Deadline extended! Now August 5th, 2022

Call for Papers: CONVIVENCIA - Towards a Just Coexistence

Convivencia is an international initiative for just coexistence rooted in our shared humanity that seeks to bring together communities of all faiths and none who share a commitment to the values of justice and peace, and to the principles of human rights. The Convivencia initiative proposes a programme of teaching, research, public events and publications at SOAS. Through this, we will explore the potential of Convivencia as a model for just and sustainable peace in the Middle East and as a foundation to re-casting community relations in other locations, including in SOAS itself. Such programmes of Convivencia could spread a message of peaceful coexistence for the common good, between communities, nature and the environment, for the benefit of all.

Programme

The programme will begin with a conference hosted by SOAS from **12-13th November 2022,** *Convivencia – Towards a Paradigm Shift in Race/Faith Relations in the International Context.* Contributions will be invited that examine the cultural heritage of the *Golden Age* in Andalucia and the usefulness of both attitudes and terminology derived from the period for transforming cross-communal/inter-race social discourse in the international context. Two hybrid events, combining physical and online presentations, will be organised by SOAS in collaboration with US and Middle East universities. Keynote presentations from a range of international leading researchers will be at the heart of the different events.

The video, audio and written output from the symposium will be used to open up conversations in classrooms and the public sphere, creating a wider circle of scholars and people from faith communities to explore the potential of Convivencia as an approach to establishing just peace in contexts of intractable, polarised, conflict.

Convivencia - past and present

The world as we know it today was transformed by periods of *Convivencia* in the past. The most celebrated is *Al Andalus*, in southern Spain, where people of the three monotheistic faiths (Muslims, Jews and Christians) lived in relative harmony during Moorish Muslim rule for a few hundred years, until the Christian *Reconquista* expelled Jews and Muslims from 1492 onwards. Despite the inevitable political ups and downs, this period of great cultural growth and social development has been retrospectively described as the *Convivencia*. A great flowering of the arts and sciences, as well as of philosophy, literature and poetry turned the cities of *Al Andalus* into centres of art and architecture without equal. Moorish rulers created an intellectual haven that preserved and extended classical knowledge, serving as a basis for the *Renaissance* and, later, the *Age of Reason* or the *Enlightenment*, by encouraging a culture drawing on broadly-shared monotheistic religio-cultural values.

Palestine under the Ottoman Empire is another example of coexistence where the three monotheistic communities lived in relative harmony. The three faiths shared a common Arabic culture, coexisting in the same social spaces. Such islands of

comparative calm existed elsewhere, for example in the Balkans and parts of Turkey, as well as in late Mughal India. This heritage offers a cultural resource to groups and individuals seeking just, sustainable coexistence in Palestine/Israel, distinctly different from the current move for *normalisation* of the settler-colonial project.

Building Convivencia

The purpose of the Convivencia initiative is to examine past forms of just coexistence to discover better international modes of race/faith relations in the coming decades. The existence of historical junctures which developed complex models for peaceful, beneficial and collaborative interactions, based on common understandings, is an important resource; its implications are crucial for our future.

Keynote speakers

We have secured four Keynote presentations from leading scholars in the field:

Professor Mashood Baderin
School of Law, SOAS
Title to follow

Professor Nabil Matar
Professor of English, Samuel Russell Chair in the Humanities, Department of English, University of Minnesota

Nabil will speak on: **From John Locke to 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī: Toleration to Coexistence**

Professor Gil Anidjar
Professor in the Departments of Religion and the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS), Columbia University

Gil will speak on: **The Destruction of History**
Al-Andalus is the name of the end, the name of a past that has ended and was never repeated, will never be repeated. It is the name of a life — a living together, *convivencia* — that is no more. It seems appropriate to ask, then: how do we live with the dead? How do we live with the destruction of history?

Professor Amina Yakin, University of Exeter,
Associate Professor in World Literatures and Publishing
Title to follow

Conference Nov 2022: Call for Papers and Creative Media presentations

Contributions are invited on any aspect of Convivencia in the form of an academic paper or a creative media - through art, poetry, animation, documentary or music - exploring the potential of using the framework of Convivencia to create in the present the possibilities of co-existence. Interested researchers should send a paper proposal of up to 250 words, before **5th of August, 2022** to convivencia@soas.ac.uk. Please use the subject heading of this email - Convivencia Conference SOAS Nov 2022.

The conference will explore a wide range of aspects of convivencia. This partial list of possible topics is a starting point to which contributors will add. There will be a small Registration Fee for participants.

Golden Age
- Strengths and weaknesses of the Convivencia model in Al Andalus
- Tensions between religious tenets and Convivencia social conventions
- The linguistic common space of Hebrew/Arabic cross-script used by Jews and Arabs during the period, enabling intercultural flux and transmutation.
- The role of the Arts and Sciences in civic life of Andalucian societies
- Proto-environmentalist concepts in Andalucian thinking and practice

Reconquista
- The reasons and social mechanisms which forced the various expulsions of Jews and Muslims and which led to the setting up of the Inquisition
- The codifying of anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish sentiments into a systemic phobic framework of socio-political, cultural behaviour leading to the exclusion and expulsion of the social *others*
- Mudejar Art as a negotiated transformational medium
- Conversos, Chuetas (Xuetes), Moriscos, Morisco Conversos, Judeizantes, Moz'arab: a historical context
- The development of Modern racism: *Limpieza de Sangre* and blood-based (proto- genetic) oppression

Renaissance
- The historic heritage of Andalucian art during the Renaissance and its European and Middle Eastern/North African reach
- Scientific influences of Andalucian Convivencia achievements

Modernity
- Modern racism – and especially antisemitism and Islamophobia - and its debt to the Spanish Inquisition
- Racist models from Spain used in the New World and the industrialised slavery which followed
- Al Andalus and modernising Islamic traditions
- The Andalucian heritage and Pan Arabism
- The racist foundations of Imperialism and Colonialism emerging from the Reconquista
- Development of antisemitism as pseudo-scientific racist discipline
- Modern Islamophobia and its historical roots in Reconquista Spain
- Islamophobic Evangelism and Christian Zionism in the UK and US
- Al Andalus *motifs* in Palestinian literary and poetic discourses
- Al Andalus Hebrew poetry and its modern re-discovery
- *Ladino* as a medium of cultural resistance within Zionism
- Suppression of the *Mizrahim* in Israel as a mechanism of excluding the Convivencia system of historical links between Jewish/Muslim/Arab traditions
- Old and *New* Antisemitism, Islamophobia and Christian Zionism
- The chimera of the 'Judeo-Christian tradition'
- The New Racism in Europe and beyond