About the London Middle East Institute (LMEI)

The London Middle East Institute (LMEI) draws upon the resources of London and SOAS to provide teaching, training, research, publication, consultancy, outreach and other services related to the Middle East. It serves as a neutral forum for Middle East studies broadly defined and helps to create links between individuals and institutions with academic, commercial, diplomatic, media or other specialisations.

With its own professional staff of Middle East experts, the LMEI is further strengthened by its academic membership – the largest concentration of Middle East expertise in any institution in Europe. The LMEI also has access to the SOAS Library, which houses over 150,000 volumes dealing with all aspects of the Middle East. LMEI’s Advisory Council is the driving force behind the Institute’s fundraising programme, for which it takes primary responsibility. It seeks support for the LMEI generally and for specific components of its programme of activities.

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The aim of the LMEI, through education and research, is to promote knowledge of all aspects of the Middle East including its complexities, problems, achievements and assets, both among the general public and with those who have a special interest in the region. In this task it builds on two essential assets. First, it is based in London, a city which has unrivalled contemporary and historical connections and communications with the Middle East including political, social, cultural, commercial and educational aspects. Secondly, the LMEI is at SOAS, the only tertiary educational institution in the world whose explicit purpose is to provide education and scholarship on the whole Middle East from prehistory until today.

LMEI Staff:

Director Dr Hassan Hakimian
Executive Officer Louise Hosking
Events and Magazine Coordinator Vincenzo Paci
Administrative Assistant Aki Elborzi

Subscriptions:

To subscribe to The Middle East in London, please visit: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/affiliation/ or contact the LMEI office.

Letters to the Editor:

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Dear Reader

Hassan Hakimian, Director and Editor

This issue of The Middle East in London magazine is a special issue devoted to the SOAS Centenary in 2016, so on this occasion we have renamed it The Middle East at SOAS.

Set up one hundred years ago ostensibly to serve Britain’s diplomatic language training needs in her Eastern colonies, SOAS is now a much transformed educational establishment. Our official strapline describes it as ‘the world’s leading institution for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.’ Despite the fact that the Middle East is only embedded in the ‘Oriental’ portion of SOAS’s official title, or that it comes after ‘Asia and Africa,’ the Middle East has been and remains at the heart of SOAS and its regional perspective on world affairs. The structure of this magazine and the varied contributions to it make this point amply clear.

Given this centrality, the idea of celebrating the SOAS Centenary through a special issue of our magazine needs little justification perhaps. The spirit of this task is reflected in the structure with which the contributions are presented in this issue:
- The Study of the Middle East
- The Middle East & SOAS
- The Past in the Present

The first section reflects on the historical depth and breadth of Middle Eastern studies as an interdisciplinary field within area studies at large, its scope and methodological complexities and its evolution over time. This is true of the region at large as well as particular countries and subregions which highlight it (for instance, the study of Iran, Palestine and the GCC states).

The second section highlights SOAS’s intertwined relationship with the region both in historical perspective and its current offerings (for instance, the study of languages, ancient religions, art and archaeology, to name but a few).

Last, but not least, the final part is an acknowledgement of the challenges remaining for understanding the contemporary Middle East and the importance of past perspectives for shedding light on the present and future.

Submissions for this issue were initially commissioned from all academic members of the London Middle East Institute at SOAS (a remarkable concentration of academic expertise exceeding some 80 scholars). This was followed by specific invitations to colleagues (including selected external associates and Editorial Board members) to write on chosen subjects. The challenge was to produce pieces that were critical and reflective rather than pieces that could be read as SOAS publicity material!

I hope the result justifies this challenge and is as enjoyable as the work that went into producing this hefty – double – volume over the past few months!

The real unsung heroes of The Middle East in London are as always the readership, the Editorial Board members and my colleagues Megan Wang, Shahla Geramipour, Vincenzo Paci and Louise Hosking without whom the magazine would not see the light of day.

A big thank you to all!
At the core of SOAS’s mission as a university is our commitment to academic freedom, and I am proud that SOAS is an institution grounded in the academic pursuit of knowledge, as well as one that welcomes a diversity of views and provides a forum for free and open debate on a range of issues affecting our regions of focus.

Because of our commitment to open debate, and because of our regional focus, lectures and events that take place at SOAS often cause controversy. I am regularly lobbied by individuals, organised groups, embassies and sometimes even our own students and staff to intervene to cancel an event, then lobbied again by different groups and individuals to ensure that the event or lecture goes ahead. Sometimes this gets extremely difficult; people can understandably get very passionate and sometimes very abusive. Indeed, the only death threats I have received in my life have been as a result of an event – about the Middle East as it happens – that we allowed to go ahead at SOAS.

But provided we are acting within the law and that it is possible for us to ensure the safety of staff, students and visitors, my response to such requests is always the same: an individual should be allowed to express his or her views, and their accuracy or appropriateness will be tested by the audience through the questions that are asked.

SOAS is in a rare position as an institution to be able to provide a forum for free and frank debate on some of the most important issues affecting the world today, and all of us here at SOAS need to ensure that academic freedom prevails. This School has produced world leaders, ambassadors, diplomats, human rights lawyers, journalists, writers and philosophers. It was on our campus that they were inspired to make a difference in the world and where their ideas were challenged and nurtured. Creating a climate of fear or an atmosphere in which ideas cannot be discussed and debated in an open manner would stifle the development of future generations of students.

Academic freedom has to be guarded carefully. We must make sure that there is no incitement to racial hatred or other illegal forms of speech. We also have an obligation to provide balance, so that staff and students have the opportunity to hear a variety of shades of opinion. What is distinctive about a university is that a wide range of issues from a wide range of perspectives are debated in an atmosphere of inquiry and tolerance: if we lose that, we will cease to be a university.

Because of our commitment to open debate, and because of our regional focus, lectures and events that take place at SOAS often cause controversy.

Professor Paul Webley (1953-2016) was the Director of SOAS between 2006-15. This article first appeared in The Middle East in London, March 2010.
THE STUDY OF THE MIDDLE EAST
 Studying the politics of the Middle East and North Africa has always had its dramatic side – driven both by events and developments in the region, but also by the excitement of new ways of thinking about power. In this it is hardly exceptional. Nevertheless, during the past few decades the region has had more than its fair share of wars between states, guerrilla insurgencies, foreign military interventions and occupations, revolutions, uprisings and the forceful suppression of dissent. These violent episodes, some lasting for decades, have had lingering and pernicious effects, giving rise to a politics of sectarian and ethnic division, to the reinforcement of the security state, the violation of human rights and the laying waste of civil society. They have also invited and provided the opportunity for intervention by outside powers and for the meddling of regional states in the politics of their neighbours. Underpinning this violent landscape are the longer-term trends that have helped to reinforce authoritarian rule and, by the same token, have provoked resistance. Sometimes this has been confined to particular places where the violence of repression has been felt most keenly and with humiliating effect, as in the successive Palestinian uprisings against Israeli military occupation, or in the Kurdish rebellions against the consistently repressive policies of various Iraqi governments. Sometimes resistance has been more widespread, as the spectacular, simultaneous but uncoordinated uprisings across the region in 2010/2011 demonstrate.

It is against a backdrop of such spectacular and bitter political conflict that new ways of thinking about power have emerged.
The development of this field mirrors that of the objects of its study. Dominated initially by master narratives, it encompassed a series of structural paradigms that fought it out for hegemony produced by this ceaseless quest that has marked the field of the study of politics in the Middle East and North Africa. In some respects, and not by chance, the development of this field mirrors that of the objects of its study. Dominated initially by master narratives, significantly gendered both in their production and in their framing, it encompassed a series of structural paradigms that fought it out for hegemony.

At different times this struggle was characterised by historicist approaches, informed variously by preoccupations with texts and embodied ideas that were assigned a trans-historical power, or by the assertion that it was the fundamental struggle over the ownership of the means of production that determined political outcomes. These were then challenged by behaviourist accounts, allied often to modernisation theory and its focus on the structure and function of political systems. This in turn gave way to a study of the state, but the state understood as a particular structural form that was both recognisable and ubiquitous whatever its local variation. And with this came the categories and processes associated with formal comparative politics, where the assumed regularities of rational choice theory and modelling appeared to replace the passion of power relations with a clinical calculability.

As ever in the field of political explanation, the playing out of politics itself, in all its forms and uncertainty across the region, as well as the development of new epistemologies in the social sciences globally, and the emergence of new voices and perspectives challenged these master narratives. The unfolding of the Iranian revolution, the resilience of Palestinian resistance, the strikes, demonstrations and upheavals in Morocco and Tunisia in the 1980s, as well as the new forms of social activism, Islamist, feminist and artistic, cast doubt on the reliability of heavily structural explanations. An insurgency of sorts has been underway in the academy. It has been driven by the varied forms of actual insurgency, by modes of resistance that were shaping the political agenda, as well as by reconfigurations of established power in ways that defied existing categories.

In many respects, the Arab uprisings that began in 2010/2011 and their tumultuous and uncertain aftermaths epitomise, but also give credence to the more open, plural and interdisciplinary approaches that recognise hitherto unconsidered regional actors and take their accounts and aspirations seriously. These approaches hold up for critical scrutiny not simply the self-legitimating accounts of the power holders and brokers, but also the ways in which the forms of explanation are themselves discursively constructed, potentially reflecting systems of power that thrive on particular forms of representation.

Such visible acts of resistance may have been provoked by a particular incident, sometimes by a public act of violence that epitomised for many the intolerable nature of their condition. But they are in essence the outcome of the sedimented violence embodied in a long-term status quo that sustains military occupation, structural economic inequality and political repression. In many respects, therefore, the visible drama of revolt is the outcome of longer-term processes that have been normalised in the way they have been framed and understood, whether in the languages of nationalism, of religion or of capitalist progress.

Such processes include the transformations of political economies fuelled by the volatility of the oil market, but also driven by global interests that see the region primarily as an energy resource that must be secured at all costs. In the Gulf and elsewhere this has encouraged inequality, held in place by a mixture of patronage and repression. Across North Africa and into the Mashriq ubiquitous neoliberal economic reforms have added to inequality and marginalisation, allegedly opening up markets and giving private enterprise free rein across the region.

In reality these measures blurred the distinction between state and private ownership where the state has been captured by self-interested clans. They ensured that only those who are well connected to established political power, both local and global, have any meaningful access to these markets. Far from opening up the possibilities of more representative government as the ideology of neoliberalism would suggest, it has led to a blocking of any systematic form of accountability and a tightening up of the repressive measures that will, its beneficiaries hope, provide the disciplined and cowed subjects required by the new rules of the economic game.

It is against this backdrop, but, more importantly as a means of trying to understand the forces that have produced such spectacular and such bitter political conflict that new ways of thinking about power have emerged. As in any field of knowledge, it is the excitement and drama
The study of Palestine – with its corollaries, the Israel-Palestine and Arab-Israeli conflicts – has been a major source of world tension since 1917, one year after SOAS was inaugurated. In November of that year, when WWI entered its final year, the United Kingdom’s Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote his famous letter to Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild, asserting that ‘His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people’. Ever since, the question of Palestine remained a key issue of world politics. Few global issues have attracted so much attention over such a long period.

Despite its small territorial size, Palestine has become a key component of Middle East studies in the academic community as well as a field of study in its own right.

The result of this outstanding historical and political reverberation is that, despite its small territorial size, Palestine has become a key component of Middle East studies in the academic community as well as a field of study in its own right, in the same way that France or Germany are each the subject of individual study while being part of European studies. The number of doctoral theses dedicated to Palestine is certainly much higher in proportion to the whole number of theses dedicated to other parts of the Middle East than the size of Palestine.

Gilbert Achcar outlines why the study of Palestine remains at the forefront of Middle East studies.
and its population compared to those of other Middle Eastern countries. This 'disproportionate' status of the question of Palestine is due to several factors.

First is the strategic location of Palestine at the Mediterranean door of the Middle East and the 'East of Suez' world. This strategic position – the source of British interest in Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century – has been enhanced by the greater importance of the broader Middle East in global affairs as demonstrated by the high frequency of wars and conflicts in the region since WWII, and even more since the end of the Cold War. In other words, the strategic importance of the question of Palestine has been narrowly linked to that of the adjacent Middle Eastern concentration of oil reserves, the most important such concentration in the world.

Second is the very particular sequence of historical events that led to the implementation of the Zionist project. Conceived by the main founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, as a 'settler-colonial' endeavour in Palestine, the Zionist project was boosted by the huge human tragedy of the Nazi genocide of European Jews in 1941-45. The result has been a complex mingling of the Holocaust, which the Zionist movement claimed as legitimising its project and actions, with what Palestinians call the Nakba, or 'catastrophe'. The latter describes the 'ethnic cleansing' of Arab Palestinians from great swathes of Palestine in 1947-48 by the Zionist drive towards the creation of Israel, especially during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

Third is the sheer complexity of the Palestine question engendered by the Nakba and hugely complicated by the state of Israel's subsequent occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as a result of the third Arab-Israeli war, the Six-Day War of June 1967. The consequence of these successive wars is that the Palestinian people are living today under very different conditions and legal regimes: they encompass those who remained in Israel after its establishment as a state in 1948; those, including refugees, living under direct Israeli occupation or indirect Israeli control in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967; those displaced by the wars of 1948 and 1967 to the eastern bank of the Jordan River, some of them still living in camps, and most of whom became Jordanian citizens; those initially displaced by the same wars and living in the refugee camps of Lebanon and Syria; those of the diaspora living in other Arab countries; and those of the global diaspora in immigration countries from Australia to Canada.

The complexity and the unparalleled diversity of contemporary Palestinian locations and situations are the keys to Palestine's 'disproportionate' status and account for the abundance of publications on Palestine and its people. This importance of Palestine studies is what incited a group of scholars from various departments at SOAS to found in 2012 the Centre for Palestine Studies (CPS) – a centre embedded in the London Middle East Institute at SOAS and the first and only such centre in London, a city that was and remains a crucial hub for everything related to Palestine. It is for that same reason that we launched, in association with the London-based publisher IB Tauris, the SOAS Palestine Studies book series, the first and only academic book series in English wholly dedicated to Palestine studies.

The SOAS CPS, along with the European Centre for Palestine Studies at the University of Exeter (founded in 2009) and the Center for Palestine Studies at Columbia University in New York (founded in 2010), are university-based centres exclusively dedicated to Palestine studies. Since 1963, the only institution for scholarly research in this field was the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), founded that year and based in Beirut and Washington. It took more than 45 years for the first academic centres fully dedicated to Palestine studies to emerge, a fact that requires an explanation which is far from obvious.

We can point, however, to one development that has certainly contributed greatly to putting the study of Palestine and the Israel-Palestine conflict – as distinct from the wider Arab-Israeli conflict – on the academic map: a generation of scholars belonging ‘ethnically’ to both sides of the Israel/Palestine divide, who have matured during the 20-year period that goes from the June 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (along with the Golan and Sinai) to the First Palestinian Intifada that started in December 1987. Some of the scholars who played a key role in founding the new centres for Palestine studies, such as Rashid Khalidi or Ilan Pappe, belong to that generation. They have built on the scholarly legacy of the earlier generation and opened the way, in turn, for the ongoing blossoming of Palestine studies among newer generations.

The complexity and the unparalleled diversity of contemporary Palestinian locations and situations are the keys to Palestine’s ‘disproportionate’ status

Gilbert Achcar is a Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at SOAS and Chair of the Centre for Palestine Studies at the London Middle East Institute
There is something very alluring about studying a country such as Iran. Of course, there are aesthetics and high culture in abundance; a national narrative that is imagined and invented with a lot of civilisational stamina. The siren song of Persia chimes with the poetry of Khayyam, Hafez and Rumi and the imagination of imperial grandeur that has animated Iranian nationalists since the ancient empire of Cyrus.

Persia staged as an opera would have a strong cast of heroes and villains. Many Iranians would nominate Rostam as the ultimate champion. He is a central character from the epic book of kings (Shahnameh) written by Ferdowsi between 977 and 1010 CE. Others would opt for Imam Hossein, the grandson of the prophet Mohammad whose killing at the battle of Karbala in 680 CE sustains Iran’s Shi’a imagery. This idea of Iran was embedded into the national narrative by the Safavids in the 16th century. The cast of villains would be equally competitive: the forces of evil embodied by the Zoroastrian ‘spirit of destruction’, Ahriman or the ‘forces of arrogance’ (mostakbaran) represented by Yazid in the aforementioned killing of Hossein. For many Iranians the stage for this opera would have to be adorned with props that resemble the architectural splendour of Isfahan, Persepolis and Shiraz. Iran, for sure, is a highly prized and competitive subject matter, not least because as an

What Iran ‘is’ is entirely dependent on who speaks for it.
idea, the country has been imagined since antiquity.

Nations are not primordial; they do not simply exist beyond inventions of the mind and the pen. An opera about Iran is exactly that – it stages an idea about Iran, in the same way as governments and their interlocutors do. For instance, from the perspective of European Orientalists, Iran was routinely represented as an exotic place, a prized colonial trophy, the epitome of Scheherazade's dream of 1,001 nights or more recently simply a convenient supplier of oil. There was a reason why Orientalists did not bother with questions of philosophy, theory and method. Either Iran had to be narrated to imperialists, oil companies and colonial functionaries or it was an indulgence, an exciting theme park to be desired. There was no room for philosophy or critical analysis in this constellation. What we may call 'traditional' Iranian studies suffered from comparable theoretical amnesia. Iran was narrowed down to philological platitudes, cultural simplifications or geopolitical descriptions: Persian as an Indo-European language, Iranians as semi-Aryan racial brethren, Iran as a nodal point for Western imperialism.

But what Iran 'is' is entirely dependent on who speaks for it. For many Iranians today, Iran is all about Shi’a Islam. For many others, the true Iranian spirit can only be found in the archives of the country’s pre-Islamic history. Traditional Iranian studies does not address the question of authorship, which is central to such battles over ‘identity’. Rather, it contributes to contracting the meaning of Iran. There are dozens of histories of Iran out there, but only a handful address how and by whom those histories were written. History is always also for someone. The passion play of Hossein serves a Shi’a identity that entered Iran (then a majority Sunni country) through the Turkic, Safavid dynasty. Ferdowsi was dependent on the whims of Iran’s Ghaznavid rulers and the patrimony of the court and its under-belly.

The point is that identities are invented in accordance with context, and they change their meanings almost immediately after their invention. Traditional Iranian studies does not challenge such issues. Yet demystifying ‘origins’ is important to understanding and explaining a country whose historical imagination spans several millennia of human history. Without such deconstruction we end up in an unscholarly battle over identity, which confuses the audience: the opera of Rostam is staged in one room and the passion play of Hossein in the other.

Yet, it is the task of 'critical Iranian studies' to interrogate the directors and producers of both plays in order to find out how the two stages could be merged into one. This would be as giant a production as the ancient idea of the meaning of Iran merits. And ultimately, this colossal performance would be closer to appreciating the complex historiography of the country: Iran as an open parenthesis, Iran as a global idea, Iran in the middle of the crossroads of identities; a central focal point in a common human experience. In sum, it will go beyond the tired ‘nationalism vs religion’ dichotomy of the older generation and view Iran as a global idea that cannot be confined to confessional or nationalistic narratives. Our increasingly influential MA in Iranian Studies embraces this multidisciplinary approach that is characteristic of the SOAS brand in the social sciences.

The 13th-century mystic, Jalaledin Rumi understood the perils of self-confining identities. In many ways, he was the Michel Foucault of his age: ‘What can I do, Muslims?’ he asked audaciously. ‘I do not know myself. I am neither Christian nor Jew, neither Magian nor Muslim, I am not from East or West. My place is placeless my trace is traceless.’

Rumi returned from where the guardians of identity are heading. He exorcised the myth of origins and primordial existence from his mind. For many nations (and individuals) this is a perilous task. It is literally unsettling. But once we pull the self (national or individual) together and start the process of picking up the pieces, they will appear clearer to us; we will be able to analyse and comprehend them more easily and reconfigure them within a wider frame than before. And so it is that we can attain a multicultural consciousness without committing any pagan betrayal of our own mosaic composition.

At that stage of our intellectual journey, we are not only closer to the truth – we appear truly liberated. And isn’t this what education should be about?

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam is Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies in the Department of Politics and International Studies at SOAS and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute. His recent books include On the Arab Revolts and the Iranian Revolution (Bloomsbury) and A Critical Introduction to Khomeini (Cambridge)
Academic work on the Arab countries in the Middle East has long been marked by a regional division between those who study the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman – and those who work on the rest of the region. For scholars interested in North Africa and the Levant, the Gulf has typically been approached as a zone somewhat akin to a ‘gated community’: an external source of migrant remittances or bilateral aid analytically removed from its poorer neighbours. Gulf studies has been similarly parochial, concerned with debates around the role of hydrocarbon rents and the nature of tribal and monarchical power with little attention shown to how the Gulf both shapes and is shaped by the wider region.

This compartmentalisation of Middle East studies has become much more difficult to sustain following the uprisings that erupted across the region in late-2010. The GCC was a major (although underreported) site of mass uprisings, most notably in Bahrain and Oman. These protests helped to shatter the dominant view of the Gulf as uniquely resilient to popular dissent, or sharply distinct from other countries in the region. At a regional level, the GCC states rapidly took a pre-eminence role in attempting to steer political developments in the wake of the uprisings. All the major zones of conflict and crisis in the region – Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Iraq and Palestine – have been marked by the Gulf state’s increasing political – and in some cases, military – involvement.

Yet one side of the Gulf’s relationship to the wider region has been less fully explored. Over recent decades, the GCC has taken on a significant position in the economy of the region as a whole, such that class and state structures in the Arab world are increasingly interlaced with capital accumulation in the GCC itself. These dynamics of the regional political economy have important implications for how we understand socio-economic
Capitalism in the Gulf
The early roots of this regional expansion lie in the ways that capitalism developed in the Gulf states. As oil and its derivatives took centre stage in the post-WWII global economy, ruling families and allied merchant groups emerged as key economic beneficiaries of urbanisation and state formation. With the onset of the first oil boom in the 1970s, these nascent business groups were granted access to cheap land, contracts for construction and service activities, as well as exclusive agency rights to import basic commodities. Through subsequent decades these businesses developed into massive financial conglomerates whose activities stretched across all economic sectors; processes of state and class formation were marked by a tight interlocking of ‘state’ and ‘private’ capital.

Since the early 2000s, these Gulf financial conglomerates have extended their reach across the Arab world. This process was closely linked to the steep rise in world oil prices that occurred between 1999 and 2014 (punctuated by a brief downturn in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis). As petrodollar surpluses grew, the large Gulf conglomerates sought higher returns and diversification of risk in overseas markets. While the majority of this investment went to Western economies (in line with historical patterns), increasing levels were also directed to the Arab region. Very significantly, this period corresponded with the embrace of neoliberal policy reforms by most Arab governments; privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation were reinforced by and benefited Gulf-based conglomerates.

Between 2003 and 2015, more than 40 per cent of new foreign direct investment (FDI) across North Africa and the Levant came from the Gulf region. For Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Palestine and Tunisia, Gulf investments stood at more than half of the total greenfield FDI (parent companies constructing new facilities in other countries). A major consequence of these flows has been the growing weight of Gulf-based firms in many key economic sectors throughout the Arab world. In the finance sector more than half of all non-state banking assets in Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon are controlled by banks in which GCC investors hold at least 20 per cent of share-ownership. Likewise, between 2008 and 2015, more than half of all real estate projects worth more than US $100 million across Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon and Tunisia were owned, developed or being built by a GCC-based company. Similar patterns can be found in other sectors: agribusiness, logistics, transport, telecommunications, Islamic finance, retail and renewable energy.

Implications for the Study of the Middle East
These trends have important implications for the study of the Middle East. For one, they complicate the ways in which we understand processes of class and state formation in the region. To a great degree, Gulf capital has become internalised in neighbouring economies, such that popular conceptions of a ‘national bourgeoisie’ no longer map in a straightforward manner onto national origins. Moreover, the economic crises and massive displacement of peoples across the Middle East have made the GCC an important zone of accumulation for other Arab elites. To speak of a ‘Palestinian’ or ‘Lebanese’ bourgeoisie without exploring these pan-regional links makes little analytical sense. Relatedly, Arab state formation is increasingly shaped by the projection of power by GCC states. This process is marked, of course, by rivalries within the GCC – such as those between Saudi Arabia and Qatar – but the character of state formation needs to be thought through a regional lens, not solely in relation to national elite interests.

Of course the decline in global oil prices that began in the latter part of 2014 could impact the future pace and magnitude of these trends. To date, however, there has been little indication that the Gulf’s weight in the regional economy has qualitatively changed as a result of declining petrodollar surpluses. Instead, GCC states appear to have chosen the path of internal economic reform: a reduction in government spending, borrowing more from international markets and opening up to greater foreign investment. How these policies play out in the coming years will be closely bound up with global economic conditions as well as the political trajectories of the Middle East as a whole. But one thing is certain: treating Middle East economies as neatly enclosed within national borders no longer provides an accurate picture of how capitalism functions in the region.

In this sense, bringing the Gulf back into wider Middle East studies is an urgent imperative.

Adam Hanieh is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Development Studies, SOAS. His most recent books include Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East (Haymarket Books, 2013) and Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011)
Andrew George on the Monkey Tablet and other unprovenanced antiquities

Cuneiform tablets: every cloud has a silver lining

In October 2015 the Times newspaper ran a splash on Gilgamesh, headlined ‘Ancient epic yields new chapter’. It was part of a brief period of media attention generated by the emergence of an important fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic in Suleimaniyah Museum, Iraq. The original discovery was made in 2011 by SOAS Research Associate Farouk Al-Rawi. He invited me to collaborate in publishing it, which we did in vol. 66 of the Journal of Cuneiform Studies (2014).

Like other compositions from the world’s oldest literature, the Gilgamesh Epic is still in the process of reconstruction. Its text remains gap-ridden. The sources are cuneiform tablets, seldom undamaged and often fragmentary, from Iraq, Syria and Turkey. I had the privilege of capturing all the known tablets of Gilgamesh in my critical edition of 2003 (The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts, OUP), but since then repeated new discoveries of text in museums and elsewhere have increased knowledge of this magnificent poem still further. So the appearance of a tablet in Suleimaniyah was, professionally speaking, almost routine. That may explain why Farouk and I did not issue a press release and were surprised by all the media attention 18 months later.

For Assyriologists, the interest in the Suleimaniyah tablet lies in the content. Some 20 lines are entirely new. They following the breakdown of law and order during the Shi'a uprising of 1991, the antiquities’ market was flooded with small finds.


© Farouk Al-Rawi
The best reaction to the looting of cuneiform tablets is to document them meticulously, quickly and publicly

restore one of the long-standing gaps in a passage where Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu arrive at the Cedar Forest in Lebanon and stand awed by its sight. Babylonians were unacquainted with forests, and the poet uses his imagination to describe it. Assyriologists, conditioned by familiarity with the evergreen forests of the north, had previously imagined the Cedar Forest to be a place of silence and stillness. The Suleimaniyah tablet describes instead a veritable jungle, in which the squawks of birds, hum of insects and shrieks of monkeys form a cacophonous orchestra to entertain the forest’s guardian. That’s why we called it the Monkey Tablet.

The interest of the media was only partly in the Monkey Tablet’s content. There was also a backstory, for the tablet was not excavated by an archaeological team. The Suleimaniyah Museum bought it from a dealer. The purchase was not a one-off, and the museum has amassed hundreds of cuneiform tablets in this way. Though classified as ‘unprovenanced’, their textual content leaves little doubt where they come from: the south of Iraq.

Following the breakdown of law and order during the Shi’a uprising of 1991, the antiquities’ market was flooded with small finds from Iraq, apparently freshly excavated by local people and thus illicitly acquired. Understandably, the archaeological community was appalled by the looting of ancient sites and museums and concomitant loss of cultural heritage. The common media response was to reiterate their outrage. The mood of cultural catastrophe has deepened recently with the self-styled Islamic State’s terrible destruction of monuments in Iraq and Syria. After years of increasingly negative stories about the fate of antiquities in the Middle East, the media seized on the Monkey Tablet as a good-news story. In this it is not alone.

Many have noted the coincidence of, on the one hand, the renewed looting of archaeological sites in Iraq and Syria, and, on the other hand, the rise – in the Middle East, Europe, America and the Far East – of private collections holding large numbers of cuneiform tablets. There are some who hold it proper for scholarship to have nothing to do with any object that has emerged on the market in the last 40 years without cast-iron archaeological provenance or documented collection history.

I hold to another view. Cuneiform tablets are written documents. They always bear information additional to that provided by archaeological context, so have considerable scientific value even when that context is unknown. Moreover, tablets in private collections do not enjoy the stability of objects in public museums. They are always vulnerable to sale and disappearance. The Assyriological community has responded to this crisis with a concerted effort to publish cuneiform tablets in all large private collections, mostly as volumes in the series Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology: 29 volumes of texts since 2007. My own part in this work has focused on literary, religious and royal genres, four books so far.

The glut of cuneiform tablets that came on to the market in the 90s, whatever its origins, is producing many gains in new knowledge. Some single tablets, like the Monkey Tablet, have changed understanding of the cultural legacy of ancient Iraq in major ways. But progress springs not just from individual documents. As work on private collections goes on, new perspectives open up. Administrative tablets from Adab and Garšana have brought important leaps forward in the study of society and economy in third-millennium Sumer. Tablets from Tigunanum in north Mesopotamia, Dur-Abišuḫ in eastern Babylonia and the Sealand in the south-east – all places unknown 30 years ago – have dramatically improved our understanding of the intellectual and political history of the second millennium BC. Tablets from the 6th century document for the first time the lives of Judaeans in Babylonian exile. All this new knowledge shows that the cloud really does have a silver lining.

The ethical issue remains: tablets cannot be unlooted. Where illegal export can be proved, objects should be returned to their countries of origin. But they cannot be restored to their archaeological contexts. The destruction by looters of sites in Iraq and Syria is deeply lamentable. But for me the best reaction to the looting of cuneiform tablets is not to expel from sight and mind objects lacking provenance or under suspicion of illegal export, but to document them meticulously, quickly and publicly. In this way the considerable information they still hold is not lost or ignored, but is made available for working into the great synthesis of knowledge that is the ancient history of Iraq.

Crying over spilled milk is not the only response. It is also helpful to clear it up.

Andrew George, Professor of Babylonian, has taught Akkadian and Sumerian at SOAS since 1983. Best known for his Penguin translation of The Epic of Gilgamesh, he was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2006.
Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak reflects on the genesis and early history of the study of Iran and Persian in an international context

Studies of Iran and the Persian language: a global perspective

The study of Iran and the Persian language was originally an integral part of Oriental studies, itself an outgrowth of Biblical studies in European universities and research centres, which eventually gave rise to the new discipline of Oriental studies toward the end of the 18th century. For almost two centuries, Oriental studies, and its basic thrust, Orientalism, denoted an area of academic pursuit called variously Near or Middle Eastern Studies and was directed toward the study of Islam as a religion, of Near Eastern antiquities and of contemporary Muslim majority states, cultures and societies.

In the case of Iran and the Persian language, ambiguities resided primarily in the multiple meanings of ‘Iran’ and ‘Iranian’ and of ‘Persia’ and ‘the Persian language’, as well as in the significant literature and poetry it had produced.

‘Iran’ referred to the pre-Islamic Iranian empires of antiquity as well as the medieval and modern country that was called Persia in the West; a culture that had come increasingly to be seen as a distinct and distinguishable part of Western Asia, of the Middle East and of the world of Islam. Meanwhile, in addition to denoting the ethnic identity of a majority of contemporary Iranians, the word Persian referred to the Indo-European language that was once Islam’s second language and lingua franca in much of Western Asia and beyond. For over a millennium, the Persian language was the vehicle of a great and glorious

The study of Iran and the Persian language was originally an integral part of Oriental studies, itself an outgrowth of Biblical studies
literary tradition as well as particular strands of philosophical thought and aesthetic culture within the intellectual currents of Islam; its literary and cultural manifestations outside Iran are now often highlighted through the word Persianate, a term first used by Marshall Hodgson.

As it related to this culture cluster, Orientalism covered a staggeringly wide and varied cultural and civilisational expanse between European and East Asian countries and its carriers had, from the beginning, been in conversation with native scholarly traditions through the colonial epoch. Sir William Jones (1746-1794), dean and doyen of Orientalism and judge adjudicate of the British Crown in India during the last decade of his life, had, in his youth, translated a recent historical work from Persian into French under the title of L’Histoire de Nader Chah (1768), written a Grammar of the Persian Language three years later and authored a seminal essay ‘On the Arts Commonly Called Imitative’ which exerted a monumental influence on the transition of Europe’s literary culture from Neoclassicism to Romanticism. After his appointment as Judge of the Supreme Court and his move to Calcutta in 1783, he came into contact with a number of learned Indian interlocutors, well versed in medieval Indo-Persian literature. Jones, truly a renaissance man and a connoisseur of Arabic and Persian poetry, also wrote in Latin and French, and exerted a tremendous influence on the formation of Orientalism all over Europe. It was above all his exposure to Persian that led him to introduce the theory of ‘language families’ and the idea of an Indo-European ‘language tree’, thus contributing to the shaping not only of the expressive theory of poetry in England, but a linguistic paradigm that is still considered largely valid. In short, in Jones England found a pioneer scholar who introduced oriental linguistic and literary studies, giving the Persian language and literature its proper place within that academic setting.

Thanks to Jones and other European Orientalists, men like the French Abraham Hyacinth Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805), the Austrian Joseph von Hammer Purgstall (1774-1856) and many others, for over a century an epoch-making intercultural dialogue was sustained between Europeans coming into contact with the great works of Persian literature, with alternative systems of collecting and editing them and evaluating them from various perspectives. And the dialogue was, of course, not always about literature and culture. Contentious contemporary issues of religion, politics and history naturally bled into ways of seeing and viewing the world around them. Persian-speaking literati in India, throughout the Ottoman Empire and in Iran proper also began to travel to Europe and hold extensive exchanges with their European counterparts over contemporary cultures, Islam, and various conceptions of literature and literary genres. As the level of familiarity grew, a genuine soul-searching began to take shape on the cultural heritage of the world in philosophy and literature, in religions and spirituality and in ways of organising and administering human societies. In Germanic countries Hammer-Purgstall’s translation of the Persian poet Hafez inspired Goethe to compose his Westöstlicher Divan. In France, Jules Mohl prepared the first European edition and translation of the complete Shahnameh, and in England a literary review by Charles Augustin Saint-Beuve based on Mohl’s translation became the source for Matthew Arnold’s 1853 long poem ‘Sohrab and Rustum’. The crown jewel of this process of literary cross-fertilisation was Edward Fitzgerald’s Rubaiyat, which was very popular throughout Europe and America.

It is hard today, in the aftermath of Edward Said’s attack on the whole of the Orientalist tradition of scholarship, to see the significance of this academic strain in an appropriate light. While it is true that, as an academic enterprise, Orientalism brought a Western bias to an understanding of eastern cultures, the case has been overblown by Said and certain of his followers; it certainly has been made into an incontrovertible creed of deliberate and unbridled prejudice and distortion.

With the advent of the 20th century and especially the aftermath of WWII – which saw America become a rapidly rising presence in academic studies of the non-Western world – we began to see the outlines of new and more energetic formations of departments of Near and/or Middle Eastern Studies on American and British university campuses. The preponderance of academic attention given to this area of the world has emerged chiefly as a result of new conditions brought about by the two world wars and the growth of the bipolar world since the 1940s.

More recent patterns of migration, especially those stemming from the Iranian Revolution in 1979, have also complicated the matter, giving rise at times to new trends in academic philanthropy that have bestowed a rather special character on academic studies related to Iran and the Persian language, more so perhaps in America than in Europe. Still, as we enter the global age a greater challenge lingers: that of fitting an interest in ethnic studies of a presentist type within the prevalent patterns of academic development, particularly in large public universities in the United States.

Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak is a Professor of Persian Language and Literature at the University of Maryland. He was the 2014-15 Leverhulme Visiting Professor at SOAS’s Department of Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East.
THE MIDDLE EAST & SOAS®
On 31 December 1600 Queen Elizabeth I granted over 200 English merchants the right to trade in the East Indies, a region whose trade routes were monopolised for much of the late 1500s by the Spanish and the Portuguese. A small group of these merchants called themselves what soon became known simply as the East India Company. While their primary objective was centred around the trade of spices and textiles from India, the company soon set about expanding their markets to Persia. Before long the factors and employees of the company began to visit and spend time in the Iranian cities of Shiraz, Esfahan, Kashan, Qom and Tabriz, and a secondary objective of exploring the culture and linguistic features of the country – whether by coincidence or design – was set in motion.

In London it was not until the establishment of the School of Oriental Studies in 1916 (to become SOAS in 1938) that Persian language and literature became a taught academic subject from Finsbury Circus to the heart of Bloomsbury.
of these merchants became discerning collectors of Persian manuscripts. Meanwhile the presence of diplomats and foreign physicians at Persian and Ottoman courts, as well as a trickle of missionaries, added to the list of those who took an interest in the dominant languages of west, central and south Asia and the Far East, sowing the seeds of Oriental studies that made its home at the heart of the elite academic institutions of the time.

The crucial change of perception in England concerning Persian, hitherto confined to oblique references to Persian characters in Christopher Marlowe's 1588 play Tamburlaine or the Sophy in Shakespeare's 1601 play Twelfth Night, came about as a result of the enthusiastic and committed work of a number of distinguished 'Orientalists'. The first and most notable amongst them was Sir William Jones (1746-1794), whose serious investigation of the Persian language and literature introduced the topic to the English-speaking world and academia. Jones, whose life and legacy is discussed more at length in Professor Karimi-Hakkak's article in this issue, had already learned Hebrew and Arabic at Harrow, but while in India he became interested in learning Persian and, according to his biographer, 'his life was permanently changed by his first reading of Hafez, which acted to him as the Faerie Queene on Keats.'

In the decades that followed, the universities of Cambridge and Oxford showed increasing interest in the study of Persian poetry and belle lettres, but in London it was not until the establishment of the School of Oriental Studies in 1916 (to become the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1938) that Persian language and literature became a taught academic subject. Many of the most respected scholars par excellence in the fields of Persian studies whose academic achievements are treasured by the SOAS community.

Presently, the teaching of Persian language at all levels, from absolute beginner to advanced, forms part of the activities of the Department of Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East that hosts UK's largest concentration of researchers and teachers of Arabic, Persian and Turkish, alongside the languages of the ancient Near East.

Today, the materials used at SOAS to teach Persian are no longer the chronicles of the Safavid monarchs' audience given to the Shirley brothers in 1597 or the accounts of the introduction of gunpowder into the arsenal of Persian armies and the adventures of Hajji Baba of Esfahan. Advances made in the use of technology and audio-visual material and integrating these into classroom activities, as well as using computer-assisted language learning tools, have made the process a lot more accessible for a generation that relies on and takes advantage of digital and mobile technology for granted. Although the benchmark for our language programme is the educated, native Persian register of Tehran, it is hoped that the vernaculars and writing systems of Persian at the Department of Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East.

The blended learning advances that are gradually becoming the norm in classrooms have completely changed the established model of total reliance on teachers, and the range of possibilities offered by digital and internet media has positively invigorated the learning experience of students. It goes without saying that learning a foreign language will have a beneficial effect not only on employability and trade but will equally enhance respect and improve relations and cultural understanding between individuals, communities and countries. Although the measure of a successful language programme is usually the proficiency levels achieved by learners in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), centres of Persian and Iranian studies in the UK and elsewhere in the West must give a higher priority to what is increasingly termed as culture, the fifth language skill.

In a quote that reflects the fundamental function of language, Nelson Mandela captured the essence of individual and the imperative of a national expression of identity: 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.'

Narguess Farzad is Senior Fellow in Persian at the Department of Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East. She is also a member of the magazine's Editorial Board.

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Zoroastrianism has played an important role in world history and its study can bridge the disciplinary gap between Iranian and Persian studies. **Almut Hintze** explains

**Falling between the cracks: the academic study of Zoroastrianism and Iranian languages**

The land of Iran is nowadays known as the home of Shi’a Islam. However, before the arrival of the Arabs in the 7th century, the region had been dominated by Zoroastrian religion and culture for almost 2,000 years. Rooted in Indo-Iranian pre-history, Zoroastrianism arose among the Iranians in the second millennium BCE and has been practised by them ever since. Although Zoroastrians now constitute a tiny minority in that country, their significance arises from the fact that an awareness of Iran’s pre-Islamic past has always been part of Iranian self-perception and continues to be a vibrant player in the country’s contemporary intellectual climate.

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest living faiths and one of Iran’s great contributions to the history of human thought. Ideas about the choice between Good and Evil, which each person has to make, about right and wrong, judgement after death, reward and punishment and heaven and hell are formulated in Zoroastrianism for the first time in world literature as constituent parts of a coherent system of thought. As the state religion of three mighty empires, Zoroastrianism arguably exerted profound influence on other religions, most notably post-exilic Judaism, nascent Christianity and Islam. More than 1,000 years.

*Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest living faiths and one of Iran’s great contributions to the history of human thought.*
years after the last of those empires fell, it still has its adherents, although today the community is microscopically small – an estimated 130,000 members worldwide with approximately 25,000 Zoroastrians in Iran and about 70,000 in India, particularly in Mumbai and Gujarat where they are known as ‘Parsis’. The rest live in a global diaspora, chiefly in the English-speaking world, the oldest centre being in London, where SOAS houses what is currently the world’s only permanently endowed university Chair in Zoroastrianism.

Given the important role played by Iranian peoples in general and Zoroastrians in particular in world history and religions, it is surprising that until recently there were relatively few academic institutions that represent the subject in teaching and research. To a large extent this is due to the fact that the engagement with the rich history of Iran tends to be overshadowed by Arabic and Islamic studies with their strong emphasis on the Islamic period of Iran at the exclusion of its non-Islamic cultures and traditions. This problem is compounded by disciplinary boundaries between Iranian studies and Jewish, Christian and Islamic theology. The significance of Zoroastrianism lies not only in its interest as a subject in its own right, but also in the fact that it bridges traditional disciplinary boundaries in the study of Iranian civilisation.

The field is currently divided into Iranian studies and Persian studies. The former traditionally focus on non-Islamic traditions of Iran, while the latter usually covers the Persian and Arabic language sources and Islamic civilisation but only rarely, if at all, Old and Middle Persian, out of which New Persian developed. Old and Middle Iranian languages – Avestan (the language of the sacred texts of the Zoroastrians), Old and Middle Persian, Sogdian, Bactrian, Choresmian and Khotanese – are widely considered to be the remit of Iranian, rather than Persian studies.

Texts written in these languages are Zoroastrian, Christian, Manichaean, Buddhist or Islamic. They testify to the complex religious and intellectual climate of Iran and Central Asia and to the wide range of languages and religions present in the area that bridges East and West. The deplorable disciplinary division between Iranian and Persian studies impedes a full appreciation of the pivotal role played by Iranian peoples in the dissemination of ideas in general, and of the contribution which Zoroastrianism in particular has made to the contemporary culture of Iran.

Zoroastrianism is a unifying force that extends from the prehistory of the Iranian peoples in the second millennium BCE up to the present day. Much of Iran’s pre-Islamic past lives on, often unnoticed, in present day Iran and has powerful, at times subconscious, resonances with current and future questions about Iranian identity.

Among academic institutions, SOAS stands out for its long-standing engagement with Zoroastrians, reaching back to its early years. In 1929 the Bombay Parsi community funded the ‘Parsee Community’s Lectureship in Iranian Studies’ through annual benefactions. The Lectureship was initially held by the eminent scholar Harold Walter Bailey (1929-1936), who was succeeded by the equally eminent Walter Bruno Henning. When the external funding ceased in 1939, SOAS supported the post from its own resources and, after Henning’s departure to Berkeley in 1961, appointed Mary Boyce, who had been lecturer since 1947, as Professor of Iranian Studies until her retirement in 1982, and Neil MacKenzie from 1955 to 1975. Subsequently further distinguished scholars of Zoroastrianism and Iranian studies ensured that the subject has been studied and taught continuously at SOAS for the past 86 years. They include Ronald E. Emmerick; Nicholas Sims-Williams (from 1976); Philip Kreyenbroek (1988-1996); A.D.H. Bivar; John R. Hinnells (1993-1998); myself (since 1997), now holder of the Zartoshty Brothers Chair and former student of Professor Boyce; and finally Sarah Stewart (since 2008), now lecturer in Zoroastrian studies.

Other important centres for the academic study of Zoroastrianism and Iranian languages include Paris, Salamanca, Berlin, Bochum, Göttingen, Hamburg, Oxford, Jerusalem, Toronto, Claremont and Los Angeles. In recent years charitable giving has benefited the academic study of the religion not only at SOAS but also at various other universities. They include Claremont Graduate University and Stanford, Oxford with the Bahari Associate Professorship in Sasanian studies, and Toronto with the Yarshater Lectureship in Avestan and Pahlavi Languages. These newly endowed positions signal an increasing awareness that in the present intellectual climate only endowed posts can ensure that Zoroastrianism continues to be studied in perpetuity at the highest academic level.

Photograph by Glenn Ratcliffe (SOAS)
Although SOAS was founded in 1916 as the School of Oriental Studies, teaching and research relating to Africa, specifically to African languages, was present on a substantial scale from early on (1916-17). The addition of the word 'African' to the school's title in 1938 (hence, the School of Oriental and African Studies) was a recognition of this reality, principally as part of a campaign to raise funds from colonial governments in Africa.

By 1946 the Scarborough Report had concluded that Asian and African studies should be primarily focussed in London. Even so, North Africa never ranked very high amongst SOAS's growing range of interests, probably because, apart from Egypt and, briefly, Libya during WWII, Britain had abandoned its imperial engagements there in 1904. Ironically enough, as the empire declined interest in North Africa grew at SOAS.

**SOAS and African history**

Perhaps the most important reason for this was the appointment of Roland Oliver to a new post in the tribal history of East Africa in 1948. It was Professor Oliver's determination to expand the study of African history in Britain that eventually created the environment in which, in the late 1960s, a post in North African history – the only university position devoted to North Africa in Britain at the time – was created. It was occupied by Michael Brett, a specialist on medieval Tunisia, until his retirement in 2002. He presided, in the 1970s and 1980s, over the growth of interest in British scholarship on the region within North Africa, as Algeria and Morocco tried to expand their academic links with Europe and the United States away from the formerly predominant role of France.

Dr Brett was joined by Professor Harry Norris, whose interests in the Islamic world, which ranged from North Africa to the Middle East and to Europe, had

*Ironically enough, as the British Empire declined interest in North Africa grew at SOAS*
In today’s changing academic world, these interests in North Africa have been absorbed into wider fields of study nonetheless originated in North Africa. He once told me – although I do not know how serious he was – that he had been stationed in Gibraltar and, looking across the Straits, he had wondered what lay beyond the mountains on the other side. It had been that curiosity, he said, which led him into his prolonged encounter with the Islamic world, starting with Mauritania and the Western Sahara. In 1977, this interest resulted in the publication of a fascinating study of the annual pilgrimage from the Atlantic coast of Africa to Mecca, the first of his many investigations of the lesser-known aspects of the Islamic world.

These developments were aided by SOAS’s widening engagement in the region. Thus, in the late 1960s, the increasingly dynamic group of African history specialists being built up by Professor Oliver was joined by Dr James Bynon after he had obtained his doctorate at the Sorbonne in 1963. His particular interest was related to Tamazight, the group of indigenous languages in North Africa, particularly in Algeria and Morocco. His wife, Theodora Bynon, was a German linguistics specialist who joined SOAS’s Linguistics Department.

Their combined interest in linguistics brought a small group of North Africans into SOAS, initially as research assistants because they were native Tamazight speakers, but some of them later became post-graduate students as well. They joined other North Africans, funded by their governments, who were already studying at SOAS as undergraduates or postgraduates. Nor were they just confined to SOAS; at least one Algerian undertook PhD research at the neighbouring Institute of Education. A veteran of the Algerian war of independence, Abbasi Madani was subsequently to become the co-leader of the Front Islamique du Salut, Algeria’s moderate Islamist party whose potential victory in legislative elections in 1992 led to the army-backed coup in Algiers against the President, Chadli Bendjedid, and thus to the Algerian civil war in the 1990s.

The Geography Department and North Africa
In 2002, SOAS transferred its Geography Department to King’s College after a merger with the parallel department there. The merger marked the end of another link with North Africa, symbolised by the simultaneous retirement of Professor Tony Allan. Tony Allan, together with his colleague, Professor Keith McLachlan, had developed major academic links with Libya and Libyan universities, initially through a joint project, completed in 1969, to survey Libyan agriculture. The project had included other well-known SOAS figures, such as Professor Edith Penrose, Dr Dasgupta and Dr Robert Mabro.

Some years later, at the start of the 1980s, those links blossomed into the first major conference on Libya after the ‘Great September Revolution in 1969’ – which had toppled King Idris and brought the Qaddafi regime to power – which was held in SOAS. The conference coincided with another initiative: to advise Libya on its maritime and terrestrial borders with Tunisia, Malta and Chad respectively. This project continued through the next decade and eventually culminated in the creation of the Geopolitics and International Boundaries Centre at SOAS; the aim of the centre was to research these issues in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and the Gulf. After publishing a series of books on boundary issues, the centre was eventually merged into the Geography Department at King’s College where Richard Schofield, a SOAS alumnus, still runs an MA course on geopolitics and boundaries (which is also available to SOAS students).

In the 1990s, too, the Department hosted several major conferences on North Africa, some of which were organised in conjunction with the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies – the fore-runner of today’s London Middle East Institute. One, in 1994, brought together for the first time representatives of moderate Islamist political parties in North Africa to discuss their future political agendas. Another, in 1989, discussed the nature of the state in North Africa and brought together scholars from the region itself with their counterparts in Britain and the United States. Two others, in the mid-1990s, examined material cultures in the Middle East and Asia, including traditional irrigation systems in Algeria and Morocco and a third provided a forum for a discussion of Tunisian domestic politics.

North Africa today
In today’s changing academic world, these interests in North Africa have been absorbed into wider fields of study; Michael Brett’s post in North African history, for example, has been absorbed into a post on the history of Islam in Africa. Instead of specified departments, individual members of staff have their own interests in the region, its history, anthropology, culture and literature. But the links still remain and, no doubt, in the future opportunities will emerge to formalise these interests and links and revive North African studies at SOAS as a discrete subject in its own right!

George Joffé is a member of the magazine’s Editorial Board

Photograph by Shahla Geramipour
SOAS and Islamic archaeology

SOAS has been an important centre for the study of Islamic archaeology for well over half of its century-long existence. David Storm Rice, the first holder of a position in Islamic art and archaeology at SOAS, was an important figure in the history of the discipline. Born Sigismund Reich in Austria in 1913, he moved with his family to Palestine when he was ten years old. In 1937, he completed his doctorate in Paris. In 1947, Rice was appointed Lecturer in Near and Middle East History at SOAS. In 1950, he was the recipient of a newly-created position, a Readership in Islamic Art and Archaeology, that reflected his interests and, indeed, seems to have been created for him. Until his untimely death in 1962 he continued to teach at SOAS, being promoted to Professor in 1959.

The same year that Rice began teaching at SOAS, the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara (BIAA) was opened in the Turkish capital. In 1949, a Mesopotamian archaeologist, Seton Lloyd, was appointed its second director. Lloyd enlisted Rice to join him at new BIAA excavations at the important city of Harran, south of Urfa near Turkey’s border with Syria, an area that is in the news these days not for dazzling discoveries about the past of humankind, but for the recent conflict that has plagued the region.

Rice’s Harran papers are held in SOAS’s archives. This rich trove of documents yields insights into the daily travails of archaeology.

*Scott Redford outlines the history of Islamic archaeology at SOAS and draws attention to the ways the field has changed more recently.*
but, unfortunately, for daily dramas of human misery. Rice’s involvement with Harran continued throughout the 1950s, leading to a handful of important articles, with, no doubt, many others planned.

Rice’s Harran papers are held in SOAS’s archives. This rich trove of documents yields insights into the daily travails of archaeology more than its rare but signal triumphs: the wheeling letters to Land Rover asking for the loan of a vehicle for the season; the endless requests for money, permits, the workmen’s pay register and other administrative documents, among them a letter to HM Customs and photo-booth photos likely destined for official documents for the Turkish Department of Antiquities.

The archive also contains photographs evocative of the stark beauty of Harran, with its famous beehive domed houses, and the important discoveries that Rice made at the citadel, where he uncovered previously unknown 10th- century inscriptions and figural reliefs, unusual for the Islamic world, of hunting dogs flanking an entrance to the citadel.

SOAS is lucky to have a collection, not only of DS Rice’s papers, but also of Islamic ceramics. In this collection are several trays of glazed and molded ceramics, mostly dating to the 12th and 13th centuries, brought back from Harran by Professor Rice.

When he died in 1962, Rice was succeeded by his Hungarian doctoral student from SOAS, Géza Fehérvari, who taught Islamic art and archaeology at SOAS for almost 30 years until his retirement in 1991. The collections at SOAS are replete with testimonials to Prof. Fehérvari’s excavations across the Islamic world, with sherds from Afghanistan, three different sites in Iran where he conducted excavations, Egypt and Libya, just as SOAS’s library contains the books and articles that resulted from these excavations. In 2000, SOAS published a book concerning excavations undertaken by two SOAS academics, Fehérvari and A.D.H. Bivar, at the site of Ghubayra in south central Iran.

The torch of Islamic archaeology was then taken up by another SOAS alumnus, Geoffrey King, who had extensive experience excavating in the Arabian Peninsula, and taught Islamic archaeology at SOAS until his recent retirement.

As readers of this magazine will recall from a recent Profile, I joined SOAS in 2014 and last year taught my first introduction to Islamic archaeology as a Master’s course. I have experience excavating in Turkey, the UAE and Egypt, and am currently involved in the final publication of Bilkent University’s excavations of the site of Kinet (the Issos of antiquity), a site on the Gulf of Iskenderun (Alexandretta) in southern Turkey.

My participation in the Kinet excavations was enabled by an invitation from Bilkent University. This is indicative of shifting winds; in recent years, funding cuts have led to a lower profile for Western European and North American excavations at sites, Islamic and pre-Islamic alike.

This, combined with increasing hostility towards former colonial hegemons, makes for an era of retrenchment, with major initiatives concentrating not on large scale excavation as much as the cataloguing, preservation and publication of excavations finds, like current British Museum projects on finds from Islamic period sites like Samarra in Iraq and Siraf in Iran. These are very worthy projects, but they remind us that the heroic age of Islamic archaeology is over.

Current Islamic archaeology trends and archaeology in general also rely on analysis of sites based on satellite and other aerial data. SOAS’s neighbours at UCL are involved in a multi-period project at the oasis city of Merv in Turkmenistan. This project is a multi-period one, but has a strong Islamic component, ranging from the earliest Islamic era through Seljuk times to the early modern period. Merv Project Director Tim Williams’ team is cooperating with Turkmen authorities and uses the latest technologies combined with targeted excavations, something that is important given the extent of the site. The UCL project is also involved in historic preservation and conservation work at the site.

Projects like Kinet and Merv seem indicative of new ways that Islamic archaeology is evolving: fewer stand-alone European and North American excavations, more cooperation between foreign and national archaeological institutions, more reliance on technology and a more holistic sense of involvement with the site. Another trend, given population growth in the Islamic world, is salvage archaeology (Kinet was one of these), with national authorities guiding archaeology in areas to be developed for urban expansion, factories, dams or other large development projects.

In recent years, funding cuts have led to a lower profile for Western European and North American excavations at sites, Islamic and pre-Islamic alike

Scott Redford is Nasser D. Khalili Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at SOAS
Ehsan Yarshater was born to Baha’i parents in Hamedan, Iran. He recalls Baha’i schools being closed in his childhood and speaks of the establishment of ‘normal schools’, where he trained to become a teacher. Orphaned early in life but driven by a near-insatiable desire to learn, Yarshater would later traverse the globe, venturing from Tehran to London and New York and making an indelible mark on the field of Iranian studies.

He graduated with a Master’s from SOAS in 1952 and eventually earned a PhD inspired and guided by the renowned Iranologist, Professor Walter Bruno Henning. What follows is a shortened transcript of an informal conversation with Professor Richard Black, Pro-Director (Research and Enterprise, SOAS), that took place in New York in April 2015.

Could you tell us a little about yourself?

My name is Ehsan, which is an Arabic word. It means ‘to do good’. My family name — which is a little bit odd, even for the Persians — is ‘Yar-e-shater’. It means ‘clever’ or rather a ‘capable friend’. The reason I have this odd family name is my father greatly believed in a mentor he had, and once — before taking family name became a must in Iran under Reza

We, as special students of Henning, shared some of this glory
SOAS had a great library – still has

Shah – in a letter this mentor had called my father ‘Yar-e-shater’. This is taken from a book by Sādī, the...Persian poet and prose writer in [the] 13th century... In his respect for his mentor, [my father] took this combination of two words as his family name.

Nowadays ‘Shater’ means ‘the important man in a bakery’ which makes a special kind of bread called ‘Sangak nan’... The original Arabic word that means ‘capable’ is not known very much in Iran. So altogether it strikes people somewhat odd that I am called Yar-e-shater, literally meaning ‘friend of a baker’!

And your upbringing and education in Iran?

[I went to] Madrese ye Tarbiyat. Tarbiyat means education... I had just gone to the 8th grade when Reza Shah ordered all Bahá’i schools closed... In the meantime, my mother died and a year later my father died. And I went to stay with my senior maternal uncle and went to a school run by the Muslims.

About this time the Ministry of Education... started ‘normal schools’ to train students for being teacher of elementary schools. And I needed also to live somewhere. I had no means of living [as I had lost my parents]... Eventually, I found my way to a normal school... [which] was a boarding school... Now there was a rule that two students, the one who came on top and the one who came second, they would get a scholarship to go to the teacher’s college... Unfortunately, I became on top... so I became a student eventually in the boarding school of the teacher’s college. And when I finished it, I was entitled to begin a teaching job at the secondary schools, but in one of the provinces, not in Tehran. Well I didn’t want to leave... because... they had opened courses for a doctorate in Persian language and I very much wanted to see that course... [So] I stayed in Tehran and I followed the doctorate course. For a number of years, I was secondary school teacher, but... [afterwards] I became the deputy director of the normal school where I had studied myself... this continued until I went to the teacher’s college and became a boarder at the teacher’s college boarding school.

What about your time spent abroad?

I graduated [in 1952] with an MA from [the] School of Oriental and African studies where Henning and Mary Boyce both taught. And then the rest, of course, was my career in Tehran. Well, one year I taught Persian literature, but from the second year I began to teach some of these ancient languages which I had studied with Henning and Mary Boyce. And it was the first time that some of these languages [were] being taught in Iran. So I became a fixture in the University of Tehran and continued my career there until 1958. In 1958 I was invited by Columbia University for a year as a guest associate professor... My guest associate professorship was extended for another year. In the meantime, a rich Armenian by the name of Hagop Kevorkian established an endowed chair, not for Armenian mind you, but... for Iranian. And so when I returned to Iran after my two years of guest associate professorship at Columbia I was invited back to occupy the chair and develop Iranian studies at Columbia. ... I continued my teaching and did develop the Iranian studies. I established the Center for Iranian Studies.

Tell us about your work in Columbia

One of the things [the Center] did was to realise an old desiderata of mine, and that was to have a detailed encyclopaedia on Iran, its history and its culture where the entries will be written by the best of people in the world, whether they were in Japan or Canada or United States or Britain or whatever. This became my main
project and continues my main project. It's a very detailed encyclopaedia… The encyclopaedia is published in print but also on our website/internet and it's free of charge to use it, to make copies of it… I thought this would be a service to Iranian studies and to the students of Iran in countries like India, Pakistan, Armenia, Georgia, [and] Iran itself… [It was] very fortunate that the National Endowment for Humanity came to our help. And the recommendation which was written for Encyclopaedia Iranica was very strong… For 34 years, the National Endowment for Humanities had been helping the Encyclopaedia Iranica so that we have been able to pay the salary of the editors. I never drew any salary. Nor do I now. And this was, in fact, helpful in my getting grants from the National Endowment because they realised that this is a work of love.

Let's go back to your time at SOAS and your memories of Professor Henning. Could you tell us a little more?

I won a scholarship from the British Council to study education. I came to England by plane and I felt that I had no interest in study education, particularly when I had such a great name like Henning who was teaching, fortunately in England not in Germany. And he was married to a Jewish woman. …So early enough, he came to England and was appointed Professor of Iranian language. He was a man with a small body, big head and slight hunch, but his presence was greatly felt. And in fact by the time I had stayed in Iran in a few years and attended the international meeting of Iranian studies I realised that Henning was a very special kind… Everybody was wondering what would Henning say when something controversial appeared in discussions. And once he said something everybody made note, and nobody ever wanted to say anything against it. And of course we, as special students of Henning, shared some of this glory.

When I became a student of Henning, at the same time I became a student of [the] School Oriental and African Studies. This school had a great library – still has. Any book you thought of, they had it. And in my time I helped also to get some of the modern books that had not reached the library… I was a graduate student and therefore I did not mix very much, except with those who taught me… And often I had my lunch in the building of the Senate Library… and this continued until 1952 when I went to Iran.

When I went to Iran I had not yet got a doctorate … because I was usually just learning things… But I asked Henning, I said ‘do you think I should go for a doctorate?’ He thought a little and he said ‘yeah, you better’. So I began to take further courses and study by myself. And then, I believe it was 1954 or perhaps sooner, there was an international congress of Oriental studies in Moscow… when we were in Moscow I [asked] Henning if I have to sit for defence of my dissertation, which I had written about a number of Iranian dialects that Henning had started and I [had] continued. He said ‘Yes, all right. We’ll have a meeting here’. And he told me come to such-and-such room. And I did, and I found that there was Henning; there was Gershevitch, who was now teaching at Cambridge University; and Benveniste, a very important scholar, French – he had the reputation of being the greatest Indo-Europeanist in the West. And they formed a committee and they called me, asking a few questions, said ‘all right, you go.’ And when I came back to SOAS there was nothing else needed, and I had defended my dissertation which was about… Persian dialects.

Henning once wrote an article ‘The ancient language of Azerbaijan’, which was an Iranian language. And later I went to Iran and found a number of villages with the same language and some slight differences. And I wrote a book, actually, about this called Southern Tati Dialects. And so this was my dissertation for a doctorate. So I got a doctorate all right.

This trip to London gave me the opportunity – also, London became my favourite city. Later I would travel to Europe very frequently and I always went to London, as if it was my second home really… and it is still the case. If I go to Europe, my real love would be to go to London. And even though later I went to Paris, I liked Paris too but London was something else for me.

This transcript was produced by Megan Wang with help from Shabnam Mirafzali under the supervision of, and with editorial input from, Hassan Hakimian
The Brunei Gallery, SOAS 1996-2016

As SOAS celebrates its centenary in 2016, the Brunei Gallery marks its own anniversary of 20 years. John Hollingworth reflects on some of the Gallery’s most notable Middle East exhibitions.

The Brunei Gallery, SOAS has spent the last two decades organising exhibitions dedicated to promoting a better understanding of the art, culture, history and contemporary contexts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. While all of the Gallery’s exhibitions have been important, the limited selection included here is an attempt to showcase a diverse range of exhibitions as a reflection of the Gallery’s interest in the Middle East region.

The inaugural exhibition, held in May 1996, was entitled Empire of the Sultans – Ottoman Art from the Collection of Nasser D. Khalili. It comprised some 200 works, objects and artefacts and explored almost every aspect of life in the Ottoman Empire: from military achievements to religious devotion. This exhibition focussed not merely on the luxury arts but also on the key role played by the Ottoman tradition of calligraphy as an instrument of power and as an art form in its own right.

This exhibition marked the start of the Brunei Gallery and reflected SOAS’s rich and longstanding relationship with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Of the 150 exhibitions held to date – a

Of the 150 exhibitions held – a landmark for the Brunei Gallery – approximately one-third of those have focussed on the MENA region.
landmark for the Gallery – approximately one-third have focussed on this region, varying from archaeological collections to historical materials, textiles, photography and modern art.

The closing exhibition in 1998 was Islamic Art & Patronage – Treasures from Kuwait an exhibition of Islamic art from the al-Sabah Collection, which presented an outstanding selection of objects from one of the most comprehensive collections of Islamic art and illustrated the diversity and splendour of the collection representing ten centuries of artistic achievement and spanning geographical boundaries from Spain to India. It explored the remarkable development of artistic patronage within the Islamic world; diverse social classes that sponsored the arts highlighting unique techniques and styles that reflected the development of artistic traditions in the world of Islam. The collection had travelled since 1990 and SOAS provided a unique opportunity for it to be enjoyed in London.

In the summer of 1999 was Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925. The Brunei Gallery was the only European venue of this exhibition. A stunning array of treasures, many never exhibited previously, were selected from public and private collections in seven countries featuring some one hundred works of art that included paintings, manuscript illustrations and works on paper. This exhibition is still considered the single most important show in the UK devoted to the paintings and the visual art of 18th and 19th century Persia. The exhibition was also important as a portrait of Nasir al-Din Shah was lent by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art for the London venue only; this was the first artwork lent to the West since the 1979 Revolution.

The following summer saw one of the highlights of the archaeological exhibitions we have hosted, Traces of Paradise – The Archaeology of Bahrain 2500 BC-300 AD. The exhibition presented the early history of this island and was drawn from nearly 600 objects from the collections of the Bahrain National Museum, many dating back 4,000 years and more, and never before seen in Britain. The exhibition included additional objects loaned from the British Museum, Musée du Louvre, Paris and the Forhistorisk Museum, Moesgård, Denmark.

In 2006 we hosted an exhibition that celebrated creativity in Egyptian Landscapes – Fifty Years of Tapestry Weaving at the Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre, Cairo. The exhibition presented a rare opportunity to see a dazzling collection of tapestries from one of the world’s greatest schools of weaving, Egypt’s ground-breaking Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre, and was their first exhibition in the UK for over 20 years. The exhibition featured masterpieces from the Centre’s permanent collection as well as stunning new pieces woven over the past half-century. They were the result of a unique educational philosophy that has profound significance for all forms of art and creativity with remarkable and vivid depictions of Egypt’s flora, fauna and people.

After the Qajar exhibition in 1999, the Gallery hosted a number of other Iranian exhibitions. Two in particular standout, both of which were SOAS-generated and curated. The first, in 2013, was The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination, which was the first exhibition of its kind to provide a visual narrative of the history of Zoroastrianism, its rich cultural heritage and the influence it has had on the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As part of the School’s centennial events this highly ambitious exhibition became the first SOAS-generated exhibition to travel: it was re-staged, to great success, in 2016 at the National Museum, New Delhi.

The second was Maps of Persia 1477-1925: A graphical journey through the history of Iran in 2015 featuring a selection of maps (urban plans, topographic maps and sea charts) taken from the Dr Cyrus Ala’i’s Map Collection.
The Middle East at SOAS
October – November 2016

Since 1997 John Hollingworth has managed the Brunei Gallery, its exhibition programme and permanent collections. In 2012 he was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to Culture and Higher Education.

of Persia which consists of over 250 historical maps that was gifted to the Centre for Iranian Studies at the LMEI in 2013. The collection includes important printed general maps of Persia and more specialist items from the early editions of Ptolemy, at the end of the 15th century, up until the end of the Qajar dynasty in 1925.

The exhibitions shown have provided the first opportunity for many artists and collections to be shown in this country, including a number of highly successful modern art shows from the region such as Dialogue of the Present – The Work of 18 Contemporary Arab Women Artists, Beyond the Myth – Contemporary Moroccan Art (which was under the High Patronage of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI of Morocco), My Father’s House: The Architecture of Cultural Heritage and, in 2008, SOAS was the launch venue for the pioneering exhibition Edge of Arabia – Contemporary Art from Saudi Arabia, which featured the work of 17 Saudi contemporary artists that explored the complex and diverse identities of 21st-century life in Saudi Arabia. The issues addressed were as much personal or domestic as they were global.

Two exhibitions which celebrated the relationship between the West and the Arab and Islamic world as it survives in magnificent books, engravings, manuscripts and documents were Looking East – The European Experience of the Middle East in Books and Watercolours and Bridge Of Knowledge: Western Appreciation of Arab and Islamic Civilisation in the Arcadian Library. The latter offered a rare glimpse of evocative books from the holdings of The Arcadian Library, one of the most prestigious and specialised private libraries, on the East-West interface of travel, science, art, and literature, from the age of printing. It also included manuscript highlights from the last millennium and, in 2011, was the 100th exhibition to be presented by the Brunei Gallery.

Earlier this year, rather aptly, we partnered once more with the British Council to present In Search of Lost Time, an exhibition that explored the complex relationship between image, speed and time in the Persian Gulf, questioning the chronological and territorial notion of the region and the paradigms of its underlying identity. The accelerated pace of growth over the last 60 years has led to monumental shifts in the economic, physical and socio-political environment of the GCC states and has created rifts and tensions between an existing desert culture and rising global capitals.

Many of these exhibitions were timed to coincide with related national and international cultural events, anniversaries and celebrations as a way to add layers of meaning and to further the Gallery’s goal of promoting a better understanding of the region, its history and its people.

Further details on all of these exhibitions can be found archived on our website at https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/previous/

‘Imperium Timuri Begel Can vel Tamerlanis circa annum ejus emortualem A. C. 1405’ (The Empire of Timur Beyor Khanor Tamerlane (Tamburlaine) around the year of his death 1405) by Homann Heirs, Nuremberg, 1737, 16.5 x 25cm. From Dr Cyrus Ala’i’s Map Collection donated to the Centre for Iranian Studies. SOAS Library, reference: MCA/S/28. Part of the 2015 Persian Maps exhibition.
In an issue of *The Middle East in London* dated October 2010 I contributed a report on the second digitisation project undertaken by SOAS Library. Six years later it seems appropriate to bring readers up to date with developments in the digitisation and cataloguing of Islamic manuscripts at SOAS.

The subject of that first report was the Yale-SOAS Islamic Manuscript Gallery that was funded by JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee). The project supplied SOAS with valuable experience in the digitisation of manuscripts and catalogues under the guidance of Yale, a world leader in this field. A selection of Persian manuscripts was digitised as images only. A number of important manuscript catalogues and dictionaries were digitised as images as well, and the texts could be searched for content by getting them re-typed; it proved impossible to achieve accurate results using OCR (optical character recognition). The grant also included money to buy hardware for digitisation.

Another one of several other projects funded by JISC under the same programme was a joint application by Oxford and Cambridge Universities called OCIMCO (Oxford & Cambridge Islamic Manuscripts Catalogue Online), to digitise their numerous published catalogues of Islamic manuscripts dating back to 1787, and the many records on hand-written slips that had never been published.

Subsequently JISC made more money available for the creation of an 'Islamic Gateway'. The successful applicants for this funding were jointly Oxford and Cambridge, who, on the basis of OCIMCO, have produced FIHRIST, which is now the union catalogue for Islamic manuscripts in the British Isles.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the usefulness of this development. Until now any student wishing to know where s/he could find a particular item would need to search in the published catalogues of all the major libraries. As these manuscript catalogues were compiled for the most part by individual academics, they have a variety of transliteration systems and forms of complicated Islamic names.

**Cataloguing Islamic manuscripts at SOAS Library**

*Peter Colvin* outlines the progress of the FIHRIST project in SOAS Library in cataloguing and digitising Islamic manuscripts.

A single manuscript containing 34 separate items written in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian. So far 1,325 items in 859 manuscripts in SOAS’s collection have been entered into FIHRIST.
To understand the significance of FIHRIST it is necessary to outline the particular issues connected with cataloguing manuscripts in general and Islamic manuscripts in particular. As a first step in achieving uniformity the specialist libraries in the UK concerned with Islamic materials belonging to MELCOM UK (the Middle East Libraries Committee) agreed in the 1980s to follow the Library of Congress transliteration tables and subject headings. In the early 2000s VIAF (The Virtual International Authority File) appeared.

On the basis of this standardisation FIHRIST has developed a schema to cover all the facets required for cataloguing Islamic manuscripts. These include accommodating the various sizes of items from one page to multi-volume works, and single manuscripts that contain multiple titles, materials and inks, watermarks, decorations and illustrations, scripts, names of scribes, incipits, explicit and colophons, provenance and acquisition details including ownership seals, languages and bindings. It also has the facility for adding links to transcriptions, translations, printed catalogues, articles and even to recordings of the spoken word. The technical details of its schema and a manual are on FIHRIST’s website: http://www.fihrist.org.uk/ (to see a list of the contributing libraries and the statistics of their manuscript holdings consult the ‘CollectionStatistics’ box).

FIHRIST has been designed to be flexible, supplying alternative choices to accommodate the characteristics of different collections. A library can put as much or as little information into its records as it wants.

In its short life of about five years it has received data from 14 libraries, including the British Library and all the other libraries with major collections of Islamic manuscripts. This comes to 16,105 individual items in a smaller number of manuscripts, as these frequently contain several works. It can be expected to grow steadily as the larger libraries catalogue more of their backlogs and as smaller libraries contribute.

The importance of cataloguing and publicising the hidden treasures of library collections was highlighted last year by the excitement generated in the media by Dr Alba Fedeli’s discovery of parchment fragments of a very early Qur’an in Birmingham University Library. She persuaded the staff to submit these to carbon dating, and they have proved to be among the oldest yet found.

At the same time the destruction deliberately wrought on Bosnian libraries during the breakup of Yugoslavia and currently being carried out in parts of the Muslim world by latter-day iconoclasts has underlined the urgent need for the preservation of the Islamic written heritage through digitisation.

SOAS Arabic and Persian manuscripts were catalogued by A.J. Arberry shortly before WWII. The typescripts were sent to Beirut to be printed but the war prevented this from being completed; now all that remains of his work are some galley proofs.

In the 1970s Adam Gacek began his career as a specialist in Arabic codicology by cataloguing all the Arabic manuscripts in the SOAS collection. Over the last five years I have entered his catalogue records into FIHRIST and also catalogued all the Persian, Turkish, Pashto and Urdu manuscripts, expanding the very sketchy records that existed in the SOAS printed catalogues. Fifty or so manuscripts had never previously been catalogued, and the remaining thirty or forty should soon be completed.

Cataloguing manuscripts in all these languages and genres to a high level requires expertise far beyond my limited abilities, and some entries are rudimentary without identified authors or titles.

The SOAS collection has been built up by donations, mostly by old colonial officials, and there are consequently many duplicate copies of the most popular works in both collections, which are of importance for palaeography more than their contents. There are also rare and, in some cases, unique works among them.

SOAS now has an active digitisation programme. The Digital Projects Officer, Erich Kesse, the Middle East specialist librarian Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb and I are all working to bring important manuscripts in our collection to the attention of scholars by digitising and publicising them, with the aim both of getting them fully catalogued and available for study.

The foundations are now in place for exciting future developments of the Library Archives during the next 100 years.

The destruction currently being carried out in parts of the Muslim world has underlined the urgent need for the preservation of the Islamic written heritage through digitisation.
THE PAST
IN THE PRESENT
On the night of 15 July 2016, the citizens of Turkey were jolted by the realisation that a military coup was unfolding in real time. In the days following the failed coup, clarity was in short supply. Gaps and inconsistencies in the accounts provided by the main protagonists fed the rumour mill. Through a haze of disinformation and wild speculation, what could be discerned was the outline of a new stage in the struggles between Erdoğan’s AKP and their erstwhile Islamist allies, Fethullah Gülen’s so-called Hizmet (Service) movement, now officially dubbed the ‘FETO/PDY terror organisation’.

In the new official narrative, the penetration of Gülenist cadres into the nerve centres of the state was likened to a virus or a cancer that had metastasised and had to be extirpated from the body politic. Yet these disease metaphors did little to elucidate the central question of how and through what processes the Turkish state apparatus had come to be thus colonised. Could this be, at least partially, interpreted as the tail end of a long, protracted and quite deliberate process of mutation of the Turkish state, whereby religious communities (cemaats) came to occupy key positions in the state apparatus?

Deniz Kandiyoti situates the failed July coup in the context of a long-running struggle between different Islamic political actors to colonise the Turkish state apparatus.
Both the rule of law and the imperative of selecting new cadres by merit and competence have, for decades, been sacrificed at the altar of loyalty to the ‘cause’ (dava) of building a ‘New Turkey’ cleansed of secular republicanism.

In fact, the penetration of Islamic actors into republican Turkish politics dates back to the Cold War period when Islam was deployed as an antidote to communism through organisations such as ‘Associations to Combat Communism,’ established since the 1960s. Indeed, Fethullah Gülen was himself one of the founders of one such Association in Erzurum in 1963 before he rose to prominence as a charismatic preacher. During the span of Turkey’s history of multiparty democracy, religious actors were firmly embedded in the electoral politics of patronage, as a succession of centre-right parties collaborated with leaders of tarikat (Sufi orders), whose following they cultivated for political support.

Initially, these accommodations between the leaders of religious communities – such as the prominent Naksibendi and Nurcu orders – and secular political parties tended to stop short of more radical demands for constitutional and legal de-secularisation. This changed when political Islam entered electoral politics during and after the 1970s, through a succession of political parties led by Necmettin Erbakan and his Milli Görüş (National Vision) ideology, similar to and partially inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, of which the ruling AKP is an offshoot.

Thus, the politicisation of cadres within the Turkish state apparatus is far from new. Bureaucracies have routinely experienced major overhauls at times of political transition, down to the most menial staff like janitors and cleaners. Yet the republican state had come to rely on elements of continuity in both institutional design and in the recruitment of cadres, which continued to sustain a relatively coherent and ‘strong’ state structure. Most notably, for many long decades, recruitment into the civil service, public administration, the judiciary, the diplomatic service, the military and the universities still went through competitive and largely meritocratic examination systems. For the first time in 2010 it transpired that examination questions for the civil service had been ‘stolen’ and leaked to members of the Gülen community, who achieved suspiciously high scores. Similar allegations followed in relation to military colleges. Later testimony has suggested the practice went much further back. Whereas in the past governments often lacked legitimacy, and the tutelage of the army and repeated coups were a constant strain on the workings of parliamentary democracy, the entire system had not yet been widely perceived as ‘rigged.’

How did these mechanisms of cadre training and recruitment break down? Under Turgut Özal’s leadership, the political economy of the 1980s led to a more thorough embedding of Islamic actors in the business world by providing access to alternative channels of finance, of the mobilisation of savings and markets and of the consolidation of the growth of Islamic capital. Processes of market reform involving deregulation and privatisation also affected the educational domain, providing fertile ground for the proliferation of new actors such as the Gülen community’s networks of schools, tutorial colleges and monitored student residences, both in Turkey and abroad.

When the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) first came to power in 2002 it lacked technical cadres. The process of eviscerating secular track education whilst supporting publicly funded religious schools (‘Imam Hatip’ schools) as a source of loyal cadres was slow. Meanwhile, the technically competent graduates of Gülen schools served as a ready-made reservoir of brainpower. Moreover, despite the different orientations of the Milli Görüş-imbued AKP and the tarikat-based Gülen community, there was a meeting of minds on the question of dismantling the secular institutions of the republican state and the education of new ‘pious generations’.

The high point of the AKP-Gülenist alliance surfaced during a wave of prosecutions starting in 2007 against the military and their perceived civilian associates (journalists, politicians and academics) for allegedly plotting a coup to overthrow the government. The ‘Ergenekon,’ ‘Sledgehammer’ and related court cases which followed targeted senior military personnel and resulted in a comprehensive purge of largely Kemalist/sectarian cadres from the armed forces. It was Gülenist officers who were promoted to fill the ranks of those culled during these trials and who turned up in front-line positions on 15 July 2016.

Thus, both the rule of law and the imperative of selecting new cadres by merit and competence have, for decades, been sacrificed at the altar of loyalty to the ‘cause’ (dava) of building a ‘New Turkey’ cleansed of secular republicanism. This now leads to the danger that key institutions may turn into fiefdoms of assorted cemaats vying for influence and positions, while the security apparatus morphs into a collection of opaque paramilitary entities.

Could the ‘cleansing’ of the body politic of ‘malignant influences’, as currently undertaken by the regime, restore clean governance or revive a thoroughly enfeebled parliamentary democracy? Not unlike Humpty Dumpty’s fall, the current descent of state institutions into incoherence appears to defy easy remedies, still less if these are pursued through hasty projects of top-down ‘redesign’, masterminded by a seemingly all-powerful leader.

Deniz Kandiyoti is Emeritus Professor of Development Studies at SOAS. A more detailed treatment of these themes may be found in ‘The travails of the secular: puzzle and paradox in Turkey’, Economy and Society, Vol. 41, No.4, 2012, pp.513-531
One of the many shocking images of the failed military coup in Turkey was that of a young, bearded man in civilian clothes, draped in the red Turkish flag, using his belt to beat a group of young soldiers who are lying on the ground huddled up against each other. Heavily armed policemen appear to be watching the spectacle without intervening. Several sources have reported brutal attacks on military conscripts, many barely 18 years old, even after they had already surrendered. Some video clips suggest that policemen have threatened to rape the daughters and wives of captured soldiers.

These incidents are a stark reminder of the complex ways violence plays out in conflict situations. But they also tell us a lot about underlying gendered norms and power relations. Prevailing notions of masculinities, promoted and embodied by the militarised Turkish state, articulate strength and authority through force rather than democratic legal means. Throughout his rule as the former Prime Minister and now President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has heavily played on his image as the über-patriarch, tasked to protect the honour and unity of the nation. This ‘protection’ has frequently translated into oppressing religious and ethnic minorities as well as political dissidents. At the same time, Erdoğan has left no doubt that, in his world view, women are not equal to men. On numerous occasions, he has referred to the idea of gender equality and challenges to heteronormativity, as campaigned for by feminists and LGBTQ activists inside Turkey, as a foreign conspiracy.

Political scientists, international relations scholars and historians often focus on what we think of as ‘the big picture’ when analysing war and conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere. The majority of discussions in the media and policy circles revolve around national security concerns, changes in political economies and state-society relations. What a gendered lens adds to the picture is not only the recognition that women and men might be affected...
by and implicated in war and conflict differently, but also that there exists a continuum of violence in terms of what is happening at home, within the family, the workplace, the streets and situations of acute armed conflicts, including battle fronts. Moreover, attention to gender as a structural feature of inequality that cuts through world politics, state institutions, economic contexts, social and legal arenas and daily lives, also opens up our research enquiries into exploring the ways that gender might intersect with other power hierarchies.

For example, in Iraq I explored the ways in which being an Iraqi woman or man might intersect with being of a particular social class and a specific religious sect or ethnic group at any given historical moment: during the Ba’ath regime, the economic sanctions period, the invasion, the occupation, or more recent sectarian tensions and political struggles. In relation to my work on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, I found that power differences linked to being a man or a woman need to be explored in conjunction with ethnicity (Turk/Kurd) as well as religious differences, particularly in relation to the Alevi minority. Different forms of violence intersect; many Kurdish feminist activists stress that their struggle against state violence goes side by side with their struggle against gender-based violence, including that at the hands of fellow Kurdish men.

Cutting across any specific empirical context is the fact that women and children are disproportionately impacted by war, conflict and forced displacement. An increase in sexual and wider gender-based violence, restrictions on mobility, limited access to healthcare and the feminisation of poverty are common, gendered aspects of war. Since the start of the Syrian conflict early marriage, forced marriages, forced prostitution, sexual violence, and the demand for maternal and wider reproductive healthcare have increased greatly.

Meanwhile, women’s behaviour and appearance are both considered to be symbolic of the national, religious and ethnic community. Women, then, are often the target of legal or informal mechanisms or even physical violence with the aim of imposing dress codes, controlling sexual behaviour and limiting access to the public sphere, all in the name of ‘restoring authentic values’. In reality these actions demarcate boundaries of ‘us vs them’ and consolidate the authority of specific political actors or attempts to ‘break’ the opposition. This trend was particularly obvious in the Iraqi case: sectarian struggles were very much fought over the bodies, dress codes and mobility of women.

The impact of recent political transformations in the Middle East on women and men, on women’s rights and gender norms has been varied according to national contexts, respective histories of state feminism and gender activism, as well as differences among and between women and men based on class, citizenship status and place of residence, amongst other social differences. In general, mass protests and uprisings created new openings for women’s involvement in public, however, these were rapidly threatened by armed conflict, counter-revolutionary backlashes as well as the empowerment of Islamist political forces seeking to promote their conservative gender agendas as part of signalling a break from former regimes. In the struggle for political power, women’s bodies, but also increasingly men’s bodies and their sexuality, have become the targets of violence and control by a range of actors seeking to ‘break

Women and men are mobilising jointly, particularly amongst the youth, to resist violence against women as an integral part of their demands for democracy and dignity. The will of those advocating change while simultaneously consolidating their authority. Gender studies has long moved away from essentialised ideas about men as perpetrators and women as victims of violence and has been engaging in studies that look at agency, resistance, complexities and complicities. Current research indicates that despite what generally is a gloomy picture, there have been significant developments on the societal level. Women survivors of violence are speaking out publicly and breaking the taboo surrounding the discussion of sexual abuse and harassment. Moreover, women and men are mobilising jointly, particularly amongst the youth, to resist violence against women as an integral part of their demands for democracy and dignity. Men, especially young men, are increasingly making the connection between state authoritarianism and prevailing patriarchal gender regimes. And those men opposed to political authoritarianism in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and elsewhere in the region have also started to realise that the struggle for gender-based equality lies at the heart of struggles for more egalitarian and democratic societies.

Nadje Al-Ali is Professor of Gender Studies at the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS and a member of the magazine’s Editorial Board
Citing ‘artificial’ borders as the cause for the current state of turmoil in the Middle East is an oversimplification. Sami Zubaida explains

**Borders and nations:**
**Sykes-Picot as destiny?**

What is it about Sykes-Picot that makes it such a popular and repeated point of reference in discourse on the current Middle East chaos? The so-called Islamic State (IS) has declared that they are erasing the lines drawn by the infamous plan, and commentators on all sides seem to have taken up the theme that this drawing of borders was bound to fail, given the ‘realities’ of communal divisions.

An otherwise sensible *Guardian* columnist, Giles Frazer, took up the theme in an article published on 8 April 2016: ‘But the underlying forces that press for a Sunni state that runs across the Sykes-Picot border – including large chunks of what we are still calling Syria and Iraq – will not disappear, no matter who is in charge or what name we give to them.’

So, Sykes-Picot was doomed because it divided the Sunnis on the two sides of an artificial border.

Let us consider the actual history and significance. Sykes-Picot was first denounced for being a treacherous imperialist plan to cheat the Arabs from

Map of Sykes-Picot Agreement showing areas of control and influence agreed between the British and the French. Signed by Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, 8 May 1916. By Royal Geographical Society (map), Mark Sykes & François Georges-Picot (annotations). This file is from the collections of The National Archives (United Kingdom), catalogued under document record MPK1/426

The final actual division of the territorial spoils did not conform to the original Sykes-Picot plan: subsequent machinations and struggles led to major alterations
their promised independent state, the reward for their participation in the war against the Ottomans. The final actual division of the territorial spoils did not conform to that plan: subsequent machinations and struggles between Britain, France, Turkey and local forces and interests (nationalist, tribal) led to major alterations. Mosul and much of Anbar province were allocated by Sykes-Picot to Syria, and Mosul remained in dispute between Britain/Iraq and Turkey until 1926. Far from being arbitrary lines on the map, then, the eventual borders resulted from protracted disputes, struggles and negotiations. There remains, however, the popular notion of 'artificial' states, lines drawn around a heterogeneous population.

Following WWI, the victors created many new states on the territories of the defeated empires in many parts of the world, including Europe. Sykes-Picot was just another example of this process, later much modified. Further territorial states were created in the process of de-colonisation later in the century. Was Sykes-Picot any less ‘realistic’ than other instances? Surely, there are few countries thus created that were ethnically homogenous? There were many problems of ethnic divisions in Europe and elsewhere, but most muddled along, with notable exceptions like Yugoslavia. Look at the most spectacular colonial creation, India: such diversity and conflict, and yet, after the initial bloody partition, it works, more or less, successfully. Let us face it, most nation-states in the modern world were originally ‘artificial’ creations after wars and revolutions. It is often the state that makes the nation, and the Middle East is no exception. Iraq and Syria, alongside such creations, went through processes of national formation, despite conflicts and despotic rule, for much of the 20th century. It was ultimately the failure and collapse of the state, in the case of Iraq, due to wars and invasions, that led to the present quagmire.

It may be instructive to take up the assertions in the above quote from The Guardian column, regarding a ‘Sunnı state’ across the Syria-Iraq border, one supposedly prevented by Sykes-Picot, and now asserting this natural affinity. The border area of western Iraq/eastern Syria was/is largely desert, divided between tribes which straddled the borders: the main forms of (shifting) identities and solidarities were tribal, and the idea of being Sunni was not an issue until much more recent times when sectarian divisions were politicised following the Iranian Revolution, the subsequent war with Iran and the use by the Iraqi regime of sectarian solidarities as a tool in that conflict.

The main centres of trade, politics and culture in the region at the time of the post-WWI division were the cities, the most prominent being Aleppo and Mosul. These were, at the time of Sykes-Picot, Ottoman cities, with a wide mix of populations, languages and cultures: Arab, Kurd, Turk, Armenian, Assyrian, Chaldean and Jewish, and a multiplicity of religions and sects, Muslim, Christian and ancient ethnic religions such as Yazidis. Both cities were part of an Ottoman network in south and east Anatolia, including Mardin and Antep, equally polyglot. For the Sunnis their religion was taken for granted and seldom a political issue. Sentiments regarding borders and state entities for various groups were determined as much by economic and power interests as by ethno-religious identity.

Some trading interests were adversely affected by the severing of the Ottoman/ Anatolian networks. During the course of the 20th century and the formation of the nation-state and the institutions of modernity, Aleppo and Mosul became predominantly Arab cities and often fiercely nationalistic: a combination of country and pan-Arab nationalism, with important elements of communism and the left. Syria was celebrated as the ‘beating heart of Arabism’, even after the setback of the failure of the union with Nasserite Egypt in 1958-61. Mosul’s Sunni identity only came to the fore after the installation of a Shı’i sectarian government in Baghdad after the 2003 US and allied invasion of the country. And that Sunni identity did not dispose the majority of its population to support IS and its brutal rule.

The historical drawing of the lines and the entities thus enclosed in a territorial state are, of course, important factors in subsequent development, but far from determinant. Iraq and Syria, unlike other countries in the region, functioned as nation-states with central institutions of politics, economy and culture facilitating the imagination of the nation, despite its fracts and conflicts (common elsewhere) and periods of despotic rule. The denouement came not so much from a historical drawing of borders around diverse populations, but from combinations of events and conjunctures in more recent history, most notably regional wars, and ultimately the disastrous invasion of Iraq.

Finally, consider the implied alternatives to the creation of the nation-states in the region: a multiplicity of homogeneous ethnic states, a recipe for ethnic cleansing, or a super Arab state? Both fantasies.

Sami Zubaida is Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck, University of London and a member of the magazine’s Editorial Board. His most recent book is Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East (2011)
In the past five years, interest in the troubled history of the Jews of the Arab world has seen a remarkable resurgence. In Israel, the Mizrahi ('Oriental') revival has taken both cultural and political forms; while in the Arab world, the topic of Jewish legacy and the Jewish exodus from Arab countries is now being discussed in a new light.

Of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who once lived in the Arab world, only several thousands remain today, mostly in Morocco and Tunisia. Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa have been part of the region for centuries and millennia. But after the middle of the 20th century, with decolonisation and Arab independence and against the background of the Arab-Israeli conflict, these communities all but disappeared. Most Jews immigrated to Israel, while others went to Europe and North America. Some migrants to Israel were motivated by Zionist sentiments, but most emigrated because their local environment increasingly identified them with the Israeli enemy. While no concrete figures exist, it is estimated that today up to half of Israeli Jews trace their roots back to Middle Eastern and North African communities – in Morocco, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, and more.

Critical Mizrahi scholars put forth the category of ‘Arab Jews’ as a challenge to mainstream Zionism and the either-or dichotomy between Jew and Arab...
Sixty years after the exodus of Jews from the Arab world, young intellectuals now engage with the question of loss: the loss of Arab heritage for Jews and the loss of Jewish heritage for Arabs

Lebanon, Yemen, Iran and Palestine. In Israel these divergent and culturally diverse communities were all categorised as Mizrahim (Orientals). The Israeli establishment, dominated by Ashkenazi migrants from Eastern Europe, welcomed the arrival of Mizrahi migrants but discriminated against them when it came to access to education, land, the labour market and other state resources.

The Mizrahim emerged as a significant political factor in the 1970s, first with the radical leftist protest group The Black Panthers. Mizrahi support then played a key role in the ascendance to power of the right-wing Likud party in 1977. A generation of aspiring Mizrahi leaders came to the fore in the Likud government, and Prime Minister Begin made the issue of ethnic discrimination a key aspect of his political campaigns. Critical Mizrahi scholars, such as Ella Shohat and Yehuda Shenhav, put forth the category of ‘Arab Jews’ as a challenge to mainstream Zionism and the either-or dichotomy between Jew and Arab. In the 1990s and 2000s, with the Oslo process, the arrival of Soviet Jews and the Second Intifada, the Mizrahi question lost its significance in Israeli politics. But since the Israeli social protests of 2011, the question of Mizrahim, their cultural and political place in Israel, has very much returned to the limelight.

One of the first expressions of this revival was a group of Mizrahi poets, who achieved prominence through provocative and politicised poems in which they challenged ethnic relations and Israel. They called themselves ‘Ars-poetics’, referring to the derogatory identification of Mizrahim as ars (pimp in Arabic). These poets and other artists now celebrate and reclaim their Arab heritage in a manner unprecedented in Israel, with Jewish-Israeli musicians, such as Neta Elkayam, Dudu Tasa, and Ziv Yehezkel singing and recording in Arabic.

The Mizrahi renaissance has not remained confined to the cultural realm. During the 2015 elections, political parties across the spectrum sought to address Mizrahi interests and grievances. From the Arab-dominated ‘Joint List’ to the settlers’ party ‘the Jewish Home’, politicians expressed their strong connection to the plight of Mizrahim and to political attempts to set them right.

There is a general agreement that Mizrahim were discriminated against in the early decades of the Israeli state, and that their cultural heritage was marginalised and ignored. However, there is no consensus over the implications of the Arab-Jewish legacy in the present day. Two vocal groups emerged in the last year: ‘the Golden Age’ initiative is focussed ‘inwards’, on Jewish Israeli politics. While sharply critical of Ashkenazi Zionism and its treatment of Mizrahim, it nonetheless stresses its Zionist identity. These activists celebrate Arab and Jewish cultural affinities, yet distance themselves from any direct discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Conversely, the ‘Joint Eastern Initiative for Mizrahi-Palestinian partnership’ sees the plight of Mizrahim as closely connected to Israel’s repression of Palestinians. Composed of Jewish-Mizrahi activists, many of whom have long been active in the ranks of the non-Zionist left, the Joint Eastern Initiative has found resonance among Palestinian citizens of Israel such as Ayman Odeh, leader of the Joint List, and officials in the Palestinian Authority who see connections with Mizrahim as vital for future peace efforts with the Jewish Israelis.

Indeed, perhaps the most interesting development is the growing interest in Arab Jews in the Arab world. In recent years, Arab filmmakers, novelists, journalists and academics have returned to investigate the legacy of Arab Jews and the bitter circumstances of their departure. According to Palestinian political scientist Dr Najat Abdulhaq, who specialises in Jews, Greeks and other minorities in the Arab world, nearly 20 Arabic novels published in the last decade by authors from Libya, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and elsewhere engage the topic of Arab Jews. In the past three years the SOAS Centre for Jewish Studies screened two documentary films which highlight the Arab fascination with the Jewish past: Tinghir-Jerusalem (2013), in which French-Moroccan filmmaker Kamal Hachkar follows the journey of the Jews who left his ancestral hometown Tinghir in the Atlas Mountains; and Shadow in Baghdad (Duki Dror, 2013), which is about the dialogue between an Iraqi-Muslim journalist and a Jewish-Iraqi-Israeli journalist whose father disappeared in Baghdad in 1972.

Sixty years after the exodus of Jews from the Arab world, against the current turmoil in the region and prevailing pessimism, young intellectuals now interpret Jewish presence not solely through the lens of Zionism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. They engage with the question of loss: the loss of Arab heritage for Jews and the loss of Jewish heritage for Arabs. These parallel trajectories indicate that, both in Israel and in the Arab world, the question of Arab Jews or Mizrahim, which has long been overshadowed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, now merits its own discussion.
In the 2010s China began taking a belated interest in the Middle East. In 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to the region, including to both Saudi Arabia and Iran, carefully negotiating the minefield of antipathies between the two, seeking oil supplies from the former and anticipating the new Silk Road that will pass through the latter. Trade and economic penetration will be the hallmarks of the new Silk Road – a hugely ambitious transport and communications system that will originate in China, pass through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran before reaching Turkey and the frontiers of Europe. It is almost exactly the same route followed by traders and explorers in the days of Marco Polo, but it will deploy high technology unheard of in the days of old. A maritime ‘Silk Road’ will also emerge from China, using land corridors in Pakistan, and loop around the Persian Gulf, again heading towards Europe. It is a unified strategy, together called ‘One Belt, One Road’.

The question that emerges is the extent to which the ‘new’ Chinese outreach resembles the ‘old’, with its principles of trade and its use of transport corridors. “The Chinese look backwards to go forwards” noted the Australian sinologist, W.J.F. Jenner, referring to an inescapable attribute of Chinese language with its referents and grammatical structure. This attribute is also discernible in the Chinese approach to political economy and international relations.

Currently, Saudi Arabia already ships 790,000 barrels of oil daily to China. What

Learning the Middle East might be as difficult as the harsh learning curve China had to undertake in Africa.
The question is to what extent a win-win balancing act can be sustained by a great power that is, even so, a neophyte in this region.

had previously been a US and European preserve, the petroleum-exporting capacity of Saudi Arabia is now shared with the Chinese – who also have long-term futures in African petroleum. This anticipates the continued burgeoning of Chinese industry in the future; the oil is not always needed now, but it will be. As the US looks to fracking and other sources of energy, the Saudis have happily looked to China as the outlet for compensating any decline in their sales.

China exports $68 billion worth of goods to the Middle East annually, and Chinese industry is establishing bridgeheads in the region, including an aluminium smelter in Saudi Arabia near the Yemen border. But Saudi Arabia’s military foray in Yemen and the meltdown in Syria, Iraq and Libya mean that the notoriously cautious China might have to take an interest in regional politics and diplomacy – perhaps even offer its services as an honest broker or mediator. It is, however, very ill-suited to do so, having little deep knowledge and expertise in the region due to its long years of isolation from it. Learning the Middle East might be as difficult as the harsh learning curve China had to undertake in Africa. Never natural diplomats outside their own region (they have problems even within), the Chinese nevertheless cannot expect to have stronger economic relations with the Middle East and be exempt from the political fallout. The care Xi Jinping took to balance his cordiality to both Saudi Arabia and Iran is evidence that the Chinese know they have a lesson to learn slowly and deeply.

But the divisions of the Middle East do have a mirror in China itself. The Muslim minorities of China have been restive. Using force to crush them has been a feature of China’s response. China’s new anti-terrorism law will allow the country, upon invitation, to send its military abroad to conduct anti-terrorism operations. But if a new firefight were to break out between Iran and a Sunni state – as occurred in the 1980s with Iraq – and one side sought Chinese help, relations with the other side could be jeopardised for a very long time. As it is, more than half of all China’s peacekeeping deployment is already in the Middle East – particularly in naval commitment to patrolling the Somali coastal waters.

In December 2015, Beijing hosted representatives of both the Syrian government and opposition. They were meant to be involved in fruitful discussions; but these, as in every other location, came to nought. Chinese bemusement with the intractability of conflict with strong confessional elements again suggests a learning curve ahead.

At some stage, China may have to take sides in one or another Middle Eastern conflict. Its ‘no enemies’ policy may be sorely tested. Officially, right now, in the first ‘China’s Arab Policy Paper’ ever written and released just before Xi Jinping’s visit to the Middle East, the grandeur of win-win relationships based on ambitious trade links and economic cooperation was loudly trumpeted. The question is to what extent a win-win balancing act can be sustained by a great power that is, even so, a neophyte in this region.

Xi Jinping went to Iran after he went to Saudi Arabia. Both countries were accorded ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ – a high-grade status in the Chinese lexicon. But China also wants to establish a China free trade zone with the GCC states. The problem of a plenitude of relationships with Sunni countries, as opposed to a high-grade relationship with a single major Shia country in Iran, is skirted entirely in the Arab Policy Paper. However, one feature of the Paper was its great care to distinguish China from the United States. This is evident in the strong support for an independent Palestinian state. Whether this amounts to anything more than rhetoric – as indeed may be said of the Arab league’s own position towards Palestine; no one is rushing decisively to the Palestinian side right now – remains to be seen. But the use of the US as a counterpoint in this, the only regional policy paper the Chinese have ever prepared for any part of the world, suggests that China sees cooperation with the Middle East as just another step, albeit a highly important one, in its long struggle to overtake the US and be, at last, the Middle Kingdom, the Central Kingdom of the world.

Middle Eastern studies in the Chinese context may mean global studies of which the Middle East is only one strategic part.
The subject of the caliphate is a lively part of contemporary political discourse about the Middle East, especially after the recent revival of the title by the IS. At the same time the concept is full of uncertainties. What does it mean? How should a caliph be chosen, if at all, and what powers should he (for it is always he; there is no record of a female caliph) be able to exercise?

These are difficult questions to answer. Perhaps surprisingly, the traditional sources of Islamic law offer no generally accepted theory of the caliphate. The hadith (traditions of the Prophet) give very little explicit guidance about how he should be chosen, what his functions should be or even whether a caliphate is really necessary for the political and spiritual health of the Muslim community.

The most respected jurist to write on the subject, al-Mawardi (d.1065) discusses qualifications for office, soundness of mind and body, devotion to Islam, descent from the Prophet’s tribe of Quraysh and so on, but is frustratingly vague and ambiguous about the really crucial issue of how a caliph should be chosen. He speculates about election but has no definite opinions about who the electorate should be, concluding, rather lamely perhaps, that an electorate of just one man is sufficient. Writing at a time when the political power of the Abbasid caliphs had declined and the idea of a caliph was no more than a distant

Terrorist organisation, claimant to intellectual superiority and guide to life, Hugh Kennedy looks critically at the ideology that props up the so-called Islamic State (IS)

The use and abuse of early Islamic history


IS theorists are preoccupied with proving that their idea of caliphate is firmly based on precedents in the early history of Islam
The use of arcane and obscure terminology is intended to demonstrate IS’s command of the real meaning of early Islamic history

...
Governments of all economies have to deliver a number of certainties to their peoples. Near the top of the list is the delivery of affordable food. The economies of the Middle East mostly have enough land. But by the 1950s some economies did not have enough water to grow food to achieve food self-sufficiency. By the early 1970s, all the economies of the region, rich and poor, had become net-importers of food. They had all run out of water.

Nearly 50 years later, with a trebled population of about 400 million, the region depends on the capacity and the willingness of North and South American and South Asian economies, Australia, Russia and Ukraine to trade for more than half of its food. This condition is the first, very uncomfortable ‘known’. It does not sit well with the imperative that governments deliver secure and affordable food.

The capacity of the global food system to mitigate the region’s water scarcity problem has, in the event, been proved decade after decade. This outcome has been made ever easier for the Middle Eastern economies because (constant) international food prices have trended downwards from the 1950s, as they have for centuries.

By the early 1970s, all the economies of the region, rich and poor, had become net-importers of food. They had all run out of water.
The global food system appears to be very effectively mitigating the problem of water scarcity in Middle Eastern economies. But it is not sustainable

Middle Eastern economies, and about one hundred other economies worldwide, entered their water and food scarcity predicaments in an era when staple food commodities were being traded at about half the cost of production. Between 1950 and 1970, Middle Eastern economies joined more than 20 water scarce European economies that have coped with their version of the food and water scarcity predicament for over a century. What appeared to be a critical strategic resource deficit – namely water – has proved time after time to be a manageable problem.

There have been worrying periods of volatile international food prices that have pushed the water and food security issue up the political agenda. The oil price spikes of 1974 and 1979 were matched by spikes in international food commodity prices. More recently the 2008 global financial and energy crises brought on a period of food commodity price volatility similar in scale to that of the 1970s but longer. Meanwhile, international food prices have fallen back almost to their pre-2008 levels. It seems likely that they will resume their pre-2003 downward trend. This downward trend may be less steep than that experienced after 1950.

The reason that the international food prices have come down after the 2008-2016 period of price volatility is because the political forces that brought about the historic downward trend are still in place. First, the political economy of the international food system is unchanged. Governments still have to be sure that affordable food is available for families on low incomes – even in OECD economies. The subsidies that made this possible in the past remain in place. Secondly, food production and farm livelihoods are still subsidised, often heavily. Thirdly, food prices do not capture the costs of natural resource inputs such as water. Nor are the externalities of damaged water ecosystems associated with crop and livestock production captured.

In this global system, farmers – who manage over 90 per cent of water worldwide – are not in a position to be good water stewards as well as providers of food and fibre. In these food production systems they do not get prices that enable them to be responsible stewards of water. The global food system appears to be very effectively mitigating the problem of water scarcity in Middle Eastern economies. But it is not sustainable. This is an important second ‘known’ that is also not part of any public debate on water security in the region.

Two significant and very uncomfortable ‘knowns’ relevant to the region’s water security have been identified. The first ‘known’ is that global trade in water intensive food commodities has mitigated what is a critical Middle East-wide water crisis. The second ‘known’ is that the global food system that provides this effective mitigation is unsustainable as it has not yet adopted practices that steward water and other natural resources.

Those in power, who have much to lose if the food and water security discourse starts to promote a sense of insecurity, have very effectively ensured that these two disturbing ‘knowns’ are ‘unkowns’. Political processes can, and do, easily background destabilising ‘knowns’. Reassuring ideas have to be constructed as if they are ‘knowns’. In this case the idea needed is that water insecurity is a problem for the future. It is not one that has been mitigated for decades by importing food in what is proving to be an unsustainable global food system. The evidence is easily to hand. The region’s water resources appear to be sufficient if supplemented by the recycling of urban and industrial water plus desalinated seawater. Together these waters appear to be meeting domestic and industrial water demands. But these two uses of water only account for about 8 per cent of the water needs of an economy. It is the existential problem of accessing most of the 92 per cent of invisible food-water via international food commodity trade that has been successfully kept to the background.

The water and food security of the Middle East will continue to depend on the capacity of its diversifying economies to afford essential food imports. At the same time all its economies will benefit from falling international food prices. The food commodity price spikes of the 1970s and the years after 2008 should have brought to the fore the need to recognise the unsustainability of the global food system on which the region depends. Middle East food consumers have a strategic interest in helping the global food system to be sustainable. They need to play a role in creating food supply chains that ship food commodities from farmers worldwide who have secure livelihoods. These secure farm livelihoods would enable them to steward the water consumed in producing food for Middle Eastern consumers. Middle Eastern farmers cannot.

Tony Allan is Emeritus Professor at KCL and SOAS
Despite its critical importance to understanding the spate of recent crises in the Middle East, scholarship on communication and conflict in the region is scattered and has yet to form a coherent body of knowledge. This is partly because the study of communication, broadly speaking, is seen as being epiphenomenal to traditional disciplines (history, politics and area studies) and partly because it is treated as a domain of interest restricted to area specialists in media studies.

Conflict – visible, armed conflicts and also social and sometimes invisible conflicts, such as struggles over gender, sexuality, human rights, ethnicity, representation and voice – has rarely been thought of in terms of communication or struggles over image, language, ideas and identities played out in different communicative spaces (television, film, art, the press, poetry, novels, music, graffiti, etc). Rather, conflict has been mostly discussed and studied in terms of conjunctural events, that is through the analysis of a set (or sets) of factors that might or might not cause disruption, social dislocation, oppression, resistance, violence, protest and/or outright war. Even in those cases when some aspects of communication have been considered in the analysis of conflicts or social upheavals in the Middle East, such as in the case of the Iranian Green Movement in 2009 and the Arab uprisings of 2011,

*Dina Matar* reflects on how media studies can help us understand conflicts in the Middle East.

**Communications and conflict**

Conflict has rarely been thought of in terms of communication or struggles over image, language, ideas and identities played out in different communicative spaces
discussions have been limited to asking whether media caused revolutions although the evidence is inconclusive.

Given that media platforms are becoming spaces in which various aspects of sociality and politics interact and intersect, where power dynamics are contested and articulated, there is a need to address the changing and fluid dynamics and practices of communication, particularly during conflicts. Such an inquiry means asking pertinent questions about power and resistance: about who gets to speak, who is heard, who is left out and ignored, who is represented and why; about which conflicts or particular aspects of conflicts are reported more frequently; about what different actors, state and non-state entities, activists and ordinary people do with media; about the dominant language and image of a conflict and how and why this language and image are meaningful to some communities in particular historical moments.

Needless to say, the military rise and media visibility of the so-called Islamic State (IS) since 2012 and the escalation of political violence in Syria and Iraq have added new urgency to the study of communication and conflict in the Middle East. Research funding has been generously allocated to addressing how social media are used for promoting political violence, hate speech, incitement and radicalisation, how best to use new media technologies as tools in conflicts, as platforms for public diplomacy, persuasion and influence or to counter political, ethnic and sexual violence, hate speech, racism and radicalisation.

New centres for the study of terrorism and radicalisation have been set up to specifically study how IS and other Islamist groups use social media platforms as ‘technologies of recruitment’ and for the dissemination of horrific spectacles of extreme violence. These endeavours reflect the assumption that media are effective and powerful tools of influence that can help shift the course of battles on the ground through shifting allegiances and changing public opinion and underline the rhetorical politics of the ‘West/rest’ binary that suggests the West is benign and progressive and the rest is reactionary and malign.

For someone active in the study of communication and conflict in the Middle East, seeking to find something benign and progressive in the ‘rest’ through studying what people actually do with media technologies is gratifying, but poses considerable challenges. The media landscape in the Middle East has changed considerably since the beginning of the 21st century. There are multiple local, regional and global agents and entities all vying to own and control media spaces and content; there are numerous new social media platforms, apps, broadcasting services and other media technologies used to disseminate particular ideologies and to mobilise support against enemies in a region that is laden with population differentiations along almost any indicator: ethnic, religious, national, sectarian and gender.

Common trends do operate across the board, the most obvious perhaps is the demographic transformation: the Middle East has an unprecedented youth bulge with half of the population under 25 years old and this generation is amongst the Global South’s highest users of social media and mobile technologies. While this generation uses social media for socialisation and entertainment purposes, its digital experiences are also shaped by lived and narrated experiences of conflict, political violence, repression, patriarchy, control and unprecedented upheaval and by progressive demands and aspirations for real change and human rights.

In such changing contexts, addressing communication becomes an even more urgent task, not least because new media platforms become the only spaces where the marginalised can speak, but also because it helps us ask questions about what state and non-state actors, movements and movement leaders as well as ordinary people do with media, when and why; what the creation of media (films, stories, plays, art work, graffiti, etc.) tells us about the nature of politics in the digital age and about the changing relationship between people and the state.

By analysing the interplay between language and image and between language and politics in communication we can understand what matters to people living in conflict and what children and women who remain invisible in the masculinised narratives of the conflicts want, how they cope and what they do. Importantly, too, such an approach can help us understand the role of memory, digital activism and knowledge production in changing contexts without privileging new media or ignoring political, economic, military and material developments.

Dina Matar is the Head of the Centre for Media Studies at SOAS
The Caliphate

By Hugh Kennedy

What is a caliphate? What is the history of the idea? How is the term used and abused today? In the first modern account of a subject of critical importance today, historian Hugh Kennedy answers these questions by chronicling the rich history of the caliphate, from the death of Muhammad to the present. At its height, the caliphate stretched from Spain to the borders of China and was the most powerful political entity in western Eurasia. In an era when Paris and London boasted a few thousand inhabitants, Baghdad and Cairo were sophisticated centres of trade and culture, and the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs were distinguished by major advances in science, medicine and architecture. By ending with the recent re-emergence of caliphal ideology within fundamentalist Islam, The Caliphate underscores why it is crucial that we know about this form of Islamic government to understand the political ideas of the so-called Islamic State and other Islamist groups in the 21st century.

July 2016, Penguin, £6.99

Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising

By Gilbert Achcar

Since the first wave of uprisings in 2011, the euphoria of the ‘Arab Spring’ has given way to the gloom of backlash, clashes between rival counter-revolutionary forces and a descent into mayhem and war. Morbid Symptoms offers a timely assessment of the ongoing Arab uprising. Focusing on Syria and Egypt, Gilbert Achcar analyses the factors of the regional relapse: the resilience of the old regimes, the power of religious reactionary forces, the exceptional number of rival international and regional supports of both reactionary camps and the shortcomings of progressive forces. Drawing on a combination of scholarly and political knowledge of the Arab region, Achcar argues that, short of radical social change, the region will not achieve stability any time soon.

May 2016, Saqi Books, £12.99

Gaza as Metaphor

Edited by Helga Tawil-Souri and Dina Matar

Open-air Prison, Terror, Resistance, Occupation, Siege, Trauma: irrespective of when, where, and to whom the word is uttered, ‘Gaza’ immediately evokes an abundance of metaphors. Similarly, a host of metaphors also recall Gaza: Crisis, Exception, Refugees, Destitution, Tunnels, Persistence. This book brings together journalists, writers, doctors, academics and others, who use metaphor to record and historicise Gaza, to contextualise its everyday realities, interrogate its representations and provide an understanding of its real and symbolic significance. Offering perspectives from residents and observers, these essays touch on life and survival, the making of the Gaza Strip and its increasing isolation, the discursive and visual tools that have often obscured the real Gaza, and explore what Gaza contributes to our understanding of exception, inequality, dispossession, bio-politics, necro-power and other terms which we rely on to make sense of our world.

March 2016, Hurst, £16.99
Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East

Edited by Nelida Fuccaro

This book explores violence in the public lives of modern Middle Eastern cities, approaching violence as an individual and collective experience, a historical event and an urban process. Violence and the city coexist in a complicated dialogue, and critical consideration of the city offers an important way to understand the transformative powers of violence – its ability to redraw the boundaries of urban life, to create and divide communities, and to affect the ruling strategies of local elites, governments and transnational political players. The essays included in this volume reflect the diversity of Middle Eastern urbanism from the 18th to the late 20th centuries, from the capitals of Cairo, Tunis, and Baghdad to the provincial towns of Jeddah, Nablus and Basra and the oil settlements of Dhahran and Abadan.

March 2016, Stanford University Press, £19.30

Women, Work and Welfare in the Middle East and North Africa: The Role of Socio-demographics, Entrepreneurship and Public Policies

Edited by Nadereh Chamlou and Massoud Karshenas

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and in light of socio-economic and geopolitical challenges facing governments old and new, women's rights and empowerment have gained new urgency and relevance. Groups in power, or groups contesting for power, are more conservative than expected, and there are serious threats to roll back some of the gains women achieved over the past 20-30 years on economic and social fronts. The global gender debate has neglected the economic dimension of women's empowerment. This book offers original research linking gender equality with economic policy, reinforcing the agenda from a broad-based perspective.

February 2016, Imperial College Press, £124.00

The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History and Tradition

Edited by Alan Williams, Sarah Stewart and Almut Hintze

For many centuries, from the birth of the religion late in the second millennium BCE to its influence on the Achaemenids and later adoption in the third century CE as the state religion of the Sasanian Empire, it enjoyed imperial patronage and profoundly shaped the culture of antiquity. The Magi of the New Testament most probably were Zoroastrian priests from the Iranian world, while the enigmatic figure of Zarathushtra (or Zoroaster) himself has exerted continual fascination in the West, influencing creative artists as diverse as Voltaire, Nietzsche, Mozart and Yeats. This volume brings together internationally recognised scholars to explore Zoroastrianism in all its rich complexity. Examining themes such as history and modernity, tradition and scripture, art and architecture and minority status and religious identity, it places the modern Zoroastrians of Iran, and the Parsis of India, in their proper contexts. The book extends and complements the coverage of its companion volume, The Everlasting Flame.

February 2016, IB Tauris, £68.00
Ancient Mesopotamian Religion and Mythology: Selected Essays
Edited by A.R. George and T.M. Oshima

The late W.G. Lambert (1926-2011) was one of the foremost Assyriologists of the latter part of the 20th century. His principle legacy is a large number of superb critical editions of Babylonian literary compositions. Many of the texts he edited were on religious and mythological subjects. He will always be remembered as the editor of the Babylonian Job (Ludlul bel nemeqi, also known as the Poem of the Righteous Sufferer), the Babylonian Flood Story (Atra-hasis) and the Babylonian Creation Epic (Enuma elish). Decades of deep engagement with these and other ancient Mesopotamian texts gave direction to much of his research and led him to acquire a deep knowledge of ancient Mesopotamian religion and mythology. The present book is a collection of 23 essays published by the scholar between the years 1958 and 2004. These endure not only as the legacy of one of the greatest authorities in this specialist field, but also because each makes statements of considerable validity and importance. As such, many are milestones in the fields of Mesopotamian religion and mythology.

2016, Mohr Siebeck, £115.00

Firdawsii Millennium Indicum: Proceedings of the Shahnama Millenary Seminar
Edited by Sunil Sharma and Burzine Waghmar

Papers presented to mark the millennium of Firdawsi’s completion of the Shahnama at a seminar in Bombay (Mumbai). This was the sole South Asian initiative, among others elsewhere in 2010-11, commemorating Iran’s national epic through conferences and exhibitions.

2016, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute

Gilgamesh’s Snake and Other Poems (Bilingual Edition)
By Ghareeb Iskander

The Epic of Gilgamesh is perhaps the greatest surviving work of early Mesopotamian literature. According to legend, Gilgamesh built the city walls of Uruk, modern-day Iraq, to protect his people from external threats. Although the epic records events from more than four thousand years ago, those events echo many of the social and cultural concerns of Iraq today. In this bilingual collection of poems, Ghareeb Iskander offers a personal response to the epic. Iskander’s modern-day Gilgamesh is a nameless Iraqi citizen who witnessed the fall of the dictatorship, who exists in a constant state of threat, and who dreams, not about eternity, but simply about life. While Gilgamesh was searching for the elixir of life, Iskander’s hero is searching for consolation.

2016, Syracuse University Press, £16.50
Mesopotamian Incantations and Related Texts in the Schøyen Collection

By A.R. George

Transliteration, photo, and commentary of over 70 new incantations, amulets, and medical and hemerological texts.

2016, CDL Press, £75.19

The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron

By Colin Shindler

The Israeli Right first came to power nearly four decades ago. Its election was described then as ‘an earthquake’, and its reverberations are still with us. How then did the Right rise to power? What are its origins? Colin Shindler traces this development from the birth of Zionism in cosmopolitan Odessa in the 19th century to today’s Hebron, a centre of radical Jewish nationalism. He looks at central figures such as Vladimir Jabotinsky, an intellectual and founder of the Revisionist movement and Menahem Begin, the single-minded politician who brought the Right to power in 1977. Both accessible and comprehensive, this book explains the political ideas and philosophies that were the Right’s ideological bedrock and the compromises that were made in its journey to government.

August 2015, Cambridge University Press, £22.99

Revolutionary Egypt: Connecting Domestic and International Struggles

Edited by Reem Abou-El-Fadl

Drawing on primary research conducted in Egypt and across the world, this book analyses the foundations and future of Egypt’s revolution. Considering the revolution as a process, it looks back over decades of popular resistance to state practices and predicts the waves still to come. It also confidently places Egypt’s revolutionary process in its regional and international contexts, considering popular contestation of foreign policy trends as well as the reactions of external actors. It draws connections between Egyptians’ struggles against domestic despotism and their reactions to regional and international processes such as economic liberalisation, Euro-American interventionism and similar struggles further afield.

2015, Routledge, £90.00
I.B. Tauris and the Centre for Palestine Studies at the London Middle East Institute (LMEI) of SOAS are delighted to announce the release of the first book in their new collaborative series, *SOAS Palestine Studies*. The series, edited by Professor Gilbert Achcar, aims at promoting innovative research in the study of Palestine, Palestinians and the Israel-Palestine conflict as a crucial component of Middle Eastern and world politics.

The first ever Western academic series entirely dedicated to this topic, *SOAS Palestine Studies* draws from a variety of disciplinary fields, including history, politics, media, visual arts, social anthropology, and development studies. Submissions from all countries and various disciplines are welcome as long as they fall within the category of Palestine studies.

*Palestine Ltd.*

*Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory*

Toufic Haddad

**SOAS Palestine Studies – I.B. Tauris**

In *Palestine Ltd.*, Toufic Haddad explores how neoliberal frameworks have shaped and informed the common understandings of international, Israeli and Palestinian interactions throughout the Oslo peace process. Drawing upon more than 20 years of policy literature, field-based interviews and recently declassified or leaked documents, he details how these frameworks have led to struggles over influencing Palestinian political and economic behaviour, and attempts to mould the class character of Palestinian society and its leadership. A dystopian vision of Palestine emerges as the by-product of this complex asymmetrical interaction, where nationalism, neo-colonialism and ‘disaster capitalism’ both intersect and diverge. This book is essential for students and scholars interested in Middle East Studies, Arab-Israeli politics and international development.


Hardback | 368 pages | 216 x 134 mm | 9781784536572 | July 2016

To order online go to www.ibtauris.com and enter the discount code AN2 when prompted.

**Forthcoming titles:**

- Sharri Plonski: *Palestinian Citizens of Israel: Power, Resistance and the Struggle for Space*
- Joseph Farag: *The Palestinian Short Story in Exile: Gender, Aesthetics, Resistance*
THE EVENTS and organisations listed below are not necessarily endorsed or supported by The Middle East in London. The accompanying texts and images are based primarily on information provided by the organisers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the compilers or publishers. While every possible effort is made to ascertain the accuracy of these listings, readers are advised to seek confirmation of all events using the contact details provided for each event.

Submitting entries and updates: please send all updates and submissions for entries related to future events via e-mail to mepub@soas.ac.uk

BM – British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B
3DG

SOAS – SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H
0XG

LSE – London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2
2AE

OCTOBER EVENTS

Saturday 1 October


1.15 pm | Arabic and Arabesques:Themes in Islamic Art (Gallery Talk) Carolyn Perry (Independent Speaker). Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 34, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

7:30 pm | Parissa + Meshk Ensemble (Concert) The Iranian singer Parissa and ‘whirling dervish’ group the Meshk Ensemble bring together two very different interpretations of the poetry of Rumi, the 13th-century Persian scholar and mystic. Tickets: £20-£25. Hall, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. T 020 7638 8891 W www.barbican.org.uk

Monday 3 October

1.30 pm | Traders and ‘Men of Bronze’: the Greeks in Egypt (Lecture) Alexandra Villing (BM). Organised by: BM. A look at Naukratis, sister port of Thonis-Heracleion and the subject of new research at the BM revealing how the excavations since 2012 are shedding new light on early encounters, which transformed both Greek and Egyptian culture. Admission free. Pre-registration required T 020 7323 8181. BP Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

7:30 pm | Exile Lit Cafe presents Whitext (Poetry Reading) Organised by: Exiled Writers Ink! Monthly Exile Lit Cafe. A night of blank verse from the front line of poetry. Whitext is the theme of avant garde Persian language Net poetry circles, referring to a detergent that’s become the code name for blank verse also known as ‘white poems’ in Persian. This is the first live Whitext event in English. Featuring: Bejan Matur, Amarjit Chandan, Abol Froushan, Abbas Zahedi. Tickets: £5/£3 2016 Exiled Writers Ink members and asylum seekers. Betsy Trotwood, 56 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3BL. T 07768955998 E abolenator@gmail.com W www.exiledwriters.co.uk

Tuesday 4 October

1.15 pm | Between Commerce and Cult: Greek Pottery in

Egypt (Gallery Talk) Alexandra Villing (BM). Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 13, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

5:45 pm | What Happened to the "Arab Spring"? (Book Launch) Gilbert Achcar (SOAS). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Event to mark the publication of Gilbert Achcar’s Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising (Saqi Books, 2016). Focusing on Syria and Egypt, Achcar assesses the present stage of the uprising and the main obstacles, both regional and international, that prevent any resolution. Chair: Salwa Ismail (SOAS). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Wednesday 5 October

6:00 pm | Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East (Panel Discussion) Nélida Fuccaro (SOAS), Ulrike Freitag (Zentrum Moderner Orient), Rasmus Christian Elling (University of Copenhagen). Organised by: LSE. Middle East Centre and LSE Cities. Event to mark the publication of Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East (2016) with the editor, Nélida Fuccaro, and two of the contributors to the volume. Chair: Fran Tonkiss (LSE). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Room 9.04, TW2, Clement’s Inn, LSE. T 020 7323 8299 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

Thursday 6 October


6:00 pm | Late at Tate Britain: Mantra (Performance) An evening featuring numerous performances, including live music and DJs from a range of backgrounds and influences based around the work by Iranian artist Shirazeh Houshiary (b.1955), Veil (1999), which is currently on display in Tate Britain. The work is made of a black acrylic paint surface, over which the artist has inscribed Arabic language in pencil, expressing Sufi thoughts. Admission free. Tate Britain, Millbank, London SW1P 4RG. T 020 7887 8888 W www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/

6:00 pm | The Fight Against ISIS: Kurds on the Front Line (Lecture) Lahur Talabani (Kurdish Regional Government). Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Lahur Talabani, head of intelligence for the Kurdish Regional Government and a founding member of the Counter-Terrorism Group, shares his insights into how the struggle against ISIS is proceeding. Chair: Toby Dodge (LSE). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Venue TBC, LSE. T 020 7323 8181 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

7:00 pm | Remembering Assia Djebar (Talk) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. A reflection on the life of Assia Djebar (1936 – 2015) who is considered one of North Africa’s pre-eminent and most influential writers in French. The event will be chaired by Wen-Chin Ouyang (SOAS) and include a panel of speakers. Admission free. Pre-registration required E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Saturday 8 October

12:00 pm | Katia Kameli (Talk) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. The French-Algerian artist Katia Kameli in discussion with art critic Simon Njami about the work in her first London solo show at The Mosaic Rooms. What Language Do You Speak Stranger? and her wider practise (see Exhibitions). Admission free. Pre-registration required E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/


Monday 10 October


Tuesday 11 October

5:15 pm | Let's Rock/Rap it! Music as Collective Action: The case of the Arab Spring (Seminar) Amina Boubia (Sciences Po Centre for International Studies). Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Boubia presents her paper which looks at the role new music genres such as rock and rap have played in the Middle East and North Africa during the Arab Spring. Part of the Social Movements and Popular Mobilisation in the MENA Research Network. Admission free. Pre-registration required. Chair: John Chalcraft (LSE). Room 9.04, Tower 2, Clement’s Inn, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

7:00 pm | An Introduction to Early Safavid Jewellery (Lecture) Beatrice Campi. Organised by: The Iran Society. Doors open 6:30pm. Admission free for Society Members and one guest. Pall Mall Room, The Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN (Dress code calls for gentlemen to wear jacket and tie). T 020 7235 5122 E info@iransociety.org W www.iransociety.org / www.therag.co.uk

7:00 pm | In Conversation with Patrick Cockburn: The Age of Jihad (Talk) Organised by: Frontline Club. Patrick Cockburn in conversation with Azadeh Moaveni to discuss in depth the current turmoil in the Middle East and the fraught role the West has played in the region from 2001 to present. Tickets: £12.50/£10 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ, T 020 7479 8940 E events@frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

Wednesday 12 October

Time TBC | Opportunities in Tunisia (Briefing) Organised by: The Arab-British Chamber of Commerce. Tickets: £30 + VAT/£15 + VAT Members. The Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, 43 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1K 2NJ, T 020 7659 4880 E el-idrissi@abcc.org.uk W www.abcc.org.uk

9:00 am | Environmental Challenges in the MENA Region: The Long Road from Conflict to Cooperation (Two-Day Conference: Wednesday 12 -
TUESDAY LECTURE PROGRAMME ON THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST AUTUMN 2016

4 October
What Happened to the "Arab Spring"?
Gilbert Achcar (SOAS)

11 October
No Lecture

18 October
Palestinians in Syria: Nakba Memories of Shattered Communities
Anaheed Al-Hardan (American University of Beirut) and Nur Masalha (Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies)
Organised jointly with the Centre for Palestine Studies

25 October
The Emergence of the Gulf States
John Peterson

1 November
Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life
Farah Al-Nakib (American University of Kuwait)
Organised jointly with the Near & Middle East History Seminar

8 November
Reading Week

15 November
Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World
Atef Alshaer (University of Westminster) and Caroline Rooney (University of Kent)

22 November
Holy Lands - How to Revive Pluralism in the Middle East?
Nicolas Pelham (The Economist)

29 November *5.30pm start
Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East
John Chalcraft (LSE)

6 December
Iranian Cinema Uncensored: Contemporary Film-Makers Since the Islamic Revolution
Shiva Rahbaran
Organised jointly with the Centre for Iranian Studies

TUESDAYS 5:45 PM
Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS

The Lectures are free and open to all.

For further information contact:
The London Middle East Institute at SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H OXG, T: 020 7898 4330; E: lmei@soas.ac.uk; W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/
SOAS, University of London, is pleased to announce the availability of several scholarships in its Centre for Iranian Studies (CIS).

The Centre, established in 2010, draws upon the range of academic research and teaching across the disciplines of SOAS, including Languages and Literature, the Study of Religions, History, Economics, Politics, International Relations, Music, Art and Media and Film Studies. It aims to build close relations with likeminded institutions and to showcase and foster the best of contemporary Iranian talent in art and culture.

MA in Iranian Studies

In 2012/13 CIS members successfully launched an interdisciplinary MA in Iranian Studies, the first of its kind, which will be offered again in 2016/17.

Thanks to the generosity of the Fereydoun Djam Charitable Trust, a number of Kamran Djam scholarships are available for BA, MA and MPhil/PhD studies.

For further details, please contact:

Scholarships Officer
E: scholarships@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7074 5091/ 5094
W: www.soas.ac.uk/scholarships

Centre for Iranian Studies
Dr Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Chair)
E: aa106@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4747
W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis

MA in Iranian Studies
Dr Nima Mina (Department of the Languages and Culture of the Middle East)
E: nm46@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4315
W: www.soas.ac.uk/nme/programmes/ma-in-iranian-studies

Student Recruitment
T: +44(0)20 7898 4034
E: study@soas.ac.uk
Thursday 13 October) Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). SOAS Centenary Conference. International and interdisciplinary conference focused on the Middle East and North Africa’s environmental challenges in the 21st century. Tickets: £100 corporate/£20 standard/£10 students. Pre-registration required. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7989 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/


Thursday 13 October
9:00 am | Environmental Challenges in the MENA Region: The Long Road from Conflict to Cooperation (Two-Day Conference: Wednesday 12 - Thursday 13 October) See event listing above for more information.


Friday 14 October
1.15 pm | Sharing the Discoveries at Ur and Ubaid: Research Communication in the 1920s and 30s (Gallery Talk) Agnes Henrikson (BM) Organised by: BM. Admission free. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

Monday 17 October
5:15 pm | Shiny Things and Sovereign Power: Uses and Abuses of Imperial Property in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic (Seminar) Ceyda Karamursel (SOAS). Organised by: Department of History, SOAS. Near and Middle East History Seminar. Convenor: Derek J Mancini-Lander (SOAS). Admission free. B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. E dm40@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/history/events/

Tuesday 18 October
5:45 pm | Palestinians in Syria: Nakka Memories of Shattered Communities (Book Launch) Anaheed Al-Hardan (American University of Beirut) and Nur Masalha (Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI) and the Centre for Palestine Studies, SOAS. Al-Hardan in conversation with Masalha on the subject of her latest book Palestinians in Syria: Nakka Memories of Shattered Communities (Columbia University Press, 2016) in which she follows the evolution of the Nakka — the central signifier of the Palestinian refugee past and present. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Saturday 15 October
4:00 pm | Iraqi Sci-Fi (Talk) With Hassan Blasim, the author of The Iraqi Christ and the editor of Iraq+100, a new anthology of science fiction short stories in which a group of Iraqi writers have projected their imaginations out to 2103, a century on from the 2003 American- and British-led invasion that ravaged their already battle-scarred homeland. Blasim is joined by a number of the anthology’s contributors to discuss the fate of Iraq. Tickets: £8/£50% off conc. (limited availability). Weston Roof Pavilion at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Sunday 16 October
11:00 am | Sense the Egyptians (Digital Workshop) Organised by: BM. Stimulate your senses to experience the Museum’s objects from ancient Egypt in a new way. Age: 5+ Admission free. Samsung Centre, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

Wednesday 19 October
7:00 pm | From Thoth to Mercurius: Exploring the Alchemical Imagination and its Sources in Ancient Egypt (Lecture) Jules Cashford. Organised by: The Temenos Academy. Doors open 6:30pm. Tickets: Admission: £8/£5 conc./full-time students free. The Royal Asiatic Society, 14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 4HD. T 01233 813663 E temenosacademy@myfastmail.com W www.temenosacademy.org

Thursday 20 October
6:00 pm | Qatar’s Changing Role in International Affairs (Lecture) Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani was Foreign minister of Qatar 1992-2013 and Prime Minister of Qatar 2007-2013. He discusses Qatar’s changing role on the regional and international stages. Chair: Toby Dodge (LSE Middle East Centre). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Venue TBC. T 020 7955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/kuwait/kwiruniversity/kuwait

7:00 pm | “I Cannot Lie”: The Literary Biography and Unpublished Letters of Forugh Farrokhzad (Lecture) Farzaneh Milani (University of Virginia). Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Literature inaugural lectures. First of four lectures by Farzaneh Milani on the poet Forugh Farrokhzad. (1934-1967) who challenged cultural and political absolutism in her all-too-brief, 13-year literary career. Although banned after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Farrokhzad is now an icon, the Iranian equivalent of a rock star, a guru. Farzaneh Milani is Raymond J. Nelson Professor and Chair of the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and
Cultures and former Director of Studies in Women and Gender at the University of Virginia. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W http://www.soas.ac.uk/events/

Friday 21 October

Until 6 November | Nour Festival of Arts Annual festival showcasing contemporary arts and culture - including film, food, music, literature, poetry, performance, urban development and visual arts - from the Middle East and North Africa in venues across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London. T 020 7361 3618 E nour@rbkc.gov.uk W www.nourfestival.co.uk

7:00 pm | “Remember Flight”: Forugh Farrokhzad, the Iranian Icarus (Lecture) Farzaneh Milani (University of Virginia). Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Literature inaugural lectures. Second of four lectures by Farzaneh Milani on Forugh Farrokzhad. See event listing above on Thursday 20 October for more information.

Saturday 22 October

1.15 pm | Egypt and Nubia Down to the Reign of Ramesses the Great (Gallery Talk) George Hart (Independent Speaker). Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 65, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

Monday 24 October

11.00 am | Celebrating Osiris Half-term Activities for all the family until 4:00pm daily (Monday 24 - Friday 28 October) Admission free. Great Court and Galleries, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

1.30 pm | Kemet: Understanding African-Centred Approaches to Egyptology (Lecture) Sally-Ann Ashton (University of Huddersfield). Organised by: BM. Ashton offers an overview on how African-centred approaches to the study of ancient Egypt can be used effectively. Admission free. Pre-registration required T 020 7323 8181. BP Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org


Wednesday 26 October

1.15 pm | Egyptian, Greek and Roman Cults in Britain (Gallery Talk) Sam Moorhead (BM). Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 49, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

7:00 pm | “The House Is Black”: A Model Life Narrative by Forugh Farrokhzad (Lecture) Farzaneh Milani (University of Virginia). Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Literature inaugural lectures. Third of four lectures by Farzaneh Milani on Forugh Farrokzhad. See event listing above on Thursday 20 October for more information.

Tuesday 25 October

5:45 pm | The Emergence of the Gulf States (Panel Discussion) John Peterson. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Panel discussion to mark the publication of the new edited volume The Emergence of the Gulf States: Studies in Modern History (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) with the editor, John Peterson and contributors. The contributions address the impact of early history, religious movements, social structures, identity and language, imperialism, 20th century economic transformation and relations with the wider Indian Ocean and Arab World. Chair: Charles Tripp (SOAS). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

7:00 pm | “I Feel Sorry for the Garden”: Democratizing the Family (Lecture) Farzaneh Milani (University of Virginia). Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Literature inaugural lectures. Last of four lectures by Farzaneh Milani on Forugh Farrokzhad. See event listing above on Thursday 20 October for more information.

Saturday 29 October

1.15 pm | The Ancient Egyptians and History (Gallery Talk) Carol Andrews (Independent Speaker). Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 4, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

1:30 pm | Explorer, Researcher, Freemason: Travellers to Ottoman Palestine (Study Day) Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East and The Library and Museum
of Freemasonry. Speakers include: Felicity Cobbing, Kevin Shillington, Aimee Newall. Study day exploring the contribution of 19th century Freemasons to the western world’s exploration and understanding of the Holy Land, and in particular Jerusalem. Tickets: £28. Pre-registration required admin@pef.org.uk Freemasons’ Hall, 60 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AZ. W www.pef.org.uk

Sunday 30 October

7:30 pm | Season of Music from Iran: The Art of Instrumental Music (Concert) Organised by: Nava Arts UK. The second in a series of three concerts featuring some of the finest musicians from Iran. With Hossein Alizadeh, Hossein Behroozinia, Behnam Samani, Saba Alizadeh. Tickets: £30. Bush Hall, 310 Uxbridge Road, London W12 7LJ. T 020 8222 6955 W www.bushhallmusic.co.uk

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday 1 November

5:45 pm | Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life (Lecture) Farah Al-Nakib (American University of Kuwait). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI) and the Near & Middle East History Seminar. Lecture to mark the publication of Farah Al-Nakib’s Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life (Stanford University Press, 2016) in which she connects Kuwait City’s past and present, from its settlement in 1716 to the 21st century, through the bridge of oil discovery. Chair: Nelida Fuccaro (SOAS). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

7:00 pm | Contested Archives: Colonial Photography from Algeria (Panel Discussion) Martin Evans (University of Sussex), Bruno Boudjelal (VU, Paris) and Siobhàn Shilton (University of Bristol). Organised by: Katarzyna Falecka and The Mosaic Rooms. Discussion on the role of colonial photography in mediating Algeria’s past since the country’s independence in 1962 and on archives as sites of historical and political contestation. Admission free. Pre-registration required E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org Th e Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Thursday 3 November

4:00 pm | Sir Charles Warren – Royal Engineer Extraordinaire (Lecture) Kevin Shillington (Independent Historian and Biographer). Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) in association with the BM Department of Middle East. Admission free. To pre-register T 020 7323 8181 W www.britishmuseum.org BP Lecture Theatre, Clore Education Centre, BM. W www.pef.org.uk

6:00 pm | Oil and the Transformation of Urban Life in Kuwait (Seminar) Farah Al-Nakib

UNDER THE SHADOW
Rage and Revolution in Modern Turkey
Kaya Genç

Turkey stands at the crossroads of world politics: caught between the West and the Middle East; bordering Syria and the frontiers of ISIS; excluded from the EU and governed by an increasingly hard-line leader. Recent events - both the failed military coup and Erdogan’s subsequent nationwide crackdown - have propelled this young democracy into a new chapter of turbulence.

Kaya Genç has interviewed activists from across the political spectrum: from censored journalists to state propaganda writers. Weaving Ottoman history and mythology together with their stories, he skilfully shows how the ideological cracks permeating Turkish society run deeper than previously thought.

‘Kaya Genç’s writing is as evocative as it is charming’
— Elif Shafak, author of The Architect’s Apprentice

‘Kaya Genç, a wonderful writer and timeless champion of literature, has done us all a great service by bringing together so many young voices on the Gezi movement.’
— Elif Batuman, Staff Writer, The New Yorker
Languitecture: Construction and Deconstruction of Language (See Exhibitions p.69)

(American University of Kuwait). Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre and LSE Cities. Al-Nakib discusses her new book *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life* (Stanford University Press, 2016) and how new social forces and youth-based movements are demanding a different kind of urban experience. Respondent: Philipp Rode (LSE Cities). Chair: Courtney Freer (LSE Kuwait Programme). Admission free. Pre-booking required. Room 9.04, 9th floor, Tower 2, Clement’s Inn, LSE. T 020 7955 6639 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

7:00 pm | Caliphate: An Idea through History (Lecture) Hugh Kennedy (SOAS). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Event to mark the publication of Hugh Kennedy’s *The Caliphate: a Pelican Introduction* (Penguin, 2016). What is a caliphate? What is the history of the idea? How is the term used and abused today? Kennedy chronicles the rich history of the caliphate, from the death of Muhammad to the present. Admission free. KLT, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

7:00 pm | The Sudanese Dining Experience Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Sudanese supper club with Omer Eltigani of Sudanese Kitchen. Tickets: £35 (includes a three course meal with drink). Pre-booking required E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Saturday 5 November

11:30 am | Poets in Exile (Panel Discussion) Registration and refreshments at 11:00am. Fatemeh Shams, Ghareeb Iskander and Nazand Begikhani are joined by discussants Jennifer Langer of Exiled Writer’s Ink and Jane Lewisohn on a panel chaired by Roya Arab for a morning of recitals and discourse with poets putting pen to paper in exiled lands, part of the Nour Festival of Arts (see event listing on Friday 21 October). Admission free. Pre-registration required W http://nourfestival.eventbrite.com Kensington Library, Phillimore Walk, London W8 7RX.

Monday 7 November

10:00 am | Middle East and Central Asia Music Forum Organised by: City University London and the Institute of Musical Research (IMR). With music from the SOAS Middle East Ensemble, led by Maya Youssef. Convenors: Laudan Nooshin (City University London) and Rachel Harris (SOAS). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Room G52, SOAS. E L.Nooshin@city.ac.uk W www.city.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/music/middle-east-and-central-asia-music-forum

Wednesday 9 November

7:00 pm | Nazi espionage in Iran in World War II (Lecture) Adrian O’Sullivan. Organised by: The Iran Society. Doors open 6:30pm. Admission free for Society Members and one guest. Pall Mall Room, The Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN (Dress code calls for gentlemen to wear jacket and tie). T 020 7235 5122 E info@iransociety.org W www.iransociety.org / www.therag.co.uk

Thursday 10 November

Time TBC | The Qur’an: Text, Society & Culture, 2016 (Three-Day Conference: Thursday 10 - Saturday 12 November 2016) Organised by: Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS. Ninth SOAS Conference on the Qur’an series which seeks to provide a forum for investigating the basic question: how is the Qur’anic text read and interpreted? Conveners: M A S Abdel Haleem (Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS) and Helen Blatherwick (SOAS). Tickets: See contact details below. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E quran.conference@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/quran-2016/

4:30 pm | Revisiting Rouhani’s Election: The Politics of Managing Change in Iran (Lecture) Ali Ansari (University of St Andrews). Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Ansari revisits the 2013 Presidential election campaign and argues that a willingness to ‘believe the rhetoric’ of the campaign has resulted in a dangerous mismanagement of expectations. Admission free. Pre-registration required. Chair: Pejman Abdolmohammadi (LSE Middle East Centre). Room 9.04, TW2, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

Friday 11 November


Saturday 12 November

Time TBC | The Qur’an: Text,
**Society & Culture, 2016** (Three-Day Conference: Thursday 10 - Saturday 12 November 2016) See above event listing for more information.

**Monday 14 November**

6:15 pm | **In Ritual We Trust: 1,000 Years of Palace-Temple Discourse in the Cult of Inanna/Ishtar at Mari** (Seminar) Mónica Palmero-Fernández (Reading). Organised by: The London Centre for the Ancient Near East. Part of the Ancient Near East Seminars: Ancient Ritual Techniques, Artefacts and Communication. Convenor: Diana Stein (Birkbeck). Admission free. Venue TBC, SOAS. E ag5@soas.ac.uk W http://banealcane.org/icane/

**Tuesday 15 November**

5:45 pm | **Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World** (Panel Discussion) Atef Alshaer (University of Westminster) and Caroline Rooney (University of Kent). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Panel discussion on the subject of Alshaer’s latest book *Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World* (Hurst, 2016) in which he demonstrates an integral connection between poetry and politics, reflecting the holistic character of Arab culture. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/


**Wednesday 16 November**

6:00 pm | **The Religionisation of Israeli Society** (Lecture) Yoav Peled (Tel Aviv University) and Horit Herman Peled (Tel Aviv University). Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Peled and Peled examine the growing saliency of religious personalities, religious themes, and the religious outlook in Jewish Israeli society. Admission free. Pre-registration required. Room 9.04, Clement’s Inn, Tower 2, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

**Thursday 17 November**

7:00 pm | **A World of Gold: The Fatimid Era Treasure of Caesarea and Other Hoards in Southern Bilad al-Sham, 10th–12th Centuries** (Lecture) Robert Kool (Israel Antiquities Authorities, Jerusalem). Organised by: Islamic Art Circle. Chair: Scott Redford (SOAS). Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 07714087480 E rosalindhaddon@gmail.com W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

**Saturday 19 November**

7:30 pm | **Dhafer Youssef + Ambrose Akinnmusire** (Concert) From a long line of muezzins in his native Tunisia, Dhafer Youssef performs music from his extensive back catalogue and presents new material from his recording due for release later this year. With Ambrose Akinnmusire, the trumpeter and composer, and guest musician on Youssef’s new album. Tickets: £10–£30. Hall, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. T 020 7638 8891 W www.barbican.org.uk

**Monday 21 November**


**Tuesday 22 November**

5:45 pm | **Holy Lands - How to Revive Pluralism in the Middle East?** (Lecture) Nicolas Pelham (The Economist). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Lecture by Nicolas Pelham on his latest book *Holy Lands - Reviving Pluralism in the Middle East* (Columbia Global Reports, 2016) in which he presents an original and optimistic argument: to accept the Middle East for the deeply religious region it is, and look to the past for lessons in pluralism and ways of managing sectarian relations in the future. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

**Wednesday 23 November**

7:00 pm | **Ottoman Tiles and Textiles** (Lecture) Arthur Millner (Independent Consultant). Organised by: Oriental Rug and Textiles Society (ORTS). A consideration of the relationship between two of the most admired decorative arts of the Ottoman Period with Arthur Millner, author of *Damascus Tiles* (Prestel, 2015). Tickets: £7/£5 students/membership of one year for 11 events at £20. St James Conference Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/
An intensive five-week programme which includes a choice of two courses: a language one (Persian or Arabic, the latter at two levels) and another on the 'Government and Politics of the Middle East' or 'Culture and Society in the Middle East'.

Beginners Persian (Level 1)

This is an introductory course which aims to give the students a reasonable grounding in the basics of Persian grammar and syntax as well as to enable them to understand simple and frequently used expressions related to basic language use. They will be able to hold uncomplicated conversations on topics such as personal and family information, shopping, hobbies, employment as well as simple and direct exchanges of information related to familiar topics. By the end of the course they will also progress to read simple short texts.

Beginners Arabic (Level 1)

This is an introductory course in Modern Standard Arabic. It teaches students the Arabic script and provides basic grounding in Arabic grammar and syntax. On completing the course, students should be able to read, write, listen to and understand simple Arabic sentences and passages. This course is for complete beginners and does not require any prior knowledge or study of Arabic.

Beginners Arabic (Level 2)

This course is a continuation of Beginners Arabic Level 1. It completes the coverage of the grammar and syntax of Modern Standard Arabic and trains students in reading, comprehending and writing with the help of a dictionary more complex Arabic sentences and passages. This course is for complete beginners and does not require any prior knowledge or study of Arabic.

Government and Politics of the Middle East

This course provides an introduction to the politics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It gives on a country by country basis, an overview of the major political issues and developments in the region since the end of the First World War and addresses key themes in the study of contemporary Middle East politics, including: the role of the military, social and economic development, political Islam, and the recent uprisings (the 'Arab Spring').

Culture and Society in the Middle East

This course examines the major cultural patterns and institutions of the MENA region. It is taught through a study of some lively topics such as religious and ethnic diversity, impact of the West, stereotyping, the role of tradition, education (traditional and modern), family structure and value, gender politics, media, life in city, town and village, labour and labour migration, the Palestinian refugee problem and Arab exile communities, culinary cultures, music and media, etc.

Timetable

Courses are taught Mon-Thu each week. Language courses are taught in the morning (10am-1pm) and the Politics and Culture Courses are taught in two slots in the afternoon (2:00-3:20 and 3:40-5:00pm).

FEES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session (5 weeks)</th>
<th>Programme fee*</th>
<th>Accommodation fee**</th>
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<tr>
<td>19 June-20 July 2017 (two courses) (one course)</td>
<td>£2,700</td>
<td>from £300/week</td>
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* An early bird discount of 10% applies to course fees before 30 April 2016. A discount of 15% applies to SOAS alumni and 20% to SOAS students.

** Rooms can be booked at the Intercollegiate Halls which are located in the heart of Bloomsbury: www.halls.london.ac.uk.

For more information, please contact Louise Hosking on LH2@soas.ac.uk. Or check our website www.soas.ac.uk/lmei
7:00 pm | Screening: A Revolution in Four Seasons + Q&A (Documentary) Organised by: Frontline Club. Dir Jessie Deeter (2015), United States, 90 mins. Documentary following journalist Emma Ben Jemaa and Constituent Assembly member Jawhara Ettis over the course of Tunisia's critical first four years after the Revolution. Followed by a Q&A with director Jessie Deeter. Tickets: £10/E8 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ. T 020 7479 8940 E events@frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

**Tuesday 29 November**

5:30 pm | Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East (Lecture) John Chalcraft (LSE). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Lecture by John Chalcraft on the subject of his book Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East (Cambridge University Press, 2016). Challenging top-down views of Middle Eastern politics, Chalcraft looks at how commoners, subjects and citizens have long mobilised in defiance of authorities and forges a new narrative of change over time. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Paul Webley Wing (Senate House North Block), SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

6:30 pm | Social Harmony: An Iraqi Perspective (Lecture) Ambassador Lukman Faily (Iraqi Ambassador to the United States). Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Faily looks at how the lack of social harmony in Iraqi society represents a key factor of instability and that increased cooperation between citizens through state-supported social and religious programmes is necessary. Chair: Toby Dodge (LSE Middle East Centre). Admission free. Pre-registration required. Hong Kong Theatre, Clement House, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E s.fseir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

**EXHIBITIONS**

Until 30 October | **Languitecture: Construction and Deconstruction of Language** Seven practitioners from different cultural and professional backgrounds join together to explore interconnections of their four mother-tongues: Spanish, Arabic, English and German. From sculptures, sound installations, dance, visual art and more, the exhibition seeks to experiment on how different cultures might battle, influence, connect or align using a fundamental and universal element of culture: language. Admission free. P21 Gallery, 21 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD. T 020 7212 6190 E info@p21.org.uk W www.p21.gallery

Until 9 November | **Zarah Hussain: Numina** Sculptural installation by Hussain which combines designs found in the art and architecture of the Islamic world with contemporary digital arts, bringing to life a usually static artform by mapping animated geometric patterns onto a sculpture. Barbican Foyers/FreeStage, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. T 020 7638 8891 W www.barbican.org.uk

Until 20 November | **Courting to Contract: Love and Marriage in Iran** Love and courtship in Iran and neighbouring regions are explored through drawings, illustrated manuscript pages and objects, depicting intimate scenes and classical Persian accounts of celebrated romances. Admission free. Room 34, BM. T 020 7323 8299 W www.britishmuseum.org

Until 27 November | **Sunken Cities: Egypt’s Lost Worlds** Submerged under the sea for over a thousand years, two lost cities of ancient Egypt were recently rediscovered. The lost cities of Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus lay at the mouth of the Nile. Preserved and buried under the sea for over a thousand years, the objects in the exhibition range from colossal statues to intricate gold jewellery. Tickets: £16.50. T 020 7323 8299 E information@britishmuseum.org W www.britishmuseum.org

Until 3 December | **What Language Do You Speak Stranger?** First UK solo exhibition of French-Algerian artist Katia Kamel, which feature films and an installation, presents some of the artist’s central concerns with issues of dual identities, multiplicity, and the potential for residing in this ‘in-between’ space (see event listing on Saturday 8 October for details of a talk with the artist). Admission free. The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Until 16 December | **The Hidden Face of Iran** An exhibition of images by French photographer, Bernard Russo, which capture the everyday life of ordinary people in Iran, images rarely seen in the West where Iran is typically presented as a land of culture, religion, and the centre of Sharia law. The Street Gallery, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Stocker Road, University of Exeter, EX4 4ND. T 01392 72 4040 E jane.clark@exeter.ac.uk W http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iais/events/exhibitions/

Until 8 January | **Barjeel Art Foundation: Mapping the Contemporary II** The last in a series of four chronological displays highlighting works from the Barjeel Art Foundation's collection. Artists from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and elsewhere in the region tell the story of Arab art from the modern to the contemporary period. Mapping the Contemporary II explores how a generation of multi-media artists has artistically engaged with the cities where they either live or work. Admission free. Gallery 7, Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. T 020 7522 7888 E info@whitechapelgallery.org W www.whitechapelgallery.org

October – November 2016 The Middle East at SOAS 69
Yarshater Lecture Series on Persian Literature
Centre for Iranian Studies
SOAS, University of London

Four lectures on Forugh Farrokhzad by Professor Farzaneh Milani
University of Virginia

Thursday 20, Friday 21, Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 October 2016
7.00pm-8.30pm

Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London
Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

Admission Free - All Welcome

Enquiries
T: 020 7898 4330 E: vp6@soas.ac.uk
W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/
A SOAS timeline

100 years of the School’s history, people and collections.

1916
The School of Oriental Studies receives its Royal Charter

1916-1937
Sir Edward Denison Ross, Director (1871-1940)

1917
The first students are admitted, initially, teaching is offered in twenty subjects.

1921-1930
Thomas Arnold CBE, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies (1795-1842)

1921-1955
Eve D Edwards, Professor of Chinese (1888-1957)

1927
The Students’ Union is founded

1930
The Library inside the School’s first location at Finsbury Circus

1934
Paul Robeson, alumnus (1898-1976)

1937-1957
Sir Ralph Turner, Director (1888-1983)

1938
The School officially changes its title to the School of Oriental and African Studies

1943
The School moves to the College Building, Russell Square

1950-1976
Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, Professor of Anthropology (1909-1995)

1957-1976
Sir Cyril Philips, Director (1912-2005)

1960-1969
Amadu Basang Jobarteh, Kora player (1915-2001)

1960-1970
Edith Penrose, Professor of Economics (1914-1996)

1966
Walter Rodney, alumnus (1942-1980)

1960-1970
Sir Michael McWilliam, Director

1969-1980
Sir Timothy Lankester, Director

1970
HRH Queen Elizabeth II visits the Royal African Society

1973
The Dalai Lama pays a visit

1973
The SOAS National Research Library is opened by the Queen Mother

1976-1989
Professor C.D Cowen, Director (1923-2013)

1979-1996
Sir Michael McWilliam, Director

1989
The School is awarded its second prestigious Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher Education.

1995
The Brunei Gallery opens, following a generous benefaction from HM The Sultan of Brunei Darussalam.

1996-2000
Sir Timothy Lankester, Director

2001-2006
Professor Colin Bundy, Director

2006-2015
Professor Paul Webley, Director

2009
The School is awarded its second prestigious Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher Education.

2013
The Alphawood Foundation donates £20 million towards Southeast Asian art at SOAS

2014-2016
A new chapter begins: Valerie Amos joins as new Director and the redevelopment of the iconic Grade II listed Senate House

Tell us why SOAS matters

There is so much more to SOAS’ story and we need your help to build a fuller picture. We welcome you to suggest seminal research and teaching achievements and events in the School’s history and pay tribute to the people who have pushed the boundaries of academic thought and made an impact on the world. Send in your suggestions and comments to alumni@soas.ac.uk and explore the Centenary Timeline online at www.soas.ac.uk/centenary
Environmental Challenges in the MENA Region: The Long Road from Conflict to Cooperation

Wednesday 12 & Thursday 13 October 2016
Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre
SOAS, University of London
Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

Admission: Corporate: £100.00 Standard: £20.00 Students and SOAS Alumni: £10.00 (proof of student status required)

Pre-registration required. To register visit www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/centenary-conference/

Enquiries: Tel: 020 7898 4330 E-mail: lh2@soas.ac.uk

Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI)