



## **Inaugural Conference 6-7 December 2014**

**SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), London**

**Convened by HRH Prince El Hassan of Jordan  
and Dr Barbara Schwepcke, of the Ginkgo Library**

### **'The First World War and its Aftermath: The Shaping of the Middle East'**

The Ginkgo conference series brings together scholars from the East and the West. The Ginkgo conferences are designed to complement the Ginkgo Library, a project to publish one hundred books over the next ten years, presenting the latest work in both Arabic and English across the full range of humanities, social sciences and sciences relating to the Middle East and North Africa. The first Ginkgo conference, to be held in London on 6–7 December 2014, focuses on the effects of the First World War on the Middle East. Our guest speakers include Professor Khaled Fahmy of the American University in Cairo and Dr Eugene Rogan of the University of Oxford. Other confirmed attendees include Professor Charles Tripp (SOAS), Professor Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak (University of Maryland), Professor Yousef Meri (LMU Munich) and Professor Mustafa Aksakal (Georgetown University).

The course of the First World War, as it played out in the Middle East and the political and cultural changes around it, shaped the modern Middle East: The Ottoman and the Russian Empires fought each other for supremacy in the region – neither succeeded nor survived the fight. Both sides tried to use notions of Islamic unity and Pan-Arabism to their own advantage: Sultan Mehmed V called for a global Muslim jihad against the Entente Powers, while Britain stirred Pan-Arabism with little intention of honouring promises made in the process. At the end of the First World War four multi-ethnic empires lay in ruins. In the Middle East lines were drawn in the sand, dividing communities which had lived together for centuries. Wilson's ideals were as powerful an inspiration as Lenin's communist utopia on nationalist leaders such as 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Tha'alibi and Saad Zaghloul, but what constituted a nation in the Middle East and North Africa in the aftermath of the First World War? In the end, neither the Tunisian Destour nor the Egyptian Wafd party were allowed to present their case for national self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference. And the only Middle Eastern delegation to attend was the Hejaz, lead by Emir Feisal, who had been promised a united Arabia – a promise betrayed at the end of the First World War.

#### Points of discussion could include:

- Shaping Ethnic Identity: From the Arab Revolt to Pan-Arabism, 1916 to 1933
- Shaping State Identity: The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the artificiality of the post-First World War state system, 1919 to 1939
- Shaping National Identity: Wilson or Lenin? Who had the greater influence on nationalism in the Middle East?
- Shaping Political Identity: From Subject to Citizen – What constitutes legitimate governance in the aftermath of the First World War Middle East and North Africa?
- Shaping Religious Identity: The Sultan's jihad and the beginnings of political Islam

Abstracts for papers should be submitted by Monday 2 June 2014 to Aran Byrne; proposals for sessions must be submitted by Monday 7 July 2014. Proposals should be no more than 300 words long. For further details please contact:

Aran Byrne  
The Gingko Library  
70 Cadogan Place  
London SW1X 9AH  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7838 9055 Fax: +44 (0)20 7584 9501  
Email: [aran@thegingkolibrary.com](mailto:aran@thegingkolibrary.com)  
[www.thegingkolibrary.com/gingko-conference](http://www.thegingkolibrary.com/gingko-conference)

The inaugural Gingko conference looks at the immediate aftermath of the First World War with a particular focus on how the period began a long process of reshaping the identities of the peoples of the Middle East. How has our understanding of this history changed in both Western and Middle Eastern scholarship? What is the relevance of this history to the self-understanding of the people and politics of the region? What are the implications in terms of the concept of nation state and national boundaries? How did it influence the legitimacy and governance in the region? What lessons can be drawn from this period for both West and East when looking at the challenges and opportunities in the Middle East today?

The conference will include a gala plenary discussion between Lord Owen and Prince El Hassan bin Talal on avoiding the mistakes of 1919 in the modern Middle East and a visit to, and reception at, the exhibition *Forgotten Heroes: North Africans and the Great War 1914–1919*. It will conclude with a literary event, bringing together writers from the Middle East and the West. Together, the two parts of the event will complement one another, presenting a unique forum for intellectual exchange among scholars and writers and will establish the intended continuity to next year's conference, when *Literature and Iran* will be the main focus of the Gingko Conference.

The Inaugural Conference is expected to attract considerable media attention and a PR agency will be engaged to handle individual interview requests as well as to publicise the dialogue. The plenary discussions will be recorded and made available via the internet to reach the widest possible audience.

Funding opportunities to cover travel and accommodation are available for scholars that are selected to speak at the conference. A selection of the papers delivered at the conference will be published together in a volume in the Gingko Library, following review. We will also be keen to talk to speakers at the conference about the possibility of developing their papers into book-length proposals for the Gingko Library. All speakers will be invited to become members of the Gingko Network, an association for scholars of the Middle East and North Africa, based both in the region and beyond.

The Gingko Library is a not-for-profit limited company by guarantee, which is currently applying for charity status and affiliation with the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). It is committed to fostering intercultural dialogue and better understanding between and within Orient and Occident.