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HBKU's College of Islamic Studies Presents Seminar on Mamluk Architectural Legacy at Oxford University

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Lectures offer insights into ancient and modern Islamic architecture



The College of Islamic Studies (CIS) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) offered its perspective on the architectural legacy of the Mamluk era at a seminar held on May 23 at the University of Oxford, UK.

Dr. M. Tarek Swelim, associate professor of Islamic art and architecture at CIS, led the seminar and discussed the era of the Circassian Mamluk Sultan, Al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, who ruled over Egypt and Bilad al-Sham in the early 15th century.

Dr. Swelim discussed the magnificent religious and funerary complex built by Sultan Al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh during his reign. Situated next to Bab Zuwayla in Cairo, the complex included a mosque, a madrasa, and mausoleums. The seminar discussed the renowned complex in the context of the earlier and later Mamluk architecture in historical contexts.

The event was hosted at the Khalili Research Centre, part of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, at Oxford University. It was organized as part of the collaboration between CIS and Oxford University for the uniquely designed Master of Science program in Islamic Art, Architecture and Urbanism.

Earlier in the month, Dr. Swelim delivered a lecture titled "Past and Present: Modern Islamic Architecture in the Gulf" at Leighton House Museum, London. The lecture, which was conducted on May 16 by the Barakat Trust, discussed how the sudden growth spurt in architecture after the discovery of oil in the Arabian Gulf resulted in various architectural trends and styles being introduced into the region.

Dr. Swelim suggested that there is not yet a coherent Islamic architectural style in the Arabian Gulf, but rather an experimenting ground for new ideas which can inspire new trends in the region. He pointed out that, while projects such as mosques may draw upon ideas from the past, this inspiration is not necessarily native to the Gulf, except for the State Mosque of Qatar, but is rather taken from neighboring countries such as Egypt, India, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey.

He also argued that as the Gulf states seek to establish and present a national identity and character through contemporary architecture, such stylistic diversity and Western influences are now being challenged.

Commenting on the seminars, Dr. Swelim said: "Both lectures aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of Islam and Muslim societies in all of their aspects. Such interactive forums aim to provoke and present debate within historical and modern-day frameworks, which in turn supports the scholarly work and academic output of CIS."

CIS regularly participates in local and international events, public lectures, and conferences that highlights and contextualizes various aspects of Islam in relation to modern-day needs and debate. The college is home to several distinguished research centers that unite scholars and thought leaders from around the world.

Commencing in the Fall 2019, CIS will offer a Master of Arts in Applied Islamic Ethics degree, the first of its kind worldwide, which will tackle ethical issues across a variety of disciplines and fields. Admissions to the program is now possible through HBKU's website.

For more information on CIS, please visit cis.hbku.edu.qa.

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