



### OUTLINE NARRATIVE WITH KEY OBJECTS AND ASSETS

*Churchill and the Middle East* explores the impact of British statesman **Sir Winston Churchill** on the region known as the Middle East.

The film narrative runs chronologically and begins with a prelude of objects relating to the final year of the First World War, which witnessed the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled much of the Middle East for centuries. Objects including **flags and pamphlets** here will introduce key themes, such as Arab and Jewish nationalism (Zionism), and personalities such as **Emir Feisal bin Hussein**, an Arab prince, rebel leader and future King of Iraq; his British liaison officer **T E Lawrence** ('Lawrence of Arabia') and **Chaim Weizmann**, a Zionist activist and future President of Israel.

The detailed narrative begins with Churchill's arrival at the Colonial Office as Secretary of State for the Colonies. In this post, Churchill became responsible for settling questions relating to Britain's future rule in former Ottoman territory it had conquered during the war. Key objects include a **map of the Arabian peninsula**, drawn up at Churchill's request, showing the areas of influence of different Arab chiefs. The key event in Churchill's time at the Colonial Office was the 1921 Cairo Conference where British policy was discussed and confirmed by senior military and political officers. Following the conference, Churchill travelled to Jerusalem, meeting Emir Feisal's brother **Emir Abdullah** for important discussions. Key objects include a **visitors' book** from Government House in Jerusalem, signed by Churchill and other leading figures. Key assets include **photographs** of the Conference attendees, including Lawrence (as a member of Churchill's staff and advisor) and **Herbert Samuel**, the first High Commissioner for Palestine.

In 1934, Churchill took a holiday to the Mediterranean and Middle East with his wife Clementine, and his friends **Lord Moyne** and his wife. In the course of the 1920s and 1930s, Churchill strongly supported British policy encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine. By the late 1930s, this immigration had created tensions between Palestinian Arabs and Jews, leading to an Arab general strike in 1936, and later an armed uprising. Key objects here include a **photo album** of the Churchills' and Moyne's holiday, compiled by Lady Moyne, and a **letter** to Churchill from **Frederick Peake** criticising British policy. Peake was an army officer who attended the Cairo conference and who was then commanding the armed forces of Transjordan (now Jordan).

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Middle East became a complex and strategically vital area. As wartime Prime Minister, Churchill directed and coordinated British strategy. Objects and assets include a **car flag** associated with Field Marshal **Sir Archibald Wavell**, the British commander-in-chief in the Middle East, and **telegrams** sent by Churchill to Wavell during a particularly critical period in spring 1941. Other assets include a **Vichy French propaganda poster** depicting Churchill as a sinister octopus, his tentacles reaching for Vichy French territory in Syria and elsewhere.

In 1944, Churchill's friend Lord Moyne was **assassinated** in Cairo by Jewish terrorists who opposed British policy in Palestine. Deeply shocked, Churchill renewed efforts to court **Ibn Saud**, the King of Saudi Arabia and most powerful Arab ruler. Hoping that Ibn Saud would use his influence to calm Palestine, Churchill and Ibn Saud met in February 1945. Churchill's meeting with Ibn Saud, in marked

contrast with a meeting between the King and US President Franklin Roosevelt a few days earlier, was a significant failure. Objects or assets here include a **letter of condolence** written by Churchill to Lord Moyne's son, and another **letter written by an American intelligence officer**, reporting to the US government the King's account of his conversation with Churchill.

Following his loss of the 1945 general election, Churchill continued to serve in Parliament as Leader of the Opposition. In August 1946, following another significant terrorist attack in Palestine, Churchill spoke in Parliament to condemn the policy of Clement Attlee's Labour government. A key object will be a copy of **T E Lawrence's book** *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, given and inscribed by Lawrence to Churchill. In his speech, Churchill defended his own reputation on Middle Eastern affairs, citing in his defence his copy of Lawrence's book, and its inscription. The exhibition will end with this defence by Churchill of his reputation. A postscript cluster of objects will lightly discuss later events affecting the Middle East in Churchill's lifetime.