

# SOAS World

The magazine for alumni and friends

Issue 43 2019

SOAS leads the debate  
on decolonising  
the curriculum

SOAS launches its first  
degree programme  
outside the UK

SOAS Director co-leads  
initiative to address  
BAME attainment gap

Alumnus Kelvin Cheung –  
combatting food, poverty  
and social isolation

HRH The Duchess of Sussex and Dr. Sabaratnam from SOAS at the Duchess' first official visit as Patron of ACU (Association of Commonwealth Universities). CC Jonathan Cole, ACU.



## Give back to SOAS

"I grew up in the UK but I have limited leave to remain, which meant I couldn't access student finance. There was no way I could have afforded studying. When I found out I had been awarded a SOAS Sanctuary Scholarship to study MA Law, I called my mother in Nigeria and she was ecstatic. My family are so proud of me and as we do in Nigeria, now they call me "The Law". Don't ask me why we do that!"

*Mariam Otaiku (LLM 2018) - Sanctuary Scholarship Recipient*

**The support of the SOAS community - alumni, students, staff and friends of the School - helps widen access, increase diversity and offer gifted students equal opportunities at SOAS.**

### Your gift can:

- Give students like Mariam an opportunity to access higher education.

- Support students from BAME and low-income backgrounds throughout their studies, through outreach work and financial support.
- Help us preserve the SOAS Library's rich collection of knowledge and culture for future generations, including digitising our collection to make these resources accessible to all.

Visit [www.soasworld.org/give-back](http://www.soasworld.org/give-back) to find out more.



### Welcome to the 2019 issue of SOAS World.

I am writing this having recently welcomed our new and returning students to SOAS in late September. Welcome Week always has such a buzz and this year we were happy to have 300 new Foundation Year students, who I hope will be with us for the next four years. It was a pleasure to welcome them to campus and experience the atmosphere in the room.

Our students have embarked on their academic journey as we continue to experience great uncertainty across many parts of the world. As I write, here in the UK we are still unsure what will happen with respect to Britain's relationship to the European Union. As a global, outward facing university, SOAS values its connection with countries across the world and the richness and diversity of our staff and student body.

Last year I had the privilege of co-leading on behalf of Universities UK (UUK) - the national body representing universities in the United Kingdom - a project to look at ways of closing the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) attainment gap in universities. Amatey Doku, Vice President for Higher Education at the

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National Union of students (NUS) co-led the project.

As part of the data gathering process, we heard from UK students, university staff and others with an interest in black and minority ethnic issues. We learned a lot. From the students constantly having to explain the realities of their daily experiences, white staff who were fearful about talking about race and racism because they did not want to say the wrong thing and BAME staff who often had to mentor and support BAME students but did not receive any support or recognition for the additional time required for this work.

At SOAS we have put in place a strong set of recommendations to address the BAME attainment gap at the School. As part of our commitment to excellence we feel strongly that everyone should have an equal opportunity to succeed in higher education. Universities are as much about delivering equality as they are about excellent scholarship and knowledge transfer. They are places where opportunity and aspiration come together.

In addition, our SOAS Opportunities Fund supports talented students who may be the first in their family to

go to university, come from schools or areas with low participation in higher education, or face other barriers to accessing higher education.

Financial circumstances and background should not prevent anyone from accessing higher education. Our student callers have been busy raising funds this summer - I am pleased to say we reached £65,000. This fund is so important, if you haven't already done so, you can donate directly via [makeagift.soas.ac.uk](http://makeagift.soas.ac.uk).

SOAS is a university which provides a distinctive academic environment for staff and students. Global is in our DNA and SOAS occupies a special place in the world of higher education. We challenge, we question and we strive to remain true to our values. In the year ahead, we will continue to work to ensure SOAS remains a distinct, diverse and inclusive environment.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Valerie Amos



# SOAS News

A round up of news and events from SOAS in the last year.



(L-R) SOAS Director Baroness Valerie Amos, Lindsey Hilsum, His Highness Muhammad Sanusi II (CON) Sarkin Kano, Margaret Busby, SOAS President Graça Machel and Nursyahbani Katjasungkana

## SOAS honours world-renowned figures

**SOAS awarded Honorary Degrees and Fellowships to pioneering figures at the 2018 and 2019 graduations.**

In 2018, artist and social activist Forest Whitaker, international film curator June Givanni, human rights activist Vrinda Grover, world-renowned author Dr Jung Chang and award-winning novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, were awarded Honorary Degrees.

Ms Adichie told SOAS graduates,

"You're very fortunate to have studied at SOAS – this wonderfully multifaceted place that is steeped in diversity where difference is normal, where different people from different parts of the world converge to learn, question and grow".

In 2019 SOAS honoured award-winning journalist, Lindsey Hilsum; anti-corruption campaigner, His Highness Muhammad Sanusi II (CON), editor, broadcaster and critic, Margaret Busby;

and human rights lawyer Nursyahbani Katjasungkana.

Baroness Valerie Amos said: "Our honorary awardees this year are all remarkable people who have been pioneers and innovators and sought to bring about change in the world. Their work has furthered the public's understanding of conflict and humanitarian affairs; demonstrated how to tackle high level corruption in often complex situations; paved the way for greater diversity in publishing;



and fought for and gained recognition for women's rights in Indonesia. Their achievements reflect the values which are important to us at SOAS and I am delighted to welcome them to our community".

You can watch the speeches from our Honorary Fellows and Graduates on the SOAS YouTube Channel: [www.youtube.com/user/soasuniversity](https://www.youtube.com/user/soasuniversity)







SOAS Director, Baroness Valerie Amos and Ngee Ann President, Mr Richard Lee, sign the agreement to deliver SOAS degrees in Singapore.

# SOAS launches its first degree programme outside the UK

In February 2019, SOAS began offering its first degree-level programme taught entirely outside of the UK. This new partnership with Ngee Ann Academy in Singapore offers three International Management undergraduate programmes, two of which focus on Japan and Korea and South East Asian Studies.

SOAS has always been an internationally focussed and outward looking university. We have successful relationships with many global institutions, but until this year, we had not offered a degree-level course taught entirely outside the UK.

This new partnership brings SOAS together with the Ngee Ann Academy (NAA) in Singapore. NAA has over 20 years experience of working successfully in international partnerships (other partners include King's College London and the University



The alignment of values with SOAS and the focus that the Ngee Ann Academy gives to education, particularly higher education, are an enabler for social mobility."

*SOAS Director, Baroness Valerie Amos*

of Adelaide, Australia) and is underpinned by Ngee Ann Kongsi, a charitable body in Singapore. NAA aims to be an exceptional institution for developing well rounded individuals who are committed to making positive contributions to society.

The partnership was announced at a ceremony in Singapore in November 2018. SOAS Director, Baroness Valerie Amos said: "The alignment of values with SOAS and the focus that the Ngee Ann Academy gives to education, particularly higher education, are an enabler for social mobility. Singapore as a country welcomes

UK universities as a key and ongoing element of its higher education system and that system is recognised globally for the quality of its education."

President of Ngee Ann Kongsi Richard Lee said: "With more than forty percent of [SOAS's] undergraduate degree programmes offering the



Ngee Ann Academy Campus, Singapore

**BSc Management** enables students to become effective managers in a changing world, offering modules in international business strategy, organisational behaviour, human resources management, accounting, finance, managerial economics, marketing, corporate governance, business ethics and corporate social responsibility.

**BSc International Management (Japan & Korea)** provides students with skill sets and a grounding for careers in Japanese and Korean organisations, or those dealing with these countries. Students gain knowledge of Japanese and Korean management systems along with a broader set of disciplines including accounting,

marketing, finance, international management, research methods, managerial economics, and strategy.

**BA International Management and South East Asian Studies** prepares students to work in management in South East Asia or elsewhere that requires knowledge of the region. The programme provides students with an excellent, broad foundational knowledge of international management systems of South East Asia along with regional cultural and political issues.

Students can opt to learn a specific South East Asian language to a level which will be of practical use when communicating or working with a native speaker of that language.

opportunity to spend a year studying in another country, we see this as an opportunity to grow the international exposure of our students."

Baroness Valerie Amos said "We are proud of these programmes and very excited to see how our graduating students will influence and shape the world we live in."

In a competitive and international environment, our work with NAA is an excellent starting point for future international partnerships. For more information, please visit: [www.naa.edu.sg/soas](http://www.naa.edu.sg/soas)





The SOAS Library

## SOAS Library's new Director

In January 2019, SOAS welcomed Oliver Urquhart Irvine as Director of Library and Learning Services. He oversees the SOAS Library, one of just five National Research Libraries in the country, hosting the world's largest concentration of scholarly works on Asia, Africa and the Middle East with over 1.5 million items in more than 400 languages.

Oliver joined SOAS from his role as Librarian and Deputy Keeper of the Queen's Archives at Royal Collection Trust. He previously worked at the British Library for nine years including as Head of the Asian, Middle Eastern and African Department. Oliver said: "The opportunity to lead a world-class library in a research and teaching intensive organisation with a truly global reach is hugely exciting."

The SOAS Library is one of the world's most important academic libraries for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. If you would like to support the Library, please visit [www.soasworld.org/donate](http://www.soasworld.org/donate)



SOAS staff and Alphawood scholars celebrate at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore

## Celebrating four years of Alphawood Scholarships

SOAS hosted its first graduation event in Singapore to celebrate four years of the Masters and Postgraduate Diploma programmes in the Department of History of Art and Archaeology.

Alphawood Scholarship graduates reunited from across the region at the Asian Civilisations Museum where SOAS Director Baroness Valerie Amos welcomed guests. In her speech, she highlighted the scholars' range of work since their studies - in galleries, universities, government and civil society. On helping to preserve the rich cultural



heritage of the region she said: "The impact you all have in this field is extraordinary."

The South East Asian Art Academic Programme was established at SOAS in 2014 through the generous and visionary support of the Alphawood Foundation. Its mission is to support and advance the understanding and preservation of South East Asian, Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture from ancient to pre-modern times. Alphawood Scholarships have been awarded to over 90 South East Asian scholars.



Dr Hettie Elgood MBE, introduces her masterclass on 'Alankara'

## SOAS hosts first Masterclasses in Singapore

In April 2019, SOAS ran its first Masterclasses on Asia, Art and the Transcultural at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) in Singapore.

Over two days, delegates enjoyed an overview of the Buddhist material culture of Angkor; the ways in which Buddhist objects are displayed in international museums; the origins of the Buddhist Mandala; the keeping and collecting practices of lay Buddhists in 'pagoda museums' in Myanmar; the art of Buddhist and Hindu networks in Myanmar; the significance and function of 'alankara' in jewelled ornament and embodiment of divinity in Hindu India; the art and architecture of Maritime Asia; and the role of opium as a commercial and social innovator in 19th century South East Asia.

The Masterclasses were delivered by leading experts from the School of Arts and the School of Histories, Religions and Philosophies. SOAS hopes to build on this successful event with similar international Masterclasses.



Baroness Valerie Amos, Director of SOAS

## Valerie Amos to take up new role at Oxford in Summer 2020

Our Director, Baroness Valerie Amos, will be stepping down at the end of the next academic year, after five years in the post.

University College Oxford will be publicly announcing her appointment, starting in August 2020, as the new Master of the College, succeeding Professor Ivor Crewe.

Marie Staunton, Chair of the SOAS Board of Trustees said:

"Valerie joined SOAS at a time of challenge for the School and with the senior leadership team, has taken strategic action to address the matter of SOAS's sustainability through implementation of the academic strategy, investment in new international initiatives and improving the academic and overall experience for our students.

"At a challenging time for higher education, through her public engagements in the UK and overseas, Valerie has championed SOAS as a voice for progressive Higher Education, reaffirming SOAS values, giving

us a distinctive place in the world academic community.

"Valerie has overseen significant and important changes at SOAS, including reform of our academic structures which have brought our academic leaders into the heart of senior decision-making in the School.

"She has also been at the forefront of leading work, on behalf of Universities UK (UUK) and with National Union of Students (NUS), nationally on the Black Asian minority ethnic (BAME) attainment gap. She is a strong voice on the importance of inclusion, diversity and equality in higher education and more widely.

"We will miss her greatly.

"We aim to appoint to allow a handover in July 2020 when there will also be time to reflect further on Valerie and SOAS's successes since she joined us in 2015. In the meantime, I look forward to working with her and the Board of Trustees to continue to deliver our 2016-2020 strategy."



# Features

## Decolonising the University: Beyond the Curriculum

Since 2017, SOAS has had a formal stated commitment to 'decolonising the university', which explicitly includes action to address its curricula, pedagogies, student systems, research practices, Human Resources practices, international partnerships and modes of public engagement in ways which recognise and seek to redress structural inequalities resulting from colonialism, imperialism and racism.



These commitments came in response to student campaigning, particularly from the SOAS student group Decolonising Our Minds Society, around the question of Eurocentric curricula and forms of racism experienced by students of colour, as covered in the SOAS Students' Union report 'Degrees of Racism'. They of course build on a longer history of anti-colonial and anti-racist praxis within parts of the institution over the past century.

The Decolonising SOAS Working Group, set up in 2016, has had responsibility for co-ordinating and leading much of this agenda over the past few years. Alongside this there has been national attention to the racialised award gap in degrees for undergraduate Home students – specifically the structural inequalities in outcomes between white students and students of colour who enter university with the same secondary qualifications – which has also informed our work.

So, what have we achieved, where have we failed, and what have we learned along the way?

The areas of learning and teaching have understandably received the most attention in terms of our work so far, and have been a top priority for student leaders for a number of years. To articulate what 'decolonising education' might mean, the Working Group collaboratively produced a document or 'toolkit' aimed at module and programme leaders, which articulates the problems with exclusionary syllabuses and teaching practices and suggests how these can be changed. This is freely available on our website and has been adopted/adapted by colleagues around the world who are looking for ways to 'decolonise the curriculum'. Through our networks such as the Association for Commonwealth Universities, which has the Duchess of Sussex as its Patron (see front cover) and engagement with an often

hostile national and international broadcast and newspaper media, we have also represented the campaign positively and on our own terms to a wider audience. Many institutions, students and staff have followed suit and begun their own campaigns and work across the country over the past couple of years.

Within SOAS, we have been involved in delivering training on Inclusive Teaching to academic staff, which includes unconscious bias training, anti-racist teaching strategies, decolonising the curriculum, inclusion of disabled students and inclusive assessment practices. We have rolled this out to about half of departments so far and we look forward to realising the benefits for both students and teachers of this work as follow-up conversations and actions continue at a departmental level.

Beyond this, the group has also taken forward a Public Engagement and Outreach scheme, supporting community and activist groups doing relevant work both materially and with our labour. In this, our first year, we are supporting a range of groups and projects working with migrants on social and cultural activities, an archiving project for a radical Black publishing house in London, research into contraceptive choices for women of colour and support for African history walks in Yorkshire. We hope to continue and deepen these



engagements going forward, because we believe that the university should work with and serve the communities in which it is embedded and that education is multi-faceted.

In addition, we have started conversations about research practice and the colonial hierarchies that continue to animate funding structures, working habits with colleagues and institutions in the Global South, representation in publishing and research ethics. Led by Dr Romina Istratii in the Research Office, we will be thinking creatively about how to ensure that our practices and collaborations around research are egalitarian, respectful, reparative and accountable both internally and externally.

Finally, we are starting to imagine what the campaign could mean for the much-beloved SOAS Library. We think that understanding the contents of SOAS Library as the knowledge

and heritage of many peoples around the world should impel us to think differently about access, preservation, ownership, cataloguing and how to use the physical spaces of the Library. We are looking forward to developing plans for how we can resource and realise these ideas.

However, the work we have done so far falls short of fully realising the vision that we have set for ourselves. Student and staff campaigners have continued to highlight problems within our own institution, also present in others across the country, such as inequalities in the treatment of precariously-employed staff who are disproportionately women of colour, experiences of racism on campus and the institution's relationships with state and military institutions implicated in colonial and imperial practices. It is necessary for us to confront and address the more difficult and uncomfortable questions that

the decolonisation agenda raises if it is to be truly transformative.

Yet, the very fact of having a decolonisation agenda allows us to cultivate an alternative vision about what universities are for and what they should do. To imagine the future of higher education through a 'decolonising' lens is to imagine a world where education is fully accessible, free, empowering and reparative for marginalised groups, locally accountable and plural/diverse in its offerings. Despite the deeply challenging conditions at a national and international level, our scholarship, archives, resources, staff and student body make some progress a genuine possibility, if we can do the work to realise it.

**By Dr Meera Sabaratnam (Chair, Decolonising SOAS Working Group) Department of Politics and International Studies**



# SOAS scholarship supports sustainable and strong institutions in the South

SOAS has been ranked third in the world in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions".

Baroness Valerie Amos CH, former Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the UN, said: "At SOAS we have always known that our research and scholarship has tremendous impact globally. But before now there hasn't been a systemic way of recognising it. I am delighted that the depth and range of our impact is finally being recognised. We seek to ask and answer some of the challenging questions facing us as a world today."

Research undertaken by SOAS academics has supported positive and lasting change around the world in a collaborative and decolonial model.



**Phil Clark**

Dr. Phil Clark has criticised the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international responses to mass violence, following his research into domestic approaches to justice in Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC.

In his book *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* he argues that, while Rwanda experiences a high degree of repression, the country has made impressive strides in laying the foundations for sustainable reconciliations.

Gacaca courts are a hybrid traditional-modern justice system which allow individuals elected by local populations to prosecute genocide cases in open-air hearings before community members. Gacaca encouraged everyday citizens to provide eyewitness testimony, including to detail the emotional and psychological impact of the genocide, in publicly accessible hearings held in the same locations where crimes were committed.

In his more recent book *Distant Justice: The Impact of the International Criminal Court on African Politics*, Dr. Clark criticises the poor standard of justice delivered by the ICC and the under-recognised achievements of national and community-based accountability mechanisms in Uganda, the DRC and elsewhere in Africa.

Dr. Clark's research has been used in court cases around the world (including the UK, US and Sweden). He has ensured that genocide suspects are prosecuted in Rwanda by Rwandans. This strengthens domestic law in Rwanda, fosters reconciliation and maintains stability in the Great Lakes region.



**Dan Plesch**

Dr Dan Plesch has researched on several topics including the creation of the United Nations at the end of the Second World War, the Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms and Proliferation (SCRAP) and Nazi War Crimes. He recently led a

research group of SOAS students who have successfully restored the role of women from the Global South in securing gender equality in the UN Charter.

His book *Human Rights After Hitler* was a major contribution to the field and his work has revolutionised understanding of war crime prosecutions. He has supported making war crime archives publicly accessible to legal practitioners and the general public. Direct legal use of the material has been made in the war crimes court in Cambodia and Chad.

He has been asked to present his research findings to the EU and UN, Netherlands and UK governments and to the diplomatic community in The Hague.

Dr Plesch's research has shown that international criminal justice can be swift, economical and fair. His research has offered practical examples of how it has been possible to go after low level perpetrators of high-level war crimes in a manner to the highest standards of fairness and justice under the restraints of world war.



**Emma Crewe**

Professor Emma Crewe was the first to undertake ethnographic research in the UK Parliament in 1998 and has been researching both Houses since then. Her book *The House of Commons: an anthropology of MPs' work* shone a light on aspects of politics that tend to be neglected or hidden, such as the rituals

and symbols, the relationships between those in the political world and the everyday power struggles. She has developed a more complex approach to Parliamentary scholarship by combining historical, anthropological and feminist methodologies and theories. Her research has deepened our understanding about MPs and officials in Parliament both in Westminster and, more recently, in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Myanmar under her directorship of the Global Research Network on Parliaments and People.

Crewe's engagement with Parliament has improved how it works. She has drawn attention to the need to take more evidence from scholars in the Global South during inquiries that concern them. She co-designed a new evaluation methodology for reviewing services provided by the administration to MPs to create a more efficient House. In late 2019 she is publishing a book about the expenses scandal with a parliamentary official, to learn the lessons from the crisis 10 years later.



**Mushtaq Khan**

Corruption is a serious challenge and major barrier to development in many countries. The SOAS Anti-Corruption Evidence (ACE) Consortium, headed by Professor Mushtaq Khan, has an innovative approach to anti-corruption that is identifying effective, evidence-based anti-corruption initiatives that are feasible and likely to have significant developmental impacts.

The DFID-funded research programme is investigating Bangladesh, Tanzania and Nigeria with a consortium of 12 international partners.

The research is motivated by the fact that existing anti-corruption efforts in developing

countries have largely failed to deliver results. Violations of rules are widespread in developing countries, and individuals and organisations are violating rules for different reasons.

Standard approaches based on transparency, accountability and prosecutions do not work in contexts where many different types of violations are simultaneously happening, often involving the majority of actors in a sector. Prosecution-based approaches usually fail in these contexts because support for prosecutions by insiders is weak, or they target the wrong people, or focus on opposition figures.

SOAS-ACE has developed an innovative approach to addressing problems at a sectoral level and identifying opportunities where feasible changes in policies will enable a majority of stakeholders to engage in their business or profession without engaging in corruption.

Identifying these opportunities on the basis of evidence is essential to develop genuine support for enforcement without which effective anti-corruption strategies cannot emerge. The research will inform policy and programming in developing countries.



**Philippe Cullet**

Professor Philippe Cullet's research in water law and governance has had an impact in India, where a sizeable proportion of the population do not have sufficient access to drinking water. As 80% of India's drinking water comes from groundwater, Professor Cullet argues that any future reforms need to delink access to groundwater from land rights. Crucially this needs to be done in such a way that it avoids a more damaging form of privatisation that would adversely

affect groundwater users.

Professor Cullet was invited by the Planning Commission of India to chair the committee that drafted the Model Bill for the Conservation, Protection and Regulation of Groundwater in 2011. This Bill included the need to regulate and control iniquitous groundwater use and distribution; to ensure safe drinking water for all; to regulate groundwater extraction to ensure its sustainability; and to prevent the contamination of groundwater resources.

In 2015, the Government of India asked a new committee (of which Professor Cullet was also a member) for the Model Bill to be updated in response to comments made by various actors. Following further comments by states and the NITI Ayog (successor to the Planning Commission), a new draft was completed in 2017.

If you would like to read more about the work of the Research and Enterprise Directorate, visit our website: [www.soas.ac.uk/red](http://www.soas.ac.uk/red)





# Addressing the BAME attainment gap

Following Universities UK and the NUS's report on 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap', UUK together with SOAS University of London hosted a one-day conference in June 2019 to focus on next steps in making change happen.

Baroness Valerie Amos said: "While many universities are proactive on the issue, this report and its recommendations aims to deliver transformation in our sector. It is important that universities act, and are transparent in their approach, so Black, Asian and minority ethnic students are given the best chance of success. Inaction is not an option. Universities should be places where opportunity and aspiration come together."

At many universities, staff and students have worked on initiatives to address the issue for some time, but progress has been inconsistent. The #ClosingtheGap project launched a nationwide call

for evidence from students and university staff to identify best practice and to invite BAME students (and staff) to talk about their experiences. Its aim was to identify gaps in understanding and practice, and gather evidence about current measures that have been put in place, whether they have achieved success, and if not, what can be learnt.

Between 2007 and 2017, there was an increase of over 50% in the number of BAME full-time undergraduates in the UK. However, while 81% of white students graduating in 2017 were awarded a first or a 2:1, 71% of Asian students achieved the same grades and only 57%



The UK has some of the best universities in the world, but what is the point of that if we are not offering real equality of opportunity?"

Baroness Valerie Amos

of black students. There is some evidence that qualifications before university are a key factor in degree outcomes, but it does not explain the differences between ethnic groups.

Following contributions from 99 universities and student unions, and 160 delegates at six regional evidence sessions, the report was published in May 2019 and has been at the centre of discussion during the conference. The report: Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK



From left to right: Adesewa Esther Adebisi, University of Huddersfield student; Amatey Doku, NUS vice-president; Professor Quintin McKellar, CBE, University of Hertfordshire; Valerie Amos, Director of SOAS; Amna Atteeq, Students' Union President, Aston Students' Union; Maxine Lydia Thomas-Asante, incoming Co-President for Democracy and Education, SOAS Students' Union; and Adwoa Darko, former Co-President of Activities and Events, SOAS Students' Union.

universities: #ClosingtheGap identified five necessary steps:

- Providing strong leadership: University leaders and senior managers need to demonstrate a commitment to removing the BAME attainment gap and lead by example.
- Conversations about race and changing cultures: Universities and students need to create more opportunities to talk directly about race, racism and the attainment gap, and identify what students think is causing it.
- Developing racially diverse and inclusive environments: Universities need to ensure that BAME students have a good sense of belonging, and understand how a poor sense of belonging might be contributing to low levels of engagement.
- Gathering the evidence and analysing the data: Universities need to take a more scientific approach to tackling the attainment



We need to understand the barriers to BAME student success so we can eliminate these gaps. We must ensure that students from all backgrounds can succeed."

Baroness Valerie Amos

gap to inform discussions between university leaders, academics and students.

- Understanding what works: Universities can collectively work to address gaps in the evidence base by using applied research to ensure evidence on 'what works' is high quality, and share evidence of what works and what doesn't.

Amatey Doku said: "Universities have presided over significant gaps in attainment between BAME students and white students for far too long and I'm delighted that the sector has come together to chart a way forward with this timely report."

UUK is asking vice-chancellors and principals to sign a pledge to work with students and use the report's recommendations within their institutions. Progress will be evaluated in 2020.





# SOAS Pro Director addresses stammering at universities

Earlier this year Pro Director of Learning and Teaching, Professor Deborah Johnston, addressed an audience about stammering in higher education, sharing her personal experience.

## What was your personal journey with stammering like?

One of my first memories was when I was in primary school and I had written a poem and a teacher wanted someone else to read out my poem in assembly. I immediately thought – no that's not right. I'm not being extended the same rights as everyone else. I have the right to be heard.

After completing my PhD I didn't think I could be a lecturer. At secondary school, I thought I'd become a librarian, because I loved libraries and being in a quiet space where I didn't have to talk to too many people. But because my work was in policy-based research I had to give presentations, present at conferences and this all helped develop my confidence. In my mid-30s I realised that my stammer gave me one

advantage. I over-prepare. And this made me an effective lecturer, as well as having to really focus on what my message was. Something which other lecturers with speech impediments have told me they do too.

## What do you think are the effects of stammering on a student at university?

There are definitely academic impacts – there is national evidence that students feel they can't take certain programmes or modules because of oral assessment, or where students may not do as well on a module because their stammer, wrongly, affects outcomes. I'd hate to think that that also happens at SOAS. More than that there is a social distance between people who stammer and those that don't. We did a focus group at SOAS last year with students and the main feedback was that stammering affected both social interaction and academic outcomes – and there is some new research which links stammering to having a negative influence on one's mental health, and even a higher rate of suicide.

## What are the challenges of having a stammer in the workplace?

There are many unanticipated barriers to comfortably being in a workplace environment. There is evidence that non-stammerers wrongly perceive those with stammers as being hesitant, uncertain or that they don't know what they are talking about.

For the benefit of students with a speech impairment: teaching staff need to know that those with stammers can ask for reasonable adjustment. This will include things like giving them more time for oral assessments or when doing a presentation, give

them a chance to present to smaller group or to pre-record their presentation.

There will always be shortcomings for all sorts of assessments. But teaching staff have to think it through and try to mitigate those issues. Especially with oral tests in languages. "Fluency" is marked in assessment – so if a person with a stammer is speaking another language for an assessment, why should their stammer be a mark against them?



One of my first memories was when I was in primary school and a teacher wanted someone else to read out my poem in assembly. I immediately thought – no that's not right."

*Deborah Johnston*

## What can universities do to support staff with speech impediments?

Fluent people tend to give bad advice such as "slow down" and "take a breath" as these are the recommendations you might make to non-stammerers who have 'normal' disfluency. However, these things don't work for stammerers, who have a physiological difference in the brain, usually from birth. What people can do is make space. Give people time to make the input they want. It is also important to maintain eye contact to show you're engaged in what they are saying. Specifically, for staff, when you're chairing a

meeting try asking the person with a stammer beforehand if there is a specific point they want to make and give them the space to make it.

## How can SOAS help its students and staff to develop confidence (even for people without any impediments?)

This year I've launched the Toastmasters Speechcraft project at SOAS. Toastmasters is an international organisation that can help improve public speaking skills. It can help you overcome nervousness and show you how to create and give effective speeches through its Speechcraft programme. I'm starting with students at the moment but hope to roll this out to staff in the future.

The British Stammering Association is online-based and has lots of resources and events for people. Also anyone can join the Bloomsbury Stammering Network. All these groups are a way to get people with stammers to meet and share experience and resources.

## What were the main takeaways from the Stammering Conference?

We had 1.1K viewers on the live stream for the conference. 1% of the population have a stammer (approximately 25,000 students) – the help is there but awareness is not being raised.

I'd like us to break out of the current situation where students aren't communicating their needs, academics aren't asking and so support is not happening.

*Words by Angel Lambo*



# Philanthropy



SOAS supports talented students to go to university

## SOAS Opportunities Fund

Education has never been more important in our ever-changing world. However in the current economic climate, it is difficult for many students to make the investment in their future. Living costs and fees can deter otherwise brilliant students from taking up their place at university or completing their course.

Financial circumstances and personal background should not prevent someone from having the same opportunities as everyone else. Last year, SOAS Director, Baroness Valerie Amos set up the SOAS Opportunities Fund to provide financial support to those students in greatest need.

The SOAS Opportunities Fund supports talented students who may be the first in their

“

For me, the Opportunities Fund meant extra stability, it meant I could stay in supported accommodation for as long as I needed, it gave me access to a network of friends and supporters, in all the hecticness of student life in London and not having my family for help.”

*Destiny Adeyemi*

family to go to university, come from schools or areas with low participation in higher education, or face other barriers to accessing higher education.

SOAS is committed to ensuring that students are supported once they come to the School. As described on page 13 our Director is co-leading a UK-wide initiative to tackle the BAME attainment gap in higher education and the SOAS Opportunities Fund supports students from low-income and BAME backgrounds, who are facing financial difficulties.

Our vision is for an inclusive, outward-looking SOAS that promotes tolerance, equality and understanding. Together, the SOAS community can help open up opportunities for all students, regardless of their background.

To support the SOAS Opportunities Fund and enable talented students to access higher education, please visit:

[makeagift.soas.ac.uk](http://makeagift.soas.ac.uk)



Dr Meera Sabaratnam speaking about the rich archives of the SOAS Library

## Celebrating the impact of philanthropy and the support of the SOAS community

In March 2019 SOAS held a 'Celebration of Philanthropy' event to honour the generosity of the SOAS community and its impact on the lives of SOAS students and the School.

Support for our Sanctuary Scholarships was truly inspiring. Over 1,400 alumni, staff, students and friends joined together to help displaced people at SOAS, raising over £350,000. Alumnus Ali Ghezelbash (MSc International Politics 2003) and his wife, Nadia, raised an amazing £4,200 by asking friends and family to donate to Sanctuary Scholarships rather than give wedding gifts. Support for the scholars wasn't just financial. Three SOAS alumni opened up their homes to provide accommodation to scholars.

At the event, Sanctuary Scholar Mariam Otaiku spoke about what

the scholarship meant to her: "I have limited leave to remain which meant I couldn't access student finance and there was no way I could have afforded studying. When I found out I had been awarded the scholarship to study an LLM, I called my mother in Nigeria and she was ecstatic. My family are so proud of me and as we call law students and legal practitioners in Nigeria, now they call me 'The Law'. Don't ask me why we do that!"

Dr Meera Sabaratnam, Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Chair of the Decolonising SOAS Working Group (see pages 10-11), spoke about the importance of SOAS Library's rich archives and special collections. She said: "We want to preserve world knowledge and culture at SOAS and by digitising and preserving our collections, we will be able to

create an online resource of material that can be opened up to students and researchers across the world. In doing so, we will preserve knowledge for the next generations and ensure that resources on Africa, Asia and the Middle East are opened up to people across the world."

Guests enjoyed a film telling the heart-warming story of Carolyn Hayman, a SOAS alumna, who offered her home to Sanctuary Scholar, Michelle Ezeuko. Carolyn and Michelle enjoyed living together so much that Carolyn asked Michelle to stay with her as she enters the second year of her undergraduate degree. The video was produced by alumna, Anna Sowa of Chouette Film and can be seen at the SOAS Alumni Channel on YouTube – search for SOAS Sanctuary Scholarships: Carolyn and Michelle's story.

To support Sanctuary Scholarships, make a gift, or find out how you can support visit: [www.soasworld.org/give-back](http://www.soasworld.org/give-back)



Baroness Valerie Amos thanks Margaret Busby for her support

## Margaret Busby "New Daughters of Africa" Award

To mark the release of writer and broadcaster Margaret Busby's anthology, 'New Daughters of Africa', a £20,000 award will be created for black female students who live in Africa to study at SOAS.

In 1992, Myriad Publishing produced 'Daughters of Africa' edited and introduced by Margaret Busby OBE. It featured literary works by over 200 women from Africa and the African diaspora. On publication, it was hailed as ground-breaking, shining a light on the "silent, forgotten, underrated voices of black women" (The Washington Post).

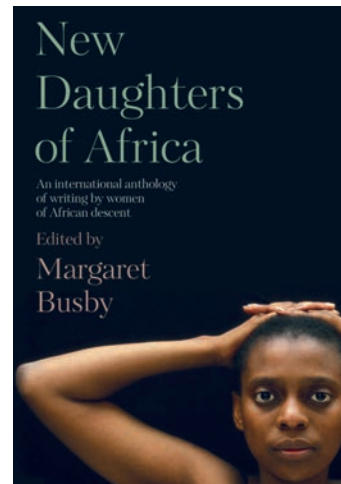
In March 2019, "New Daughters of Africa" was launched at SOAS. It features a further 200 works by women writers of African descent from across the world. Contributors include acclaimed authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Zadie Smith, along with Warsan Shire, Malorie Blackman, Patience Agbabi, Roxanne Gay, Bernadine Evaristo, and contributions from new talent.

“

It is a thrill and a pleasure to be able to shine a light on the remarkable creativity of each and every writer gathered in the pages of New Daughters of Africa. They must all take credit for their part in enabling the very special legacy that is this SOAS award.”

Margaret Busby

The award has been created (from fee waivers and a proportion of the royalties) to help a black female student living in Africa to study at SOAS. The award contributes to tuition fees and living costs, and thanks to International Students House, will also provide accommodation.



Margaret Busby said: "This is a truly empowering moment and I hope we can build on it in a way that will be a lasting inspiration and a pointer towards what becomes possible through imaginative collaboration."

Candida Lacey, Publishing Director of Myriad, said: "We are so proud to be publishing Margaret Busby's new landmark anthology. In addition to celebrating the literary excellence, diversity and shared heritage of women of African descent, Margaret always wanted New Daughters of Africa to make a real difference to women's lives. Thanks to the generosity of the 200-plus contributors, every one of whom has waived their usual fees, we were able to explore many worthy causes. SOAS, with its unrivalled reputation for championing international understanding, recognition and awareness of African literature, shared our vision and leads the movement among universities to decolonise the curriculum. We couldn't have hoped for a better partner."

We are grateful to Margaret Busby (now an honorary fellow of SOAS), to Myriad, and to International Students House for their generosity.

## Meet the 2017-2018 John Loiello AFSOAS Scholar



Sherin Nassar, MA Development Studies

The John Loiello Scholarship fund is now in its sixth year, offering up to \$30,000 towards a one year Masters at SOAS for a US citizen or permanent resident. We are delighted to share Sherin Nassar's story from her time at SOAS. Sherin was awarded a John Loiello Scholarship in 2017 to study a Masters in Development Studies.

"My favourite memory at SOAS was one of the first nights after class sitting in the JCR listening to an Afrobeats band play the drums. The vibe of the night spoke to the heart of what SOAS was as an institution: a place where people from so many different cultures and backgrounds could come together and feel welcome in a space.

The JCR itself that night was calm, relaxed and served as a place for everyone to just enjoy the moment. I remember exhaling in that moment –

maybe from all the anxiety I had going to a predominantly white institution for undergrad or having all these unspoken emotions about race and realising for the first time I was in a space where people just got it – and that was a really beautiful moment. It spoke to what my experience over the last few months at SOAS has been – incredibly comfortable, as if I always was meant to be here.

I want to use my education to make real change in the world. I want to fight for the rights of the people – it sounds clichéd, but the world is rapidly changing and diversity is becoming something that is scorned.

With that, we are seeing more and more people losing their rights to education, health, access to critical resources, such as water, and even the rights to politically engage with their political systems.

Scholarships are vital to helping us achieve our mission, enabling the best students from around the world to pursue studies at SOAS without barriers of finance or personal circumstances. If you live in the US and would like to support the John Loiello Scholarship, or any other project mentioned throughout this magazine, please visit:

[www.chapel-yorkfoundation.org/donate-to-soas](http://www.chapel-yorkfoundation.org/donate-to-soas)

These issues are incredibly apparent in contexts like Egypt where many of the young people who participated in the Egyptian revolution, some of the most influential and smart people that exist today, are imprisoned. These people are critical to promoting a better world and I want to help protect them and their rights to change.

My time at SOAS will have a lasting impact on my life. SOAS gave me the opportunity to be surrounded with like-minded individuals who challenge your conceptions, force you to acknowledge your own lack of awareness, critically engage with what you learn in class through real world experience, and own up to how you can effectively challenge a system that many conform to."

Following her Masters at SOAS, Sherin was accepted into the Harvard Law School to pursue a degree in International Law.





The burning of the Sanjō Palace, from the Heiji Monogatari (Tale of the Heiji insurrection), Japan, 17th Century. Comprising 12 stitch-bound manuscripts. Ref: MS 41853. © SOAS

## Asian Art Scholarship

The Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art at SOAS provides a unique object-led study of the arts of Asia. It combines a concentrated survey of Asian art with a practical approach to the study of objects. Lectures are given by leading experts on India, China, South East Asia, Japan and Korea, Buddhist Art, and the Islamic world. This combination of the theoretical and practical study makes the Postgraduate Diploma a unique programme. For more information, visit: [www.soas.ac.uk/art/programmes/dipasart](http://www.soas.ac.uk/art/programmes/dipasart)

In 2018, two alumnae of the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art, Gretchen Welch and Ida Chow, honoured their teacher and friend, Dr Hettie Elgood MBE, by setting up a scholarship in her name.

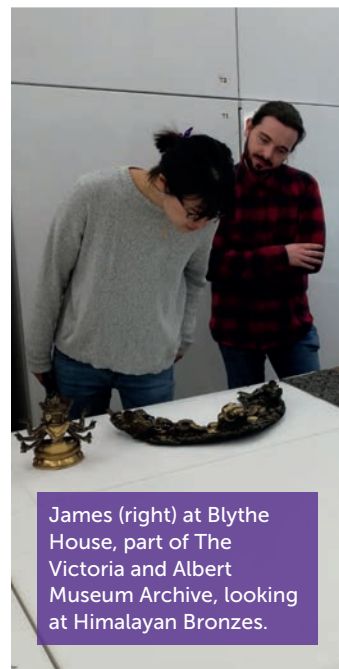
Dr Elgood is the Course Director of the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art. Gretchen and Ida felt passionately that others should have the opportunity to learn under her guidance, so founded the scholarship to cover the full costs of tuition and living expenses for the course.

"We have both been fortunate enough to learn under her guidance and would like to

support a student who would not otherwise be able to afford this wonderful course."

The scholarships were created with the hope that the successful scholar would eventually contribute to the course by lecturing or tutoring in the future, and by promoting the study of Asian Art. The course has proved a pathway into successful careers in the art world, alumni from the course work in museums, auction houses and galleries across the world, as well as going on to further studies in History of Art and Archaeology.

In September 2018, we were delighted to welcome James



James (right) at Blythe House, part of The Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, looking at Himalayan Bronzes.

Hallett, our first Dr Hettie Elgood Scholar to SOAS. James completed his BA History of Art at SOAS in 2017, after being inspired by a trip he made to Japan. After graduating, James was intent on finding a way to continue studying in this field.

"I'd like to thank everybody who supported the scholarship, and to those who continue to support Hettie Elgood Scholars. Without this opportunity I would never have been able to continue with my studies. I believe working-class people really have a wealth of experience and insight to offer to the field of Art History, and the arts world more generally – not just as artists themselves, but as scholars. I'm so grateful that I'm here today and am excited to use this opportunity to encourage more people like me to engage with the world of Asian art."

SOAS is grateful to everyone who supports the Dr Hettie Elgood Scholarship and is indebted to Gretchen and Ida for making this a reality. We look forward to welcoming our 2019-20 scholar in September.



Members of The Fair Justice Initiative handing out packages to female inmates in Ghana. Credit: Lightville Photography

## Crowdfunding

The SOAS Crowdfunding Platform is designed to foster student ideas which will have a positive impact on the lives of their fellow students, the School, the wider community and around the world.

Since its launch, we are proud that students, staff, alumni and friends have raised over £130,000 to support various initiatives, including:

### The Helen Kanitkar Library

Dr Helen Kanitkar was a Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at SOAS. When she sadly passed away in 2001, her husband Hemant funded the refurbishment of the departmental library that Helen loved so much, and donated 800 of her books. It was reopened as the Helen Kanitkar Library and Research Centre (HKL).

The Library is a place for writing and research, group and individual study, and peer advice and support. It encourages friendship and creativity across the department, establishing connections between students. The Library largely depends on student volunteers and staff support, and crowdfunding has covered the costs of a student librarian.



### People for Prisoners Society

The People for Prisoners Society ran a campaign to provide care packages containing basic necessities for female inmates at Nsawam Medium Security Prison - Ghana's largest prison facility. They partnered with The Fair Justice Initiative, a local NGO based in Ghana, which seeks to combat discrimination against current and former inmates, ensure equal access to effective legal representation, and to improve conditions in Ghanaian prisons.



### Solar SOAS

Through support from the SOAS SU and crowdfunding, 114 solar panels were fitted on the roof of SOAS College Buildings - the first community energy project to install crowd-funded solar panels at a UK university. The electricity generated is used on-site and excess sold to the national grid, generating £1,000 a year for the Green Community Fund, which provides financial support to social and environmental projects at SOAS.

For more information about the SOAS Crowdfunding platform, and to support any of the initiatives, please visit: [www.soas.hubbub.net](http://www.soas.hubbub.net)

# Alumni News & Events

## Round up of alumni events

Our staff and alumni have had a busy year organising events far and wide – check them out below!

### USA

#### Kapoor Galleries (New York)

In September 2018, SOAS alumni braved the UN General Assembly week traffic and torrential rain to attend a gathering at Kapoor Galleries. As well as a private tour of the galleries, the event highlighted plans to send two scholars from Ghana to attend a training programme at the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme at SOAS in 2019.

#### Silicon Valley African Film Festival

In October 2018, SOAS alumnus, Federico Olivieri (MA Global Media and Post-National Communication 2009) hosted the annual Silicon Valley African Film Festival (SVAFF). Federico has helped to organise the festival since moving to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2017.

Talking about his experiences, Federico said: "For me, it is events like these that have always made African screen media so fascinating and demonstrate why their promotion is necessary for a better understanding of our interconnected realities. This is exactly what brought me to study at SOAS in the first place, and what keeps me committed to fostering cultural initiatives that can make a difference in the way that we relate to our 'global village'."

#### Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (Washington DC)

In September 2019, the Centre of African Studies at SOAS, in partnership with the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, hosted a very special event in Washington DC – "Navigating Change in African Art".

Museum Director, SOAS alumnus and Honorary Fellow, Dr. Gus Casely-Hayford engaged philosopher, cultural theorist and novelist Kwame Anthony Appiah in a rich conversation about the role and changing landscape of African art in the world today.

Centre of African Studies Manager Angelica Baschiera, SOAS Trustee Nizam Uddin, and five members of the Board of Directors of the American Friends of SOAS were on-hand to welcome guests.

This is the first event in a series of collaborative events between SOAS & the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art planned for the next two years. Early 2020 will see Gus come to speak at SOAS.

### UK

#### ArtBreath X SOAS: Art and Human Rights (London)

In January 2019, SOAS alumna and ArtBreath founder, Nour Saleh and the SOAS alumni team hosted a panel discussion on the potential art can have in highlighting and protesting for Human Rights. We were joined by Professor Stephen Hopgood, Professor Charles Tripp and artist Bob and Roberta Smith, who shared their experiences on how art can be used to challenge the status quo and promote freedom of expression, and the importance of arts in education.

We are very grateful to all of our alumni ambassadors who have helped to organise events across the world. If you would like to become an alumni ambassador, or be connected with one in your local area, drop us an email at: [alumni@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@soas.ac.uk)

### UAE

#### Pot Luck Picnic in Dubai

In March 2019, Aishwarya Singh Kapoor (SOAS Alumni Ambassador in Dubai) and Harris Laspas (Alumni Engagement Manager) hosted a pot-luck picnic in the Al Barsha Pond Park. Alumni and their families had a chance to get to know each other and talk about all things SOAS.

### India

#### Pastries with the Prof

In March 2019, Professor Ed Simpson (Director of the SOAS South Asia Institute) hosted an alumni meet-up in Kolkata, after delivering a series of public lectures on infrastructure and post-disaster rebuilding in India. A huge thank you to Nayantara Palchoudhuri, SOAS Alumni Ambassador in Kolkata for all her efforts in organising the event.

### China

#### British University Pub Quiz

Summer 2018 saw the first British University Pub Quiz organised by the SOAS Alumni Association Beijing, hosted at the British Embassy. Over 10 different university teams joined the quiz and fittingly, the SOAS team swept to victory.

### Singapore

#### SOAS Alumni Celebration Dinner

In April 2019, SOAS hosted a celebration dinner at the Cricket Club for alumni from Singapore and South East Asia. The evening opened with welcoming remarks from SOAS Director, Baroness Valerie Amos and SOAS alumnus, Randall Ong. Special thanks to our alumni in Singapore who helped to organise the dinner-Randall Ong, Ingrid Hanson, Pei-Yi Yu and Maniza Jumabhoy and everyone who attended.

### Hong Kong

#### Chinese New Year Spring Dinner

In February 2019, the SOAS Hong Kong Alumni Association held their annual spring dinner. Members old and new from the SOAS alumni community came together to enjoy traditional Chinese dishes and an interactive session with Kelvin Cheung (see page 29). Thank you to Ms Gloria Ho, and Mr Ilex Lam, Chairman of the Association.

### Japan

#### Pints with the Professor

In March 2019, SOAS Alumni in Japan (SAIJ) had a casual gathering with Lutz Marten, Professor of General and African Linguistics, and William Hetherington, Head of Foundation Programmes, IFCELS. They were joined by alumni from other colleges of the University of London, making for a diverse get together.

Would you like to organise an alumni event in your city? If so, let us know and we can help to send out invitations and promote it.



# Alumni in the news

We are proud of the achievements of our alumni across the world.  
Read more about their stories below.



Noha Aboueldahab

## SOAS alumna awarded the British Council Global Alumni Award

On 15 October Alumna Noha Aboueldahab, winner of the British Council Global Alumni Award for Professional Achievement was invited as guest speaker in a panel discussion event with Dr Gina Heathcote of the Law Department. Noha was selected by the British Council for her work on transitional justice and human rights in the Arab region at various NGOs, UN agencies, academic institutions and think-tanks, as well as research and policy work; contributions to international media outlets; and for the recent publication of her book, *Transitional Justice and the Prosecution of Political Leaders in the Arab Region: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen* (Hart:2017).

Talking about the impact SOAS had on her career, Noha said: "SOAS grounded my ideas about international law and human rights by complicating them, challenging them, and ultimately turning them upside down. This has – and continues to have – a significant impact on how I approach some of the world's problems through my work."



Poppy Ajudha with the celebrated saxophone player Nubya Garcia

## SOAS alumna crowned "Best Soul Act of the Year"

Poppy Ajudha (BA in Social Anthropology and Music 2017), has won the Jazz FM 2019 award for 'Best Soul Act of the Year'.

Hosted by Chris Philips and Jez Nelson, and coinciding with UNESCO's International Jazz Day, the ceremony took place at Shoreditch Town Hall in East London, honouring a diverse list of artists ranging from established jazz musicians through to the next generation vanguards.

Jazz FM said: "The vibrancy of the UK's thriving young jazz scene was once again a key theme throughout the night, with 23-year-old Poppy Ajudha reigning supreme."

In an interview with SOAS in 2017, Poppy said: "My degree completely changed the way I think about the world and therefore the way I write music and what I write about has been politicised in new ways. Anthropology was central in this and every year I felt newly inspired by the lecturers we were assigned."



Adam Matan

## SOAS graduate on the Queen's New Year's Honours List

This year, Adam Matan received an OBE for his services to the Somali Community in London. Adam is the founder of the Anti-Tribalism Movement, a non-profit organisation based in London that tackles tribalism and inequalities amongst communities. "It is an honour to be awarded an OBE for the work I love doing on a daily basis. This recognition has given me a further boost to ensure the most marginalised members of society are supported."

Adam did a Postgraduate Diploma in Law and Community Leadership in 2017. "Studying at SOAS helped me to understand the laws that affect my community and develop my leadership skills. I loved participating in debates and having my preconceived ideas challenged by fellow students and professors. Fun, adverse and stimulating – that's how I remember SOAS!"

If you have some special news to share, please email us at: [alumni@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@soas.ac.uk)





# Alumni in the spotlight

## Communications, comics and tax evasion

Saskia Kekvliet is a Senior Account Executive at 89up, a progressive communications agency. She recently completed her MSc in International Politics at SOAS, and has gone on to turn her dissertation on tax into a comic and present her paper at the 2019 Tax Justice Network Conference. We spoke to Saskia about her time at SOAS and plans for the future.

**You worked in communications for a few years before returning to university. What made you decide to go back to studying, and why did you choose SOAS?**

It was hard making the choice to leave work and go back into education: in Taiwan I had a really nice quality of life and great friends, but my career wasn't quite on the right track. I've always been a very political person and I got tired of erasing that part of me in my work. I enrolled at SOAS because I wanted to guide my career into a path that's more in sync with what I actually think and read about every day. I chose SOAS specifically because I knew that it had a reputation for being more radical and critical.

**What did you enjoy most about the course?**

I had a very different background so I enjoyed going through all the different frameworks and schools of thought in my core modules. I was also lucky to study Economics from a very critical perspective getting an insight into schools of thought like Marxism and Keynesianism that challenge the mainstream orthodoxy.



What I enjoyed most about the course was that it opened up a whole new set of questions. In recent years there's been so little true debate about the basic principles about how we understand the economy, but there's a movement now that's beginning to challenge this, and now even some of the most basic questions are up for debate.

**In what ways has your experience in SOAS changed you?**

I've got the knowledge and confidence to explain how I understand what's going on in the world, and I know I'm not the only one who sees it like that - there are plenty of academics who are on the same page! My experience here has pushed me in the right direction and given me the tools and

theories to be able to understand and critically assess things. I feel I'm a lot less afraid now to articulate views that are more radical and more challenging.

Also, everyone in SOAS is very political in their own different ways and spark all sorts of ideas off of each other. Everyone's got an interesting perspective and even if you might not quite agree sometimes, the debate is quite open and frank.

**Let's talk about your dissertation. How did you pick the topic, why did you decide to turn it into a comic, and what did you hope to achieve by doing so?**

It all kicked off about five years ago when I watched two TED talks by one of the heads of Global Witness, Charmian Gooch, and I got interested in tax

evasion. I turned it into a comic because I learnt so much in those four months of research, and I wanted to find a way to reduce it down and make it fun, engaging, and more digestible for the wider public. The Nib publishes political satire and I found the artist, Erlend Sandøy, through a comic he had done on the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia.

I wanted to get the conversation going on how to reform global tax governance, because it's so messed up and we need a really big change, but people don't really understand the crux of the problem, so I was trying to raise more awareness about what's really going wrong. I'm currently working on turning it into an animation and am looking for funding!

**What do you do now and how has SOAS influenced your work?**

I've just started a new role at a communications agency which works for clients that have good causes at their heart. I feel really lucky to have this opportunity to learn more about how to build communications strategies to amplify good projects and ideas, and spark wider public debate and activism around important issues. While I'm doing this work, I often get flashbacks to things I learnt during my MSc at SOAS and use this as inspiration for research.

**Where do you see yourself in five years' time, and how will your degree from SOAS help you to achieve your goals?**

In the immediate future I'll focus on building more experience in communications through my

new role, finishing the animation video, and doing more work with The Tax Justice Network - I was invited to present my research at their annual conference in July!

In the more distant future, I want to take my academic learning with me out into the real world. Ideally I see myself fusing my expertise on communications with my passion for politics. Most importantly, I'd like to play a part in helping to address the structural inequality of power and wealth that we now have. I think that my time at SOAS was hugely enriching and I will probably look back on it in five years' time as something that really helped push me in the right direction.

## Social awareness, innovation and entrepreneurship – and coffee

Meet Kelvin Cheung, social innovator and entrepreneur who launched FoodCycle, a charity combating food poverty and social isolation, now bringing sustainability to the public sector.

**What have you done since SOAS?**

After SOAS, I spent six years in London, first starting as an intern at various non-profits and then starting and running FoodCycle for five years before I moved back to Hong Kong. There I started UnLtd, a sister charity of a foundation in the UK,



Kelvin Cheung

which provides grant funding to social entrepreneurs, and then for the past four years or so I've been heading up Good Lab, a public sector social innovation consultancy here.

**Why did you choose to do an MSc in International Development at SOAS?**

SOAS has a long history of international development and the MSc seemed like a great degree to obtain for



'do-gooders' to get the prep required to, well, do good!

### **What is the average day like for a social innovator and entrepreneur?**

I don't know what to expect! Some days it's a lot of meetings here and there, but to be honest, it's just like every other job, on the computer replying to emails, sending emails and on PowerPoint. It's not the task, but how much you love your job, and I love my job!

### **You founded FoodCycle in 2008 and currently support several charities in advisory positions. Can you share the importance of working with more social awareness?**

Almost all of the biggest issues in the future are social issues. An ageing population, housing, education and youth prospects. Social awareness when framed in the right way, is just new business opportunities. I would say that my involvement in social awareness just allows me to see the many entrepreneurial opportunities out there that are waiting to be realised.

### **In 2019, what should companies be doing to tackle social and environmental challenges?**

Every company will be impacted by social and environmental challenges, so I would say that every company needs to put this as the core of their business. Think long term about how they can bring about shifts in consumer behaviour. For example, in Hong Kong, the company Green Monday has been advising many of the food and beverage companies on how to conduct more sustainable business. Due to their partnerships, many more restaurants have a 'sustainable green menu', which I think is a great way to get new mindsets imprinted into consumers. When I came back to HK in 2014, I

would have never expected the mainstream restaurants to have any vegetarian menus, but it's changing!

### **What have been the biggest hurdles when working as an entrepreneur and how have you overcome them?**

As a young person straight out of school, I think the main thing is understanding that when starting something new, it'll take a lot of time and a lot of 'noes' or questions before you get anywhere. Persistence is the key. I was fortunate to have some very good entrepreneur friends around me to advise me and keep my spirits high.

### **What did you enjoy about your course at SOAS?**

I gotta be honest, I think I spent a little too much time in the library reading and studying. I wished I took part in more extracurricular activities and clubs and engaged with more people from all around the world. I loved the discussions in the bar after a tutorial class, and just the people you meet. I would never have gotten that in Canada. The different cultures, and the appreciation of each other's viewpoints is something I find very unique about the SOAS experience.

### **Your work is focused in Hong Kong and London, what are your favourite parts of both of these cities?**

Good coffee, food, and history. Preferred mode of transport is the bicycle and best enjoyed with friends! Where all this intersects in London is at this little French Pastry shop. I used to do last minute studying before exams here by myself with a coffee, before going into the examination hall. I still try to visit every time I'm in London.

## **Finding my voice**

**At the age of two Sulaiman Addonia fled war-torn Eritrea with his mother and siblings to seek refuge in Sudan. For eight years, Sulaiman and his family moved between refugee camps and at the age of 10, he went to Saudi Arabia to join his mother, who had migrated there six years prior.**

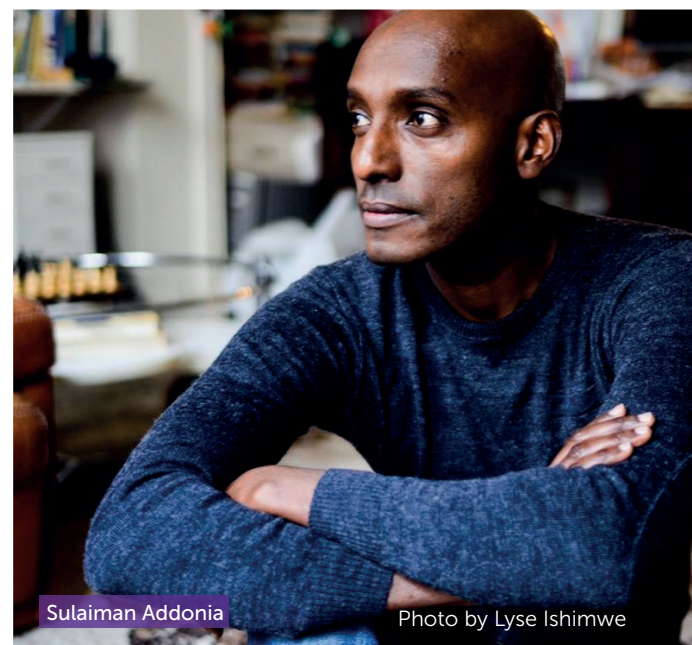
It was there that he discovered his love for literature. He achieved excellent school grades and moved to London aged 15 to live with relatives. Unable to speak English, he immersed himself in London, received his citizenship in 2000 and a year later he embarked upon his SOAS adventure. Now a published novelist living in Brussels, we caught up with Sulaiman to hear more about his work, life after SOAS, and what writing means to him.

### **Congratulations on the recent publication of your second novel – 'Silence is my Mother Tongue' – in October 2018. Where do you take inspiration for writing?**

My life story. All the moving from one country to another from such a young age, and in the process encountering different people, cultures and languages, led me to gather interesting observations, ideas, and experiences. Inspiration also comes from reading, listening, loving, and dancing.

### **'The Consequences of Love' has been translated into more than 20 languages and was nominated for the Commonwealth Writer's prize – what does this mean to you?**

A lot, because it connected me to readers in different places. I receive letters from so many countries that it still amazes me how a book that I wrote in my small London room has (and continues to) travelled to many parts in this world. With each letter I receive, I get to



Sulaiman Addonia

Photo by Lyse Ishimwe

appreciate just how many of us are connected to each other by words and love for stories. Literature is truly a universe full of beauty and complexity.

### **The reality of growing up in refugee camps is something many of us will never understand. Has writing helped you to deal with the torment and tragedy you experienced as a child?**

For me, writing is not catharsis. Actually writing can be a difficult undertaking. But there is also beauty that comes with conceiving ideas, exploring truth, trying to understand the world through your characters' eyes. Having said that, writing gave me an identity. Being exiled from the age of two and having moved ever since then from one country to another, I started to shed the idea of nationhood and belonging to one particular country. That's why I often say, 'I don't know what it means to love one's own country but I know what it means to love a book.' So, I guess all those traumas have led me towards this beautiful home country, called "Literature."

### **Can you tell us more about the creative writing academy you have set up?**

I know how lonely it is to be an immigrant, as you are shunned by society. If I would have had the space to create and use my imagination in the years following my arrival to the UK, it would have made a world of difference to me. But I also know how vital and empowering it was for me to, years later, own my voice rather than being subject of someone else's story. Being a refugee should not mean surrendering your voice. That's what motivated me to set up this course. It was my way of saying: no need for a voice for the voiceless, we all have our own voice and we all are capable of representing our stories. So we teach our students the basic elements of writing, so they can articulate their own stories, and at the same time we provide them with a space to pursue their passion for writing with total freedom.

### **What was it about SOAS that attracted you here?**

I did my BSc in Economics at UCL, so I often came to the SOAS Library, and whenever I did, I went to the bar for a drink. I loved the energy that was transmitted there. It seemed to me a place laced with free spirit, comradery. It was a place of intellect too. At the time, I felt it would be a perfect next step for my career.

### **What did you enjoy most about your MA in Development Studies?**

In truth, I had mixed feelings about the course. Almost all lecturers were white and male. So looking back, the perspectives I was taught certainly lacked width as a result. I know it would have been far richer had representation been broader. But having said that, Professor Henry Bernstein's classes were very enjoyable. He gave us the space to debate fiercely but with respect for each other. In doing so, we gained nuance and acquired the knowledge to see and appreciate the complexity of issues.

### **What was your most memorable SOAS story?**

Falling in love with a woman carrying books as we crossed paths on the stairs of SOAS. Though I tease her that I had actually fallen in love with the books stacked up in her arms all the way to her chin.

### **Finally, in your opinion, which book should everyone have on their bookshelf?**

Many, but these come to mind *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston; *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih; and *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* by Eimear McBride.



# SOAS Connect



Have you signed up to SOAS Connect yet? If not, you could be missing out on opportunities to engage with other SOAS alumni, share contact and career details, expand your professional network, and find an alumni mentor or mentee.

SOAS Connect is the online community exclusively for SOAS alumni. It is free to use and is one of the many benefits we offer our alumni. Register now to start taking advantage of the opportunities it has to offer.

Would you like to help others achieve their career goals? Or perhaps you are looking for some careers advice to help you land your dream job?

The eMentoring platform is there to do just that! Whether it's checking a CV or job application,

offering work experience, or providing careers advice via email, phone or in person, this interactive platform can facilitate introductions between mentors and mentees.

Are you looking to reconnect with an old classmate, or find someone in your area or field of work?

When you register on SOAS Connect, you can enter contact details, information about your current and previous jobs, as well as your degree details. You can decide how much information you are happy to share with others in the Directory. As well as other alumni being able to contact you, you can use the Directory to find a contact in your academic field, industry or even your country.

If you want to connect with others who share your experience of studying at SOAS, sign up to SOAS Connect now at [alumni@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@soas.ac.uk)

Since we launched the platform in 2017, we are delighted that we already have a number of success stories.

**Will Seal - Communications Officer, Division of Pacific Technical Support, World Health Organization talks to us about his experiences.**

"As a communications professional with an interest in foreign affairs, building relationships is a vital part of my career. So too is having trusted, global networks. The SOAS Connect platform allowed me to do just that, and the result



Will Seal on a field mission in northern Kiribati.  
Will graduated with a Masters in Global Diplomacy in 2017

was better than I ever could have imagined - it helped me secure my dream job.

It allowed me to connect with Jose M Bendito (MSc Political Economy of Development, 2000), a development consultant with experience at UNDP, UNICEF, and the UN Mission in East Timor, who provided me with insights and guidance regarding working at the UN.

Having studied at four universities, I've long been interested in capitalising on alumni networks. Too often they seem somewhat underutilised. Especially when talented, experienced people (particularly alumni) always seem willing to give advice, guidance and support if asked. So, when I saw an email about SOAS Connect, promising to connect

“  
**SOAS  
Connect  
helped me  
secure my  
dream job”**

me with just those types, I thought it was worth trying.

Using the geographic and expertise filters, I was able to search for contacts in relevant areas, connect via the messaging function, and take the conversations further on other platforms. The wide-

-ranging expertise and skill-sets of SOAS alumni allowed me to gain first-hand career insights and personalized guidance, and develop meaningful contacts. I was able to connect with numerous alumni around the world, with varying backgrounds and experience.

But one mentor, Jose, was a particularly valuable guide. Quick to lend his time and knowledge, and provide helpful connections, he guided me through both the broad strokes of entering the global development sector and the intricate details - including CVs and interviews. The result was fairly quick. Within a few months, I had landed the perfect role - providing public health communications support to 21 Pacific countries and areas as part of WHO's Pacific team based in Suva, Fiji."



# In Memoriam

At SOAS, our lives are touched by many inspirational people. Sadly, we must say a final farewell to some familiar faces.

**Aisha Lemu, BA Chinese, 1965 (1940 - 2019)**

Aisha was introduced to Islamic literature at SOAS and was so deeply influenced that she converted to Islam. She founded the Islamic Society and later in Nigeria, established the Islamic Education Trust with her husband and helped found the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria. Her kindness left a mark on students, friends and colleagues.

**Professor Chandra Lekha Sriram, SOAS Professor in Law, (1971 - 2018)**

In her brief time at SOAS Professor Sriram left a rich legacy, not just in her work, but also the research culture in the Law department. She began the School of Law Research Newsletter and the annual PhD Colloquium. Her interdisciplinary work on peace-building, transitional justice, international criminal law, and human rights is widely recognised and her energy and passion will be remembered fondly.

**Professor Ronald P. Dore, PhD Japan and Korea, 1949 (1925 - 2018)**

Ron was a sociologist specialising in the Japanese economy and society, and the comparative study of types of capitalism. He studied Japanese at SOAS on a scholarship alongside the regular curriculum in Dulwich College. His insights into empirical phenomena and his comprehensive theoretical work on comparative capitalism are of enormous value to scholars. He will be missed by all who knew or worked with him.

**Professor Effa Okupa, PhD Law, 1996 (1935 - 2018)**

Effa came to the UK as a teenager in 1954 and started her academic career nearly 30 years later. Her PhD focused on comparative laws of the family and customary laws. She initiated a collaboration between SOAS and the University of Namibia to allow law students from UNAM do an exchange at SOAS. Her kindness and generosity will be remembered by her colleagues and friends.

**Oliver Vick, MSc Violence, Conflict and Development, 2003 (1973 - 2019)**

Oliver worked on the UN's promotion of local election management in Afghanistan where his dedication and hard work was recognised. On his way to Somalia, he sadly became a victim of the Ethiopian Airlines plane crash. He dedicated his life to addressing the insecurity and vulnerability of communities around the world and he will be deeply missed by friends and colleagues at SOAS and all over the world.

**Virginia Chimenti, MSc Development Studies, 2015 (1993 - 2019)**

Virginia worked for the World Food Programme and took part in environmental and educational projects all over the world. She joined the NGO Alice for Children in Nairobi while at SOAS. Her sister Claudia says that "Even as a child, she displayed an inner generosity and a genuine concern to look after others." Her colleagues and fellow alumni will miss her inspiring and empathetic personality.

**Jessica Hyba, MSc Public Policy and Management, 2014 (1975 - 2019)**

Jessica completed her MSc after a long history as a humanitarian worker. She worked at the humanitarian agency offices in Ottawa, in Indonesia as part of the Indian Ocean tsunami response effort, and in the Middle East for CARE, UNICEF and the UNHCR. She had recently started in Mogadishu with the UNHCR, when she was aboard the Ethiopian Airlines plane that crashed in March. Her humanitarian work was highly praised and her dedication will continue to inspire friends and colleagues.

**Victor Tsang, Postgraduate Certificate on Sustainable Development, (1981 - 2019)**

Victor was a Programme Officer on Gender in UN Environment based in Nairobi, working on strengthening gender equality in projects and policies. He had a long career working for non-governmental organisations and was passionate about promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation. He will remain an inspiration to his colleagues and fellow alumni.

**Professor Kwabena Nketia, MA Linguistics and Phonetics, 1955 (1921 - 2019)**

Professor Nketia was one of the most famous Ghanaian composers and ethnomusicologists. Born at Mampong Asante, his education included a degree in Linguistics and Phonetics from SOAS in 1955. He received multiple Ghanaian and international awards, including the IMC-UNESCO Prize for Distinguished Service



to Music. In 2015 the Kwabena Nketia Centre for Africana Studies was officially launched. His rich legacy will live on.

**Professor Lee Ngok, PhD History, 1967 (1939 - 2019)**

Professor Lee was Honorary President of the education committee and a board member of the Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong. His PhD focussed on the anti-Japanese activities of the Chinese Communist Bases in North China. He was not only a noted academic and higher education leader, but also a renowned hockey player. His presence will be missed by all.

**Edmund Capon, MPhil Chinese Art and Archaeology, 1972 (1940 - 2019)**

Edmund worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, then became Director and Chief Curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales where he focused on developing the gallery's Asian art collection. He also published books on art and archaeology in China. His work in popularising Asian art continues to be celebrated and his convivial personality will be missed.

**Lamia Al-Gailani Werr, SOAS Research Associate in Archaeology, (1938 - 2019)**

Lamia Al-Gailani was an expert in archaeology in Iraq and ancient Mesopotamian antiquities. She completed her BA, MA, and PhD in the UK, but always returned to her home in Iraq where she worked in the National Museum. She worked to preserve Iraqi antiquities as well as rebuilding the Museum after damage in the American-led invasion. She was involved in establishing a new museum for Basrah. Colleagues at SOAS and around the world will miss her deeply.

**Alan Bolt, attended part of Hokkien Language, 1945 (1919 - 2019)**

Alan joined SOAS after WWII during which he was taken a prisoner of war in Germany. While in prison he bargained for instruments for an international orchestra of 50 fellow prisoners which he conducted. After his short time at SOAS Alan became an English teacher and wrote textbooks for English language learners.

**Rex Sean O'Fahey, PhD History, 1966 (1943 - 2019)**

Rex joined SOAS in 1963 and was awarded a BA, an MA, and a PhD in History focussing on the Keira Sultanate of Darfur. He lectured at the University of Khartoum, the University of Edinburgh and at the University of Bergen. Professor O'Fahey was an authority on the history of the Durrur Sultanate and Sufi brotherhood in the Sudan whose contributions are widely recognised.

**Paul Thomas Robinson, MA in Area Studies, (China) 1975 (1945-2019)**

As well as holding several lecturer positions, Paul demonstrated an ability to turn his hand to just about anything, from real estate to investment banking. He could get along with anyone and refused to be put 'in a box'. Paul was proud to have studied at SOAS and will be deeply missed by family, friends and colleagues. A memorial fund for SOAS students is being set up in his name. Donations from US taxpayers are being accepted via Chapel and York Foundation (choose the Paul Robinson Award in the drop down menu): [www.chapel-yorkfoundation.org/donate-to-soas](http://www.chapel-yorkfoundation.org/donate-to-soas)



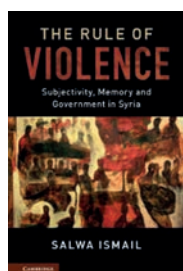
# SOAS Book World

The latest publications by SOAS alumni and staff



**The Left Case Against the EU**  
Costas Lapavistas, Professor of Economics (*Polity, 2018*)

Professor Lapavistas provides a clear and concise response to the question why the rightward drift of the European Union cannot be fought from inside. He argues that the EU's response to the Eurozone crisis demonstrates its neoliberal ideology and explores the divisive effect of the rise of German hegemony.



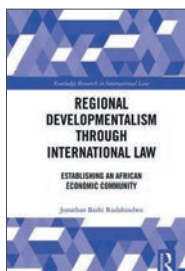
**The Rule of Violence**  
Salwa Ismail, Professor of Politics (*Cambridge University Press, 2018*)

Drawing on fieldwork and interviews completed in Syria between 2005 and 2011, this book illustrates life under Assad's rule and shows how ordinary people felt as subjects of that regime. Professor Ismail examines the effect of the regime's practices of violence on both Syrian political subjectivities and on the individual and societal level.



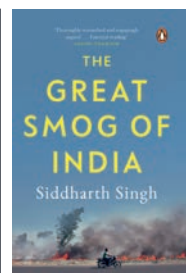
**Law and Revolution: Legitimacy and Constitutionalism After the Arab Spring**, Nimer Sultany, Senior Lecturer in Public Law (*Oxford University Press, 2018*)

Sultany demonstrates that constitutionalism, rule of law and judicial independence were unable to deliver in the context of the Arab Spring. Winner of the ICON-S Book Prize, and the Society of Legal Scholars Peter Birks Prize for Outstanding Legal Scholarship.



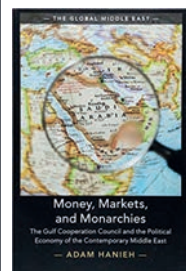
**Regional Developmentalism through Law**  
Jonathan Bashi, MA Law (2012) (*Routledge, 2018*)

This book looks at the African Economic Community in an examination of regionalism and the way that law can potentially address the problems created by regional processes in Africa. Jonathan Bashi provides a framework for strengthening and harmonising Regional Economic Communities through effective use of law.



**The Great Smog of India**  
Siddharth Singh, MA International Studies and Diplomacy, 2011 (*Penguin India, 2018*)

Every year the Great Smog of India brings health impacts on citizens equal to those of smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, causing critically poor health and reduced cognitive abilities. Singh discusses the social and political aspects of the air pollution crisis, and what we can do to address it.



**Money, Markets and Monarchies: The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East**  
Dr Adam Hanieh, Reader in Development Studies (*Cambridge University Press, 2018*)

The multidisciplinary empirical research in this book gives an understanding of the Gulf that goes beyond oil. Analyses of agribusiness, real estate, finance, and telecommunications outline the key role of the Gulf in shaping the Arab political landscape.



**The Pisa Griffin and the Mari-Cha Lion. Metalwork, Art and Technology in the Medieval Islamicate Mediterranean**  
Anna Contadini, Professor of the History of Islamic Art, editor and contributor (*Pacini Editore, 2018*)

This volume contains over 20 years' multidisciplinary work on the two unique bronze objects and redefines our understanding of metalwork and art in medieval Mediterranean areas, demonstrating how individual artefacts can expand our general historical and cultural knowledge of an entire region.



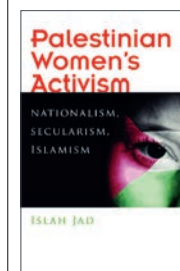
**Corporate Governance in Contention**  
Ciaran Driver, Professor of Economics, co-editor (*Oxford University Press, 2018*)

There is much debate on the meaning, importance and purpose of corporate governance. Bringing together the work of 20 academics, this book outlines a sense of deep concern that the current goals and incentives of corporate governance are not fit for 21st century society.



**The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey**  
Dr Veli Yadirgi, Post-Doctoral Research Associate and Teaching Fellow in the Department of Development Studies (*Cambridge University Press, 2018*)

Dr Yadirgi offers a historical analysis of the Kurdish identity and the socioeconomic and political changes that have surrounded the Kurdish people from the Ottoman Empire to modern-day Turkish Republic. Shortlisted for the 2018 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize.



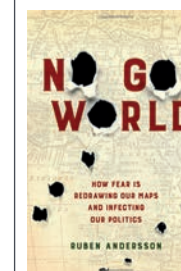
**Palestinian Women's Activism**  
Dr Islah Jad, PhD in Gender and Development Studies, 2004 (*Syracuse University Press*)

This book looks at women and nationalist movements, and women and Islamist movements, two subjects that haven't previously been studied together. Tracing the history of the Palestinian women's movement, Dr Jad illuminates its engagement in Palestine and the way it has challenged supposedly immutable Islamic gender roles.



**Psycho-nationalism: Global thought, Iranian imaginations**  
Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies, and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies (*Cambridge University Press, 2018*)

Professor Adib-Moghaddam uses a new framework of psycho-nationalism that looks at the role of psychological dynamics in the making of nations. The book focuses on the utilisation of the Iranian identity as a psychological construct to feed nationalist aggression.



**No Go World: How Fear Is Redrawing Our Maps and Infecting Our Politics**  
Ruben Andersson, BA in Anthropology, 2003 (*University of California Press, 2019*)

This book strips the western illusion of a 'refugee crisis' to its bone: a world ripped apart by conflict. Andersson exposes the ways in which military actions, interventions, and aid coordinated by Western states and international organisations contribute to a dangerous spiral of increasing risk and fear.



# Love in the first degree



In December 2018, my wife (Miki) and I got married in Tokyo. It was a very happy occasion, attended by both our parents and a wonderful way to see the year we graduated from SOAS off in style!

Miki and I met at SOAS whilst we were both studying an MA in Japanese Studies (2016/2017). As I'm British and Miki is Japanese, we were naturally very interested in each other's cultures and backgrounds. During the summer of 2017, we ended up spending a lot of time together exploring the very best that London has to offer, from art galleries and restaurants, to walks along the river and even a Sake-tasting event!

We began dating and I stayed with Miki a number of times in Japan and we ended up getting engaged in March 2018. I timed the engagement perfectly as the cherry blossom season was just beginning in Tokyo. Fast-forward one year and we are very happily married!



I have since returned to SOAS – a place which understandably has such strong memories for me now – to continue my studies as a PhD student, while Miki is now working as a financial consultant of PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers). "SOAS was like a second home to both of us - every day felt like it was full of magical

chance encounters, and you never knew who you might start chatting to or what you might learn. It made us believe in the joy of serendipity!"

If you have a SOAS love story that you would like to share, please email us at [alumni@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@soas.ac.uk) as we would be delighted to feature you.





# Alumni benefits

As a former student of SOAS, you have access to a range of fantastic benefits, services and discounts – both on and off campus. Check out the benefits below.



## Library card

- Free reference membership
- Borrowing membership is available at a 70% discounted rate of £60 per year

## E-Journals

- Free access to hundreds of academic journals on JSTOR and Project MUSE

## Other Discounts

- 10% off at the SOAS bookshop
- 10% off short courses at the SOAS language centre
- 25% off venue hire at SOAS
- Alumni Union discounts on health, leisure, financial services and more

## Careers

- Life-long access to the careers centre for advice and guidance on how to land the dream job

## SOAS Connect

- Get guidance on your chosen career
- Mentor alumni
- Build your network and expand opportunities
- Reconnect with old classmates
- Exclusive news and events
- Monthly e-newsletters with latest news and invitations to events

To take full advantage of these benefits, please visit us online at [www.soasworld.org](http://www.soasworld.org) or in person at the following address:

SOAS University of London  
Alumni Hub (Room 116)  
College Buildings  
Russell Square  
London WC1H 0XG

[alumni@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@soas.ac.uk)  
+44 (0)20 7898 4041





# SOAS Connect

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Advice by  
Phone/Skype



CV/Application  
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