



Invisible
East

Stories to Connect: Stories and History in the Islamicate World

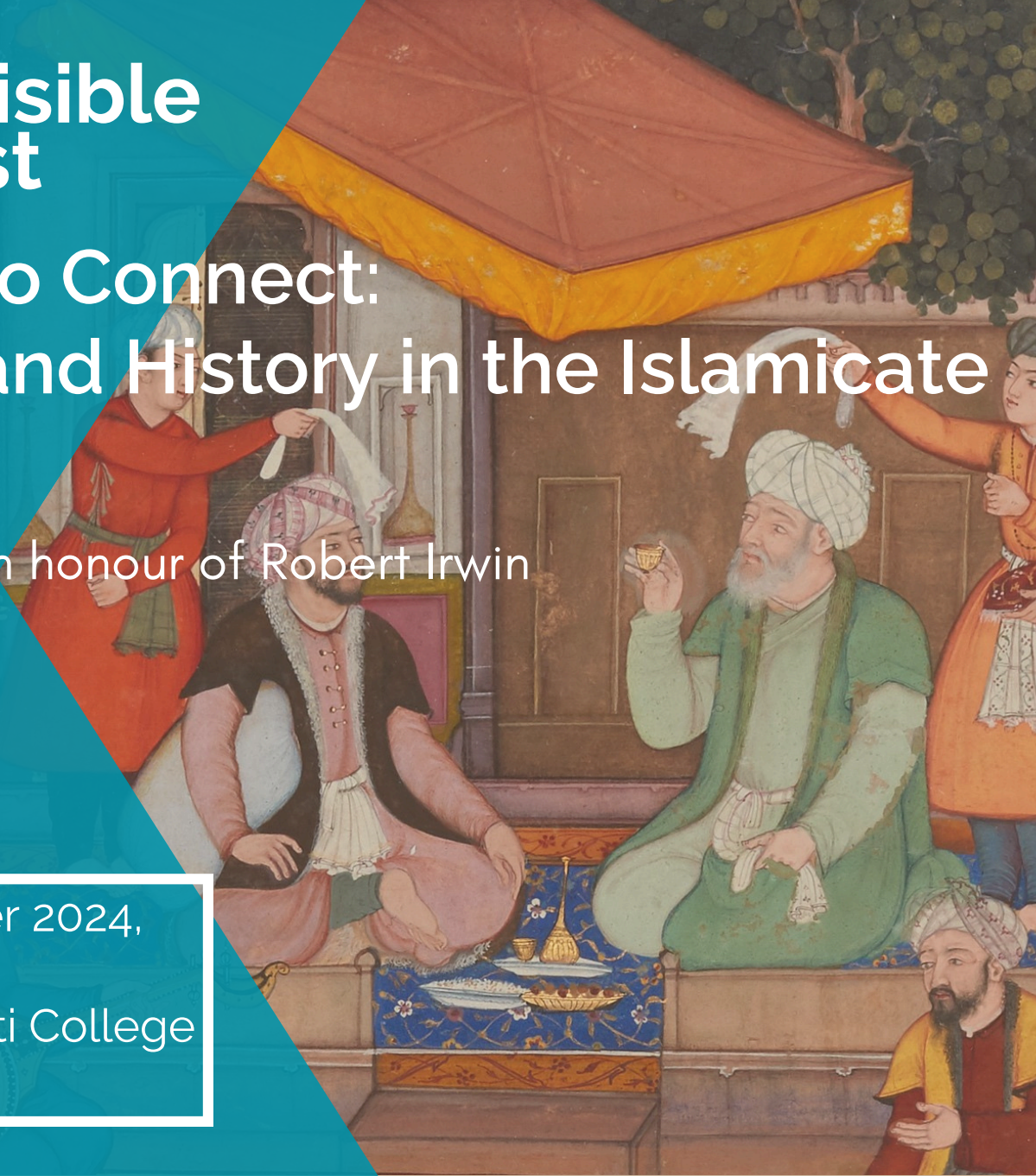
A workshop in honour of Robert Irwin

27 September 2024,
9:00 - 17:00
Corpus Christi College
Oxford

Description

The power of stories is a point of discussion in all areas of knowledge, both at policy level and in academia. Lawyers lament the fossilization of “big case” stories to the detriment of using real-life, contemporary stories and cases.

Fiction writers emphasize the importance of stories as instruments of truth. Historians argue that “narratives have changed history and influenced the mindsets of generations.”





Aim

The aim of this workshop is to bring this critical engagement with the role of stories in history into the current discourse amongst scholars of the Islamicate world. Some critical questions that will be tackled in this workshop are:

- To what extent do stories on historical characters and events circulate across literary, historical and artistic genres?
- What is their message? And to whom are they addressed?
- How are the stories transmitted across genres? When and why are they forgotten or retold?
- How powerful are stories about the past today?
- How well do scholars tackle the nexus between “stories” and “fact,” “fact” and “fiction”?



Programme

9:00 **Welcome, coffee**
Arezou Azad, Julia Bray, Hugh Kennedy

9:15 **Introduction**
Arezou Azad, Matthew Weait

SESSION 1: AT THE INTERSECTION OF LITERATURE AND HISTORY I

Session Chair: Edmund Herzig

9:30 Enass Khansa (Beirut)
Adaptations of Alf layla's "Qiṣṣat Sayf al-Mulūk" in an Anonymous Escorial Manuscript

9:55 Julia Bray (Oxford)
Hārūn and the Barmakids in Kitāb al-Aghānī and al-Faraj ba'd al shidda: the beginnings of a legend?

10:20 Arezou Azad (Oxford/Inalco-Paris)
Persian stories on the Barmakids in Bodleian manuscript Ouseley 217: the Barmakids as models for Islamicate administration?

10:45 Respondent: Teresa Witcombe (Oxford)

10:55 Q&A



11:05 **Coffee break**

SESSION 2: AT THE INTERSECTION OF LITERATURE AND HISTORY II

Session Chair: Arezou Azad

11:30 Simon Berger (Paris, CNRS)
Tales of the Mongol Conquests. Jūzjānī's Anecdotes about the Mongols in his Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī

11:55 Hugh Kennedy (SOAS-London)
Narratives of condemnation: Miskawayh's biography of 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār

12:20 Respondent: Sarah Savant (AKU-London)

12:30 Q&A

12:45 **Lunch break**

SESSION 3: ART AND THE STORY

Session Chair: Umberto Bongianino

14:00 Robert Hillenbrand (Oxford)
Creating spirituality in Islamic painting: the Muhammad cycle in the Edinburgh World History of Rashid al-Din



14:25 Michael Shenkar (Hebrew University)
Narrative Paintings and Epic Stories in Sogdian Art

14:50 Respondent: Akshaj Awasthi (Oxford)

15:10 Q&A

15:20 **Coffee break**

SESSION 4: AT THE INTERSECTION OF LITERATURE AND HISTORY III

Session Chair: Hugh Kennedy

15:35 Guy Ron-Gilboa (Bar-Ilan)
Turning the Tables on the Captors: Wonder and Moral Critique in *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-Hind*

16:00 Isabel Toral-Niehoff (FU Berlin)
“Tell me a parable about kings and their assistants”.
Political Allegories and Statecraft in *Kalila wa Dimna*

16:25 Respondent: Wen-Chin Ouyang (SOAS)

16:35 Q&A

17:00 **Wrap-up and close**

19:00 **Dinner (for speakers, respondents and chairs)**



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Contacts

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Venue

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