one day event also provides excellent networking opportunity. It was hoped that by the end of

event, the group will be able to produce a feasible and workable cluster-level framework that will not only enhance individual research, but also increase the visibility of UM's overall intellectual and practical contributions in local, national, regional and international efforts on sustainable development. The objectives of the event can be divided into four parts:

1. To share information, concerns and insights on the meaning of conducting research for sustainability science from the different perspectives of the group members;
2. To initiate familiarity and networking between different members of the cluster;
3. To reach some level of agreement on the commonalities and differences between different research groups, and to see how this could be used to shape the future direction of the cluster;
4. To set a more concrete time-frame and action plan for future activities of the cluster. This seminar was introduced by Prof. Nik Meriam Nik Sulaiman, Head of SuSci Cluster who was followed by speakers, who were;

- Prof Dr Hazim Shah Abd Murad (S&T Studies Dept, Fac. of Science)
- Prof. Datin Dr. Azizan Baharuddin (Centre for Civilization Dialogue)
- Prof Dr P. Agamuthu (Centre for Research in Waste Management)
- Prof Dr Lim Lee Hong Susan (Environmental and Molecular Parasitology, Fac. of Science)
- Prof Dr Hamzah Abdul Rahman (Centre for Sustainability & Built Environment, Fac. of Built Environment)
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fatimah Kari (FEA-UM)
- Assoc Prof Dr Norhaslina Hassan, (Spatial-Environmental Governance for Sustainability Research Centre, Fac. of Social Sciences)
- Ir Dr Abdul Aziz Abdul Raman (Research Group on Cleaner Production, Fac. of Engineering)
- Dr Hezri (LESTARI-UKM)
- Dr Pun-Arj Chairatana, Ministry of Industry, Thailand

It was hoped that by the end of

Sixth Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)

At the invitation of the Government of Malaysia, the Sixth Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) was held in Kuala Lumpur, from 16 to 19 June 2009. It focused mainly on science ethics and on the ethical implications of climate change. COMEST is an advisory body and forum of reflection composed of 18 independent experts and 11 representatives of international scientific bodies. The Commission is mandated to formulate ethical principles that could provide decision-makers with criteria that ex-

tend beyond purely economic considerations. Discussions focused mainly on two COMEST reports for 2009: on science ethics, and on the ethical implications of global climate change.

Discussions were also held on environmental ethics, with particular reference to teaching, and on the ethical issues of nanotechnologies. The Session was an excellent opportunity to extend discussions through the UNESCO Asia-Pacific School of Ethics and experts from around the globe on the ethical issues concerning science and technology in Asia and the Pacific, enlarge the framework of the debate, and reinforce future activities throughout the region

and beyond. A Youth Forum on the ethical and social responsibilities of scientists in Asia was also integrated into the program, with a view to involving young researchers and representatives of youth organizations in the work of COMEST and UNESCO. Another satellite event was the Workshop on the Establishing of a National Bioethics Committee (NBC) towards which the CCD is working together with the National Commission UNESCO of Malaysia as well as the Protem Committee of the NBC.

Prof Dr Darryl Macer, Regional Adviser at the Regional Unit for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific (RUSHAP) UNESCO Bangkok giving his views on the National Bioethics Commission



makers with criteria that ex-

*** Quotable Quotes ***

In order to have dialogue you have to have a common ground. I am a professional philosopher. Plato who is the father of dialogical thought in the Western and also in the tradition which Islam inherited from the ancient antiquity says so too. In order to have a dialogue you have to have a common measure, a common ground. And so the great question today is to distinguish between dialogue amongst civilisations which despite the flight of time, nevertheless is still rooted in that presiding idea, in religion, understood in its vaster sense.

Professor Dr Syed Hussein Nasr, 'Religious and Civilisational Dialogue'. Islam21, Issue 29, June 2001.



It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.

Samuel Phillips Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," in Foreign Affairs (1993)

There's one rule that lies at the heart of every religion - that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This truth transcends nations and peoples - a belief that isn't new; that isn't black or white or brown; that isn't Christian or Muslim or Jew. It's a belief that pulsed in the cradle of civilization, and that still beats in the hearts of billions around the world.

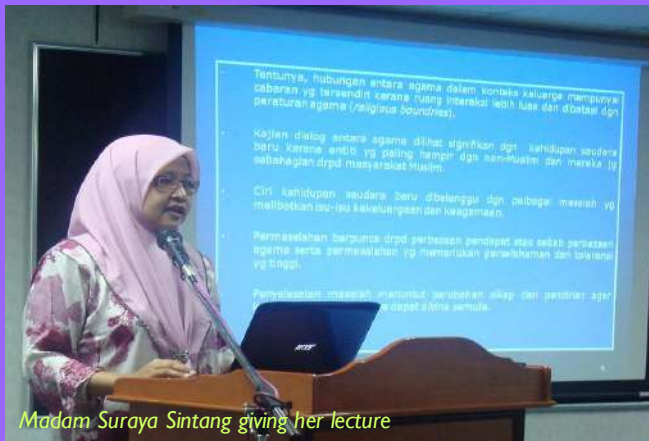
President Barack Obama, Speech Entitled 'A New Beginning'. The President Addressing the Muslim World. Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt on June 4th, 2009.



We can appreciate better Islam's lasting contribution to world culture by talking about its historical role in the foundation of the university. It is my hope that a glimpse of Islam's contribution to science and culture will lead to a sincere desire on the part of many people to know more about the past civilisational relationship between Islam and the West. This is with the view of advancing the cause of dialogue of cultures.

Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Speech Entitled "Islam's Contribution to Human Civilization: Science and Culture" at the Canadian Annual Islamic Congress's Ottawa dinner, October 15, 2001

Public Lecture : Madam Suraya Sintang



Madam Suraya Sintang giving her lecture



Participants at the lecture



Madam Suraya Sintang (right) and the moderator
Assoc Prof Dr Khadijah Hanbali



Participants at the lecture

Dialog Kehidupan dalam Konteks Mualaf di Sabah: Peranan Mualaf dan Implikasi Dialog

Syarahan ini telah membicarakan satu penelitian awal mengenai konsep dialog dan bagaimana konsep ini boleh dibudayakan dalam kalangan masyarakat massa. Perbezaan dilihat dari segi perbahasan dialog yang membincangkan dialog kehidupan dalam kalangan masyarakat pelbagai penganut ataupun dikenali sebagai 'dialog cultural'. Gambaran realiti dialog kehidupan ini dipaparkan Melayu pengalaman saudara baru yang hidup bersama masyarakat Muslim dan bukan Muslim. Penelitian kajian difokuskan di Kota Kinabalu, Sabah sebagai pusat perkembangan dialog beraneka etnik dan agama yang ditonjolkan Melayu aspek tumpuan penghijrahan dan pusat perkembangan institusi agama dan rumah ibadah. Bersandarkan metode kualitatif dengan menggunakan teknik temubual berfokus dan mendalam, kajian ini dapat mengenalpasti beberapa isu yang berkaitan dengan budaya dialog dalam kehidupan saudara baru terutamanya. Syarahan ini telah dipengerusikan oleh Profesor Madya Dr Khadijah Hanbali dari Akademi Pengajian Islam Universiti Malaya.

Dialogue of Life in the Context of Muslim Converts in Sabah :The Role of the Mualaf

Mrs Suraya Sintang is currently a lecturer at the University Malaysia Sabah. She is working on her PhD thesis which is focusing on the situation of the Muslim converts practicing a 'dialogue of life' in their everyday experiences. Her initial study shows that there are many elements in the Sabahan community that points to a rich cultural dialogue tradition and which makes the 'mualaf' experience in Sabah more unique as compared to the experiences of similar groups elsewhere.

Public Lecture : Prof Dr James Higham⁵



Prof Dr James Higham

The Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government warned in 2004 that “climate change is the most severe problem we are facing today, more serious even than the threat of terrorism” (King, 2004:176). While it is directly related to potential catastrophic environmental change, the issue of climate change is also foreboding in terms of economic development and social and political stability (World Health Organisation, 1999). Climate change will inevitably alter the character of tourism, and patterns of demand for tourism resources. These changes represent new and considerable challenges that demand the attention and responses of the tourism industry, government, non-government organisations and scientists within a range of academic disciplines.

Armed with this theme, on the 13th of May 2009, The Faculty of Business and Accountancy in collaboration with the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue,

University of Malaya hosted the public lecture of FBA'S visiting scholar, Professor James Higham entitled “Tourism and Climate Change: Implication for Sustainability”.

The lecture explored some of the key questions of climate change and the tourism research agenda which included five key fields; the science of climate change and tourism, tourist perceptions, responses and market change, climate change & policy directions, tourism businesses and destination management. The public lecture chaired by Associate Professor Dr. Ghazali



Participants attending the lecture

Musa, a lecturer at the Faculty of Business and Accountancy of University of Malaya was attended by academics, students as well as individuals who are interested in the topic of tourism and climate change.

Professor James Higham began and continues his academic career at the University of Otago (New Zealand). His PhD (1992-1995) addressed the management of wilderness experiences. In 1994, he was appointed the academic staff of the Department of Tourism. Between

1996-2001, he worked in a research team on a range of projects as part of a government funded ‘Sustainable Tourism’ research programme. Periods of sabbatical leave in 2002 and 2007 were spent in the United Kingdom (2002, 2007) and Norway (2002). He has been a visiting researcher at the University of Stavanger (Norway) in 2002 and the University of Alberta (Canada) in 2001 and 2006.

Selected Recent Publications of Professor Dr. James Higham include:

Higham, J.E.S. & Bejder, L. (2008). Managing wildlife-based tourism: Edging slowly towards sustainability? *Current Issues in Tourism* 11(1):63-74.

Higham, J.E.S., Lusseau, D. & Hendry, W. (2008). The viewing platforms from which animals are observed in the wild: A discussion of emerging research directions. *Journal of Ecotourism* 7(2/3):132-14. (Special Issue on Australian wildlife tourism).

Higham, J.E.S. & Lusseau, D. (2007). Urgent need for empirical research into whaling and whale-watching. *Conservation Biology* 21(2): 554-558.

Higham, J.E.S. & Hinch, T.D. (2006). Sport and tourism research: A geographic approach. *Sport & Tourism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 11(1): 31-49



Prof Dr James Higham

Public Lecture : Dr Vinoth Ramachandra

“Respecting Persons in a Pluralist Society”



Dr Vinoth giving his lecture

Dr Vinoth Ramachandra (from Sri Lanka) gave a public lecture entitled “Respecting Persons in a Pluralist Society” on June 12th, 2009 at the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue. Dr Vinoth is the Regional Secretary for South Asia, for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. He holds a doctoral degree in nuclear engineering from the University of London. Instead of pursuing an academic career, he returned to Sri Lanka in 1980 and helped to develop a Christian university ministry in that country. In 1987 he was invited to serve as the South Asian Regional Secretary for IFES, a global partnership of over 130 autonomous and indigenous university student movements. Since January 2002 his role within IFES has changed to that of Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement (Asia). This multi-faceted role includes giving public lectures and seminars in universities and helping Christian graduates think and respond as Christians to some of the social, cultural and political challenges they face in their national contexts throughout Asia. He has also taught in

several theological seminaries and conferences in other parts of the world.

Dr Ramachandra is the author of “The Recovery of Mission” (Paternoster and Eerdmans 1996), “Gods That Fail” (Paternoster and InterVarsity Press - USA 1996) and “Faiths in Con-

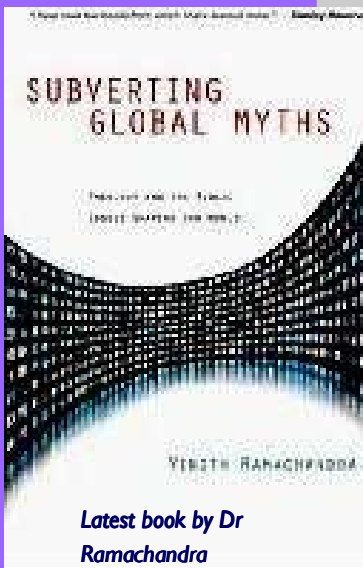


Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya. It was attended by people from various backgrounds such as lecturers, representatives from non-governmental organizations, representatives from religious bodies, public and students. Briefly his lecture is described in the following: People think about and value life in different ways. Some live for shopping and others seek martyrdom; some believe in human rights while others believe in ecological holism. Why are human persons worthy of respect, and what

does it mean, in practice, to respect them? In a culturally and religiously diverse society, do we have to choose between endless conflict or mere co-existence? Dr Vinoth explored these questions. He argues for a way beyond both ‘theocracy’ and ‘secular tolerance’ towards an engaged, mutually interactive pluralism, and outline the personal and political implications for all of us.”

“flict?” (InterVarsity Press - UK and InterVarsity Press - USA 1999). He is involved with various groups in Sri Lanka that seek to empower the poor and bring reconciliation to a war-torn island. He has been a visiting lecturer in theological colleges in Sri Lanka, India, England and Canada. He also serves on theological commissions, both ecumenical and evangelical, but feels a special calling to equip ‘lay’ Christians to relate biblical truths and values to their work and everyday world.

The public lecture was chaired by Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr. Osman Bakar, Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for



Latest book by Dr Ramachandra



Staff at the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue

“Concept of ‘Tian’ in Chinese Traditional Culture Comparison with the Concept of God as Understood by Muslims”



Mr Yusof Ma, a Chinese Muslim from the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), gave a Public Lecture on the “Concept of ‘Tian’ in Chinese Traditional Culture Comparison with the Concept of ‘God’ as understood by Muslims”. It was held on the 5th of June 2009. This lecture aimed to present a Chinese understanding of ‘Tian’ as used in its traditional meaning in history and to show some similarities between the concept ‘Tian’ and the term ‘Allah’ as Chinese Muslims understood this term. There were three philosophical schools in the history of China which represent ‘Chinese traditional culture’ namely Confucianism, Faism and Mohism. Attention was focused more on Mohism which was, as well known as Confucianism was in the beginning, but which later disappeared for several reasons. According to this school, ‘Tian’ is not only ‘existence’ but is also “the

highest power”; “the owner of heavens and earth”. Tian has will, He loves mankind; He rewards good people and punishes bad ones; He likes justice (‘yi’) and dislikes injustice; He is all-knowing and all-honorable; He should be obeyed by everyone especially the emperor; His will is the standard and criteria of everything. As a result of being influenced by such ancient thought, most of Chinese people until today have in their minds the concept of God, which is translated as ‘Tian’ or ‘Shangdi’ in Chinese language. They pray to Him consciously or unconsciously, in their worldly life. As a Chinese Muslim, Mr Yusof Ma believes that his lecture may benefit those who are interested in studying whether God had sent His divine teaching to the Chinese people and whether He had chosen anyone among them to be his messenger or not a question, which is frequently discussed by scholars in this field. The Centre records its thanks to Assoc Professor Obaidellah Haji Mohamad for moderating this lecture.

Women Hadith Transmitters : Research by Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi, a leading contemporary scholar of *hadith* (sayings and actions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad), was invited to present a talk on Islam and gender issues at the Dean's meeting room, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, the University of Malaya on April 1, 2009.

The talk chaired by Emeritus Professor Osman Bakar was jointly organized by the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya and the Gender Studies Department, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences .

About 25 academics and social activists were in attendance. Dr Nadwi, a Research Fellow at the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies since 1991, gave an interesting talk on the sub-

ject. He approached the issue of Islam and gender in a rather unique way, that is, by using his vast research knowledge on hadith to demonstrate the positive role of women in the public sphere in the early centuries of Islamic history, especially in the field of education, scholarship generally and the teaching of hadith especially.

audience regarding the plight of some Muslim women today, Dr Nadwi responded by saying that it is not the fault of the religion. He supported his view by citing many examples from the history of hadith learning, teaching, and dissemination that demonstrated the vast scope of women's involvement.

He has been able to identify about 8,000

women narrators and scholars of hadith, which he says is unique in the history of women's



Dr. Nadwi (centre) with the attendees of the talk

According to Dr Nadwi, his studies on the hadith which he has been pursuing for decades clearly shows that Muslim women enjoyed free social interactions with men in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.

There was a lively discussion after Dr Nadwi's presentation. To the many questions raised by members of the

role in religion. Dr Nadwi was in Malaysia for one week (30th March – 5 April, 2009) giving lectures on various aspects of hadith scholarship at the joint invitation of the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS), the Academy of Islamic Studies (API), University of Malaya, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).

Visit by Muslim Student Association of Sri Lanka



Head of Delegation receiving a token of appreciation from Datuk Osman Bakar

On June 30th, 2009, the Muslim Students' Association of Sri Lanka, visited the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya. This visit was the first for the association. Muslims in Sri

Lanka are a minority and the association's visit to Malaysia was to learn and experience the multicultural setting of the Malaysian society. The students were formally hosted by *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM– Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia) as well as the International Institute of Islamic Thought

(IIIT). At the centre, the Director, Professor Datin Dr Azizan Baharuddin gave a welcome speech and Senior Research Fellow, Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar explained the role, function and importance of the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya.



A group photo with all participants and representative of the centre

Visiting Scholar Programme - Prof Dr Paul Morris

Prof Paul Morris was visiting scholar during the period of 27th April to 9th May 2009. A brief introduction about Prof Morris: since 1994, Prof Morris have been Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, where he is currently Programme Director for Religious Studies. Previously, he taught at Lancaster University in the UK from 1984-1994, and has held visiting positions at the University of California, Santa Barbara; the University of Queensland, Australia; Boston University; and, the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations, UK. He is a New Zealander with a BA (Religious Studies) from Victoria University of Wellington, an MA (Religious Studies) from McMaster

University in Canada, and a PhD from Lancaster (Religious Studies) where his supervisor was Professor Ninian Smart.

He has been a member of the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR). Currently he is a member of the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions (President and conference committee member; the

American Academy of Religion (Section Chair 1998-2003), the International Association for the History of Religions (member of the Executive Committee 2000-2005). He is on the editorial boards of *Numen* (by virtue of being on the IAHR Executive), *Implicit Religions*, *Postscripts*, and *Beliefs and Values*. He is also co-editor of the journal, *Human Rights Research*.

Whilst at the centre, he accomplished several important activities which among others included the following:

- A) Discussion on the Establishment of Centre for the Study of Islamic and Muslim Cultures in New Zealand (CSIMCNZ) with the collaboration of Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- B) Visit to the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of

Malaya
C) Official meeting with Professor Datuk Dr Ghauth Jasmon, Vice Chancellor of University of Malaya.

D) Meeting with His Highness Prince Dr Raja Nazrin Shah ibni Sultan Azlan Muhibuddin, Prince of Perak Darul Ridzuan to discuss the establishment of CSIMCNZ. In the meeting, His Highness agreed



Prof Dr Paul Morris with Prof Dr Mohd Amin Jalaluddin

to be the patron of this centre.

- E) Helped the centre to form linkages with the Alliance of Civilisation in Spain.
- F) He suggested to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Centre for Civilisational Dialogue be appointed as a reference and partner in the context of civilisational dialogue.
- G) He conducted Public Lectures at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), International Islamic University of Malaya (IIUM), International Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) and the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya. All his lectures attracted large audiences.
- H) He promoted the Centre in the context of 'inter-



religious dialogue in Malaysia' through a live interview with a popular New Zealand national radio programme.

The centre wishes Prof Paul Morris a big thank you for his contribution and the centre hopes he will come again.



Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar making a point



A roundtable discussion

Research - Intercultural Dialogue in Malaysia

Dialogue Among Ethnicities and Cultures in Malaysia : the History and Impact to the Development of Bangsa Malaysia

A research project entitled *Dialog Antara Kelompok Etnik Dan Budaya Di Malaysia: Sejarah Dan Dampaknya Ke Atas Pembangunan Bangsa Malaysia (Post-independent Inter-cultural Dialogue in Malaysia)* was approved under the Short-Term Grant (PJP) to be carried out within 1 year (April 2009 – April 2010).

This research project is led by Professor Emeritus Datuk Osman Bakar with the help of a Research Assistant, Chang Lee Wei.

The objective of the research include:

- To determine the level of inter-cultural dialogue since the independence of Malaysia in year 1957
- To determine the impacts of the inter-cultural dialogue towards the present lifestyle of the multiracial community in Malaysia
- To identify the main characteristics of the process of inter-cultural dialogue in Malaysia
- To summarize the importance of post-



independent inter-cultural dialogue in Malaysia.

dependent inter-cultural dialogue towards the present lifestyle of the multiracial community in Malaysia. It is estimated that around 30 well-known personalities that are from various ethnic and religious groups which are related to the post-independent inter-cultural dialogue, will be interviewed.

Prepared by
Chang Lee Wei
Research Assistant

In the first phase of the research, information pertaining to the post-independent inter-cultural dialogues in Malaysia, including their background, purpose of having the dialogues, and the outputs of those dialogues were gathered to see the impacts of these post-

in-



Research - Muslim Women NGOs in Malaysia '1'

The Evolution And Mission of Muslim Women In Malaysia: Research On The Roles And Contributions To Improve The Position Of Muslim Women In Malaysia.

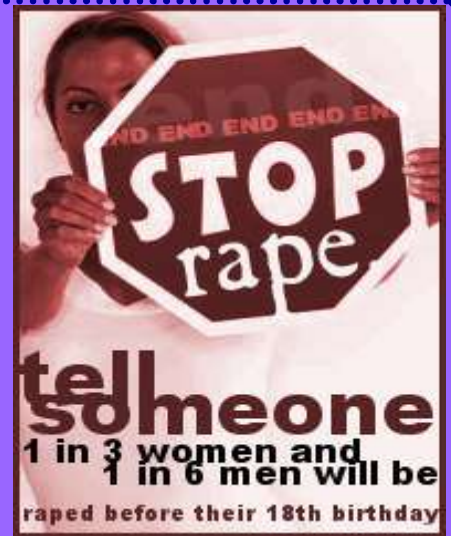
The 21st century has seen a remarkable progress and developments of the Malaysian women. The parameters used to measure those achievements based on several aspects such as economic, educational opportunity, involvement in politics and also science and technology. The progress can be seen more obviously if we compared the scenario with the women for the last 50 years. Muslim women have been given equal opportunity in modernizing the country. The opportunity for women to attain the development become bright when Dekad Wanita (Decade of Women), declared by the United Nation (UN) on 1975.

This Dekad Wanita began 1976-1985 with the theme of 'Rights, Equality, Development and Peacefulness'. The purpose of this declaration is to improve the women's position in society. Malaysia also acknowledged this declaration and endeavored in integrating women in development. The government has allocated special budget in Rancangan Malaysia Ketiga for the purpose of women's development especially because of their role as mother, wife and contribution in supplementing family sustenance. Several ordinance to improve the women position have also been legislated. Perkara 8, Perlembagaan Persekutuan have altered at early year 2000 by

insert the word gender. This means, Perkara 8(2) Perlembagaan Persekutuan gave the collateral where women cannot be discrimination just because they are women. Whereas in Akta Pekerjaan 1955, the allocation is not only in the form of beneficial to women but also the protection to them. These ordinances prohibit women work on shift and work over than 11 hour continuously. These ordinances also allocate the maternity leave in 60 days with full salary along that leave and also the ordinance regarding to the domestic violence cases. Many of current development issues are related to the women interest and this is the result of the efforts and struggles made by the women NGOs. However, recently several women Muslim's NGOs were established especially to handle questions and issues rising from Muslim women. The understanding about Islamic Feminism Ideology began to be looked at and spoken by some of the NGOs to ensure the discourse on the equality of man and women is in accordance with the Al-Quran and As-Sunnah perspectives.

Hence, this research aims to observe how far the ideology of Islamic Feminism is accepted in Muslim Malaysia's NGOs. The development of activism among women Muslim NGOs nowadays have testified the growth of a few new NGOs and the existing NGOs have improved their mission and vision. Hence, this research is done to increase the existing discussion and literature especially in recognizing the ability of Islamic Feminism Philosophy to influence the efforts of Muslim women's NGOs in Malaysia. The research has several objectives. The first objective is to identify the evolution of Muslim women NGOs in Malaysia. The second objective is to identify the issues brought up by the Muslim women's NGOs in Malaysia and the final objective is to identify the basics, approaches, roles and contributions of Muslim women's NGOs in Malaysia in a way that stand out for Muslim women.

At the end of the day, we will see that this research will increase the variety of exper-



tise in the 'Islam and Gender' field. This research also helps certain bodies to understand the direction Muslim woman's NGOs mission especially in an effort to empower the Malaysian Muslim women. This research only focuses on the Muslim women's NGOs in Malaysia especially those NGOs which gave a lot of impact towards the aspects of the social, politic, laws and socialization of women. A few Muslim women's NGOs will be identified as a samples for this research.

Finally, the results of this study will be presented in the national and international conference presentation. Besides that, a monograph or book related to the research will be produced. The articles will also be published in the national and international journals.

The Principle Investigator of this project is Assoc Prof Dr Raihanah Abdullah.

Prepared by
Zazren Ismail,
Research Asisstant.

The slow road to gender equality

Malaysia may be moving forward in efforts to eliminate gender inequality but women's groups tell CHOK SUAT LING that these are only the first steps of a marathon.

The slow road to gender equality in Malaysia is a marathon, not a sprint, say women's rights activists. They say the government has made progress in areas such as the minimum wage, but more needs to be done to address issues like the gender pay gap and workplace harassment.

Malaysia needs a Gender Equality Act, say activists.

There must approach and sufficient, open jobs.

The slow road to gender equality in Malaysia is a marathon, not a sprint, say women's rights activists. They say the government has made progress in areas such as the minimum wage, but more needs to be done to address issues like the gender pay gap and workplace harassment.

Malaysia needs a Gender Equality Act, say activists.

There must approach and sufficient, open jobs.

Research - Bioethics in Malaysia: Importance of Intercultural Dialogue



Delegates from University of Malaya and Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development

Malaysia started the strategy to develop the nation as a hub for biotechnology in the region through the National Biotechnology Policy launched on the April 28th, 2005. Besides the biodiversity resources available in abundance in the country, it is also blessed with the diversity of values and principles of the people, who come from multi-religious and multi-cultural backgrounds.

Biotechnology is fast developing at a very rapid rate in Malaysia, however, this development needs to be looked into and guided because biotechnology applications also have a lot of socio-economic, health, environmental effects and ethical implications, which if not handled properly, may cause unsustainability in the development of the nation. The check and bal-

ance system must be based on the values and ethics commonly accepted by all Malaysians. Till this day, Malaysia does not have any acts or specific law regarding bioethics. However, the government is working on the establishment of a National Bioethics Commission. The research by the centre (Sebuah Kajian Mengenai Perkembangan Bioetika Di Malaysia Dengan Tumpuan Khas Kepada Peranan Nilai Dan Sistem Indegenous Di Dalam Penentuan Sikap Dan Regulasi Aplikasi Bioteknologi-Bioteknologi Terpilih) hopes to be a contribution in the process.

The objectives of this project is

This project is headed by the centre. Other researchers for this project includes Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Prof Dr Rofina Yasmin Othman, Assoc Prof Dr Raihanah Abdullah, Assoc Prof Dr Siti Nurani Mohamed Nor, Puan Rasmuna Mazwan Muhammad and Cik Munirah Isa. Mr Mohamed Azmi Mohd Rasheed Khan is the research assistant for this project. It is expected to end by April 2010 with results such as the formation of National Bioethics Commission in Malaysia as a highlight of the project. The researchers also expect to write a few articles for journals. The 1st National Workshop on Estab-



to:

- to investigate the instruments or current policy available which can assist in the shaping of the management and regulatory body of biotechnology;
- to look at the understanding and ways to increase awareness about bioethics among the public;
- to obtain the perception and suggestion from various scholars and experts in Malaysia regarding bioethics;
- to give inputs and ideas to establish a National Bioethics Committee to the government of Malaysia.

lishing a National Bioethics Committee was held in conjunction with the Sixth Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST).

Prepared by
Mohamed Azmi Rasheed Khan
Research Assistant



Dr Azizan Baharuddin (second from left), Datin Seri Elena Chiang Abdullah (fourth from left), Prof Dr Darryl Macer (centre) and Prof Dr Henk Ten Have (second from right) and other participants.

Prof Datin Dr Azizan Baharuddin

- Member of the Panel of Evaluation for the *Anugerah Akademik Negara* (AAN) by the Ministry of Higher Education
- Visit to National Commission of UNESCO Malaysia with the University of Malaya, UNESCO Club (UMUC)
- Resource Person for Course on *Belia Lestari*, Ministry of Youth and Sports on the 16th—17th May 2009.
- Presented paper at the Commission for Ethics for Science and Technology Conference (COMEST)
- Meeting with International Relations Department, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development for the preparation of Workshop on Establishing a National Bioethics Committee on May 12th, 2009.
- Chair, Panel of Evaluators for *Anugerah Belia Negara* (Leadership Category)
- Talk at INPUMA Course for senior officials from Sudan, entitled 'Multiculturalism in a Globalising World : Issues and Challenges' on May 25th, 2009.
- Presented paper at Conference on Asian-Arab Philosophical Dialogue, UNESCO Bangkok entitled, 'Meta Versus Indigenous Narratives' on June 28th-29th, 2009.
- Presented paper '*Kelainan Kreativiti dan Iqbari Minda*', Seminar 40 tahun USM
- Presented paper 'Ethical Infrastructure for the Governance of Sustainable Development' 15th June 2009 at COMEST Conference
- Moderator, Workshop on Establishing a National Bioethics Committee in Malaysia, 18 June 2009.

Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar

- Moderator at Public Lecture by Professor Paul Morris at IAIS, 'New Zealand, Muslims and Islam'.
- Meeting for Establishment of Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities Malaysia
- Moderator, Talk by Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi, Research Fellow, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, United Kingdom.

Assoc Prof Dr Raihanah Abdullah

- Presented paper entitled 'Islamic/ Syariah Law Dimension of Bioethics' at the Workshop on Establishing a National Bioethics Committee on June 8th, 2009



University of Malaya UNESCO Club (UMUC) Meeting With Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM)

Date: July 17th, 2009

Venue: National Commission of UNESCO Malaysia (SKUM), Ministry of Education, Putrajaya

The UMUC was established as a response to the call by the National Commission of UNESCO Malaysia for the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) to enhance internationalization and excellence in higher education in Malaysia through the establishment of UNESCO Clubs. To proceed with this mission, UMUC held a meeting with the Malaysian National Commission For UNESCO (NATCOM) on Wednesday, 25th Mac 2009, 2.30 pm at the Ministry of Education, Putrajaya. It was attended by ten members from UMUC and four officers from the Ministry of Education (NATCOM). The meeting began with the speech by Madam Hazlinda who chaired the meeting. She welcomed everyone and extended apologies of the General Secretary of NATCOM for not being able to be at the meeting as he was away for a conference in

missions collectively. NATCOM exists in fulfillment of Malaysia's obligation as a Member State of UNESCO & for the purpose of constituting the main channel of co-operation between UNESCO and Malaysian expertise in the areas of its mandate and managing Malaysia's relationship with UNESCO. NATCOM was established by the Government of Malaysia in 1966. NATCOM comes under the purview of the MOE and its secretariat is based at the Policy and International Relations Division (PIRD) in MOE's headquarters, Putrajaya. The NATCOM is chaired by the Minister of Education. Its members, who are appointed by the Education Minister himself, comprises of individuals, government agencies, and institutions whose interest are related to UNESCO's fields of competence in education, science, culture, social science and communication. The Undersecretary of the IRD is also the Secretary General of NATCOM. NATCOM advises the Government of Malaysia on all matters pertaining to UNESCO and on all matters referred to the Commission by the Minister. It acts in a consultative capacity with regard to the appointment of all Malaysian delegates to the General Conference, and to other meetings and conferences and the recruitment of Malaysian personnel of suitable quality to UNESCO posts. NATCOM also acts as an advisor to the members of the Executive Board of UNESCO, as well as being a clearing house for disseminating information to all related organizations, institutions and individuals on the objectives and functions of UNESCO. For UMUC, Prof. Datin Dr. Azizan Baharuddin gave a speech regarding the activities and the purpose of establishment of the UMUC. Currently, UMUC has established itself with a total of 110 members consisting both local and international

students and professional members of the varsity. In the last few months, UMUC has organized its inaugural meeting of members along with the planting of the Peace Pole at the Centre for Civilization Dialogue on 22nd December 2008. Other than that, UMUC also has organized culturally embedded programs such as "Nooroz"

(Iranian New Year) on the March of 2009 which was graced by the Cultural Counselor of The Embassy of The Islamic Republic of Iran. UMUC seeks the guidance and advise on determining its future direction. The club encourages communication with similar clubs in other countries. Therefore, UMUC needs the collaboration of NATCOM to achieve more effectiveness. As a result of the discussion, NATCOM plans to expand the influence of UMUC through invitations for its participation. NATCOM also has an action plan in regard to forming linkages with the center to achieve better understanding. To begin with, the commission will provide seed funding to the club to help it establish itself in conducting beneficial and international activities. The clubs framework is based on the seven thrust areas of UNESCO. It strives to work with neighboring countries and to link with other regions. Within these approaches, we believe that the mission and vision stated by UMUC will be a reality soon.



Members of UMUC with Puan Nurfaliza Ismail (third from right)

Phuket. She also explained the objective of the meeting was to discuss and exchange thoughts on how UMUC and NATCOM should work closely in achieving UNESCO's



Roundtable discussion with the Malaysian National Commission UNESCO Secretariat, Ministry of Education officials and members of UMUC

Upgrading of CCD Website

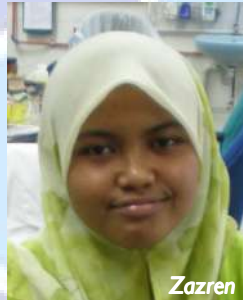
The centre recently upgraded its website (see front page for full URL). Puan Siti Rukiah, headed this project by collecting all relevant data and information for the website. With the help of the Centre for Information Technology (PTM) of the university, the website had some major changes and was given a fresh look with more information on events, activities, visiting scholars.

Miscellaneous

New Family Members of the Centre

The Centre for Civilisational Dialogue received three new members recently. They are **Zazren Ismail**, **Chang Lee Wei** and **Mohamed Azmi bin Mohd Rasheed Khan**. All three are fresh graduates from the University of Malaya.

Ms. Zazren Ismail, born in 1986 comes from Ipoh, Perak. She completed her Bachelor of Science (Applied Physics) from Faculty of Science, University of Malaya. Her interest is in science and religion. Currently, she is the research assistant for the project entitled 'The Evolution And Mission of Muslim Women In Malaysia: Research On The Roles And Contribution To Improve The Position Of Muslim Women In Malaysia' under the supervision of Assoc Prof Dr Raihanah Abdullah.



Zazren

management. Currently, he is the research assistant for the project 'Dialogue Among Ethnicities and Cultures in Malaysia : History and Impact to the Development of Bangsa Malaysia' under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar.

The third member of the centre is **Mohamed Azmi bin Mohd Rasheed Khan**. He was born in 1984 and comes from Subang Jaya. He completed his Bachelor of Science and Technology (Policy and Management of Science and Technology) from the Department of Science and Technology Studies, Faculty of Science, University of Malaya. His area of interests include Science and Technology, Sustainable Development, Science and Religion, and Bioethics.



Azmi

The centre wishes all its new members a hearty welcome and to work hard in this new and very exciting environment. It is hoped that all new members would do well and to always learn from each other.

Welcome aboard!

Mr. Chang Lee Wei, born in 1986 comes from Bukit Mertajam, Pulau Pinang. He completed his Bachelor of Science (Policy and Management of Science and Technology). His area of interest are entrepreneur and



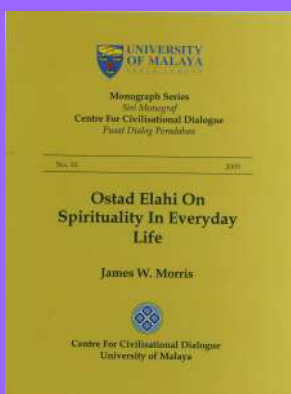
Chang

Visitors to our website could also see all publications by the centre such as books, journals, monographs and proceedings. As a new feature, the website also links itself to all the various organizations and agencies in the world which have been collaborating with various programmes and activities of the centre. It is our greatest hope that all other organizations could also link us in their websites. We also call upon all visitors to give comments and inputs on how to further enhance our website.



ACTIVITIES JULY—SEPTEMBER 2009

- July 14th-15th, 2009 - Regional Workshop For Islamic Scholars "Islam And Biotechnology: Finding A Common Language Between Ulama and Scientists" organized by Malaysian Biotechnology Information Centre, Yayasan Ilmuwan and Centre for Civilisational Dialogue tre
- July 18th, 2009 - Seminar on Sustaining National Unity, Organised by Persatuan Alumni Universiti Malaya (PAUM), Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya & Jabatan Perpaduan Negara & Integrasi Nasional.
- July 27th-28th 2009 - Hokkaido-Kuala Lumpur Science Symposium organized by Center for Civilizational Dialogue, University of Malaya, Department of Science & Technology Studies, University of Malaya, International Institute of Islamic Thought (Malaysia) and Petronas University of Technology
- August 17th-18th, 2009- Conference "The Role of NGOs In Promoting Dialogue Across Values & Cultures" organised by Department of National Unity and University of Malaya Centre for Civilisational Dialogue in collaboration with Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations (ISESCO) & Kuala Lumpur City of Islamic Culture (KLCIC)

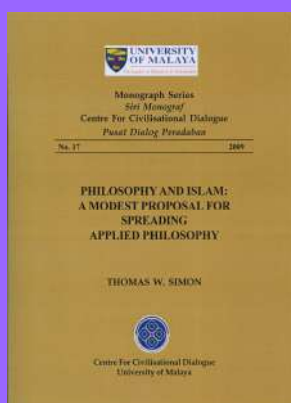


Ostad Elahi On Spirituality In Everyday Life by James W. Morris

According to the two pioneers in the field, Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2004), spiritual intelligence is the means with which we can reach our purposes, meanings and motivations. If we refer to Marlow's hierarchy of needs these elements would also be found in the top-most section of his pyramid. Although according to Zohar and Marshall the word "spiritual" may not have necessary connection with "religion", James Morris's work is able to show that connection in the Islamic tradition. Morris's rendition of Ostad Elahi's "Spirituality in Everyday Life is an important contribution in the Centre's focus on mechanisms for enhancing ethics and values which are the bedrock of any civilisation. The centre welcomes analogous contributions from the other traditions.

Philosophy And Islam : A Modest Proposal For Spreading Applied Philosophy by Thomas W. Simon

Thomas Simon's "Philosophy and Islam: A Modest Proposal For Spreading Applied Philosophy", is anything but modest. It is an ambitious attempt to bring 'Islam and the West' to intellectually communicate with one another through the medium of philosophy. It is an exercise in constructive engagement. Simon begins by lamenting the lack or absence of Philosophy courses and departments in Malaysian universities, and seeks an explanation for it. He then explores the notion of Philosophy not only in its western context but also looks at Philosophy in Islamic history. After exploring the notion of philosophy in terms of its five functions, namely: (i) as 'problem-solver' (ii) as 'analyzer' (iii) as 'mirror' (iv) as 'interpreter', and finally (v) as 'adjudicator', Simon rejects philosophy as 'grand narrative' (which is what the five functions would suggest or point towards) and instead succumb to the postmodernist notion of philosophy as piecemeal, 'fragmented philosophy' which is not epistemologically privileged but exists as but one of the several ways of cognizing or viewing the world. Philosophy as an architectonic system of thought, as a body of knowledge, or even as a dogmatic set of doctrines, is set aside in favour of philosophy as method, as a way of thinking, and as critical intellectual activity. Towards the end of the monograph he even suggests that these 'philosophical' activities not be subsumed within a single subject called 'philosophy', but 'instead, pieces of these methods and processes should be scattered and planted throughout a university's curricular offerings'.



Jurnal Katha Vol 4

In this first totally-in-English issue, all the articles (with one exception) deals with topics of inter-religious dialogue, especially insofar as these pertain to relations between Islam and Christianity. Articles by Dr Mohd Fakhrudin Abdul Mukti, Emeritus Professor Osman Bakar, Ma Zhanming, Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury are all concerned with the theme of inter-religious relations and dialogue in its various aspects. The exception, authored by Dr Yamin Cheng, and dealing with the various intellectual shortcomings in the post-Enlightenment understanding of religion in the West, may not explicitly dwell on the subject of inter-religious dialogue but many of the issues discussed in it are relevant to inter-religious dialogue at a more philosophical level. Of the articles dealing with issues of inter-religious relations and dialogue, all of them are concerned with the encounters and relationships between Islam and Christianity at various points in time in the common history of the two religions. The sole exception is the article by Ma Zhanming, which seeks to highlight hitherto unknown aspects of inter-religious relations and dialogue between Islam and other religions in China. The current issue of the journal also includes two book reviews and a conference report. The first review, contributed by Dr Stephen Bucher, is on the book *Buddhism and Environmental Ethics in Context* published by the Center for Civilizational Dialogue. The book is authored by Alastair Gunn and Ruth Walker. The other review written by Dr Mohamed Ajmal Al-Aidrus is on Dr Osman Bakar's book (new edition) entitled *Tawhid and Science: Islamic Perspectives on Religion and Science*. The conference report is prepared by the Oxford Center of Islamic Studies. It is based on the proceedings of a conference on *Islam and the Environment* which the Center had organized in October 2008.

