THE MIDDLE EAST IN LONDON

THIS ISSUE: IRAQ – People and Heritage

- The rise and fall of the nation
- The Kurds and ISIS
- The Yezidis of Sinjar
- The artifice of the destruction of art in Iraq
- Obliterating Iraq’s Christian heritage
- Nimrud reduced to rubble
- Interview with Saad al-Jadir
- Supporting humanities and culture for a sustainable Iraq

PLUS Reviews and events in London
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.

LMEI is a Registered Charity wholly owned by SOAS, University of London (Charity Registration Number: 1103017).

Mission Statement:

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 Valentina Zanardi

Subscriptions:

To subscribe to The Middle East in London, please visit: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/subscription/

Letters to the Editor:

Please send your letters to the editor at the LMEI address provided (see left panel) or email lmei@soas.ac.uk

Disclaimer:

Opinions and views expressed in the Middle East in London are, unless otherwise stated, personal views of authors and do not reflect the views of their organisations nor those of the LMEI and the MEL's Editorial Board. Although all advertising in the magazine is carefully vetted prior to publication, the LMEI does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of claims made by advertisers.
## Contents

### EDITORIAL

4

### INSIGHT

5

#### Iraq: the rise and fall of the nation

Sami Zubaida

7

#### The Kurds and ISIS

Hamit Bozarslan

9

#### The Yezidis of Sinjar: the aftermath of catastrophe

Christine Allison

11

#### The artifice of the destruction of art in Iraq

Charles Tripp

13

#### Obliterating Iraq’s Christian heritage

Erica C D Hunter

15

#### Nimrud reduced to rubble

John Curtis

17

#### Mosul’s music and rich cultural heritage

Nadje Al-Ali

19

#### Pasts and futures entwined: supporting humanities and culture for a sustainable Iraq

Eleanor Robson

21

### REVIEWS

BOOKS

The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution

Barnaby Rogerson

22

Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourse

Pamela Karimi

23

### BOOKS IN BRIEF

24

### OBITUARY

Leila Ingrams (1940-2015)

Thanos Petouris

25

### EVENTS IN LONDON

---

**LMEI Board of Trustees**

- Professor Paul Webley (Chair)
  - Director, SOAS
- Professor Richard Black, SOAS
- Dr John Curtis
  - Iran Heritage Foundation
- Sir Vincent Fean
- Professor Ben Fortna, SOAS
- Mr Alan Jenkins
- Dr Karima Laachir, SOAS
- Dr Dina Matar, SOAS
- Dr Barbara Zollner
  - Birkbeck College

**LMEI Advisory Council**

- Lady Barbara Judge (Chair)
- Professor Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem
  - Near and Middle East Department, SOAS
- H E Khalid Al-Duwaisan GVCO
  - Ambassador, Embassy of the State of Kuwait
- Mrs Haifa Al Kaylani
  - Arab International Women’s Forum
- Dr Khalid Bin Mohammed Al Khalifa
  - President, University College of Bahrain
- Professor Tony Allan
  - King’s College and SOAS
- Dr Alanoud Alsharekh
  - Senior Fellow for Regional Politics, ISS
- Mr Farad Azima
  - NetScientific Plc
- Dr Noel Brebony
  - MENAS Associates Ltd.
- Professor Magdy Ishak Hanna
  - British Egyptian Society
- HE Mr Mazen Kemal Homoud
  - Ambassador, Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Founding Patron and Donor of the LMEI
- Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber
  - MB Al Jaber Foundation

---
It seems timely and appropriate to devote this issue to the people and heritage of Iraq a year after the dramatic fall of Mosul to the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The articles included in this issue analyse some of the tragic events and consequences of the takeover of Iraqi territory by ISIS’s militias before and after Mosul. As widely reported in the world media the violent actions and destructive behaviour of the ‘army of the Caliphate’ have targeted individuals and communities, and with them some of the extraordinary archaeological, religious and artistic heritage of Iraq.

As MEL goes to press, the battle to retake Ramadi – which fell to ISIS forces on 17 May – is about to begin. ISIS threatens to forever change the political, demographic and religious configuration of this diverse and complex region, and to obliterate the historical memory of its peoples. To rekindle this memory the insight piece by Sami Zubaida revisits the trajectory of Iraq as a nation through the lens of sectarian politics and identities against the backdrop of the consolidation and disintegration of the modern state. In what follows Hamit Bozarslan reflects on the destiny of the Kurds, debating the new opportunities of – and the challenges to – Kurdish self-determination posed by ISIS’s occupation of portions of Iraq and Syria. Zooming in on rural Kurdistan, Christine Allison provides an account of the terrible ordeal of the Yazidis of Sinjar, an ancient heterodox religious community facing a very uncertain future under ISIS threat, not least as a result of their ambiguous relations with the Kurdish Regional Government.

Charles Tripp brings to light the contradictions of ISIS’s religious extremism by discussing the very mundane politics underpinning the spectacular acts of faiths staged in and around Mosul: from the destruction of museums, libraries and archaeological sites to the looting and sale of artefacts. The articles by Erica C D Hunter and John Curtis survey and remember some of what has been lost. Hunter’s focus is on ISIS’s systematic desecration of Christian monasteries and heritage which has torn apart Iraq’s ancient Christian communities and culture. Curtis remembers the city of Nimrud, blown up by ISIS in April. He examines this history both as one of the great centres of the Assyrian Empire and as an exceptionally rich archaeological site that attracted generations of archaeologists.

Nadje Al-Ali’s interview with Saad al-Jadir is also a tale of loss which evokes the ancient musical culture that animated Mosul’s thriving artistic and intellectual scene in the 20th century.

In this scenario of suffering and destruction Eleanor Robson offers some hope by concentrating on the activities of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, some of whose council members and affiliates have contributed to this issue. Robson reminds us of what is being done in London to help Iraqi academics and institutions to develop and maintain the skills and resources necessary for the country’s recovery. It is hoped that this recovery will not remain wishful thinking for long.
We now witness the unravelling of the Iraqi state and the deep fissures and fragmentation of its people and territory. The spectacular sweep of ISIS over Iraqi territory was made possible by the hollowing out of the state and the obsolescence of the corrupt military forces. Part of this failure is the political sectarianism at the heart of Iraq’s current regime. While elements of sectarianism had been variable features of politics and society in earlier times, they had never before been so central and deadly with each side negating the other. How did we get here?

We are told that this is the inevitable product of the colonial creation of ‘artificial’ national entities, cobbled together from diverse and antagonistic elements. Inevitably, the Sykes–Picot agreement is cited as the arch-villain in this narrative: it drew arbitrary lines on the map of the Middle East, carving the Ottoman Empire into territorial spoils after WWI. It is, of course, true that Iraq, Syria and many other countries were colonial creations and comprised diverse populations. But there were many other colonial creations – notably India with its much greater ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity – which have survived and, more or less, thrived. Iraq, too, over the course of the 20th century, made advances in the formation of national consciousness, institutions, a civil society and a public sphere.

The Iraqi intelligentsia – functionaries, educators, professionals, journalists and artists – grew and prospered from Ottoman reforms, and even more so after the British Mandate and the formation of the modern state. Colonial dominance was a stimulus and a model for national formation. Iraqis also had models of the struggle for political and constitutional modernity from their immediate and ascendant neighbours: Turkey and Iran. The Turkish Republic and Atatürk were much admired, with aspirations to similar paths. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 had many roots in the Shi‘i shrine cities of Iraq and had stimulated much ideological ferment and aspirations. Many of the Shi‘i intellectuals and clerics identified with the wider Islamic reform movement in the Arab world and espoused aspirations of Islamic unity against colonial domination.

Sectarian, tribal and local communal identities were, of course, powerful foci of solidarity and competition for resources. But these were competing with identities generated by modern political and ideological affiliations and actions. For most people, sectarian identity, while present, was not primary. The Shi‘a, for instance, were socially and ideologically diverse: a

For most people, sectarian identity, while present, was not primary
Shi'a was, typically, also something else which was often more important. Tribal Shi'a were socially distinct from urban middle classes which had regional and city affiliations between Baghdad, Basra and Karbala, for instance. Clerical networks were, naturally, the most 'Shi'a', yet, many adopted patriotic and anti-imperialist stances that brought them together with others in political affiliations. Sunnis were equally diverse by class, tribe and region. Christians and Jews (those until their mass departure in 1950-51), while marked as non-Muslim 'minorities' and suffering covert or overt discrimination, still participated prominently in public life and supplied many notable writers, journalists and artists, as well as the spheres of business and the professions. There were also the 'ethnic religions', those that constituted closed and esoteric communities, such as the Mandeans (Sabi'a) of the south, the Yazidis in Kurdistan, and several other small sects in the northern mountains. These are esoteric religions, intertwined with the communal structure and with hereditary ritual functions, and tied to the particular sacred sites of their territories. In the course of the 20th century many members of these communities sought emancipation from communal ties and entered the modern spheres of public life and politics.

Where do the Kurds fit into this picture?
The Kurdish national struggles continued, through many bloody episodes, for much of the 20th century. The Kurds, too, are heterogeneous with tribal, regional, religious and linguistic diversity, sometimes translating into political affiliations. Kurdish demands varied between independence, autonomy and cultural rights. Yet, for much of the 20th century the Kurdish intelligentsia participated in Iraqi public life and contributed politicians, writers and artists. The common educational system, while granting language rights to the Kurdish region, was conducted mostly in Arabic, which facilitates a common universe of discourse. It may be said that educated Iraqi Kurds, until the last decade of the century, shared more with equivalent Iraqi Arabs than with Kurds from neighbouring countries.

A crucial element in the formation of this common Iraqi sphere of discourse and participation from diverse elements was the Iraqi Communist Party. While always clandestine and persecuted, it continued, nevertheless, to function, recruit and organise. In addition to its actual organised members, it enjoyed wide sympathy and support amongst many sections of the intelligentsia and the working classes. It became the national party par excellence. It recruited from all the communities and classes: Arab, Kurd, Sunni, Shi'i, Christian, Jewish and all others. It was the vehicle by which many Kurds could see their national struggle as part of a common Iraqi ‘progressive’ endeavour. It presided over the uprisings and agitations of the 1940s and the 1950s, engendering legends of heroism, martyrdom and revolution. Prominent writers, poets and artists celebrated the events and the struggles and mourned the martyrs. Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri was one such figure, and his rousing lines were memorised and inspired a whole generation. His famous line, Ana al-Iraqi, lisâni qalbuhu, wa-damî furâtuhu, wa-kiyânî minhu ashtâru (I am Iraq, my tongue is her heart, my blood her Euphrates, my being is one of her branches), expressed the sentiment of Iraqis aspiring to common citizenship and national identity. These sentiments reached their height with the revolution of 1958, opening the political field to contention between leftists and pan-Arab nationalists and culminating in the 1963 coup and massacre of the left. This was then repeated in the Ba'thist coup of 1968 and the rise of Saddam, aided in repression and military adventure by Iraq's multiplying oil revenues.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the ensuing Iran–Iraq war led to the sharpening and politicisation of sectarian boundaries, and the emergence of religious Shi'a parties and institutions as the main opposition. That devastating war was followed by an even more ruinous Kuwait adventure in 1990-91, followed by the crippling sanctions. The decline of state capacity and services that followed, and the ever escalating violence of the state and associated gangs, the policy of re-tribalisation and religious enforcements all forced people to seek security and livelihood in affiliations of kinship and patronage, of tribe, sect and local powers. The American and British invasion in 2003 and the disastrous policies it initiated furthered this process of sectarian and tribal fragmentation. This state of corruption and arbitrary power opened up the field to ISIS and sectarian gangs.

Sami Zubaida is Emeritus Professor of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck, University of London and a member of the Editorial Board. His most recent book is Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East (2011)

Mosul, 1932. A Yazidi shrine can be seen on the left with the minaret of the Nouri Mosque on the right.
The summer 2014 will be remembered as a season during which the century-long Kurdish issue in the Middle East was entirely reconfigured. The de facto enlargement of the Iraqi Kurdish region by the inclusion of Kirkuk, the oil-rich city located in the so-called ‘disputed areas’ between Erbil and Baghdad, was not the main reason for this change. The brutal conquest of the Sinjar region – one of two main historical places of the Yezidi community in Iraqi Kurdistan – by ISIS forces and the five-month long siege of the Kurdish city of Kobane in Syria have provoked serious security problems in the Kurdish regions of both Syria and Iraq.

From 1918/1919 on, the Kurds have defined themselves in a dialectical relation with the Turkish, Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian states. Iraqi Kurds have enjoyed autonomy since the 1991 Gulf War and Syrian Kurds have had access to a de facto self-rule since the regime’s withdrawal from Kurdish towns in the summer 2012. Even then, Baghdad and Damascus remained the main references for Kurdish decision-makers who could not envision a secessionist scenario. In the summer 2014, however, the Kurds discovered a new dominant regional force which defies the interstate borders established after WWI and mobilises an international military force. ISIS distinguishes itself for its cruelty and extreme rationality, the latter demonstrated by the construction of a quasi-state administration and development of a military strategy. ISIS is also displaying nihilism by using suicide-bombings and wide-scale attacks that increase the number of its enemies.

Furthermore, this force, which finds its ultimate motive in intra-Arab sectarian divisions and not in any Kurdish–Arab conflict per se, has been able to change the territorial configuration of the Arab, and therefore Kurdish, lands: while Iraqi Kurdistan shares a 1,053 km-long frontier with the new ISIS ‘state’, official Iraq becomes a territorially distant reality. Likewise, Kobane and Afrin, two of the three Kurdish cantons in Syria, which share a common frontier with Kurdistan in Turkey (but are isolated Kurdish localities in Syria), have a new neighbour in ISIS.

The sudden emergence of the ‘armies of the Caliph’ has unavoidably shocked the Kurds, who by 2014 had developed some narcissistic self-confidence. Before

Hamit Bozarslan examines the reconfiguration of the ‘Kurdish issue’ in light of ISIS aggression

The Kurds and ISIS

© Persian Dutch Network, Wikimedia Commons

Kobane, in Syrian Kurdistan, during the US-led bombing of ISIS targets. Photograph by M. Akhavan, Persian Dutch Network

The sudden emergence of the ‘armies of the Caliph’ has unavoidably shocked the Kurds
that summer, Iraqi Kurdistan had a half-patrimonial, half-democratic system; while in Syria, Kurdish areas, which were controlled by the PKK-affiliated PYD (Party of Democratic Unity), had adopted a hegemonic system of direct rule. Whatever references Kurdish politicians had in mind, they considered the division of Kurdistan a sort of Middle Eastern ‘Athens’, that is, a ‘city’ spared by violence. In both cases, the Kurdish armed resistance seemed to belong to the past as the armed forces were in charge of the symbolic defence of Kurdistan’s borders. With ISIS attacks, however, death returned to the Kurdish city, obliging it to reorganise itself in accordance with a ‘Spartan model’ built around a militarised society. Iraqi Kurds needed to recognise the weaknesses of their armed forces and to professionalise them. In Syria, the Kurds had to accept that the battle might well be conducted in Kurdish cities and not necessarily on Kurdistan’s periphery.

The challenge posed by ISIS has also affected the region-wide Kurdish political space. In spite of the division of Kurdistan between four countries – and as a response to it – the trans-border dimension of the Kurdish issue has always been considered decisive by all Kurdish organisations. Throughout the 20th century, the Kurdish national narrative (which emerged between the 1920s and the 1940s) included a common national map, a unified history-writing, a flag and a national anthem, thus posing a strong challenge to interstate borders. By the end of the 1970s, the Kurdish issue imposed itself more and more as an interstate issue, giving birth to an unofficial trans-border Kurdish political and military space. But in the 1980s and the 1990s, this integrated space was affected by numerous violent internal conflicts. In the first decade of the 21st century the Kurdish political-military arena still remained fragmented and conflictual but acquired the means of self-regulation. Two organisations – the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) and the PKK – became the leading political actors. Challenged by ISIS in 2014, the KRG and the PKK were obliged to coordinate their military effort in the Makhmur Refugee Camp as well as in Sinjar and Kobane. From this point of view, the events of 2014 accelerated Kurdish integration.

But the changes are not limited to military cooperation. The main question is existential: how will the Kurds integrate this episode into their national narrative and redefine the Kurdish cause in the absence of the two Arab states that have so overwhelmingly determined its evolution in the past? How will they imagine and describe themselves, historically and geographically, in relation to this new actor, ISIS? Throughout the 20th century, Kurdish movements could translate Turkish, Persian and Arab discourses (Western-centric, left-wing or even oppositional Islamist) into their own political language and project themselves in a universalistic framework. How will they ever be able to communicate with the Caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, which destroys any form of universalism and works to exacerbate sectarian divisions? More importantly, how will the Kurds be able to envision their future after 2014?

In a sense, the entire region finds itself in an unprecedented situation: the collapse of the central states, in Syria and in Iraq, is followed by an extremely militarised territorial fragmentation and the break-up of societies. No one can be certain that there will still be an Iraqi or Syrian society at the beginning of the 2020s. The lack of resistance at the fall of Mosul – a city of 1.3 million inhabitants, including 86,000 heavily equipped soldiers and policemen – can only be understood by taking into account the massive effects of on-going social and political disintegration. In contrast with the Arab population, the Kurds, who come from the region’s historical peripheries, seem to realise genuine social integration both in Iraq and Syria. One cannot deny that, compared to their situation in the 1980s when their very existence in Iraq was in danger, the Kurdish community has been widely empowered throughout the region. It is also true that the plight of the Kurds has won worldwide sympathy. However, one should also admit that, no matter how cohesive it is internally, no society can live as an island in the midst of a generalised state of violence. The survival of the Kurds in Iraq and Syria will therefore ultimately depend on the pacification of the neighbouring Arab societies.

Professor Hamit Bozarslan teaches at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. He has recently published Révolution et état de violence: Moyen-Orient 2011-2015 (Paris, CNRS Editions)

Peshmerga (the military forces of Iraqi Kurdistan) on a T-55-Tank outside Kirkuk in Iraq, June 2014

© Boris Niehaus, Wikimedia Commons
On 3 August 2014, ISIS seized Mount Sinjar in Northern Iraq, bringing violence to the Yezidis, a religious minority who form the majority of its population. Hundreds of thousands of people evacuated the area in panic. Those who were unable to flee into the region controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government faced a stark choice: convert to Islam or die. A small minority besieged on the mountain managed to survive with outside help, but many elderly people and children died. Thousands of men were massacred, and about 7,000 women and children were taken into slavery. Almost one year on, of the 900,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, some 350,000 are Yezidis. Many live in makeshift shelters in appalling conditions. But the most serious damage to the community runs far deeper.

The Yezidis’ religion is probably ancient Iranian in origin but has incorporated many elements from the rich variety of faiths of the area. They believe in one God who has entrusted the world to the most senior of seven Holy Beings or ‘angels’; these have sometimes appeared in the world in the form of saints venerated in Islam or Christianity, and the Yezidis revere them too, as well as many saints of their own. Their sacred tradition has been orally transmitted for centuries; unlike Christians and Jews they were not classified as ‘people of the Book’ in the Ottoman Empire. This lack of status made them vulnerable to attack and was exacerbated by the inaccurate label of ‘devil-worshipper’ which has persisted for centuries. Perhaps surprisingly, the ISIS English-language publication Dabiq issued in October 2014 prefers the label ‘polytheists’, but justifies the slavery of Yezidi women as legitimate. Chillingly, it adds that the continued existence of Yezidis is something Muslims should ‘question’ as they may be called to account for it on Judgment Day. With such a rationale given by the perpetrators, the Yezidis justifiably use the term ‘genocide’.

In a society where the ‘honour’ of men and their families is defined by the sexual modesty of their women, the abduction and enslavement of girls hits the Yezidis particularly hard. Kurds and Arabs have sung for centuries of tribal warfare provoked by the inaccurate label of ‘devil-worshipper’. Of the 900,000 Internally Displaced Persons in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, some 350,000 are Yezidis.
by the abduction of women, especially between the different religious and ethnic communities of the area. Patriarchy identifies protection of ‘our women’ – sometimes referred to as ‘our honour’ – as a priority. The Sinjaris are seen by other Yezidis as proud traditionalists, careful of their honour and of the rules of Yezidism concerning marriage. The religion imposes a ban not only on marrying non-Yezidis but even on marrying those outside one’s own social group or caste (all Yezidis belong to one of three social strata, determined by birth). So this, the largest mass rape the community has seen since WWI, strikes a deep blow not only to the families concerned but to the whole of this close-knit community. Last October, the Yezidis, unused to speaking to the international community, sent an unprecedented – and ultimately unsuccessful – delegation to Washington to request US help in targeting the kidnappers and freeing the women. Meanwhile the women’s own stories have been pieced together from calls made to their families and the accounts of the minority who escaped or were freed. In their desperation many of the women committed suicide whilst in captivity. Others have been raped, and are facing everyday life as IDPs. Despite the efforts of local and international NGOs and the Kurdish authorities, psychological and psychiatric facilities are severely limited.

After the catastrophe some Yezidis fought on in Sinjar, supported by Kurdish PYD militias from Syria linked to the PKK (the Kurdish Worker’s Party originating in Turkey) and later by the (Iraqi) Kurdistan Regional Government; despite their success, the mountain is not yet secure.

Yezidis once lived across much of Eastern Turkey and Northern Syria. The former migrated en masse to Armenia and Georgia in 1918, and in the post-Soviet economic crisis they spread across Russia and Europe. Of those left in Turkey, most became ‘guest-workers’ in Germany a generation ago. Those of Syria were affected by the civil war. All that remains of the traditional heartland is the community of Northern Iraq, where the holiest Yezidi site of Lalesh is located in the locality of Sheikhhan on the fringes of the Kurdish zone. ISIS also advanced on Sheikhhan and the inhabitants fled, though most have now returned. The heartlands of Sheikhhan and Sinjar are vitally important for Yezidis worldwide: many hope to visit the fluted spires of Lalesh at least once in their lives. And Lalesh is not the only holy place: with the loss of Sinjar comes the loss of countless smaller sites associated with one saint or another. The landscape where Yezidism evolved remains its wellspring and any loss of it is felt by the community at large, as the demonstrations of solidarity by Yezidis from Tbilisi to Hamburg show.

Perhaps the most dangerous consequence for the Yezidis’ security is the impact of last August’s events on the Yezidis’ relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), especially the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the party of Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region. It was the KDP who garrisoned the peshmerga station at Sinjar whose commanding officer left the area hours before civilians were informed of the ISIS attack, followed shortly by his subordinates; and when Mosul was taken in June it was the KDP who had reassured Yezidis that they would be safe and there was no need to leave. The only effective outside support came from militias belonging to the PYD (Syrian Kurds, aligned to the PKK from Turkey) who opened up an escape corridor for some Yezidi refugees. KRG support for Yezidi militias came later.

Despite Barzani’s stated intentions to punish the officers concerned, many Yezidis remain angry and some activists have been arrested in the KRG zone. Most disturbingly, divisions have opened between Haidar Shesho, leader of the Sinjar Yezidi militia, and the KRG over his political allegiances. At a very sensitive time in Iraqi Kurdistan Yezeidi protests are not welcome, especially after the initial outpouring of compassion and goodwill from the Kurdish population immediately following the catastrophe. But many Sinjaris are not currently identifying as Kurdish themselves. They say that they no longer want to depend on Kurdish protection and, like the displaced Christians, are requesting separate autonomy and security arrangements. But such a settlement would need to be part of an integrated plan for Iraq which would allow the voices of small minorities to be heard, and, with the battle against ISIS still raging, it will be some time before settlements can be made which will allow this traumatised community to take the first steps towards recovery.
Politics is frequently about the spectacular and in this, as in so much else, the grouping ISIS is no different from any other political organisation. For much of 2014 the world’s media and the internet were saturated by ISIS generated images of shootings, beheadings, crucifixions, defenestrations and mutilations of people whom the group had decided should die and die most publicly. This was intercut with filmed acts of destruction of Shi'i, Christian and Yezidi places of worship, as well as of Sufi shrines and of prophets’ tombs in Mosul.

In 2015, ISIS focused on other aspects of the rich cultural and archaeological heritage of Iraq. Assyrian and other statues in the Mosul Museum were destroyed, as they were at Nineveh, Nimrud and Khorsabad where sections of the ruins were bulldozed. A similar fate befell the Parthian ruins of Hatra where buildings and statues were demolished. This is all presented as spectacle, to ensure as wide an audience as possible, knowing the impact that this will have on the outside world. The intention is to shock, but also perhaps to be a riposte to the military setbacks suffered by ISIS since January 2015.

In the films, the acts of destruction are accompanied by voiceovers claiming that ISIS is doing the work of God by destroying idols that ‘had been worshipped instead of Allah’. In one video shot in the Mosul Museum the spokesman states ‘we do not care if we could have made billions of dollars’. The casual mention of a market price (even if an inflated one) for the artefacts that were being destroyed in the name of piety should alert one to what else might be going on. Because ISIS has framed these spectacular events in a language of religiosity, asserting that its adherents are acting as nothing less than the instruments of God’s will, the pietistic aspect has coloured much of the coverage.

Yet spectacle can be used as much to distract as to impress. So it is worth thinking about the other political features of these alleged acts of faith. In the first place, far less spectacular, but considerably more profitable materially, has been the systematic looting of countless archaeological sites in areas of Syria and Iraq controlled by ISIS. This has been going on for about two years, carried out by units of ISIS or farmed.

**Smuggling routes and networks have facilitated the export of artefacts, creating a constant and reliable income stream for ISIS leadership**

*Charles Tripp on ISIS, the spectacle of demolition, profit and piety*
The treasures of ancient Mesopotamia are now paying the price for their 20th-century incorporation into the national myth of Iraq

out, under lucrative licenses, to the many freelancers who have seen this as a golden opportunity for self-enrichment.

Smuggling routes and networks have facilitated the export of artefacts, creating a constant and reliable income stream for ISIS leadership and for the networks that it has franchised. The use of graven images as commodities, especially when this is for personal profit, as it often seems to be, scarcely conforms to any understanding of sharia or the example of the Prophet invoked by ISIS. Consequently, the acts of spectacular destruction of what remains can be a way of redirecting the gaze and of putting on a pious performance at the same time.

There are strong suspicions that this was precisely what has occurred at the Mosul library and at other institutions which house collections of rare manuscripts that are under the control of ISIS. Figuratively, but also on some occasions literally, a pile of unremarkable printed books were burned in front of the library, whilst sacks full of manuscripts and valuable printed material were taken out the back door. The whole operation was publicly justified with reference to the heretical or godless contents of much of the material in these libraries, but it was the market value that was of particular interest to the ISIS units charged with making the selection.

The nature of these acts of destruction, their distribution and the timing of their occurrence would also suggest that they are the product of a developing politics within ISIS. The assault on statues in the Mosul Museum and at various archaeological sites seems to have occurred at least nine months after they came under ISIS control. It did not happen in the first encounter when pious outrage and the signalling of the religious zeal of the new order might have been expected to be at the fore. It was then that human communities and their places of worship were spectacularly and cruelly targeted.

It is likely, therefore, that some of these acts of destruction are the product of what could be called ‘competitive piety’ within ISIS. The organisation is not monolithic. It is made up of a number of groupings that saw some strategic purpose, and possibly profit, in coming together in 2013/14 and internal tensions exist between ideologues, opportunists and those who hope to use the destructive energy of ISIS for their own purposes. They have different priorities, but they share an insecurity common to all ideologically driven organisations: the fear that they will be thought insuffi ciently committed to the most extreme version of the cause. Competitive destruction, like competitive murder, becomes a way of allaying suspicions of backsliding. This may be all the more necessary at a time when there have been hints of internal unease about the propriety, but also the distribution of revenue from the sale of artefacts. Their destruction becomes a way for one faction to pre-empt its rivals.

In this respect, the salafi spirit of the re-enactment of piety within the politics of ISIS should not be discounted. For such adherents, performing what they imagine are the actions of those who helped to found the faith is a key part of their identity. Destroying the winged bulls and other statues of gods and kings provides them with a chance to emulate what they imagine to have been the example of the earliest Muslims in casting down the idols of the jahiliyya. It is part of their search for authenticity through bodily re-enactment and can also be projected as external proof of inner commitment.

Finally, the destroyed artefacts may have fallen victim to a political impulse stemming from the challenge that ISIS represents to the nation states of Iraq and Syria. The treasures of ancient Mesopotamia are now paying the price for their 20th-century incorporation into the national myth of Iraq. Successive Iraqi governments have done much to encourage the study of the extraordinary material legacies of Ur, Babylon and Assyria. But they have also used them in the project of Iraqi nation-building to persuade all the inhabitants of the valley of the two rivers that they share a common national heritage, regardless of present linguistic, ethnic and sectarian differences. Part of the political project of ISIS is to dissolve any such notion of national community, and so it is not surprising that the artefacts integral to it should become primary targets for destruction.

Charles Tripp is Professor of Politics with reference to the Middle East and Vice-Chair of the Council of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq

Michael Rakowitz, The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist (Recovered, Missing, Stolen Series), 2007-ongoing
Erica C D Hunter surveys the damage done by ISIS’s desecration of Christian monasteries in Iraq

Obliterating Iraq’s Christian heritage

ISIS’s destruction of churches and monasteries continues a pattern that has been on-going since 2006, following the sectarian violence that erupted with the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra by Sunni extremists. To date, a total of 72 churches and ecclesiastical institutions throughout various cities in Iraq have been targeted. Many of these attacks were perpetrated by Al-Qaeda. However, it might be said that ISIS has refined this agenda to a previously unprecedented degree, equally targeting all denominations: Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldaean Catholic.

ISIS has damaged or destroyed all 45 Christian religious institutions in Mosul, many of which are centuries old. The St. George monastery, located north of Mosul, was founded by the Church of the East (Nestorian) in the 10th century, but was rebuilt in the mid-19th century by the Chaldaean Catholic Church. In December 2014, militants removed the iron crosses on the roof of the monastery and hoisted the black flag of ISIS. Three months later the church was attacked once again; men using sledgehammers destroyed its pictorial tile façade depicting biblical scenes. The church bells were thrown to the ground. Such was the orgy of violence that even the dead in the adjacent cemetery did not escape. Crosses were wrenched from graves, many of which commemorated war dead. According to reports, however, the monastery is still standing – albeit stripped of its Christian symbols since ISIS is currently using it as a detention centre.

To date ISIS has damaged or destroyed all 45 Christian religious institutions in Mosul, many of which are centuries old.
the current needs of ISIS this is not the case with the Church of St. Ahoadamah in Tikrit. Otherwise known as the ‘Green Church’, it was built in 700 by the Syrian Orthodox Maphrian, Denha II and was considered to be one of the most famous churches not only in the city, but in all of Iraq. Excavations by the Iraqi Archaeological Service during the 1990s made notable discoveries including several coffins, one of which belonged to a bishop who was still wearing his silver seal ring. The recent destruction by ISIS is merely another chapter in the long history of the Green Church. In 1089 the Muslim governor ordered the church to be destroyed, but it was later restored and returned to usage in 1112. Although it was no longer a working institution, the Green Church was an important reminder of the rich Christian history of Tikrit, which was, for many centuries, a metropolitanate of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Another ancient institution to fall victim to ISIS is Mar Behnam Monastery south of Nimrud. Fighters stormed the monastery in July 2014 and expelled its monks who were not allowed to take any of the monastery’s ancient relics or their Bibles. They literally left just with the clothes that they were wearing – and their faith. The monks were forced to leave behind precious manuscript archives and holy books, although fortunately these had been digitised in a programme initiated by the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (Minnesota, USA). Father Behnam Sony had also compiled a catalogue of the monastery’s holdings. There are no authenticated reports as to whether the manuscripts have been destroyed, but the chances that they have survived are slim. It is possible that these items may emerge on the international ‘art market’. Such trading usually accompanies the anarchy in which groups like ISIS flourish and abets the desecration of cultural heritage.

Worse was to follow the expulsion of the monks and the ransacking of the monastery’s library. In March 2015 militants allegedly blew up parts of the ancient monastery of Mar Behnam. The monastery was built on the site of the 4th-century martyrdom of the Sassanid prince Behnam and his sister, Sarah, who were Zoroastrian but were converted by St. Matthew, the eponymous founder of the Mar Matti monastery which is still standing on the frontier between the KRG-controlled territories and ISIS occupied lands. Behnam and Sara had refused to renounce their newly acquired faith and were martyred on the orders of their father, the king, who converted to Christianity on his deathbed. In addition to providing a real connection with the earliest strata of Christianity in the Sassanid Empire, Mar Behnam monastery was also part of the global emergence of monasticism in the 4th century, following the initiatives and rules laid down by St. Anthony and Pachomias in the Nitrian desert, Egypt, where ancient monasteries are still functioning. Along with these venerable institutions, Mar Behnam monastery stood as testimony to the monastic way of life that is still a major characteristic of Christianity to this day.

ISIS’s destruction of Mar Behnam monastery is not the first that the monastery has experienced in its long history. During the 13th century it suffered under the Mongol incursions, but its rebuilding under the Il-Khanate marks it out as one of only a handful of buildings in all of Iraq to survive from this period. Whilst the exterior of the monastery was refurbished in the 1980s – a

**Father Behnam Sony in his ecclesiastical attire**

**ISIS is imposing a puritanism that displays their ignorance of the rich Christian heritage and inter-communal relationships of Iraq**

Dr Erica C D Hunter is Head of the Department for the Study of Religions and Senior Lecturer in Eastern Christianity. She first visited Iraq in 1987 and has since maintained a keen interest in its Christian communities

Modern gatehouse and façade taking pride of place – the interior still featured ornately carved marble doorways with Estrangela Syriac inscriptions, domed ceilings and exquisite muqarnas. The monastery also contained a unique 13th-century Syriac–Uighur (Old Turkic) inscription that was a legacy of the Mongols; some of their troops were Christian Uighurs. As the most western example of the spread of Uighur, the inscription was unique, not just for Christianity or for Iraq but for world heritage.

ISIS will undoubtedly continue to desecrate and destroy churches and monasteries, with the collective result being the eradication of a unique strand of Iraq’s religious, architectural and cultural heritage. Nicholas al-Jeloo, a young Assyrian scholar recently summed up the bleak situation saying, ‘IS[IS] is destroying the rich cultural fabric of the area, the multilayered, multilingual, multi-ethnic aspects of society. It’s not just our heritage, it’s the heritage of the world. It is part of our history and now it’s gone.’

ISIS’s campaign to destroy the symbols of the common bonds that overcame religious and ethnic partisanship and cemented society for centuries is an outright assault on Iraq’s cultural heritage. In their aspiration to expunge all traces of ‘undesirable, unethical’ strands in the history of Iraq – via ethnic cleansing, mass expulsions and the destruction of holy places – ISIS is imposing a puritanism that displays their ignorance of the rich Christian heritage and inter-communal relationships of Iraq, both of which contributed much to the fabric of the country under ‘rightly-guided’ Islamic rule.
The world was stunned on Saturday, 11 April when ISIS released a video showing destruction at Nimrud. If the intention was to shock they certainly achieved their objective. Nimrud, now in Northern Iraq, was one of the principal cities – along with Nineveh, Khorsabad and Ashur – of the great Assyrian Empire that flourished between the 9th and 7th centuries BC. It was here that Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) established his capital which remained an important centre until it was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC. The walls of Nimrud – now represented by earthen banks – enclose an area of 360 hectares, within which are a great citadel mound and the site of Fort Shalmaneser, a palace arsenal constructed by Ashurnasirpal’s son Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC). Crowded on to the citadel mound are a ziggurat, temples dedicated to the gods Nabu, Ninurta and Ishtar, and various palaces, the chief of which was built Ashurnasirpal (the North-West Palace) and is known to have measured at least 200 by 130 metres. Nimrud may once have had a population of more than 60,000 and, by any standards, is one of the most important sites in the whole of the ancient world. It should certainly have been recognised as a world heritage site long ago; the fact that it was not is a reflection of the relations between Iraq and the international community in the time of Saddam Hussein.

The first excavations at Nimrud were undertaken by the great Victorian traveller, archaeologist and politician Austen Henry Layard between 1845 and 1851. His descriptions of Assyrian art and civilisation, published through a series of well-written and popular books, attracted enormous interest amongst a British public well-versed in the Bible and hungry for information about the Ancient Near East. For the first time, people were introduced to the now-familiar carved stone panels showing the Assyrian king in official ceremonies, hunting bulls and lions, or leading his army into war, as well as the massive stone gateway figures showing winged human-headed bulls and lions. It is said that the Assyrian images of bearded figures inspired the fashion for beards in Victorian England, but this may be apocryphal. The main focus of Layard’s excavations was the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal, where he worked mostly in the state apartments to the south of the main entrance. Many of the stone reliefs that he found, and some of the colossal gateway figures, together with miscellaneous smaller objects and cuneiform tablets were sent to the British Museum in London where they now occupy pride of place in the Assyrian galleries. After

The reconstructed North-West Palace at Nimrud seen from the ziggurat

Nimrud was one of the principal cities of the great Assyrian Empire that flourished between the 9th and 7th centuries BC

The best surviving example of an Assyrian palace has been destroyed by ISIS. John Curtis remembers what was lost

© J.E. Curtis

IRAQ

© J.E. Curtis

The reconstructed North-West Palace at Nimrud seen from the ziggurat

The best surviving example of an Assyrian palace has been destroyed by ISIS. John Curtis remembers what was lost
The contents of the tombs not only demonstrated the great wealth of the Assyrian empire, but also revolutionised our understanding of Assyrian technology and arts and crafts.

Layard's time many other Nimrud reliefs or parts of reliefs were removed from Nimrud and sent to museums around the world. Other 19th-century excavators at Nimrud included Hormuzd Rassam, William Kennett Loftus and George Smith, but then there was a hiatus. Large scale excavations at the site were resumed by the British School of Archaeology (now the British Institute for the Study of Iraq) between 1949 and 1963, led first by (Sir) Max Mallowan and then by David Oates. During this time the School made many important discoveries.

Of three wells excavated in the North-West Palace, one (NN) produced some of the finest Phoenician ivory plaques yet to be discovered including two showing female heads – one very beautiful (nicknamed 'the Mona Lisa') and the other rather less comely ('the ugly sister') – and a pair of plaques each showing a lion killing an African. These ivories were carved in a centre or centres in Phoenicia or Syria and brought to Nimrud in antiquity as booty or tribute.

During his time at Nimrud, Mallowan was always accompanied by his wife, the celebrated crime writer Agatha Christie, who not only wrote some of her thrillers at Nimrud but also helped on the excavation. In her autobiography Agatha describes how she had to sacrifice her precious face cream to help clean and preserve the ivories.

The excavations of the British School will probably be chiefly remembered, however, for the vast numbers of ivories discovered in Fort Shalmaneser, particularly in the storerooms SW 7 and SW 37. Thereafter, a Polish team excavated in the central part of the citadel mound between 1974 and 1976, and in the late 1980s British Museum and Italian teams worked in Fort Shalmaneser and, in the latter case, in the outer town. In recent years, however, the most important work at Nimrud has undoubtedly been done by the Iraq Department of Antiquities.

Clearance of a well in Room AJ in the North-West Palace yielded another spectacular collection of ivories, but the most dramatic discoveries were made in four vaulted, subterranean tombs in the domestic wing of the North-West Palace. The tombs were discovered and excavated by Muzahim Mahmud between spring 1988 and November 1990 and were found to contain astonishing quantities of goldwork including bowls, jewellery and even a crown. Cuneiform inscriptions showed that the consorts of several Assyrian kings were buried in these tombs. The contents of the tombs not only demonstrated the great wealth of the Assyrian empire, but also revolutionised our understanding of Assyrian technology and arts and crafts. Fortunately this mass of goldwork (together with some of the ivories) was moved to a bank vault in Baghdad before the second Gulf War in 2003 and is still in safe keeping there.

Iraqi archaeologists also cleared previously unexcavated parts of the North-West Palace and undertook a lot of restoration work, rebuilding mud brick walls. Although many reliefs had been removed to museums around the world, there were about 50 panels still in position, together with a large number of fragments. Consequently, apart from being the only substantial building still standing at Nimrud, the North-West Palace was the best surviving example of an Assyrian palace and probably represented the only location where it was possible to get an impression of how such buildings would once have looked. Also, some of the reliefs were of the highest quality and, in contrast to the exported reliefs, still retained extensive traces of their original paint. On 2 April the entire North-West Palace was blown up by ISIS in a massive explosion, leaving only a pile of rubble. The world will be the poorer for the loss of this unique cultural treasure.

John Curtis is currently the President of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, the Hon Secretary of the Friends of Basrah Museum, and the CEO of the Iran Heritage Foundation. He was Keeper of the Middle East Department at the British Museum 1989-2011.
Saad al-Jadir is an Iraqi intellectual, businessman and musician who grew up in Mosul but has been living in London since the late 1960s. He studied classical guitar for over 25 years with the concert guitarist Antonio Albanes. Al-Jadir owns one of the most comprehensive collections of old music from Iraq.

Can you tell us about the historical significance of Mosul in terms of its influence on Iraqi and Middle Eastern music?

Mosul has had a great influence, directly and indirectly on Iraqi and Middle Eastern music, even to some extent on European music. For example, in medieval times, during the caliphate of Harun Al-Rasheed, the composer, musician and musicologist Isaaq al-Mosuli was very influential. One of his students was Zyraba (Abu l-Hasan Ali Ibn Nafi, 789-857), a musical genius, who is said to have improved the oud by adding a 5th string. He wound up in Al-Andalus (Spain) where he not only influenced southern Spanish music but also became a fashion icon as the chief court entertainer in Cordoba.

Much more recently, Mullah Uthman al-Mosuli (1854-1923), a very talented composer and poet famous for his maqam al-iraqi, had a huge influence on musicians in the region. He was particularly important to the Egyptian composer Sayed Darwish (1892-1923), the father of popular Egyptian music, who moved away from more traditional compositions in favour of more experimental and innovative ones.

More recently, there were other singers, composers and performers – such as Sayyed Ahmed, Sayyed Ismail Al Fahham and others – who became regular performers in the modern Baghdad Radio.

What about more contemporary music? Did the influence of Mosul continue during the modern era?

Mosul enjoyed its own modern music and popularised it through the Baghdad Radio, Baghdad Radio, which was the only Iraqi radio available at the time, acted as the medium that familiarised people in general with music from most parts of Iraq.
which was the only Iraqi radio available at the time, but it acted as the medium that familiarised people in general with music from most parts of Iraq.

Some of the most famous contemporary Iraqi musicians came from Mosul and they were instrumental in producing generations of Iraqi musicians. Among them is Munir Bashir (1930-1997). He, like many other famous Iraqi musicians, was of Christian origin, a virtuoso oud player, composer and educationalist. One of his students is the currently well-known oud player Naseer Shamma, who himself has produced generations of musicians.

Jamil Bashir (1920-1974), a lesser-known brother of Munir, was also a very talented musician, not only playing the oud but also the violin. Both studied at the Baghdad Conservatory, founded by Hanna Petros in 1936, under the famous Turkish classical musician and oud player Şerif Muhiddin Targan (1892-1967).

Ghanim Haddad (1925-2010) is a virtuoso violinist and another student of Şerif Muhiddin Targan. He taught at the Baghdad Conservatory and has composed a rich heritage of classical music.

Jamil Salim (1938-1980), another musician from Mosul, composed a number of famous muwashahat (Andalusian love songs). Musicians who originated from Mosul made up the backbone of the Baghdad Conservatory and later School of Fine Arts. Some ended up playing in the Iraqi symphony orchestra and most were dedicated teachers.

Why do you think a disproportionately high number of accomplished musicians were of Christian background?

The Iran–Iraq war, followed by the invasion of Kuwait, followed by the sanctions; this has all destroyed the mood for creativity

Maybe because music was more of a Christian tradition in terms of the chanting in church as part of worship and sermons, which made singing and music making much more acceptable to the Christians than the more conservative Muslims.

There was a substantial Christian community in Mosul, consisting of various churches such as the Orthodox, Catholics, Chaldeans, Assyrians and the Armenians. A well-integrated community that also included Kurds, Turkmen, Yezidis and even Jews. It did indeed feel like a well-integrated and harmonious community.

Musicians generally came from working classes, and only occasionally from middle classes. At the time, it was not prestigious to be a musician in Mosul. People would admire music, enjoyed listening to it, but they would not want their children to be musicians. For example, my family was not happy about my interest in music. They were dreading television coming to Mosul for fear that I might be seen on television playing the accordion.

What was the wider cultural and artistic scene of Mosul like when you grew up?

I remember in the 1950s and the 1960s our schoolteachers were very well trained and many of them were actually excellent musicians and music theorists themselves. We had lots of school concerts, performances and choirs. The choirs would sing muwashahat, for example. Most schools also had drama classes and would put on theatre performances. Then there were regular art exhibitions as painting and sculpturing were very popular. There were a number of world famous painters and sculptors such as Rakan Dabdoub, Dhirar Kaddo and Najeeb Younis.

There were a number of bands in Mosul. I was playing the accordion with a couple of bands. There were lots of local singers as well. We had public concerts several times during the year.

Mosul was a very cultured city. It was normal for people to read. You would find lots of literature and poetry books in homes. Actually many of us were writing literature and poetry. We used to meet regularly in coffee shops to read and to discuss literature, art and culture more broadly.

When you say ‘we’ do you mean men, or were women also going to cafes?

We were only men. Women did not join in. In fact, almost all the artists, musicians and writers of the time were men. But we were mixed in terms of social classes, ethnicity and religion. Men from all walks of life would be sitting in cafés discussing literature.

Unfortunately none of this exists in Mosul anymore. The Iran–Iraq war, followed by the invasion of Kuwait, followed by the sanctions; this has all destroyed the mood for creativity. Most artistic and creative people either fled or stopped playing music or making art.

A lot of the musical heritage in Mosul is lost or destroyed. I cannot think of any worthy documentation still existing locally. I probably have the largest collection of the music of Mosul and have some rare recordings of performances. The technology of recording at the time was not very good and people lacked the skill to record and document music. I worked on a lot of classic Mosul recordings and tried to improve them through equipment, but sadly, some historical performances went unrecorded or lost.

Nadje Al-Ali is a member of the Editorial Board and a Professor of Gender Studies at SOAS

The old zone of Mosul, the river Tigris and the remainders of an ancient wall
Since the summer of 2014, ISIS has been bombarding the world with brutal images of mass murder and the destruction of religious and cultural heritage in northern Iraq. Christian churches, Yezidi shrines, Shi'a mosques, museums, libraries and archaeological sites have all been targets. ISIS knows very well that culture is the glue that holds communities together and that by wiping out the buildings at the heart of communities it is effectively wiping out their ability to remain intact. How can we in London help Iraq resist this systematic erosion of human and cultural diversity?

Cultural and scientific organisations all over the world, from UNESCO to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, have recently been encouraging research on northern Iraq's built heritage: what has been destroyed, what can and should be salvaged? While it will be a challenge to restore and replace the lost mosques, churches, shrines and archaeological remains, it will be even harder to knit together the fragile remnants of communities that have been badly traumatised by war after war in recent decades. Yet the two projects must go hand in hand, for it is individuals and communities who create culture and who use, enjoy and make meaning from their built environment.

Over the past decade the highest priorities in Iraqi educational reform have understandably been on sciences, technology, medicine and business – the subjects most urgently needed and most directly geared to enabling Iraq's economic recovery. But it is becoming increasingly apparent that the country's social and political development has not been keeping pace. Widening the focus of educational priorities to include humanities and culture can help to rebuild Iraq in many direct and indirect ways.

Even in the UK, we are only just starting to acknowledge and quantify the skills and benefits that humanities-educated students bring to the workforce. Maybe because the humanities are so well embedded in our own society, they are barely visible as distinct elements of the economic and cultural landscape. But we cannot assume that they will flourish through neglect. And if they need to be nurtured in the UK then it is even more critical that we help foster them in the much more fragile political environment of contemporary Iraq.

The British Institute for the Study of Iraq
(BISI) was originally set up as the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. Based at the British Academy in central London, we have been promoting the value of research and education in the humanities, social sciences and culture in Iraq for over 80 years. As a small and dynamic charitable organisation lacking external grants or sponsors, we currently operate on a relatively small scale. But we have developed an ambitious yet carefully phased and costed strategy for growth over the coming years that puts Iraq at the heart of all we do. We have plans for bottom-up educational projects in Iraq at all levels, from primary to higher education. BISI copes with the challenges of working in Iraq by focusing on individuals and local institutions that have the vision and energy to make transformative change.

We support archaeological projects in Iraqi Kurdistan, for instance, and museum refurbishments in the southern cities of Kirkuk and Basra.

Here in the UK, we are working to persuade British-Iraqi businesses that they can benefit directly by investing in humanities and culture and by cooperating with organisations such as BISI. Employers not only gain articulate, literate, well-rounded staff who can put together evidence-based arguments, make critical judgements and take appropriate decisions, they are also helping to create empathetic, tolerant citizens and communities who have pride and confidence in the variety and power of Iraq’s history, culture and identity.

Another key component of BISI’s work is to protect, support and mentor Iraqi colleagues in humanities and cultural heritage, to help close a skills gap that is now a quarter of a century old. The Gulf War of 1991 and the subsequent UN sanctions against Iraq not only cut academics off from the huge technological changes brought about by the internet, but also denied them access to discoveries and methodological innovations made in their research fields elsewhere in the world. Even now, 12 years since the end of the Iraq War, universities, museums and libraries are still badly managed and under-resourced.

To help bridge that skills gap, each year BISI offers two or three Visiting Scholarships to humanities academics, museum staff, librarians and other cultural heritage professionals from Iraq. They come to the UK for a month or two with a programme tailored to their particular needs. They engage in research, training and collaborative work with colleagues in universities, museums, and libraries all over the country. We then maintain mentoring relationships with them once they have returned to their own place of work. In 2014, BISI sponsored two Iraqi Visiting Scholars from northern Iraq, in the months before ISIS’s invasion of the region.

The first was Dr Nabeel Nooruldeen Hussein, a Lecturer in Archaeology at Mosul University and the Chief of Excavations at Nineveh, the capital of the vast and powerful Assyrian empire in the 7th century BC. Through his BISI visiting scholarship, he was able to survey the British Museum’s collection of sculptures from king Ashurbanipal’s palace at Nineveh, to see how they relate to those that he and his team have recently excavated. During the visit Dr Hussein was able to meet with UK academics in his area of expertise and to access the libraries at UCL’s Institute of Archaeology and at SOAS.

The second visiting scholar was Father Behnam Sony, a Priest and Lecturer at Saint Ephrem’s Seminary in Qaraqosh, and a distinguished scholar of Syriac, the classical language of Middle Eastern Christianity. Qaraqosh, just south of Mosul, is an old and important Christian centre, with many churches and monasteries and where many people still speak a modern variety of Syriac called Neo-Aramaic. His BISI scholarship enabled him to come to London to take part in a programme organised by the British Library. He learned how to care for, conserve and create a digital catalogue of the Seminary’s manuscript collection. Importantly, it includes the former holdings of nearby Mar Behnam monastery, now feared destroyed by ISIS. Father Sony was also able to access documents relating to the early Christian writers of Qaraqosh which he had never seen before, thereby greatly contributing to the history of Iraqi Christianity he is currently writing.

In these and other ways BISI is helping to maintain and develop the ‘in-country’ expertise that will enable Iraqi institutions and individuals to harness the resources at their disposal, so that humanities and culture can thrive there again. As ISIS is driven out of northern Iraq, the needs of academics in Mosul and its surroundings will become particularly acute.

More information about the BISI and its projects can be found at http://www.bisi.ac.uk.

Eleanor Robson is Professor of Ancient Middle Eastern History at University College London and currently the voluntary Chair of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq’s governing Council.

Visiting the Museum of Imam Hussein in Kerbala to plan a staff training programme with BISI. Photograph by Eleanor Robson
The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution

By Patrick Cockburn

Verso Books, January 2015, £9.99

Reviewed by Barnaby Rogerson

This book reads like a series of extended journalist features that have been stapled together with an updated afterword. It has the feel of a work in progress, with some repetitions and an uneven narrative that loops back to look repeatedly at certain key events, such as the fall of Mosul. But these faults are also the virtues of this work: its structure is a necessary reflection of the search for truth amongst the smoke of rumour, conspiracy theories, polemic and propaganda. It also looks to the horizon, providing insight into the nature of media coverage, the role of the modern war-reporter as well as a reading of the key players in the modern diplomatic game of chess. In this respect, The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution by Patrick Cockburn – an award-winning journalist and prolific writer – is a welcome addition to the growing number of publications on ISIS.

The date at the centre of Cockburn’s book is the fall of Mosul on 10 June 2014. Like all political events that have captured the world’s imagination – be it the first Palestinian Intifada (December 1987), 9/11 (2001) or the Arab Spring (December 2010) – it came like a bolt from the blue, catching intelligence chiefs and analysts without briefing papers to hand. Even the official ISIS spokesman (Abu Mohammed al-Adnani) confessed that our ‘enemies and supporters alike are flabbergasted’. A new Islamic Empire was about to be born without anyone having an inkling. How could this have happened? For Patrick Cockburn the signals were already discernible. He argues that ISIS, although its leader might be Iraqi in origin, must be seen as a product of the Syrian civil war. It grew out of the Sunni resistance to the Assad regime of Syria, which was strongly supported by the democratically elected Islamist regime of Turkey, and lavishly funded by the monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

To understand ISIS’s success we must look at the organisation’s skilful use of propaganda. The ISIS leadership used scenes of public violence, especially the execution of prisoners of war and humiliation of the Shi’a, to demoralise their enemy. Patrick Cockburn has sifted through this nebulous world to identify the verifiable acts of propaganda terrorism from the false, identifying footage of atrocities borrowed from Afghanistan and the chainsaw-wielding drug-barons in Mexico. He also looks at the importance of false but still powerful stories, quoting the tale of babies being thrown out of hospital incubators in Kuwait and the Viagra-fuelled rape of prisoners by Qaddafi’s soldiers as examples of incidents that did not happen but helped guide decision-making at the time. ISIS propaganda is also a recruiting tool, attracting both Chechen veterans and thousands of youthful volunteers from such countries as Morocco and Tunisia.

Cockburn tells us that an analysis of the language in these propaganda clips reveals that it seldom rises above the most childish abuse of the Shi’a enemy and formulaic boasts of future victories.

Patrick Cockburn helps his readers understand the murderous mess that arose in the aftermath of 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which threatens to overwhelm both Syria and Iraq and to destabilise the Middle East in an unprecedented way. By the end of this book readers will fear that Iraq and Syria are in danger of becoming the cockpit of another Thirty Years War: the Sunni states of Turkey, the Gulf and Saudi Arabia (with its ally Pakistan) on one side with Russia, Iran and Shi’i Lebanon on the other.

Barnaby Rogerson has written North Africa – A History, The Prophet Muhammad – a biography, The Last Crusaders, The Heirs of the Prophet Muhammad and guidebooks to Tunisia and Morocco. He is a member of the Editorial Board and his day job is Publisher at Eland (www.travelbooks.co.uk)
Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourses

Edited by Hamid Keshmirshekan

IB Tauris, January 2015, £59.50

Reviewed by Pamela Karimi

What is the location of contemporary Middle Eastern art in the broader context of global art or in light of such concepts as diaspora, deterritorialisation, transnationalism, hybridity and cosmopolitanism? Are 'local' and 'global' opposites or are they interdependent? The essays in Hamid Keshmirshekan’s edited volume, originally presented at a 2013 conference at the London Middle East Institute at SOAS, offer fresh responses to these queries. Together they make one of the finest recent volumes on contemporary Middle Eastern art, examining local artistic aspirations in relation to mainstream global art trends.

Essential theoretical debates surface in the first two chapters: Hamid Dabashi envisages the binaries of ‘local’ and ‘global’ irrespective of old colonial associations and Irit Rogoff accentuates the symbiotic relationship of the two concepts. Next, Nada Shabout explores the expansion of modern and contemporary art of the Arab world as a scholarly discipline in the English-speaking world (and the lack thereof). Hamid Severi reflects on how Iran’s Persian-language publications have unexpectedly surpassed the restrictions imposed on the press industry, allowing ample room for discussions of global art. Considering civil war and lack of state support, Shaheen Merali argues that in the absence of systematic archival, textual or visual memory and oral history play a significant role in safeguarding the history of Middle Eastern art. Art education, if properly fashioned, can be equally influential, as contributor James Allan asserts. How local oral history and schooling constitute an alternative to elite and scholarly texts or formal archiving remains to be further explored and scrutinised against other similar global trends.

Calling once more for systematic historicisation, Keshmirshekan’s own contribution – aside from his earlier introductory comments – marks the beginning of Section Two, in which he demonstrates how local traditions and history inform current and future art. Sarah Rogers follows a similar trajectory by exploring Beirut’s post-civil-war art against the broader context of modern Lebanese and Western art. Somewhat incongruent is Abbas Daneshvari’s article, which exposes the complexity of motifs in contemporary Iranian art, seeing them through the lens of post-structuralist theory.

It is often implied that since the early 1990s scores of Western art exhibitions have inadvertently perpetuated stereotypes associated with the Islamic world. In Section Three, Fereshteh Daftari and Venetia Porter, themselves curators of major UK and US shows, demonstrate how most recent regional and international venues have actually helped bridge the gap between the regional and the global, rather than the other way around. Conversely, Hella Darabi’s brief history of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in the final chapter shows how mainstream Western art can be both exposed and censored, depending on a given political situation in the region.

The book as a whole could benefit from a more balanced distribution of content. While Section One holds most of the chapters, the other two sections are rather thin. Inconsistent with its title, the book is primarily concerned with the art of Iran and the Arab–speaking Middle East. Turkey and Israel are occasionally addressed, but their artistic achievements are not substantially studied.

These minor criticisms, however, in no way detract from the worth of this volume. In recent years there has been an abundance of published work on contemporary Middle Eastern art. However, few go beyond descriptive accounts, engaging the region’s recent artistic trends in a dialogue with broader philosophical and theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, due largely to the recent revolutions and civil wars and the ensuing inability to access the archives, few scholars have had the privilege to rely on sources in regional languages. Consequently, most valuable to the broader field in Keshmirshekan’s edited volume are those essays that are attentive to theoretical frameworks (Chapters 1 and 2) and original sources (e.g. Severi’s article on lesser-known Iranian publications). However, this well-researched, clearly written and richly illustrated collection is on the whole impressive. Scholars, curators, students, and art practitioners as well as Middle-Eastern art enthusiasts will find the book informative and stimulating.

Pamela Karimi is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Massachusetts and IHF Visiting Fellow in Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, SOAS. She is the author of Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era (Routledge, 2013)
**The Middle East in the World: An Introduction**

Edited by Lucia Volk

*The Middle East in the World* offers students a comprehensive, multidisciplinary entry point to the broader Middle East. After a brief introduction to the study of the region, the early chapters of the book survey the essentials of Middle Eastern history; important historical narratives; and the region’s languages, religions and global connections. Students are guided through the material with relevant maps, resource boxes and text boxes that support and guide further independent exploration of the topics at hand. The second half of the book presents interdisciplinary case studies – each of which focuses on a specific country or sub-region and a salient issue – offering a taste of the cultural distinctiveness of the particular country while also drawing attention to global linkages.

*February 2015, Routledge, £24.99*

---

**Arab Media Moguls**

Edited by Naomi Sakr, Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, Donatella Della Ratta

Transformations in the Arab media landscape are a key element in the regional dynamics of political change. Where do the private owners of Arab media outlets stand on the scene? What part, if any, have they played in weakening dictatorships, countering sectarianism and political polarisation, and reforming business practices in the Arab world? *Arab Media Moguls* charts the rise of some leading investors and entrepreneurs in Arab media, examining their motives, management styles, financial performance and links to political power. Responding critically to scholarship on Western moguls, this book uncovers the realities of risk and success for Arab media potentates and billionaires.

*March 2015, IB Tauris, £15.99*

---

**Inside the Islamic Republic: Social Change in Post-Khomeini Iran**

Edited by Mahmood Monshipouri

The post-Khomenei era has profoundly changed the socio-political landscape of Iran. Since 1989, the internal dynamics of change in Iran, rooted in a panoply of socioeconomic, cultural, institutional, demographic and behavioral factors, have led to a noticeable transition in both societal and governmental structures of power, as well as the way in which many Iranians have come to deal with the changing conditions of their society. This is all exacerbated by the global trend of communication and information expansion, as Iran has increasingly become the site of the burgeoning demands for women’s rights, individual freedoms, and festering tensions and conflicts over cultural politics. These realities, among other things, have rendered Iran a country of unprecedented – and at time paradoxical – changes.

*May 2015, Hurst, £25.00*
OBITUARY

Leila Ingrams

(1940-2015)

Leila Ingrams was born in 1940 in Cairo with the help of a Jewish midwife, a fact she often pointed out to those who only saw discord in the modern Middle East. She was the daughter of Harold and Doreen Ingrams, the first Europeans to make their home in Hadhramaut, part of modern Yemen, during Harold’s tenure as Resident Adviser and British Agent to the Qu’ayti and Kathiri Sultanates. Her mother, née Shortt, was an actress before joining her husband in his first colonial posting in Mauritius. Leila spent her early childhood in Aden and al-Mukalla, making her first trip through the Yemen in 1941 together with her older sister Zahra, whom her parents had adopted in 1937 from a woman of the Se’iar tribe.

Leila’s early experience of South Arabia and the burden of a parental legacy, which is still remembered in the form of the Ingrams Peace in Hadhramaut, were to define her life. Still a child, she travelled with her family to Ethiopia and later by car from England to the Gold Coast, an adventure published under the title Seven Across the Sahara: From Ash to Accra. After finishing her studies, she worked for CAABU, her mother being one of its founding members. Since then, she remained committed to the Palestinian cause and the defence of human rights in the Arab world. In the 1970s Leila lived in Muscat, working for the Omani government’s adviser, John Townsend, as well as for the Omani Director of Information Shaykh Nasir Seif al-‘Ali, later to become Oman’s first ambassador to London.

It was after Oman that Leila’s literary career began: in 1988 she and Professor Richard Pankhurst jointly published Ethiopia Engraved. During the same period she worked with her mother to compile the 16-volume opus Records of Yemen 1798-1960, a truly monumental task. Yemen Engraved, a companion volume to Ethiopia Engraved, appeared in 2006. Leila found a hospitable environment for her multifaceted activities at SOAS, where in 2007 she convened the Yemen Film Festival; it is difficult to think of any Yemeni cultural event to which she was not, in some way, linked. At the time of her death she was working on this year’s Nour Festival.

She dedicated the latter part of her life to the custodianship of her parents’ legacies, maintaining links with people across the Indian Ocean from Zanzibar and Mauritius to Singapore. She oversaw the reprint of her mother’s Palestine Papers, 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict and A Time in Arabia, which was also translated into Arabic by her friend, the Hadhrami poet Najib Ba Wazir. She organised the permanent exhibition of her parents’ photographs at the Say’un Museum, and donated the artefacts they had collected from their various postings to the British Museum. In 2004 she set up a scholarship in her mother’s memory for Palestinian female students, who would otherwise have no access to higher education, at Birzeit University.

Leila’s compassionate nature and profound understanding of her fellow humans and their cultures allowed her to develop her own interests independently of her parental past. Her name is inextricably linked with Ethiopia, a country that she came to know intimately and that she wrote about. Her philanthropic spirit found expression in the support of grassroots relief work in Ethiopia, and in Hadhramaut through the Friends of Hadhramaut organisation, of which she was a patron.

Leila was an existential link to the past of Yemen and the Hadhramaut and a delightful person. She passed away on 22 March near her home in Kent, and she will be mourned by her many friends at home and overseas. She generously provided help and support to many a scholar with an interest in either Ethiopia or Yemen. I shall miss our afternoons at her regular haunt, the Royal Geographical Society, with a ‘stale cup of tea’ but always fresh conversation about her beloved Hadhramaut.

Thanos Petouris is a Yemen Researcher and a member of the British-Yemeni Society. His work focuses on the anti-colonial movement in South Arabia and the British colony of Aden.
**Listings**

Events in London

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.

**June Events**

**Monday 1 June**

6:00 pm | Advertising and Promotion of Medicine and Public Health in Roman Palestine

(Lecture) Estee Dvorjetski, Oxford Brookes University and University of Haifa. Organised by: Anglo Israel Archaeological Society and the Institute of Archaeology, UCL. AGM Lecture. Admission free. Lecture Theatre G6, Ground Floor, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY.

7:00 pm | Out of Focus

(Documentary) Dir Shahriar Siami, 51 min. Film about the Iranian born British artist based in London Afshin Nagouni (Ash). Considered a child prodigy, Ash won a number of regional and national painting competitions between the ages of 9 and 12 and has not stopped painting since. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330 / 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.aias.org.uk

**The 2015 Middle East in London Photo Competition**

As the summer holidays approach, the London Middle East Institute at SOAS is pleased to announce a photo competition for its bimonthly magazine, *The Middle East in London*.

Harness the power of photography and share your experiences from around the Middle East. A selection of entries will be published in a future edition of *The Middle East in London* magazine. The winner, chosen by members of the Editorial Board, will be awarded £100 worth of Amazon tokens. Entries should be emailed to middleastinlondon@yahoo.com by 5:00pm on 29 September 2015 and should include your name, email address or telephone number, photo title and photo-caption including place and date. This information is mandatory; we are unable to consider entries without it.

Photographs must be in digital format (JPEG or .jpg) and digital files must be 5 megabytes or smaller and at least 1,600 pixels wide (if landscape/horizontal) or 1,600 pixels tall (if portrait/vertical). We are unable to consider print or film submissions. You may submit as many entries as you wish, although we recommend sending a separate email for each individual entry. Themes are not restricted, but the following categories may serve as helpful guidelines:

- Travel portraits: People working, playing, celebrating
- Outdoor scenes: Landscapes, aerials, wildlife, waterscapes
- Sense of place: Buildings & architecture, culture & food
- Current affairs: Political and social events, protests, demonstrations

By submitting a photograph, each entrant confirms and accepts the following terms and conditions:

- The photograph, in its entirety, is a single work of original material taken by the contest entrant.
- The entrant warrants that the photograph submitted is their own work, that they own the copyright for it and that no other party has any right, title, claim or interest in the photograph.
- The entrant accepts the responsibility to ensure that any images submitted have been taken with the permission of the subject and do not infringe the copyrights, trademarks, moral rights, rights of privacy/publicity and/or intellectual property rights of any entity, third party or any laws.
- Copyright in all images submitted for this competition remains with the respective entrants. However, each entrant grants a worldwide, irrevocable, perpetual license to London Middle East Institute at SOAS, University of London to feature any or all of the submitted images in any of their publications, their websites and/or in any promotional material with full credits given to the photographer.

*The Middle East in London* will not enter into correspondence regarding the final decision.
Tuesday 2 June

6:00 pm | Saudi Islamists on Peaceful Revolution: Divine Politics Reconsidered (Lecture) Madawi al-Rasheed, LSE. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Madawi al-Rasheed looks at mutations of Saudi Islamism during the Arab uprisings and examines the responses of Salman al-Ouda, one of the most influential Saudi Islamist scholars.

Chair: Steffen Hertog, LSE. Admission free. Sheikh Zayed Theatre, Lower Ground Floor, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/home.aspx

Wednesday 3 June

3:00 pm | The Politics of Human Rights and Religious Mobilization in Asian Turkey (Lecture) Jack Snyder, Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University. Organised by: Centre for the International Politics of Conflict, Rights and Justice, SOAS (CCRI). Admission free. Room: 4426, SOAS. W www.soas.ac.uk/ccri/events/

4:30 pm | Bahraini Activism in Exile: Legacies and Revolutionary Ruptures (Lecture) Claire Beaugrand, Institut Français du Proche Orient. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Bahrain’s 2011 political uprising marked a new phase in Bahraini outmigration and exile politics. Beaugrand examines the forms of opposition and advocacy that were built on previous exile experiences and analyses the novelty of different modes of action. Chair: John Chalcraft, LSE. Admission free. Room 9.05, Tower 2. Clement’s Inn, LSE. T 020 955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/home.aspx

6:30 pm | Iran’s Diverse Musical Traditions (Lecture) Ameneh Youssefzadeh, Graduate Center, CUNY, New York and Encyclopedia Iranica. Organised by: Iran Heritage Foundation. Youssefzadeh looks at Iran’s rich and diverse musical traditions. On the one hand, there is Persian classical music, cultivated mostly in the centre of the Iranian plateau in the cities and on the other, ‘regional musical traditions’. Followed by a reception. Tickets: £10 W www.irancheritage.org Asia House, 63 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 7LP. T 020 3651 2121 E astrid@iranheritage.org

7:30 pm | The Wanted 18 (Film) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms.Dirs Amer Shomali and Paul Cowan (2014), Canada/France/Palestine, 75 min. In Arabic, Hebrew and English with English subtitles. Animated documentary that looks at the Israeli army’s pursuit of 18 cows, whose independent milk production on a Palestinian collective farm was declared “a threat to the national security…”. Tickets: £6.50 advance booking/£7.50 on the door W http://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

7:30 pm | Yasmine Hamdan (Concert) Though Lebanese singer-songwriter Yasmine Hamdan’s vocals are connected to traditions of Arabic music, to which she takes a personal and unconventional approach, the structures and arrangements of the songs are very remote from its codes and might be described as a kind of mutant strain of electro folk pop. Tickets: £16 advance

SOAS, University of London, Language Centre is pleased to offer its renowned programme of professional development leading to a post-graduate qualification (Certificate and Diploma levels) in teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language. These awards have contributed substantially to the professionalising of Arabic teaching in the UK and elsewhere and to the recognition of the expertise of teachers of Arabic.

New Arabic Teacher Training Programme Starting October 5th 2015 - Full-Time (2/3 days attendance per week) 5-10-15 to 8-7-16

SOAS, University of London, is the only place that trains teachers of Arabic in the latest communicative methods that enable learners to use the language effectively right from Beginners level. Our fees for these University of London accredited programmes are very reasonable and we have had excellent feedback, both from trainees and from their subsequent employers. For more information contact:

The Programme Convenor, Ilham Salimane Email: is23@soas.ac.uk Telephone: +44 (0)20 7898 4870 or The Programme Officer, Mandy Payne Email: mp38@soas.ac.uk Telephone: +44(0)20 7898 4895 or Follow the link: http://www.soas.ac.uk/languagecentre/languages/arabic/postgraduate-certificate-diploma-in-teaching-arabic-as-a-foreign-language.html

We also run full-time SOAS accredited Certificate and Diploma courses in Arabic language (MSA) and Persian 28-9-15 to 8-7-16 http://www.soas.ac.uk/languagecentre/languages/persian/certificate-and-diploma-in-communicative-persian.html
Thursday 4 June

10:00 am | Painting and Illumination in Persian and Mughal Books: An exclusive look at Manuscripts in the British Library with Dr Barbara Brend (Seminar) One-day seminar with a morning session at the British Library with the curators and Barbara Brend, viewing illustrated and illuminated works from the collection. Followed by pigment and technical demonstrations with Anita Chowdry in her studio. Tickets: £135. British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB & Studio 3, 1-7 Woburn Walk, London WC1H 0JJ. T 020 3556 7075 E anitachowdry@talktalk.net W https://anitachowdry.wordpress.com/british-library-seminar-with-barbara-brend/

5:30 pm | Recent Discoveries in and around Petra (Lecture) Lucy Wadeson, Université Libre de Bruxelles. Organised by: British Foundation for the Study of Arabia (BFSA). AGM Lecture. Admission free. Room G6, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H OPY. E ionisthompson@yahoo.co.uk W www.thebfsa.org/
Thursday 11 June


Friday 12 June

9:00 am | Minorities and Popular Culture in Modern Middle East: Representation and Participation (Two-Day Workshop: Friday 12 - Saturday 13 June) Organised by: The Woolf Institute, Cambridge and the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS (CCLPS) with the support of the London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Workshop exploring the contribution of all religious and ethnic minorities to the popular culture industries and how popular culture products have represented minorities and dealt with the minority question in modern Middle East during the twentieth century and at present. Tickets: £20/£10 students. Pre-registration required E eth22@cam.ac.uk Room B102, SOAS. W www.woolf.cam.ac.uk / www.soas.ac.uk/cclps/events/

Saturday 13 June

10:00 am | Minorities and Popular Culture in Modern Middle East: Representation and Participation (Two-Day Workshop: Friday 12 - Saturday 13 June) Workshop concludes with the screening of Jews and Muslims: Intimate Strangers. Followed by a Q&A with the filmmaker, Karim Miské. See above listing for Friday 12 June.

12:00 pm | Permaculture in Palestine (Talk) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Alice Gray, freelance permaculture teacher and designer, discusses the role of trees in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: both as a tool for colonisation and displacement, and as a land-based resistance strategy used by Palestinians. Admission free. Pre-registration required E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org W 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

7:00 pm | Kurdish Aid Foundation’s Charity Concert Organised by: Peyman Heydarian and the SOAS Kurdish Band. Tickets: £20/£10 conc. and students. St Marylebone Parish Church, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LT. E events, santur@yahoo.com W www.thesantur.com

Monday 15 June

6:30 pm | Turkey and the UK: Their Policies towards the EU after their General Elections (Panel Discussion) Organised by: British Institute at Ankara (BIAA) and the Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey (Research Turkey). Turkey and the UK both have complex relations with the European Union. Listen to, and question, two former foreign ministers with long experience at the forefront of their countries’ relationship with the EU and two commentators on European affairs. With Hikmet Çetin, Jack Straw, Quentin Peel and Soli Özel. Chair: Sir David Logan. Tickets: £10 (free for BIAA Members). Wolfson Auditorium, British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7969 5204 W www.biaa.ac.uk/events
Lecture Series. Admission free. Pre-registration required E info@mbifoundation.com MBI Al Jaber Conference Room, London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI), University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. W www.mbifoundation.com

Thursday 25 June
9:00 am | BRISMES Annual Conference 2015: Liberation? (Three-Day Conference: Wednesday 24 – Friday 26 June)
Organised by: British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES). Liberation has been a recurrent theme in the Middle East for millennia and together with ‘bread and dignity’, it was one of the central principles of the Arab Spring. The BRISMES Annual Conference 2015 will explore the multitude of meanings that the concept has for the region today. Tickets: Various. Pre-registration required W http://brismes2015.com LSE. T 0207 955 6553 E c.pearson@lse.ac.uk

Wednesday 24 June
9:15 am | BRISMES Annual Conference 2015: Liberation? (Three-Day Conference: Wednesday 24 – Friday 26 June)
Organised by: British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES). Liberation has been a recurrent theme in the Middle East for millennia and together with ‘bread and dignity’, it was one of the central principles of the Arab Spring. The BRISMES Annual Conference 2015 will explore the multitude of meanings that the concept has for the region today. Tickets: Various. Pre-registration required W http://brismes2015.com LSE. T 0207 955 6553 E c.pearson@lse.ac.uk

Saturday 20 June
6:30 pm | I Am The People (Documentary) Part of the Open City Documentary Festival. Dir Anna Roussillon (2014), France, 111 min. Portrait of a family, far from Tahrir Square in Egypt’s rural South, as they follow the Tahrir uprising via television news and local papers. The film charts their progression from amused distant observers of the events in Cairo through their increasing engagement and politicisation. Tickets: £10/£8 conc. Cine Lumiere, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT. T 020 7679 4907 E info@opencitylondon.com W www.opencitydocs.com / www.opencitydocsfest.com

Friday 19 June
7:00 pm | Those Who Feel the Fire Burning + Q&A (Film)
Organised by: Frontline Club. Conflict, economic crisis, and depleting environmental resources are driving increasing numbers of people to attempt the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean to Europe. Morgan Knibbe’s film, places viewers in the perspective of a person who has begun this dangerous and desperate journey to Europe by sea. Followed by a Q&A with the director Morgan Knibbe. Tickets: £10/£8 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QI. T 020 7479 8940 E events@frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

7:00 pm | Supper Club with Hana Haj Ahmad of Tatreez Café
Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. With stories and discussions guests will have the opportunity to learn about and sample a seasonal taste of Palestine. Tickets: £35 (includes a three course meal with wine). Pre-booking required. The Mosaic Rooms, A M Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7730 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org

7:30 pm | Cechanok (Documentary) Part of the Open City Documentary Festival. Dir Maziyar Moshtagh Gohari (2014), Iran, 72 min. This almost wordless documentary looks at the strange and fascinating world of Arabic Falconry, from the catching of a field mouse in Iran to the bizarre competitive falcon shows in Abu Dhabi. Tickets: £5/£3.50 conc. Deptford Cinema, 39 Deptford Broadway, London SE8 4PQ. T 020 7679 4907 E info@opencitylondon.com W www.opencitydocs.com / www.opencitydocsfest.com

7:00 pm | Supper Club with Hana Haj Ahmad of Tatreez Café
Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. With stories and discussions guests will have the opportunity to learn about and sample a seasonal taste of Palestine. Tickets: £35 (includes a three course meal with wine). Pre-booking required. The Mosaic Rooms, A M Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0EA. W www.mbifoundation.com

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN PALESTINE
From the Second Intifada to the Roadmap
Ahmed Qurie (Abu Ala)

The start of the twenty-first century in Palestine saw the breakdown of the Oslo Accords give way to a turbulent period of dashed hope, escalating violence and internal division. Tracking developments from the Second Intifada of 2000 to Hamas’ 2006 electoral victory, former Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie provides revealing and first-hand detail of the monumental changes that have rocked the peace process and the region as a whole.

www.ibtauris.com
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 2015/16.

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
6:30 pm | Remembering Iran: Zoroastrian themes in Pahlavi, Persian and Gujarati texts (Lecture) Sarah Stewart, SOAS. Organised by: Iran Heritage Foundation. Parsi tradition dates the migration from Iran and early settlement of Zoroastrians on the west coast of India to either the eighth or tenth centuries CE. This talk will discuss the development of Parsi identity on Indian soil, which was both shaped and challenged by feelings of allegiance to the old country mixed with a desire to put down roots in the new. Tickets: £10 W www.iranthanage.org Asia House, 63 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 7LP. T 020 3651 2121 E astrid@iranthanage.org

7:00 pm | Insight with Samar Yazbek: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria (Talk) Organised by: Frontline Club. Samar Yazbek’s new book The Crossing documents several dangerous clandestine trips she took into the North of her country and is testimony to the reality that is Syria today. Yazbek shares her observations and what she heard from the Syrian people about their hopes and fears for the future. 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


JULY EVENTS

Wednesday 1 July

6:30 pm | Remembering Iran: Zoroastrian themes in Pahlavi, Persian and Gujarati texts (Lecture) Sarah Stewart, SOAS. Organised by: Iran Heritage Foundation. Parsi tradition dates the migration from Iran and early settlement of Zoroastrians on the west coast of India to either the eighth or tenth centuries CE. This talk will discuss the development of Parsi identity on Indian soil, which was both shaped and challenged by feelings of allegiance to the old country mixed with a desire to put down roots in the new. Tickets: £10 W www.iranthanage.org Asia House, 63 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 7LP. T 020 3651 2121 E astrid@iranthanage.org

7:00 pm | Insight with Samar Yazbek: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria (Talk) Organised by: Frontline Club. Samar Yazbek’s new book The Crossing documents several dangerous clandestine trips she took into the North of her country and is testimony to the reality that is Syria today. Yazbek shares her observations and what she heard from the Syrian people about their hopes and fears for the future. 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


7:00 pm | London Festival of Kurdish Music Organised by: Peyman Heydarian and the SOAS Kurdish Band. 5th Festival of Kurdish music. Tickets: £10/£8 conc./£6 SOAS students. DLT (formerly G2), SOAS. E events. santur@yahoo.com W www.thesantur.com

Saturday 11 July

Until 26 July | Shubbak Festival 2015: A Window on Contemporary Arab Culture

‘Untitled’, 25 x 25 cm, © Corinne Silva, 2014. Corinne Silva: Garden State (see Exhibitions, p. 34)
London's largest biennial festival of contemporary Arab culture featuring the visual arts, film, music, theatre, dance, literature, architecture and debate and over 60 events taking place across various venues. W www.shubbak.co.uk

**Sunday 12 July**

11:00 am | **Disappearing Cities of the Arab World** (Symposium) A symposium exploring issues of architecture, post-colonialism, globalisation and psycho-geography. It brings together writers, artists, historians, architects and urbanists to explore the complex space that is the contemporary Arab city. Tickets: £20. BP Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7960 4200 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org

2:00 pm | **Visions of Palestine: A homage to Michel Khleifi** (Documentary/Panel Discussion) Organised by: Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). A triple bill of seminal documentaries, followed by a panel discussion with director Michel Khleifi, Peter Kosminsky and Ilan Pappe. Tickets: £11/£8 conc./£7 ICA Members. Cinema 1, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7930 3647 W www.ica.org.uk

**Monday 13 July**

6:00 pm | **Canticle of the Stones** (Film) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Dir Michel Khleifi (1990), Palestine/Belgium, 110 min. Khleifi's second feature film tells the story of star-crossed lovers, Bushra and Makram. Parted in the 1960s when Bushra emigrates to the US, the pair meet again years later at the height of the first Intifada. 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

**Tuesday 21 July**

6:00 pm | **Forbidden Marriages in the Holy Land** (Film) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Dir Michel Khleifi (1995), Palestine/Belgium/UK, 66 min. A documentary on mixed marriages between inter-faith and inter-racial couples from Israeli and Palestinian societies. 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

**Friday 24 July**

TBC | **The 2015 Seminar for Arabian Studies** (Three-Day Conference) Friday 24 - Sunday 26 July) 49th Seminar for Arabian Studies Conference. International forum that meets annually for the presentation of the latest academic research in the humanities on the Arabian Peninsula. Tickets: Various. BM. E seminar.arab@thefbsa.org W www.thefbsa.org

5:45 pm | **Activism and Poetry Writing Workshop** Organised by: Southbank Centre. Working with Palestinian performance poet and human rights activist Rafeef Ziadah, an opportunity to look at examples of activist poetry and create some of your own. Tickets: £20/50% off conc. (limited availability). Sunley Pavilion at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

7:45 pm | **Poets on the Frontline** (Reading/Discussion) Choman Hardi, Ghasheeb Iskander and Kei Miller. Organised by: Southbank Centre. Poets Choman Hardi (from Iraqi Kurdistan) and Ghasheeb Iskander (from Iraq) are reunited with UK-based Jamican poet Kei Miller, who visited the Kurdistan capital Erbil for last year’s literary festival. Together, they discuss the challenges of capturing conflict in verse. Tickets: £10/50% off conc. (limited availability). Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

**Saturday 25 July**

11:00 am | **Introduction to Iranian Poetry Past and Present** (Workshop/Discussion) Organised by: Southbank Centre. An introduction to both traditional and contemporary Persian poetry. Ted Hodgkinson and Stephen Watts explore how poets have responded to the modernisation of Iran and translations of European poetry. Tickets: £15/50% off conc. (limited availability). Level 3 Function Room at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

11:15 am | **How to Write Ghazals** (Workshop) Organised by: Southbank Centre. Learn how to write ghazals, the ancient Arabic verse form similar to the sonnet. Tickets: £20/50% off conc. (limited availability). Sunley Pavilion at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

4:45 pm | **Close Reading: Paul Batchelor** (Reading) Organised

'The Light is Fading Slowly Slowly and Slower, The Time Being in the Shadow of Hyperobjects', oil on canvas, 200 x 220 cm, 2015. Yeşim Akdeniz: The Secret Life of My Coffee Table (see Exhibitions, p. 34)
5:15 pm | Close Reading: Hubert Moore and Nasrin Parvaz (Reading) Organised by: Southbank Centre. Hubert Moore and Nasrin Parvaz are the translators of Sabeer Haka’s short poems. Join them for a close reading of their translations and learn more about their working method. Tickets: £5/50% off conc. (limited availability). Sunley Pavilion at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Sunday 26 July

3:00 pm | The House is Black and Forough Farrokhzad (Film) Organised by: Southbank Centre. Iranian poet Forough Farrokhzad made her documentary about a leper colony for Ebrahim Golestan’s film company in 1963 and paved the way for Iranian New Wave cinema. Followed by a discussion with Aras Khatami. Tickets: £10/50% off conc. (limited availability). Spirit Level at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Monday 20 July


Monday 27 July

8:45 am | Palestine refugees and the interpretation of article 1D of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Workshop) Organised by: Oxford Rights Workshops. A workshop on the legal issues relating to Palestinians who seek asylum in the UK. Tickets: £350 (includes tuition, workshop materials, lunch and refreshments). Pre-registration required by Friday 5 June. Oxford Quaker Meeting Room, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW. T 01865 428655 E admin@oxfordrightsworkshops.co.uk W www.oxfordrightsworkshops.co.uk/product/Palestine-refugees/

EXHIBITIONS

 Until 5 June | The Dangerous Frontier Works by the Moroccan photographer Lalla Essaydi whose photographs are the result of a complex performance-based medium comprising painting, calligraphy, interior design, costume design, stage directing, and finally photography with the uncropped white borders of the film with the Kodak brand made visible emphasising the fabrication of her settings. Admission free. Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, 22 Eastcastle Street, London W1W 8DE. T 020 3588 1195 E info@kashyaholedbrand.org W www.kashyaholedbrand.org

Until 20 June | The Tent Makers of Islamic Cairo: A Photographic
study by Massimiliano Fusari In the milieu of old Cairo craftsmen have been producing textiles of both utility and beauty for centuries. Intended originally for tents, these decorative pieces of stitched cotton - known as khayamiyya - have long attracted local Cairenes as well as distant travellers. Fusari's images capture the tentmakers at work as stitchers and sellers, their medieval street and its changing neighbourhood. Admission free. Brunei Gallery, SOAS. T 020 7898 4046 E gallery@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/

Until 20 June | Garden State Photography exhibition in which Corinne Silva offers an unexpected view on gardening, exploring Israel's suburban gardens, parks and public places. Silva encourages visitors to view gardening not simply as the act of nurturing a plot of land, but potentially as a tool used in aggressive state expansion, territory marking and occupation. See website below for various events around the exhibition. 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 20 June | The Art of Integration 'Islam in England's green and pleasant land': Photographs by Peter Sanders Sanders shows an alternative picture of Muslims integrated completely within British society, a reminder that Muslims have been part of British life for well over a century, and have made and continue to make an important contribution to the United Kingdom's rich cultural diversity. Admission free. Brunei Gallery, SOAS. T 020 7898 4046 E gallery@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/

Until 27 June | Yeşim Akdeniz: The Secret Life of My Coffee Table Akdeniz has produced a series of paintings of the exteriors of iconic stone buildings partially submerged by bodies of water with depictions of the buildings' interiors, these seemingly post-apocalyptic scenes suggest a potential future where our buildings and design objects in their various forms remain as our sole survivors. Admission free. Pi Artworks London, 55 Eastcastle Street, London W1W 8EG. T 020 7637 8403 E info@piartworks.com W www.piartworks.com

Until 11 July | Nascent States Group exhibition bringing together the diverse practices of eight female artists including Judith Barry's ‘...Cairo Stories', a series of recorded stories, based on personal interviews. Initiated in 2003 at the beginning of the Iraq War, the project explores the many different ways that Cairene women negotiate the ideological, cultural and economic conditions that are specific to Cairo. Admission free. Waterside Contemporary, 2 Clunbury Street, London N1 6TT. T 020 3417 0159 W www.waterside-contemporary.org

Until 31 July | The Bridge An East-West travelling art exhibition organised and curated by CARAVAN, an interreligious and intercultural peacebuilding NGO and showcasing the work of 47 contemporary artists from 15 countries. Admission free. St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 4JJ. T 020 7766 1100 E info@smitf.org W www.smitf.org

Until 25 September | Faith and Fortune Exhibition focussing on the use of Late Antique coinage as a platform for the promotion of the respective political and religious ideals of the Byzantine, Umayyad and Sasanian Empires. Admission free. The Street Gallery, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, Stocker Road, Exeter EX4 4ND. E jane.clark@exeter.ac.uk W http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iais/events/exhibitions/

Until 4 October | A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis New archive display which documents the history of the Festival of Arts Shiraz-Persepolis, a ground-breaking international arts festival held around Shiraz, Iran, every summer from 1967–1977. Admission free. Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. T 020 7522 7888 E info@whitechapelgallery.org W www.whitechapelgallery.org

Friday 12 June

Until 25 July | The Map is Not the Territory A group exhibition looking at relationships and commonalities in Palestinian, Native American, and Irish experiences of invasion, occupation, and colonization – not as novelty or polemic, but as history and current events. Admission free. P21 Gallery, 21 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD. T 020 7121 6190 E info@p21.org.uk W www.p21.org.uk

Thursday 2 July

Until 1 August | Brion Gysin: Unseen Collaborator Reopens 8 September – 3 October 2015. Painter, writer, sound poet, tape composer, lyricist, and performance artist, Gysin is remembered particularly for his evocative paintings of the North African desert in the 1950s and his original calligraphic abstractions based on Japanese and Arabic scripts. Admission free. October Gallery, 24 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AL. T 020 7242 7367 W www.octobergallery.co.uk

Saturday 11 July

Until 22 August | I Spy With My Little Eye... Exhibition exploring the practices of a new generation of Beirut artists most of whom are in their late twenties to early thirties and all born after the break out of the war in 1975. 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

Monday 13 July

Until 23 July | Tripoli - The Melting Pot Featuring works that represent the different interpretations of the artists exhibited as they consider the concept of a City in the case of Tripoli, Libya. Includes paintings, photography, films and installation art, each depicting the artist's special relationship with this metropolis. Admission free. The Arab British Centre, 1 Gough Square, London EC4a 3DE. T 020 7832 1310 E info@arabbritishcentre.org.uk W www.arabbritishcentre.org.uk
An intensive five-week programme which includes two courses: an Arabic Language Course (introductory or intermediate) and another on 'Government and Politics of the Middle East' or 'Culture and Society in the Middle East'.

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.

To qualify for entry into this course, students should have already completed at least one introductory course in 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.

FEES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session (5 weeks)</th>
<th>Programme fee</th>
<th>Accommodation fee*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 June-23 July 2015 (two courses)</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>from £300/week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 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
NEW MA PALESTINE STUDIES

- Develop an understanding of the complexities of modern and contemporary Palestine
- Explore history, political structure, development, culture and society
- Obtain a multi-disciplinary overview
- Enrol on a flexible, inter-disciplinary study programme

For further details, please contact: Wen-chin Ouyang, Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature
E: wo@soas.ac.uk

www.soas.ac.uk