

RPCS Quarterly

Developing New Horizons of Knowledge for Islam in the Contemporary World

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Contact us at RPCS@Muis.gov.sg

Upcoming Event

The International Conference on Communities of Success (ICCOS) is part of the Communities of Success initiative by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis). ICCOS aims to provide a platform for Muslim minority communities around the world to galvanise around a strong narrative of success founded on the notion of “Contributing Citizens, Dynamic Institutions”. The Conference will discuss how contextualised religious guidance and progressive religious leadership can empower Muslims to live as dignified and contributing citizens, as well as the important roles that various institutions can play to develop Muslim communities of success.

ICCOS 2022 will be held from 9th to 10th September 2022 at the Raffles City Convention Centre, Singapore. The conference will be held in English and Arabic with simultaneous interpretation. The 2-day programme will feature speeches and panel discussions by renowned religious scholars and leaders, state officials and community leaders from different parts of the world on the 3Cs of successful Muslim communities – Character, Competency and Citizenry.



Islam & Transgender: Gender Reassignment Procedure

A. Introduction

As part of RPCS' aim to pave the way for inter-disciplinary discussions and collaborations with both local and international scholars, this roundtable discussion (RTD) served as a platform for Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff bin Hassan, a Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) to discuss one of the many issues related to the ongoing LGBTQ+ developments. The session is in line with our efforts to hold inter-disciplinary discussions on RPCS' identified research areas, and to eventually incorporate the relevant content for training of Asatizah on developments in secular and diverse societies.





B. Fiqh Literature on Khuntha and Mukhannath

The speaker presented the key discussions found within our fiqh literature on *khuntha* and *mukhannath*, including some of the relevant theories and principles that are acknowledged by both classical and contemporary scholars. While matters pertaining to *khuntha* and *mukhannath* have been discussed within our religious traditions, the overall discussions in existing literature are quite limited in comparison to the wide-range and evolving medical theories, conditions and diagnosis as recognised in our contemporary context. Examples include congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), disorder of sex development (DSD) and testicular feminisation syndrome (TFS), among many others.

C. Contemporary Fatwas

In discussing the differing views from religious scholars on the ruling of gender reassignment procedure, the speaker presented several fatwas issued by regional and international scholars and fatwa bodies. These include matters pertaining to the dilemma on how those who have gone through complete gender reassignment procedure should perform religious rituals and acts of worship, especially in communal spaces.



D. Recommendations Moving Forward

The session provided several recommendations on the way forward, in terms of tackling the overall complexities related to LGBTQ+ developments as well as the specific issues related to transgenders and/or transsexuals. This includes employing critical analysis of the differences of opinions and views among both classical and contemporary scholars as well as conducting inter-disciplinary discussions with domain experts prior to issuing the relevant guidance and advisory to members of our community.



About speaker

Muhammad Haniff Hassan is a Fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (formerly known as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies), Nanyang Technological University. Haniff holds a PhD and M.Sc. in Strategic Studies from the same school. He received his early education in Aljunied Islamic School. He then continued his tertiary education at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia, with honours in Shari'ah and Civil law. He is active in social activities as a member of the Islamic Religious Council Appeal Board and Asatizah Recognition Board. He has published many books in his name, co-authored a monograph and helped publish two books for PERGAS and the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore. He has a personal blog at www.haniff.sg and a blog to counter Al-Qaeda violent ideology at <http://counterideology2.wordpress.com>.

If you are interested in the topics and discussions covered in our RPCS Roundtable Discussions, do keep a look out on our website and related platforms for upcoming sessions. We look forward to providing a safe space for collaborative learning and the building of new bodies of knowledge on the range of topics covered. Please visit www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/RPCS.



Rereading The *Sīrah* and Models of Muslim Engagement and Contribution in Secular Societies

A. Introduction

As part of its continuous efforts to develop contextualised bodies of knowledge on socio-religious issues that are typical for Muslim communities living in secular states, this roundtable discussion served as a platform for RPCS fellow, Ustaz Muhammad Saiful Adli Ayob to present his research findings on his ongoing project entitled 'Rereading the *Sīrah* in the Secular Context' with our local Asatizah. The session also included related work by research officers in the RPCS Secretariat, discussing the implications of misreading the history of the Prophet as well as how *sīrah* is a model of Muslim engagement and contribution in secular societies.



B. Rereading the Sīrah in the Secular Context

Ustaz Muhammad Saiful Adli deliberated on the emergence of *Maghazi* in *sīrah* writing as well as the reasons such approach was employed and became dominant throughout most classical *sīrah* writings and literatures. He also discussed the evolution of *sīrah* writing as seen throughout our religious scholarly traditions, including attempts made by several contemporary scholars in rereading *sīrah* for various reasons and contexts. This is where he then emphasised the importance of context and lived realities in understanding and rereading the *sīrah*. He concluded his presentation by sharing the proposed framework for rereading *sīrah* in secular context.

C. Implications of Misreading the History of the Prophet

Ustazah Nur Hafiza presented how some Muslims living in minority or secular context today may still face challenges in applying the invaluable lessons and important principles from various historical events and narrations as currently presented in our study of *sīrah*. She argued that such struggles may result in, if not caused by, the spread of false assumptions and perceptions within some segments of the Muslim community today, especially those living in minority and secular contexts. She then discussed some examples of *sīrah* study materials currently used in local madrasahs, mosques, and Islamic education centres and providers (IECPs) that may have contributed to such assumptions and perceptions.

D. *Sīrah* as a Model of Muslim Engagement and Contribution in Secular Societies

Ustaz Abdullah Al-Muaz discussed how contemporary Muslims should strive to develop new methodologies to present prophetic history and maximise its impact and relevance to current realities. He gave important examples on how the proposed framework for rereading the *sīrah* can be successfully employed to achieve the desired outcomes from studying the history of the Prophet. He concluded his presentation with a call to action: (a) to adopt a holistic approach in delivering the *sīrah* through all age-groups to institutionalize desired values in the local Muslim community; (b) to develop a contemporary *sīrah* narrative which is relevant and empowers local, regional, or even global Muslim communities to thrive in their modern contexts.



About Speakers

Muhammad Saiful Adli Ayob is a manager in the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) Office, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis), who is also one of our first two RPCS research fellows. He holds a master's degree in Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies from Graduate School Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (Jakarta). He received his early education in Aljunied Islamic School before continuing his education at Qortuba Religious High School (Kuwait). He then continued his tertiary education at Kuwait University in Education, specializing in Islamic Studies & Arabic Language. His research interests include interfaith and intrafaith as well as religion and secularism.

Nur Hafiza Roslee is a senior executive in the Office of the Mufti (Research), Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis). She holds a master's degree in Islamic Thought and Civilisation from International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC – IIUM). She received her early education in Al-Ma'arif Islamic School before continuing her pre-university education in Aljunied Islamic School. She then pursued her tertiary education at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, specialising in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence. Her research interests include Islamic education as well as shariah and its higher objectives (maqasid).





Abdullah Al-Muaz Mohamed Fatris is a senior executive in the Office of the Mufti (Research), Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis). He is currently completing his Master of Counselling from Monash University. He received his early education in Al-Irsyad Islamic School (presently Irsyad Zuhri Islamic School) before continuing his pre-university education in Aljunied Islamic school. His research interests include intra-faith diversity and relations as well as religion in plural societies.

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RESEARCH PROGRAMME IN THE STUDY OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OF SUCCESS (RPCS)

RPCS FELLOWSHIP 2022/2023

Call for Applications

APPLICATION IS NOW OPEN

The Research Programme in the Study of Muslim Communities of Success (RPCS) would like to invite Asatizah to contribute in building new bodies of knowledge. Asatizah who have a minimum Masters degree or extensive specialized experience on the ground are invited to apply for the RPCS fellowship. Interested applicants are invited to send in your applications or attend a briefing session on 16 September 2022.



APPLY NOW

The Research Programme in the Study of Muslim Communities of Success (RPCS) was launched in June 2021, and it was developed as part of Muis' efforts in advancing religious thought leadership for the future.

The RPCS programme seeks to develop contextualised bodies of knowledge on socio-religious issues that are typical for Muslim communities living in secular states and advanced economies. The RPCS focus will be on developing new understanding, interpretations and application of Islamic principles, values and traditions to contemporary issues and challenges.

The RPCS aims to bring together local scholars and senior practitioners to look into current and future issues in the socio-religious life of the Singapore Muslim community. It serves as a platform to nurture the right intellectual environment to facilitate the growth and development of its own group of religious leaders, scholars and thinkers who are authentic and credible to guide the local Muslim community.

For more information on RPCS, please visit: www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/RPCS

1 Can I attend the briefing first before I decide to apply?

Of course! We would highly encourage interested Asatizah to attend the briefing for more information. This will allow you to have a better understanding about the fellowship programme. If you are interested, please submit your name to RPCS@muiss.gov.sg by 12 September 2022.

2 What do I need to submit?

Following the briefing, interested applicants may submit the following to RPCS@muiss.gov.sg by 23 September 2022:

- Curriculum Vitae
- Cover letter
- Letter of recommendation
- Description of their proposed project (*Please refer to the research areas. It should not exceed more than 1500 words, Arial font, size 12, Single Space*).

All applications, supporting materials and confidential letter/s must reach Muis by the closing date. Late and incomplete applications will not be accepted.

3 What are the key research areas?

Interested applicants may submit a description of their proposed project on one of the three key areas:

- Governance** – Islam, secularism and diversity (policymaking and governance in a diverse and secular social context)
- Society** – Family (marriage, divorce and Muslim law), Social cohesion (inter- and intra-faith)
- Science and Technology** (Biomedical ethics, new food technologies, digital technologies and ethics, crypto-currencies)

4 What is the process and timeline?

All applications will be assessed, and shortlisted candidates will be notified by the RPCS secretariat. Shortlisted candidates will then be interviewed by the RPCS Fellowship Committee. The fellowship is expected to commence in October 2022.

For further queries, please contact us at RPCS@muiss.gov.sg

CALL FOR PAPERS

About

As part of the Research Programme, RPCS will publish Insights and Perspectives, a series of online articles which hopes to provide timely commentary and analysis of issues relevant to the theme of Muslim Communities of Success. It is intended to update on the evolving religious discourse in light of contemporary and emerging contexts and challenges.

Contributors

We are currently looking for Asatizah to contribute papers (1000 – 2000 words) focusing on one of the three research areas, to be published as part of our RPCS Insights & Perspectives.

Research Areas

- ✓ **Governance (Islam, secularism and diversity)** - Study and develop new understanding on the relationship between religion and secularism, identify models of successful citizenship and contribution, and formulate a robust and credible framework of successful living drawn from Islamic traditions, history and experiences.
- ✓ **Society (Family & Social Cohesion)** - Identify ways of supporting and strengthening the family institution and review laws as society evolves so that they remain resilient amidst these challenges, and how religions can be an effective resource in enriching further the common space and common good in any pluralistic society.
- ✓ **Science and Technology (Biomedical ethics, new food technologies, digital technologies and ethics, crypto-currencies)** - Develop Islamic thought and ethics to provide new guidance on issues such as new food technologies, digital and financial technologies, environmental challenges and others.

Submission Link

Interested Asatizah are invited to submit your curriculum vitae and proposed topic for the paper submission. The RPCS secretariat will follow-up with more details.

 RPCS@muis.gov.sg

RPCS Quarterly is a publication of



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OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OF SUCCESS