

EDITOR'S NOTE

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A LOOK FORWARD AND A LOOK BACK

This issue marks the beginning of the fortieth volume of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and throughout the year we will commemorate this milestone with occasional dips into the past. In January 1970, founding editor Stanford Shaw welcomed readers and contributors to Volume 1 with his hope “that *IJMES* will become a major vehicle for scholars all over the world” to share their findings. Although *IJMES* is still striving to realize that goal of true international breadth, the journal has published many articles regarded as standard-bearers in the field. This year we will excerpt just a few of these based on recommendations from former editors.

Alas, we are not able to consult Shaw, who died in December 2006. As Amadou Hampate Ba famously remarked, “When an old man dies, a library disappears.” With Shaw disappeared much of the oral history of the *IJMES* launch, although we can glimpse those heady days through tables of contents and notes “from the editor’s desk.” For the first issue, Shaw solicited contributions from Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb (“The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World” [I]), Charles Issawi (“The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830–1900: Rise and Decline of a Route”), and Gabriel Baer (“The Administrative, Economic and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds”). Out of choice or necessity, he included one of his own, “The Central Legislative Councils in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Reform Movement before 1876.” Stepping down a decade later, at the close of Volume 10, Shaw confessed his initial pessimism “about the possibility of attracting articles of quality sufficient to fill [the journal’s] pages on a quarterly basis,” and then added, “How wrong I was!” Bowled over by the “quality of research,” in 1979 he reported a “backlog of unpublished articles . . . to as much as two or even three years in areas particularly rich in scholarly production.” Present-day contributors, take heart: we no longer have such a backlog, so if your article passes our rigorous review process, we usually schedule it for the next issue—the whole process complete within a year or so of submission.

Initially, book reviews were a less happy story, Shaw admitted. “The ideal of assigning reviews to mature scholars of proven competence in the field of each book, and of securing reviews that present the contents and objectively evaluate contributions has been extremely difficult to achieve because of the concentrations of many specialists to their own research and the inclination of some to use the reviews as occasions to promote their concerns.” Busy scholars, contentious field—sound familiar? For *IJMES* Volume 1, Shaw wrote thirty-nine of the fifty-eight book reviews but soon found a better solution: a multidisciplinary panel of editors to assign the reviews to colleagues, a system that has well served the journal to this day.

The second editor of *IJMES*, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, professor emerita at the University of California, Los Angeles, recalls many memorable articles from her 1980–1984 tenure. Her picks include the following:

- Marcel A. Boisard, “On the Probable Influence of Islam on Western Public and International Law,” *IJMES* 11, no. 4 (1980)

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- Fazlur Rahman, "A Survey of Modernization of Muslim Family Law," *IJMES* 11, no. 4 (1980)
- M. G. Weinbaum, "Legal Elites in Afghan Society," *IJMES* 12, no. 1 (1980)
- Nazih Ayubi, "The Political Revival of Islam: The Case of Egypt," *IJMES* 12, no. 4 (1980)
- Willem M. Floor, "The Revolutionary Character of the Iranian 'Ulama: Wishful Thinking or Reality?" *IJMES* 12, no. 4 (1980)
- Nasir Islam, "Islam and National Identity: The Case of Pakistan and Bangladesh," *IJMES* 13, no. 1 (1981)
- Ethan Nadelmann, "Setting the Stage: American Policy toward the Middle East, 1961–1966," *IJMES* 14, no. 4 (1982)
- Akbar Aghajanian, "Ethnic Inequality in Iran: An Overview," *IJMES* 15, no. 2 (1983)
- Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, "The Transformation of Land Tenure and Rural Social Structure in Central and Southern Iraq, c. 1870–1958," *IJMES* 15, no. 4 (1983)
- Brad Hanson, "The 'Westoxication' of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, al-e Ahmad, and Shariati," *IJMES* 15, no. 1 (1983)
- Habib Ladjevardi, "The Origins of U.S. Support for an Autocratic Iran," *IJMES* 15, no. 2 (1983)
- Hamied N. Ansari, "The Islamic Militants in Egyptian Politics," *IJMES* 16, no. 1 (1984)
- Wael Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?" *IJMES* 16, no. 1 (1984)
- Charles R. Kennedy, Jr., "Multinational Corporations and Political Risk in the Persian Gulf," *IJMES* 16, no. 3 (1984)

Given Iraq's dominance of the headlines today, we are highlighting the Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett article, which appeared in November 1983 (<http://www.jstur.org/view/00207438/ap010063/01a00050/0>). At the time, Marion and Peter were teaching at the University of Durham. A decade later they crossed the pond, to the University of Utah, where Peter now directs the Middle East Center. Marion's death in 1996, after a battle with cancer, was a loss not just to her family but also to the field. (See memorials from that year in *MESA Bulletin* 30, no. 1, and *Middle East Report*, no. 199.)

A LOOK BACK

*Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett*THE TRANSFORMATION OF LAND TENURE
AND RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN CENTRAL
AND SOUTHERN IRAQ, C. 1870–1958

This paper is an attempt to show how the economy and society of rural Iraq was affected by a combination of changing world economic circumstances and structural innovations in the pattern of land tenure. Iraq's gradual incorporation into the world market in the latter part of the nineteenth century was assisted by the application of the legislative and military reforms of the Tanzimat, which served generally to extend the powers of the Ottoman state over its provinces. Although the effects of the application of the new system were less direct than the Ottomans desired, it did set in motion a gradual process of detribalization, which tended to reduce the powers of tribal shaikhs and promote the emergence of private property in land. When the British came to Iraq in 1914, they adapted the Ottoman machinery and combined it with British-Indian administrative practice, which arrested the decline in shaikhly power and gave wide-ranging powers to tribal shaikhs and landlords. We shall show how local notables made use of their new powers to acquire vast semifeudal estates, and to reduce 'their' tribesmen to the status of debt-bonded serfs; this led eventually to the virtual isolation of the rural area from the rest of the economy, and tended to arrest the emergence of capitalist relations of production in the countryside. The acute contradictions set in motion by this process resulted in severe distortions in the country's economic and political systems, which continued until, and indeed long after, the Revolution of 1958.

LAND TENURE, POPULATION, AND SOCIETY, 1517–1869

...

As long as they were able to do so, the tribes resisted Turkish efforts to "pacify" the countryside, which were of course principally aimed at subjugation and taxation.⁷ Thus in general, for most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the writ of the Ottoman governors of Iraq did not run far outside the towns in which their garrisons were quartered. Iraq was relatively far from Istanbul, and the Porte's capacity to intervene remained severely limited until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the military, legal, and socioeconomic reforms of the Tanzimat were introduced. With the benefit of superior strategy, the establishment of police and army posts, and the introduction of the telegraph, Ottoman rule was extended over a gradually widening area.

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THE OTTOMAN LAND CODE OF 1858

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In general, in the conflict over the possession of land between tribal leaders and the Ottoman state on the one hand and between shaikhs and tribesmen on the other, the Turkish policy of 'divide

and rule' led to the gradual decomposition of the tribal confederation.²⁵ The opening of the world market to Iraqi agricultural products began to undermine the subsistence economy of the tribes, and many shaikhs gradually began to view their tribesmen more as a source of profit than as efficient fighters. At the same time they were still forced to depend on a loyal and reasonably contented following to assist them against the encroachments of other tribes and of the Turkish state. The shaikhs' position was therefore somewhat equivocal and insecure, and remained so until the British Occupation changed the situation once and for all, by freeing the shaikhs from their dependence upon their tribesmen, and, as we shall see, by uniting their interests with those of the government.

BRITISH OCCUPATION AND THE MANDATE, 1914–1932

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From the beginning of the Occupation, the British authorities had been concerned to secure, if not the loyalty, at least the neutrality of the local population, who were still nominally Ottoman subjects. Attempts were made to ensure that they did not cooperate in any way with the Ottoman armies, and to secure regular food supplies for the British army. The authorities seem to have decided that the surest way of achieving these objectives was to bolster the position of the tribal shaikhs whose domains lay along the lines of the army's advance, by granting them security of tenure over the lands which they claimed as their own.²⁷ Thus vast tracts of land passed into the personal possession of selected tribal leaders, and were subsequently so registered in *tāpū*. In this fashion, the decline of shaikhly power and the gradual decomposition of the tribal structures which had been initiated in the last years of Ottoman rule were dramatically halted, especially as the administration began to appoint suitable shaikhs as the 'official' leaders of their tribes. "Many of them were small men of no account until we made them powerful and rich," one Political Officer wrote in August 1920,²⁸ and the same general tendency is confirmed in his Chief's memoirs some ten years later: "The shaikhs were in most cases directly dependent on the civil administration for the positions they held; realising that their positions entailed corresponding obligations, they cooperated actively with the political officers . . ."²⁹

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LAND POLICIES UNDER THE MANDATE AND MONARCHY, AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

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The peasantry, or perhaps more accurately the *fallāhīn*, were naturally those most immediately affected by the landlords' enhanced socioeconomic role. The fallāh and his immediate superior, the *sārkal* (foreman), suffered a concomitant decline in status, income, and independence of action. Agricultural production remained tied to the system of share-cropping in which the fallāh was paid in kind. He and his immediate family did the bulk of the work of cultivation while the *sārkal* supervised the distribution of land, fixed the times of sowing and harvest, and was responsible for the actual division of the crop at the time of harvest. The peasant's share varied from region to region and amounted to between 30 and 50 percent of the crop⁴⁸; the rest would be divided again, the bulk going to the landowner, who would sell it for cash. If the fallāh supplied seeds and draught animals and owned his own tools, he was entitled to a clear 50 percent (*niṣf bārid*), though a fallāh was rarely able to supply all three components.⁴⁹ In addition, he had to pay a series of dues, which also varied from region to region, for the maintenance of the shaikh's coffee-man in the guesthouse (*mudāf*), the man of religion (*mu'min*) and the crop measurer. If he owned his own livestock he had to pay grazing charges and the sheep or cattle tax, and if there was a wedding or birth in the

shaikh's family he might have to pay an arbitrary fee. It is almost impossible to determine exactly how much was left for the peasant himself after the payment of all these different dues.

...

The British Occupation of Iraq in the First World War took place during a period in which the Iraqi tribal population in rural areas was gradually abandoning its nomadic existence and adopting a settled or semisettled way of life. Although this process of sedentarisation was accompanied by the development of a certain amount of small peasant proprietorship... most land was still state or *mīrī* land, held collectively by the tribes under a variety of traditional prescriptive tenurial arrangements. In their capacity as successors to the Ottoman state, the British authorities managed to achieve a far higher degree of control over southern Iraq than their predecessors. The complicated and widely differing tenurial arrangements which they found in existence compelled them to decide to whom state land should be allocated, that is, either to the producers and cultivators themselves, or to the tribal leaders and their families.⁵⁹ From the very beginning, the latter group was favored, in spite of a series of memoranda from concerned officials questioning the wisdom of this course.⁶⁰ Gradually, this state of affairs led to lopsided and uneven development in Iraq as a whole; more precisely, capitalist penetration under these particular colonial conditions resulted in the creation and perpetuation of precapitalist relations of production in the countryside. Thus a system increasingly directed toward production for an urban capitalist market managed to exclude most of the rural producers from all but the most marginal participation in the money economy.

NOTES

⁷Although, as Nieuwenhuis shows (p. 44), the Ottoman or Mamluk governors consistently maintained political alliances with important tribal leaders: "Some tribal aristocracies... played a basic role in the political arena of the pashalik (sc. of Baghdad)... Some contracts existed well before the 18th century, others were made during the Mamluk period." See also pp. 158–168.

²⁵Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, p. 77.

²⁷The British authorities certainly knew what they were doing. A report of 1917 states: "Settled agriculture and extended civilisation have tended to disintegrate the tribe and to weaken the influence of the shaikhs. To restore and continue the power of the tribal shaikhs is not the least interesting of the problems in land administration which the Baghdad *wilayet* presents." (Administrative Report, Revenue Board, Baghdad, for the period 22 March to 31 December 1918, FO 371/3406/139231.) Again, the Revenue Commissioner noted in 1919: "We must recognise that it is primarily our business not to give rights to those who have them not, but to secure their rights to those who have them." (Lt. Col. E. B. Howell, *Note on Land Policy*, Baghdad, 1919; FO 371/4150/127807.) Edgar Bonham-Carter, Sir Percy Cox' Legal Advisor, wrote in April 1921: "My own experience has been that when Arabs settle down to agriculture they begin to wish to come under a more settled authority and to break away from the Shaikh" (CO 730/3/52858).

²⁹A. T. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917–1920: A Clash of Loyalties* (London, 1931), p. 96.

⁵⁹As we have already stated elsewhere, most writers on Iraq in this period seem to have misunderstood this important point. For example: "Had the British authorities understood the local situation more clearly while they still retained effective control over the country after the First World War, they might have been able to introduce a system for settling land titles which gave the great tribal shaikhs, who now often lived in the cities, smaller opportunities to acquire tribal lands for themselves and form a large class of absentee landlords." (Edith and E. F. Penrose, *Iraq: International Relations and National Development* [London and Boulder, Col., 1978], p. 153.) See our review entitled "Iraq: the Path to Independence," *Gazette Review*, 6 (1978), 40–48.

⁶⁰Some of these contrary opinions can be found in Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, pp. 231–238.