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## THE IRAQI CONSTITUTION OF 2006 AND THE IRAQI LAW OF ANTIQUITIES: ARE THEY HONORED AND RESPECTED IN IRAQ NOW?

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*From the TAARII-sponsored session entitled "Iraqi Heritage" at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, November 23, 2009.*

Antiquities Law Number 55, written in 2002, clearly states that antiquities discovered within the borders of the Republic of Iraq should be deposited with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. There they must be conserved, documented, photographed, and inventoried with an IM (Iraq Museum) number. I should stress that the Iraq Museum is the only institution within Iraq that has the expertise to handle antiquities in an appropriate manner.

After the change in the government in 2003, we became aware of some situations in which this law was not being followed, so we realized that we needed to be certain that these provisions were included in the new constitution that was being prepared at that

time. As they were preparing to write a new constitution for Iraq, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities stating my fears about the mishandling of antiquities at the provincial level within Iraq, and asked him to contact members of the Iraqi Cabinet and the Iraqi parliament, insisting that they include antiquities in the constitution. When it appeared that we did not receive a clear answer, I wrote to the head of the committee that was actually writing the constitution, explaining my fears that the antiquities would be scattered and looted if a clear statement indicating that antiquities must be managed by the Iraq Museum and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the only institution in Iraq with the expertise in these matters, was missing. I ar-

ranged for a peaceful demonstration in the gardens of the Iraq Museum to demand the inclusion of the antiquities provision in the constitution and made sure that the media were aware of this situation. I knew then that there were those who were against any policy that would have antiquities controlled by the central government, and made sure that everyone understood that Iraq's antiquities were the heritage and wealth of the Iraqi people and therefore, like oil, should be governed by the central (federal) government according to the antiquities law.

Eventually we managed to have a paragraph included in the constitution. Paragraph Number 113 stated: "The antiquities are the heritage and wealth of the Iraqi people and they should be



Figure 1.1. Dhi Qar province in Iraq. All maps arranged by Elizabeth Stone



Figure 1.2. Qadasiyah province in Iraq



Figure 1.3. The provinces of Karbala, Najaf, Basra, Wasit, Dhi Qar, Qadasiyah, and Misan in Iraq



Figure 1.4. The walls of Nineveh



Figure 1.5. The walls of Nineveh



Figure 1.6. The cars donated by the U.S. and Japan

dealt with by the central government according to the law,” and that law was already in place.

Nevertheless, in spite of this clear statement within the new constitution, when I was the chairman of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and therefore responsible for any antiquities found in Baghdad or the provinces, it became clear that many of the provincial governments were not following the law. I will provide you with several examples of the difficulties that we encountered with provincial officials.

Our first problem was with the Dhi Qar province in the area around Nasiriyah, where our Inspector of Antiquities — the person who is our representative to that province — was put in prison on

the basis of a series of completely false accusations. It was clear to me that this was because he had taken his job seriously and had been very active in tracking the looters to the archaeological sites, arresting them, sending them to the courts, and sending the rescued artifacts to the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. Although our inspector was eventually released once it was ascertained that none of the accusations were true, we found that the governor of the Dhi Qar province issued an order that all antiquities found in that province should stay there and not be taken to Baghdad.

The Inspector of Antiquities in the Qadasiyah province was also put in jail on a similar series of baseless accusations, and again just for doing his

job: protecting antiquities and sending the antiquities recovered from looters to the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. Once again, he was released because the accusations were groundless.

Dhi Qar province was just the first to declare that all antiquities found within its borders were to stay in the province and not be sent to Baghdad. The governors of Karbala, Najaf, Basra, Amara, and Kut all issued similar proclamations.

An archaeologist from Hilla, which is in the Babylon Governorate, conducted excavations in Qadasiyah under the sponsorship of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. He was in the process of unearthing several large, well-preserved, and complete clay tab-



Figure 1.7. The Antiquities Police, which is no longer functioning



Figure 1.8. Sumerian axe head seized by the German Federal Police and returned to Iraq in March 2009

lets, which, according to the constitution should be sent to the Iraq Museum where they could be conserved and kept in suitable conditions. However, he was afraid that the governor of the Qadasiyah province would try to stop him. He therefore resorted to smuggling his finds to Baghdad — even though they were the result of an official excavation. He was able to transport the material to the Iraq Museum in several trucks belonging to local farmers, using back roads rather than the major highways and thus avoiding the checkpoints established by the governor to prevent such objects from leaving the province. Only in this way was he able to take all the material he found in his official excavations to the Iraq Museum in Bag-

dad, because he knew what would happen if the governor found out about it.

In Mosul, which is in the Nineveh province, the governor had some extra money and ordered the reconstruction of the walls of the ancient city of Nineveh. He did not like the way the archaeologist suggested the restoration work be completed, which was in accordance with well-known regulations and the antiquities law, so he gave the job to some contractors, who started cleaning the site with bulldozers and then built the walls with stone and concrete; the archaeologist there could not interfere.

Since none of the security services within Iraq — whether members of the multinational forces, Iraq's own secu-

rity forces, or the local police — were protecting the archaeological sites from looting, I initiated a program designed to develop our own archaeological police whose mandate was to protect the archaeological sites. I got the approval from the Minister of Culture to recruit 1,400 personnel, all men who had previously served in the Iraqi military or police force, that is, those who already had the necessary skills and could begin their work immediately. The field vehicles that they needed were provided by the United States and Japan, and communication systems by UNESCO. We bought weapons for them from our own budget. Wherever these archaeological police were completely equipped, they did an excellent

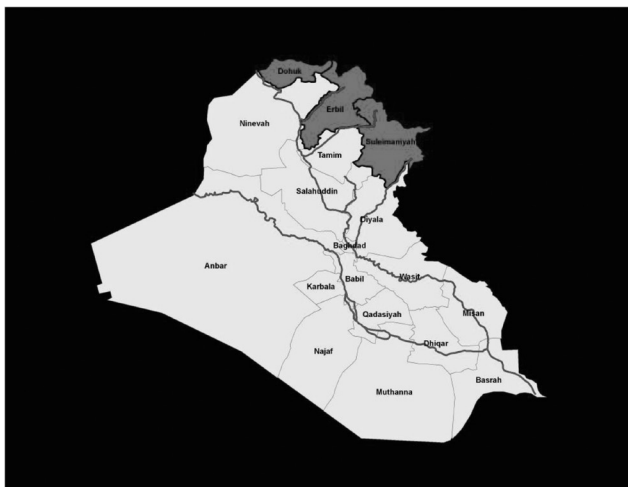


Figure 1.9. The provinces of Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniya in Iraq



Figure 1.10. Basrah province in Iraq



job: arresting looters, taking them to the court, and sending any antiquities seized in the process to the Iraq Museum. But this was not to last as other players worked to slow them down. First, the budget for the fuel for their cars was cut, and then the budget for their salaries was cut; finally, in January 2009, I learned that they no longer reported to the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, but, instead, to the Ministry of Interior. This change was accompanied by a new job description that contained no mention of patrolling the archaeological sites. There is a promise of forming a new task force for the protection of the sites, but no such force has been formed and the sites remain unpatrolled.

We are now being told by the staff of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in most of the provinces that the provincial governors and some of their senior staff there are arranging to have people bring them antiquities, some of which are put in show cases in their offices while others just disappear.

The latest news from Baghdad is that two ministers and one of the vice presidents have established offices to receive antiquities from the Iraqi people. Some of these are certainly sent to the Iraq Museum, but the question remains whether those that go to the museum are the entirety of those that are turned in, or whether the cream of the crop is removed before they are transferred to the Iraq Museum.

#### ANTIQUITIES SENT BACK TO IRAQ FROM EUROPE

After four years of work by Dr. Michael Muller-Karpe from Germany, a Sumerian axe head from the Ur III Sumerian period with the inscription of King Shulgi on it, which was seized by the German Federal Police, was taken as a good will initiative by the German foreign minister to Baghdad and handed over to the Iraqi prime minister

in March 2009. It was not sent to the museum until November 2009, and then only after endless phone calls and memos by the director of the Iraq Museum requesting the axe.

The Kurdish area in the north of Iraq has ceased contact with the Iraq Museum since 1991, even though we know that many antiquities — including those from southern Iraq that have been caught at the border as they were being smuggled to Turkey and Iran — are housed there. These objects have been placed in the museum in the Sulaymania and Erbil museum, and the ones in Sulaymania have even been assigned Sulaymania museum numbers.

We have had a particular problem with the governor of Basra. At the heart of Basra lies the old city — one of the best-preserved historic Arab cities. The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage has been working tirelessly to persuade the governor of Basra to prevent people from building new houses in this area, but without success. We have finally learned the reason. The old city of Basra is the earliest Islamic city outside the Arabian Peninsula since it was the creation of Khalifa Umar bin abi Khattab, one of the companions of the Prophet Mohammed. But because Umar is considered to have been a leader of the Sunnis, the populations of Basra, who are now predominantly Shi'a, see it as a city built by their enemies.

In Baghdad, the traditional buildings that have a very special Iraqi architecture from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century have been neglected and therefore destroyed by their owners in order to build modern structures for commercial purposes, especially on Rashid Street. Now, with



Figure 1.11. One of the historic houses in Basra

pressure from specialists and architects, the municipality of Baghdad has announced a conference to be held in Baghdad in a few months to study this case; surprisingly, the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage is not invited to this conference, regardless of the fact that the traditional (heritage) buildings are controlled by the Iraqi Law of Antiquities and Heritage Number 55 since 2002.

The sad stories that I have presented show how embattled the staff of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage are. They are virtually the only people in Iraq who are trying to protect Iraq's rich cultural heritage. They have to fight on two fronts: against the looters of antiquities at the sites, and against government officials of all kinds. The latter group may well be the more dangerous of the two.

One final note: In preparing this paper, I was checking the website describing the Iraqi constitution and was surprised to find out that the final copy of the new constitution that was delivered to the United Nations no longer include Paragraph Number 113 regarding Iraq's antiquities.

Thus, no matter what Iraqi officials say, we can see from the above that the Iraqi government, at all levels, has contributed to the destruction of Iraq's important cultural heritage.

## IRAQI ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORTS PROJECT

MCGUIRE GIBSON, TAARII PRESIDENT

TAARII is in the final year of a project that began with a grant from the NEH and continued with State Department funding that is administered by a not-for-profit named IRD (International Reconstruction and Development). The project began as an effort to gather, translate, and publish archaeological reports that had been prepared by Iraqi colleagues but had been caught up in the 2003 destruction of the offices of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, which are housed in the same complex of buildings as the Iraq National Museum. By taking on this project, we sought not only to rescue important information by aiding the excavators to reassemble the reports, but also to make their work known to a larger international audience by presenting them in English in major international journals.

The key person in the project is Dr. Mark Altaweel, a Chicago-based Mesopotamian archaeologist who was born in Iraq and retained his control of Arabic. Working initially with only two Iraqis, we arranged to pay for them to have Internet access in their homes and scanners for the copying and transmission of their manuscripts and catalogues. With this technology, they were able to keep in close contact with Altaweel, sharing information, sending manuscripts in Arabic, and answering questions about details. Altaweel translated their manuscripts into English and made initial layouts of the figures. He then turned them over to me for editing and additional comments. The English versions all appear under the authorship of the Iraqi colleagues and Altaweel.

With an increased level of funding under the IRD grant, we expanded



Figure 2.1. Overall view of Iraqi excavations at Tell Muqtadiyah, Diyala province

the number of manuscripts and authors, working mainly with Dr. Salah Rmeidh and Hussein Ali Hamza. Each year, we meet with our Iraqi colleagues in Amman or Istanbul to go over the translated reports, verify details, and finalize them. We then send the manuscripts off to international journals, such as *Akkadica* and *Iraq*, where they have been and are being published. With Mr. Hamza, we are working on a major report on Tell Muqtadiyah and three other

sites. These reports of Mr. Hamza will appear in a monograph along with Dr. Rmeidh's major report on his excavations at Tell Asmar (ancient Eshnuna). All these sites are related because they are all located in the Diyala region east of Baghdad. Mr. Sabri Muahmmad sent his manuscript on excavations at Tell Shmid, one of the sites in Dhi Qar province that had been badly looted in the early 1990s and was made the focus of salvage excavations just before the 2003 war. In

the past year, Mr. Muzahim Muhammad has joined the project, bringing with him a book-length manuscript on the Neo-Assyrian Queens' Tombs and other excavations by the State Board of Antiquities at Nimrud, a work that encompasses the results of excavations over the past thirty years. This book will be presented with color illustrations.

It was our intention, initially, to publish the reports both in Arabic and English, but our colleagues preferred to publish first in Arabic in the journal *Sumer*, to which they have an obligation as employees of the State Board. Our English language versions give reference to the Arabic publications. It should be noted that since 2005, the State Board has revived its journal *Sumer*, and the last three issues have included the Arabic versions of several of the reports that we have been preparing. Included among these is the Arabic report on important work done at Tell al-Wilaya, the English version of which was so sizable that it had to be split for publication in the last two issues of *Akkadica*.

The material we are publishing is extremely important because it reflects work done under extraordinarily difficult circumstances (the Embargo) when the State Board of

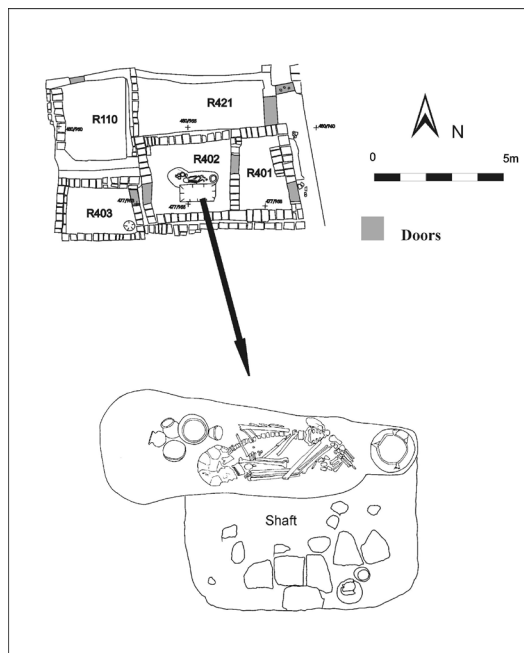


Figure 2.2. Plan of house and detail of a grave at Tell Muqtadiyah, redrawn by A. Witsell

Antiquities was trying to keep the field of Mesopotamian archaeology alive and especially to save sites from looting that began on a massive scale in the mid-1990s. Because no foreign archaeological teams were working in Iraq during that time, the investigations of the State Board represent not only a valiant effort to save some of Iraq's heritage but also the only fieldwork

carried out in the country at the time. Its documentation of important Sumerian cities such as Umma and Zabalam, as well as unidentified sites such as Umm al-Aqarib and Tell Shmid, has added greatly to our knowledge of places that had never had scholarly excavations before. Their documentation of materials may make it possible, eventually, for Iraq to reclaim thousands of

stolen cuneiform documents and other objects that now reside in private collections and even university collections in the U.S., Europe, the Gulf, Japan, and elsewhere. Of course, there will be no exact provenience for these artifacts, but at least it will be clear in some cases which cities produced them.

## THE EFFECT OF KING FAISAL'S EARLY DEATH ON THE POSITION OF THE MONARCHY AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM\*

MUDHAFAR AMIN

When Faisal was installed as king of Iraq on 23 August 1921, he had to cope with numerous difficulties: with the British who brought him to Iraq and with the Iraqis who accepted him as their king. However, after several years, he emerged as an experienced and prestigious ruler with a strong instinct for political survival, and thus commanded the respect of all the different factions. Nevertheless, his reign was not without major difficulties. It was necessary to meet the demands of the British Mandate while attempting to maintain a good working relationship with the British officials, who held the real power. Hanna Batatu describes his dilemma and tactics:

Suffering the buffets of the English on the one side and the national opposition on the other, Faisal could now enlarge the sphere of his authority only subtly and gradually. Inasmuch as the appearance of power is not completely separate from its substance, by clinging to the one he acquired more and more from the other, edging the English, whenever opportunity offered, out of degree after degree of their influence. Simultaneously, he kept his hands on the political pulse of the country and while leaning on the ex-Sherifian officers — now the backbone of Iraq's

army — he maintained contacts with all the existing forces and shades of opinion, and placed himself publicly above rivalries between parties, sects, or tribal combinations.<sup>1</sup>

Although Faisal clearly wanted to transform Iraq into a modern state, he was well aware of the immense problems that would face him. In 1930, the U.S. Legation in Baghdad reported that the king was taking a particularly active part in directing the policies of the kingdom,<sup>2</sup> probably as a consequence of Sir Henry Dobbs' departure and the death of 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun. In the same report, the U.S. diplomat cited the king's active influence on the selection of the ministers in Nuri al-Said's cabinet:

One thing seems very evident, and that is the members of the New Cabinet, with the possible exception of Abdul al-Hussain al-Chalabi, owe their appointment mainly to the fact that they have long been very loyal followers to King Faisal. It will be noted from a study of their biographies that they were all soldiers, with the exception of Abdul Hussain al-Chalabi, and that they all served under King Faisal in the Arab Revolt.<sup>3</sup>

Even the British officials who occa-

sionally disagreed with King Faisal's policies were forced to recognize his capabilities and his grasp of the political situation. The acting high commissioner, Hubert Young, reported in 1931 that:

It cannot be denied that he [Faisal] has been remarkably successful during the past ten years in maintaining connection with all shades of political opinion, and while the methods adopted have been open to criticism, the results obtained have certainly justified them.<sup>4</sup>

Faisal died on 7 September 1933 in Switzerland in somewhat suspicious circumstances.<sup>5</sup> The following day, his only son, Prince Ghazi, was installed on the throne, with some reservations on the part of Nuri al-Said and Jafar al-Askari, who both favored the elevation of Faisal's brother, Prince Zaid. On hearing of Faisal's death, Jafar al-Askari, who was then minister (head of Iraq's legation in London), went to the Foreign Office and indicated that:

There could possibly be some difficulty about the succession of the Crown Prince, who might be considered by a section of opinion in Iraq as unfit by youth and inexperience to take the helm at this critical time.<sup>6</sup>



Even before the death of Faisal, Nuri al-Said had expressed the same opinion to the British Foreign Office.<sup>7</sup> In fact, however, there seemed to be no other alternative to Ghazi and thus he was crowned with the approval of the British ambassador, although not without reservations:

It looks as though there may have been some hesitation in proclaiming the Crown Prince King, as Jafar Pasha hinted that there might be. It is too early to say that the Crown Prince is firmly on the throne.<sup>8</sup>

Nuri and Jafar's relations with Ghazi and their continuing intrigues (especially those of Nuri) further undermined the position of the young king, as well as the precarious balance of the political system, and further strained his relations with the British high commissioner and the rest of the British officials. However, Ghazi's more serious weaknesses included his lack of experience, and his lack of interest in the daily workings of the government, which further undermined the position of the monarchy, contributed to destabilizing an already enfeebled political structure, and led to the army's domination of political life between 1936 and 1941.

King Ghazi, although he was loved and admired by the general Iraqi population as a youthful anti-British monarch, drew adverse criticism for his character from both Iraqi politicians and the diplomatic corps (especially the British). The British Embassy commented:

The King's [Ghazi] absorption in his private hobbies made him heedless of the welfare and susceptibilities of his subjects, and indifferent to affairs of state, which had become notorious.<sup>9</sup>

The U.S. legation report was no more complimentary:

He [King Ghazi] has shown little initiative in matters political and he is very irregular and lax in attending even the routine duties in connection with the government. Much of his time ap-

pears taken in trifling amusements.<sup>10</sup>

King Ghazi's character and practices affected the running of the government and had inescapable repercussions on the political system. The British were not happy to work with him, which created a dangerous power vacuum. The British ambassador informed the Foreign Office that:

King Ghazi was not playing, or capable of playing, the part of monarch effectively and vigorously, which disturbed the balance of the constitution.<sup>11</sup>

His nonchalant character contrasted unfavorably (at least to Nuri al-Said and the British) with that of his father, and the delicate equilibrium, which Faisal was able to maintain, was weakened, if not destroyed. Contending political cliques filled the power vacuum, and the office of prime minister became a coveted prize, falling to the politician most able to combine British approval with support of either the tribal chiefs or the army commanders. The atmosphere is captured in this report from the U.S. legation in September 1933:

It is said that Rashid Beg al-Gailani hopes to retain the premiership in the new cabinet, and that Nuri Pasha seems to think that he may still be able to marshal enough influence to gain it. The general consensus of opinion is that Yasin [al-Hashimi] will become the new prime minister.<sup>12</sup>

A similar report from the British Embassy explains further the qualities of the ministers and their objectives in taking office:

The King, in effect, has left more of the affairs to his ministers ... and his ministers, as long as they draw their substantial salaries, spend most of their time bickering amongst themselves and allowing the affairs of the state to run more or less under the impetus imparted to them by the late King Faisal.<sup>13</sup>

To make matters worse, King Ghazi's weaknesses led the politicians to turn against the monarchy and further un-

dermine its authority and legitimacy. Nuri al-Said, for example, constantly attempted to depose Ghazi and to replace him with his uncle, Prince Zaid, or his cousin Abd al-Ilah, or by a Crown Council.<sup>14</sup>

After a turbulent reign of less than six years, King Ghazi died on 4 April 1939 in a car accident in what were, to say the least, suspicious circumstances.<sup>15</sup> According to Naji Shawkat, a former premier and minister of interior at the time of King Ghazi's death, "Ghazi's death was a result of foul play and Nuri al-Said was behind it."<sup>16</sup> Ghazi's death, says Batutu, "was one of the elements that damaged the moral authority of the Crown beyond repair."<sup>17</sup> Abd al-Ilah, Ghazi's cousin and brother-in-law, was installed as a regent because Ghazi's son, Faisal II, was only four years old. However, Abd al-Ilah was also young, inexperienced, and no great improvement on his cousin. Yet, in many ways, his lack of good qualities suited both the British and Nuri al-Said, since he was completely under their control. His close association with Britain and Nuri further led to divisions within the populace such as the struggle between the Crown and the nationalist elements, which culminated in the uprising of May 1941. This led to the flight of the regent and Nuri from the country and the installation of a new regent. The British forces moved to put down the revolt, occupied the country for the second time, and brought regent Abd al-Ilah and Nuri back to power. This always remained particularly damaging to their moral authority and credibility, as Batatu explains:

It made them so odious among the people that, regardless of what they did afterwards, they were never able to command public confidence. Their image as servants of foreign interests and the impression that the British were in the background of their actions and policies simply would not wash.<sup>18</sup>

The situation was made worse by the way the regent and Nuri dealt with

the leaders of the rebellion. Examples include the hanging of four military commanders and the young Minister of Economy, Muhammad Yunis al-Sabaawi, the thinning of the army to less than half its previous size, and the internment of many officers and civilians. The Iraqis, although they admired the young king, made their dislike of the regent and Nuri a well-known fact.

The years of World War II, between 1941 and 1946, witnessed a strong grip of the government on the political life in Iraq with the direct support and involvement of the British. The British ambassador was in daily contact with the regent and the prime minister, advising them on the best possible way to run the country. British Ambassador Cornwallis had to preside over conflicts almost daily within influential groupings and warring factions, as the U.S. minister wrote in a report to his government:

Yesterday, the counselor of the British Embassy, who is in the formation of the new cabinet, played a certain role behind the scenes under the direction of the British ambassador, stated to a member of the [U.S.] legation his view that although the new cabinet is weak and makeshift, it is the best that can be done short of the British taking over complete control of the country.<sup>19</sup>

For the remainder of the war, under the premiership of Jamil al-Madfa'i [1940], Nuri al-Said [1941–1944], and the veteran nationalist Hamdi al-Pachachi [1944–1946], Iraq cooperated fully with her British ally. She became a base for the military of the Levant and Persia, a channel of supply to Russia, and, until the Axis pincers were withdrawn, a defensive position against a possible attack through the Western Desert or the Caucasus.<sup>20</sup>

Add to that the fact that the majority of the Iraqi population suffered greatly under harsh economic conditions because the Iraqi economy was directed towards supporting the British war efforts. Thus, the British felt the need to

exert pressure on the rulers of Iraq to modernize their methods and establish more liberal and democratic policies as the influence of Allied propaganda against Nazi Germany found wide acceptance within the region and in Iraq, in particular. Furthermore, the conditions inside Iraq also created strong pressures for change and reform, especially with the more politicized and educated elements, which had grown in size and activity:

The high cost of living, irregularities in distribution of bread and flour, and hardship, which these things entail for the poor, have been taken up as themes for propaganda by the Iraqi communists. It is clear that left-wing elements in this country are gaining in strength, both in numbers and influence, and they are profiting from the immunities, which they have so far enjoyed as anti-Nazis, to develop propaganda to an extent, which has not hitherto been permitted.<sup>21</sup>

As a result, Britain felt it necessary to demand the infusion of new blood and a move away from old tactics and practices. Certain steps had to be taken in order to facilitate movement in that direction. First, and probably most obviously, Nuri al-Said had to be sacrificed. The regent had to be encouraged to take a more active role in internal politics, and a more neutral and acceptable politician would be asked to form the cabinet, which would follow a more liberal line and give relative freedom of press and political activity. According to plan, Nuri resigned, claiming a lack of support from the regent and Hamdi al-Pachachi headed what came to be called the "Regent's Cabinet."<sup>22</sup>

The new government took measures to ease the tense situation, release built-up pressures, and absorb widespread ill feelings toward the ruling class. The government gave permission for applications to form trade unions, which quickly showed "a fairly discreet activity."<sup>23</sup> The first and the largest union to be formed was the Railway Workers

Union, which soon after its formation called for a strike demanding wage increases.<sup>24</sup> There was also a resurgence of other political activities in the form of political parties, trade unions, and student demonstrations. Different groupings were formed from a number of sections of society, notably peasants, women, and students.<sup>25</sup>

The government partially lifted censorship and also allowed more newspapers to be published, thus creating a notable resurgence of political activity and discussion. This tendency was exemplified in the press. At the beginning of the year, five Arabic daily newspapers were published in Baghdad. There were eleven in 1945.<sup>26</sup>

Al-Pachachi's government succeeded in easing the tense political situation that prevailed during Nuri's time and moved toward establishing a more normal administration. The period was also marked by more vigorous and dynamic activity on the part of the nationalist and democratic groupings, which had lost all faith in the promises of democracy and reform. Instead, these forces turned to stronger and more direct opposition to the government and the British presence. Monitoring the political flurry, and sensing the inability of the government to face up to it, the regent became so discouraged that he confessed to the British ambassador his determination to resign. The ambassador, in his turn, conveyed this to his government after dissuading the regent from the idea and asserting H.M.G.'s confidence in the regent and the system, although the former was not convinced:

He [the regent] remarked gloomily that he expected the king would be de-throned in due course 'with all these communists about.'<sup>27</sup>

As the war came to an end, the situation became increasingly critical. The government could either go back to repression and coercive measures or move forward by taking liberal mea-



tures and granting the right to form political parties.

On 27 January 1945, the regent called for a joint session of both houses of parliament, and delivered a speech,<sup>28</sup> which came as a surprise to the cabinet, as well as the politicians,<sup>29</sup> in which he declared that the government intended to implement a number of social reforms. He emphasized the need for the establishment of political parties and the enactment of a new electoral law. After the regent's speech, criticism was leveled at al-Pachachi's government, which it was clear he wanted to replace.<sup>30</sup> Al-Hasani indicates that the regent wanted Salih Jabr to form the cabinet, which tends to confirm the suggestion that Britain had been grooming Jabr for the job since 1941.<sup>31</sup> Jabr, however, was indisposed and, after a month, Tawfiq al-Suwaidi formed the government, accepting the premiership on the condition that he would be given a free hand to select his ministers.<sup>32</sup>

The cabinet was formed on 23 February 1946 and, according to the well-known opposition figure, Kamil al-Chadirchi, "was a signal for a new era in Iraq."<sup>33</sup> One of the reasons was that the cabinet included men of "high quality and good patriotic reputation."<sup>34</sup> The new government promised to restore peacetime conditions by abolishing emergency rule, closing internment camps, lifting censorship, permitting the formation of political parties, enacting a new electoral law, and alleviating the plight of the poor, especially the fellahin (the peasants), by distributing *miri* land to them. In fact, al-Suwaidi's government fulfilled many of its promises. It ended martial law, closed the camp at Amara, abolished censorship, allowed trade unions to be formed, changed the election law by abolishing secondary elections, and finally permitted political parties to function legally.<sup>35</sup>

On 2 April 1946, the Ministry of the

Interior sanctioned the formation of five political parties. It refused to give permission to only one because of its leaning toward communism.<sup>36</sup> Three of these parties had leftists, one was center-left, and the fifth was Arab nationalist.

The period that followed the formation of political parties witnessed a wide upsurge in political activities, which dominated the life of the capital. Political parties and their newspapers, the headquarters of the trade unions, meeting halls, and clubs came alive with articles, lectures, speeches, and mass meetings. The left parties made their presence felt so much so that after they had only been in existence for three months, the regent went to London to ask the British government "for help in repressing the left wing in Iraq."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, in June 1946, he appointed the ruthless and hard-headed Arshad al-Umari as prime minister<sup>38</sup> to deal with the widely growing influence of the left and communism, by which many political activities were characterized. The new prime minister "went for his objective like a bull at a gate,"<sup>39</sup> declaring the Hizb al-Shaab and the Hizb al-Ittihad al-Watani illegal, suppressing the opposition newspapers,<sup>40</sup> and finally sentencing the leader of the National Democratic party, Kamil al-Chadirchi, to six months' hard labor.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the period in which the country enjoyed what could be almost described as normal political life did not last more than three months. Nevertheless, it left a deep and strong impact on the Iraqi population, especially on the politically active segment of the society, as well as the ruling hierarchy. The regent and his politicians were struck by the magnitude of both the popularity and influence of the opposition parties, which caused them to increase their suspicion of them. In fact, the period was crucial in making the ruling class more distant, on the defensive, and rigid, which created an unbridgeable

gap between the government and the governed. This helped the opposition movement to involve a wide spectrum of alienated and disaffected sections of the society, including the Armed Forces. This latter group was ultimately instrumental in providing the final blow, which crushed the monarchy on the morning of 14 July 1958.

\* This paper is based on a section of my Ph.D. thesis, "Jama'at al-Ahali, Its Origin, Ideology, and Role in Iraqi Politics, 1932–1946," University of Durham, 1980. It was presented at the "Iraq: Notions of Self and the Other Since the Late Ottoman Era" Conference, sponsored by the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Amman, Jordan, 5–7 January 2005.

<sup>1</sup> H. Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, 1978), p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Sloan to State Department, 1.4.1930. USNA 890G.00/128.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. For further details of Faisal's skill at political finesse, see Batatu, *Old Social Classes*.

<sup>4</sup> Young papers, St. Anthony's College, Oxford, quoted in Pool (1972), p. 188. There have been various attempts by Iraqi historians to re-evaluate King Faisal and his policies and practices through the Mandate and independence years. In general, they seem to exonerate him of earlier harsh judgments, of being a British "agent" or "tool" and to show some aspects of his nationalist aspirations and his clever dealings with the British high commissioner, as well as with the Iraqi nationalists. See M. al-Adhami in *Afaq Arabiya* 1979 4(1): 86–95, and the earlier issues of the same periodical.

<sup>5</sup> The British ambassador in Berne cited Lady Paget's letter. She was a nurse who lived in the same hotel as King Faisal. She saw King Faisal the day he died "looking particularly well," accompanied by a "comely Indian woman" with whom he had "intimate relations." Lady Paget describes King Faisal suddenly feeling ill after having dinner and vomiting, which she attributes to "poisoning." She accuses the doctors, stating that "no adequate post-mortem examination was made as his body was embalmed with suspicious celerity" and the Indian woman disappeared the day after his death. "All these features," the ambassador wrote, "have convinced Lady

Paget that King Faisal did not meet with a natural death." Sir H. Kennard, Berne, to G. W. Rendel, Foreign Affairs, FO371/16924/E 5519 of 14 September 1933. See also USNA 890G.00/277, 11 September 1933: "*Al-Ahrar* published a statement to effect that King Faisal's death was ... suicide."

<sup>6</sup> Ambassador Francis Humphreys to S/S Foreign Affairs, 8.9.1933, FO 371/16924/E 5250.

<sup>7</sup> The earliest sign of a rebellion against King Faisal on the part of a supposedly loyal politician was the dispute between himself and Nuri al-Said over the appointment of Rashid Ali as prime minister in 1932. U.S. legation to State Department (USNA 890G.00/201 and 221 of 7.6.1932 and 27.10.1932). Hall minutes report by Francis Humphreys on the conflict between the two: "In private conversation with me at Geneva, Nuri went even further and said that he could not again accept the premiership so long as Faisal occupied the throne. Nuri talks of Zaid rather than Ghazi to succeed King Faisal." Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 19.12.1932, FO.371/16903/E105.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes by G. W. Rendel, see Ambassador Humphreys (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 8.9.1933, FO371/16924/E5265.

<sup>9</sup> Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 2.7.1936, FO371/20017/E4057.

<sup>10</sup> Knabenshue to State Department, 23.8.1934, USNA 890G/296. For the king's personal scandals, see the story of the murder of a personal servant of the king within the confines of the Royal Palace (Peterson to S/S Foreign Affairs, 28.6.1938, FO 371/21846/E4196).

<sup>11</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Office, Annual Report of 1937, FO 371/21856/E794.

<sup>12</sup> Knabenshue to State Department, 21.9.1933, USNA 890G.00/276.

<sup>13</sup> Review of events in 1934, prepared by the Director of Operations and Intelligence, Air Ministry, 7.2.1935, FO 371/18949/E898.

<sup>14</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 1937 Annual Report FO 371/21856/E794. The suggestion of deposing King Ghazi and replacing him by a regent (Zaid or Abd al-Ilah) or by creating a Regency Council, was often mentioned in the British Embassy and the U.S. legation reports, mainly at the instigation of Nuri al-Said. The three British ambassadors and C. J. Edmonds, at their times, did not favor Nuri's schemes to get rid of King Ghazi, for fear of creating an upheaval in the country. A change of heart took place in 1939, at the ensuing of World War II, and

as King Ghazi grew more popular with the Iraqis, to the dismay of the British ambassador, as he maintained strong links with young Iraqi army officers, had his own broadcasting station, which claimed Kuwait part of Iraq and incited nationalist feelings. For details, see Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 28.6.1938, FO 371/21846/E4196; 10.1.1938, FO 371/21856/E305; 25/1/1939, FO 371/23200/E938; 31.12.1938, FO 371/23207/E281; and 1938 Annual Report, FO 371/23214/E932. Also, Knabenshue to State Department, 12.11.1937, USNA 890G.00/433 and 8.3.1939, USNA 890G.00/475.

<sup>15</sup> Batatu, *Old Social Classes*, pp. 342–44.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Naji Shawkat, Baghdad, October 1979. Naji's theory is supported by his brother, Dr. Sa'ib Shawkat, who was the coroner and a close friend of Nuri al-Said. Naji adds that Nuri kept a picture of Ghazi's wrecked car in his office.

<sup>17</sup> Batatu, *Old Social Classes*, p. 343.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson (Baghdad) to State Department, 22.10.1942.

<sup>20</sup> S. H. Lingrigg and F. Stoaks, *Iraq* (London, 1958), p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 22.1.1943, FO 371/35010/E946.

<sup>22</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 9.1.1945, FO 371/45302/E608.

<sup>23</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 19.3.1945, FO 371/45302/E2177.

<sup>24</sup> Ja'far 'Abbas Humaidi, *Al-Tatawwurat al-Siyasiya fi al-Iraq* ("The Political Development of Iraq, 1941–1953") (al-Najaf, 1976), p. 153.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>26</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 9.1.1945, FO 371/45302/E608.

<sup>27</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 4.3.1945, FO 371/45329/E1531.

<sup>28</sup> Abd al-Rzzaq al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-Wizarat al-Iraqiya* ("History of the Iraqi Cabinets") (Saida, 1974), volume 6, p. 244.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Muhammad Fakhri al-Jamil, who alleges that the British Embassy constructed the regent's speech. See also Humaidi, *Al-Tatawwurat al-Siyasiya*, p. 167.

<sup>30</sup> For the text of the speech, see al-Hasani, *Tarikh*, volume 6, pp. 244–49.

<sup>31</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 14.10.1942, FO 371/31371/E6356; 7.6.1943, FO 371/35010/E3313; and Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs, 8.2.1944, FO 371/40041/E1143.

<sup>32</sup> T. Mudhakkarati al-Suwaidi, *Nisf Qarn min Tarikh al-Iraq wa al-Qadhiya al-Arabiya*

("My Memoirs: Half a Century of Iraq's History and the Arab Cause") (Beirut, 1969), pp. 412–17.

<sup>33</sup> Kamil al-Chadirchi, *Mudhakkarat Kamil al-Chairchi wa Tarikh al-Hizb al-Watani al-Dimuqrati* ("The Memoirs of Kamil al-Chadirchi and the History of the National Democratic Party") (Beirut, 1971), p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Humaidi, *Al-Tatawwurat al-Siyasiya*, p. 174.

<sup>36</sup> S. Khairi, *Min Tarikh al-Haraka al-Thawriya al-Mu'asira fi al-Iraq, 1920–1958* ("From the History of the Contemporary Revolutionary Movement in Iraq, 1920–1958") (Baghdad, 1974), p. 126.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes by Mr. W. Baxter, Foreign Office, 19.7.1946, FO 371/52402/E9584.

<sup>38</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 23.8.1946, FO 371/52402/E8328. British Ambassador Sir Hugh Stonehewer Bird, noted later: "It [the Umari cabinet] had deviated into a reactionary dictatorship;" see Sir H. Stonehewer Bird to S/S Foreign Affairs, 5.12.1946, FO 371/52405/E11846.

<sup>39</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 23.8.1946, FO 371/52402/E8328.

<sup>40</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 3.9.1946, FO 371/52402/E8794; 16.8.1946, FO 371/52402/E8328; 6.9.1946, FO 371/52402/E8921.

<sup>41</sup> Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 16.8.1946, FO 371/52468/E8113; 20.8.1946, FO 371/52468/E8336; 22.8.1946, FO 371/52468/E8345; 28.8.1946, FO 371/52468/E8531.

## NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS, COMMENTS, & SUGGESTIONS

To submit articles, images, or announcements in either *English or Arabic*, please email Katie Johnson at [katie@taarii.org](mailto:katie@taarii.org) for submission details. The deadline for the fall issue of the TAARII Newsletter is **June 1, 2010.**

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## WAR AND ITS SOLDIERS

DINA RIZK KHOURY, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Ali was fifteen years old in 1980 when the Ba'th party student representative in his high school recruited him to join the Popular Army. For a son of prosperous merchant family from Kadhimiya, the induction into military life that summer was life changing. He hated waking up before dawn to undergo the military drill and, despite the friendships he developed with other young men his age, he found the experience unsettling. Until he was drafted into the regular army as an infantryman at eighteen, Ali spent his free time during the school year as part of the youth organization of the Popular Army, acting as a civil defense force at his school. By eighteen, he had more or less acquired the rudiments of a military education but was not prepared for the war at the southern front. He fought in the most intense battles in East Basra and in the marshes bordering Iran. He remained in the southern sector for most of the war. When he was finally demobilized in 1989, he was twenty-four, with no college education or usable skills. His father offered to start a small business for him while he awaited immigration to join one of his siblings overseas. Less than a year later, he was again asked to join the Iraqi army and was sent to a post on the border with Saudi Arabia to support the Iraqi forces in Kuwait. As his unit began its chaotic withdrawal from their outpost on April 28, 1991, he was among three fleeing soldiers whose vehicle was strafed by American airplanes. As he lay on the sand bleeding and unable to move or see, he was fortunate to be saved by a group of retreating men from the Popular Army. Left at the hospital in Samawah, he witnessed the chaos in the hospital during the take-over of the city by rebels against the regime. By the time Ali recovered he found himself

inserted into life in Baghdad that was circumscribed by economic hardship created by the U.N.-imposed embargo and stymied in his attempts to resume his education by government red tape. He took up his father's offer of running a small copying store and spent time painting, listening to classical music, and dreaming of escaping Iraq to join one of his siblings abroad. His dreams shattered and his opportunities limited, he was, when I met him in Damascus in the April of 2009, a soft-spoken man with the resigned look of someone who had lost hope in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Ali's story is part of a larger narrative of a generation of Iraqi men who have spent the better part of their adult life fighting wars and surviving the repercussions of these wars. While their stories might be those of soldiers everywhere, what makes their engagement with violence unique is the way it has been memorialized, vilified, and forgotten in writing of Iraqi history. Unlike their Iranian counterparts who fought in the Iran-Iraq war, there is no heroic narrative that has linked their sacrifices with the survival of a revolution.<sup>2</sup> The Iranian martyrs of the war have become the backbone of a social and political order that trumpets their contributions (and those of their families) to the achievements of the Islamic Republic, but no such role has been assigned to the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi dead in present day Iraq. For the current government in Iraq as well as the Iraqi opposition in the 1980s and 1990s (whose leaders now control state institutions in Iraq), the Iran-Iraq and first Gulf War are lumped together as Ba'thist wars and their dead and living soldiers can make no legitimate claims on the Iraqi nation. At the same time, the Iraqi soldier was celebrated and memorialized by the Ba'thist state

in the 1980s, he was marginalized and often persecuted during the 1990s for his alleged complicity in the rebellion against the regime in 1991. And while the Iranian state continues to invest vast amounts in the shoring up of social and cultural institutions that cater to the martyrs of that war, the sanctions imposed on Iraq all but eroded the ability of the state to take care of the families of their dead soldiers. As a former prisoner of war who had spent sixteen years of his life in an Iranian prison told me, rather than find support from the government when he returned in 1998, he encountered suspicion and an endless amount of red tape when he tried to ask for benefits. Well into his sixties when I met him in the summer of 2007, he expressed frustration that his sacrifices have been, like his life, "lost."<sup>3</sup>

It is the stories of this lost generation of Iraqi soldiers, most of them infantrymen, that I am interested in studying. TAARII has funded two research trips to Jordan and Syria that allowed me to conduct interviews with soldiers who had fought in the Iran-Iraq and first Gulf War. The questions I raise came to me in the wake of the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003. I was struck by the fact that Iraq had been at war for twenty-three years at the time of the invasion. Yet, most analyses of Iraq focused on the dictatorial and corrupt nature of the Ba'th or the humanitarian consequences of the sanctions. Little has been written about the profound impact of war, and here it is important to stress that the embargo was a form of war by other means, on the organization of society, the everyday practices of state institutions, and the transformation of the ways that Iraqis articulated their sense of citizenship and belonging. While scholars have



often written on the militarization of Iraqi society, they have attributed the phenomenon to the nature of Ba'thist ideology and politics, or the desire of the regime to strengthen the hold of the state over society.<sup>4</sup> Yet, I would like to maintain that the policies of the Ba'thist state in its last twenty-three years had been largely determined not only by regime survival but by the need of the state to control, classify, reward, and punish men and their families, men desperately needed for the war front between 1980 and 1991. Its policies were also determined by the security apparatus that maintained control of the situation during and in the aftermath of war. More specifically, I ask how society was transformed by the attempts of both the Party and state institutions to control, mobilize, and create consensus among the men who provided the fodder for the killing fields of the Iraqi-Iranian frontier and the desert of Kuwait and Iraq. That the Party and the state devoted much energy and many resources to this undertaking bespoke the difficulty it continued to experience in the control of manpower.<sup>5</sup>

During wartime, the shaping and control of the war story is central to mobilizing popular support for the war effort. The Iraqi Ba'thist state was no different than other states at war in that respect. Soon after the outbreak of hostilities with Iran in September of 1980, Iraqi cultural institutions began propagating the idea of the war experience (*tajrubat al-harb*). What constituted the "war experience" and the meaning of that experience became the cornerstone of the Iraqi state's attempts, through various practices, to shape Iraqi citizenship and the Iraqi self. Unlike the German process of the sanctification of death described by historian George Mosse, the definition of what constituted the war experience in Iraq was not a product of government and civil society organizations.<sup>6</sup> It was from the beginning very much a state enterprise.

State practices were transformed at several levels: at the institutional level, the Iraqi state, exemplified by the executive and legislative prerogatives of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, restructured the programs of social benefits to give priority to soldiers, martyrs, POWs, and their families. Party officials and members, peasants and workers no longer occupied center stage in the development programs of the state. At the same time, the Party's power was expanded to survey, punish, and reward Iraqis based on their contribution to the war. Attempts at the shaping of the public culture of death and mourning were regulated by the incorporation of rituals of bereavement and commemoration under the purview of neighborhood party officials.<sup>7</sup>

From the first months of the war, the soldier became central to the creation of a "new man," forged by the heroism of the war experience.<sup>8</sup> Government presses as well as the different organs of the Ministry of Culture and Information portrayed the war as an experience central to the creation of a new Iraqi citizen and subject. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt on the part of the state's cultural institutions to render the soldier's subjective experience was the sponsorship of a war literature. By the second month of the war, soldiers' short stories began appearing in the press merging the fictional with the real. At the center of this was the idea of witnessing the war and remembering the battles fought. The line between the documentary aspect and the remembered portion of the story was intentionally blurred so that the memory of war soon drew a homogenized "war experience" based on certain sets of characters and experiences. Some stories were written by soldiers with a literary bent who were killed before the end of the war. Many of these stories were penned by writers, journalists, and young amateurs who were sent to the front to witness action, talk

to soldiers and come back and render their witnessing into literature. Others wrote stories of battle based solely on their reading of the European, Soviet and American literature of World War I and World War II. Some imagined battles based on their watching films about war. One of the authors of such stories told me that he wrote a story about urban warfare set in Muhammara in southern Iran, based on his viewing of a film on the battle of Stalingrad. In other words, the intent of these war stories was from the beginning to blur the individual memory of the soldier into a generalized experience of war drawn as much from representations of war as it is from the actual experience itself.<sup>9</sup>

The Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Culture and Information, and the Party worked hand-in-hand to recruit writers. A few months after the outbreak of the war, the phrase "the literature of war" began to be used to describe a genre of writing that had developed around the experience of the soldier. Between 1980 and 1986, the Iraqi press published hundreds of short stories recording soldiers' experience in the war. These were often no longer than 2,000 words or less, published on the cultural pages of *Jumhuriya* or *Qadisiya* newspapers, the main newspapers in Iraq, and written sometimes by journalists, short story writers many of them soldiers themselves. By 1983, there were so many of these short stories that the Ministry of Culture and Information appointed a special committee to weed out those short stories that lacked literary merit. The members of the committee were novelists and literary critics among them Fuad al-Takarli, Muhsin al-Musawi, and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, all luminaries of the Iraqi cultural scene. The stories were published in a nine volume series that appeared between 1982 and 1986 called "Qadisiyat Saddam: Stories Under Fire."<sup>10</sup>

There were two categories of experience that emerge from this literature

that were echoed in the soldiers' remembrances of war: that the war created a specific kind of memory for them that marked them as a generation; and that death and martyrdom were central to the Iraqi man's sense of self. The literature generated and supported by state institutions encouraged the propagation of the idea of a generational memory based on the war experience. It was a powerful tool to combat its loss of legitimacy after it had abandoned its socialist credentials and turned against the communists, Islamists, and Kurdish nationalists. Having said that, however, the memory of war it propagated was drawn from the existential experience of men whose lives were transformed drastically by the war. The war experience was not a manufactured one, but became discourse through which the soldiers linked their personal remembrances with the larger experience of war that other men had witnessed.

The generational experience of the young soldier on the front as reflected in the literature on war varied. In the early years of the war when the stories were written by party intellectuals or young ambitious journalists, the material was somewhat hackneyed. According to many of these stories, the experience of war transformed the soldier from a soft city slicker into a hardened fighter; it allowed him to forge friendships with people from the countryside, and it cemented his bonds with people from other regions of Iraq.<sup>11</sup> The soldier belonged to the generation of young Ba'thists, products of the Revolution, who were now risking their own lives for it against a medieval and backward regime bent on the destruction of the achievements of the Ba'th in modernizing the country. Ba'th party officials on the front were portrayed as caring and disciplined and military officers were portrayed as exemplary leaders. Death was always glorious and soldiers were never afraid. War was an adventure and journey of discovery as it was

political act. In other words, it shaped the private self in ways that ideology could not, and the shaping was always dangerous but the risks were worth it.

This simplistic view of war fell to the background after 1982. Both in the literature and other artistic media, the war experience was now much more fraught. The war was going badly. Iraq was forced to withdraw from the Iranian territories it had conquered and was now desperately trying to stop advances into Iraqi territory. The trench warfare, marked by intense and costly battles and periods of quiet, was as brutal as it was deadly. The Iraqi regime proposed a ceasefire that was rejected by Iran. The regime chose to open up space for the portrayal of war as a necessary evil rather than a life enforcing experience. Soldiers' stories carried a clear criticism of war as a waste of human lives and national resources. The criticism in this literature was deflected from the state and put squarely at the feet of the Iranian state bent on the destruction of Iraq. At the same time, while the appeals to the memory of ethnic hostility between Arabs and Persians continued to dominate the popular press and media outlets, the struggle was increasingly portrayed as one between a modern state and a medieval backward looking one. The soldiers of the later stories were often urbanites who had love interests, were intellectually sophisticated, and were beneficiaries of Ba'th modernization projects. While the earlier literature had set up a clear distinction between the pampered and relatively insular urbanite whose war experience transformed him into a "man," the latter literature eschewed this stereotype altogether. However, political statements about the war were strictly circumscribed, as was any writing on losses on the front. As for the fictionalized testimonies of soldiers, those excluded any allusions to the pervasiveness of meaningless death on the front or the ubiquitous presence

of execution squads in every battle that ensured that soldiers did not retreat or desert. Death was always glorious and for the country, and soldiers went willingly to their end knowing that they were defending the nation.

One of my primary concerns in approaching this literature is the extent to which this sanctioned articulation of the "war experience" corresponds or reflects the remembrances of the soldiers I interviewed. The soldiers I interviewed in Amman and Syria come from different social strata and areas of Iraq. And while their remembrances of their time at the front were quite different, what they all shared was sense that their time at the front was formative. In other words, it was viewed as an existential experience that formed them as men and as individuals. In that, they do not differ much from other soldiers at war. The telling of all draftees, for example, included their introduction to military life in training camps and how much they hated it. All alluded to the camaraderie that developed between them and other men from other regions of Iraq, and almost all discussed in detail the terrain of the front and how frightening and beautiful it could be. They also had remarkably consistent views as to why they were fighting. They firmly believed that if they had not fought Iran, it would have conquered their country and brought in an Islamic revolution. This is a view echoed across the social, regional, and sectarian divides. At the same time, all of them expressed regret that theirs was a generation that had lost most of its youth fighting a war that had no winners and losers. The length of the war, the nature of the trench, and the military routine that came with time at the front produced a sense that war was a school that shaped their generation. Their testimonies contrast sharply with the testimonies of Iraqi soldiers who fought in the first Gulf war, which lasted all of 45 days. For the soldiers

who told me about that war portrayed it in apocalyptic terms but did not view it as part of their formation as a generation.

If generational memory was something that all my informants claimed, all spoke of their gradual hardening towards death and their fatalism about their mortality. But their view of death challenged that propagated by the Iraqi state. The regime had sacralized the dead, erecting memorials for the martyrs, celebrating martyrs day for the first time in Iraqi history, and instituting commemorative practices at every level of society. Soldiers who fought at the front had a more ambiguous attitude toward the dead. While all alluded to the war dead as martyrs and spoke of their comrades who died at the front as martyred, many who had survived the fiercest battles such as the battle of the Fao Peninsula or the battles of East Basra, spoke of the bodies of the dead as fodder for fish and tractors. Every single one of them remembered the traumatic experience he had when he first encountered a dead body and contrasted that with the way that his attitude had hardened by the end.

Fawzi, for example, was a survivor. A young and fledgling artist when he was drafted, he spent the first few months on the front lines, avoiding battle by drawing large pictures of Saddam Hussein on the trench wall. Six months after his tour started he had managed to survive without firing a single shot at the enemy. No one noticed in the heat of the battle. His first actual engagement came when his squad was attacked by enemy rockets and they had to leave the trench to engage at close range. He threw his first grenade at an Iranian soldier who was aiming at his superior. Afterwards, he walked close the body and found a youth with a wispy mustache and pink complexion. His image was a far cry from the image of the enemy that he had imbibed from his unit's propaganda machine. By the

time Fawzi was fighting on the Fao Peninsula in 1986, he was hardened soldier. His description of his unit's engagement is harrowing. In a particularly deadly confrontation, he and his unit had to climb a hill to escape Iranian fire. Some seventy percent of his unit died before they made it to the top of the hill. He attempted to march back to the rear lines and came across bodies of Iraqi soldiers half sunk in the salt water of the Fao. When one injured soldier asked him to help him, he moved him aside telling him he could hardly walk himself. Eventually he came face-to-face with seven Iraqi soldiers dressed in olive garb with red ribbon tied around their arms. He recognized them as the execution squad run by party militia and set up to prevent soldiers from retreating. He managed to survive by telling them that his whole unit was decimated and that he was leaderless. He was allowed to join the rear lines of his platoon.<sup>12</sup>

### CONCLUSION

I have argued that the Iraqi regime sought to create a "new man" through the experience of a war generation and fueled by a new Iraqi subject and citizen: the idealized soldier. This literature, however, is strictly a phenomenon of the 1980s. The "Mother of all Battles," as the first Gulf War was known by the regime, did not produce such literature. When I asked my interviewees, at least those who were artists, journalists, and writers, why there has been no re-working of the memory of the Iran-Iraq war, they could not answer beyond saying that they were too busy trying to live under sanctions and now as refugees. But the answer goes deeper than that. For one thing, the literature of war that was sponsored by the state has generated a heated debate and much recrimination between leftist intellectuals who went into exile in the late seventies and early eighties and those artists and intellectuals who

chose to write about war within Iraq. Many of these intellectuals were writing for the opposition press in Syria, Europe, and Iranian Kurdistan when their countrymen were fighting the war with Iraq. The concern of these intellectuals and writers in exile lay not with the existential dilemmas facing soldiers, but rather with the co-option of intellectuals of the left into the making of the "war experience." Like many leftist intellectuals in the U.S. during the Vietnam era, Iraqi leftist intellectuals were hostile to men who fought on the front, viewing them as part of the machinery of the state. Any literature produced about their experience was bound to be suspect. The generation of Iraqi intellectuals and artists who have lived and fought in the war have not as yet been able to draw a distinction between writing about the war and allegiance to the regime.

There is, however, another reason for the lack of any attempt to deal with the meaning and memory of the Iran-Iraq war. The war itself has become a contested arena in Iraq at the moment. It has been completely delegitimized by the current regime that is strongly allied to Iran. Iraqi soldiers who fought in the war, particularly officers, are subject to harassment. Unlike the story of Iranian soldiers and martyrs, the story of Iraqi soldiers remains outside any national narrative of sacrifice or meaning in dominant political discourse of present-day Iraq.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, Damascus, March 28, 2009. I have changed the names of my interviewees.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Farideh Farhi, "The Antinomies of Iran's War Generation," in *Iran, Iraq and the Legacies of the War*, edited by Lawrence Potter and Gary Sick, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 101–20; Christopher de Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden of the*



*Martyrs*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2005); and Roxane Varzi, *Warring Souls: Youth, Media and Martyrdom in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). There are countless websites that commemorate the war dead of Iran. Youtube is a great resource for this topic. Little serious work has been done on the experiences of soldiers or the social and political impact of the war in Iraq. For a preliminary sociological study see Faleh, "Iraq's War Generation," in *Iran, Iraq and the Legacies of War*, 121–40.

<sup>3</sup> Interview, Amman, July 8, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Isam al-Khafaji, "War as a Vehicle for the Rise of a State-Controlled Society," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, edited by Steven Heydemann (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 2000), 258–91; and Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> I am currently undertaking a study of Ba'th Regional Command Party documents on the classification of such men and the attempts to control them.

<sup>6</sup> George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, (US: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Many of my interviewees mentioned the active role played by neighborhood Party cadre in the notification of families of the death of their loved ones, the visits cadres did on occasions that commemorated the dead and their activism in ensuring that these families' remained quiescent.

<sup>8</sup> Achim Roded, "Opportunities for Masculin-

ity and Love: Cultural Production in Ba'thist Iraq during the 1980s," in *Islamic Masculinities*, edited by Lahouchine Ouzgane, pp. 148–201.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Amman, June 21, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> *Qadisiyat Saddam: Qisas Tahta Lahib al-Nar*, Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Information, Dar al-Rashid, Baghdad 1981–1986.

<sup>11</sup> One of the most popular novels written early on about the war was Adel Abd al-Jabar, *Jabal al-Nar, Jabal al-Thalj* (Mountain of Fire, Mountain of Snow), Ministry of Culture and Information, Dar al-Rashid, Baghdad, 1982. I am told that it was made into a popular film, but I have not been able to view it.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Damascus, March 2, 2009.

### NEW TAARII PROGRAM: RESEARCH AFFILIATES IN JORDAN

TAARII is pleased to announce the creation of a Research Affiliate status, for U.S. scholars working on Iraq, while based in Amman, Jordan. As increasing numbers of American researchers undertake Iraq-related research in Jordan, TAARII aims to support their needs and work and to include them in the broader, TAARII community.

TAARII Research Affiliates will have access to a range of benefits, including:

- Access to TAARII's growing research library and collections
- Access to the Internet, phone, and fax
- Temporary accommodation at the rate of \$20 USD/night
- Kitchen and laundry facilities
- Meeting space for interviews or small conferences

Please note that because the TAARII residence is small, it is suitable for short-term stays only and must be reserved in advance.

To apply for Research Affiliate status, please submit a brief project statement, together with a CV, to [Stephanie@taarii.org](mailto:Stephanie@taarii.org). There is no deadline and scholars can apply for Affiliate status at any time, on a short-term or long-term basis.

### TAARII ANNOUNCES FIRST RESEARCH AFFILIATE

TAARII is pleased to introduce Susan Macdougall as its first Research Affiliate, for 2009–2010. Ms. Macdougall has studied Arabic and social policy at Northwestern University, served as a Research Associate at The Center on Law and Security of the New York University School of Law, and is currently writing a thesis in cultural anthropology at the University of Arizona.

Her project is entitled "Displacement, Authoritarianism, and Subjectivity: Narratives of Iraqis in Jordan." Through the collection of open-ended interviews and participant observation, Macdougall will continue research begun in the summer of 2009 to examine the coping mechanisms of Iraqi women displaced by the challenges of recent decades. In particular, she will explore the impact of change on gendered roles within the family and in the public sphere. Cooperating with the Queen Rania Family and Child Support Center, she considers the impact of refugee status on Iraqi women in Jordan. During the upcoming academic year, she will accompany Iraqi women in their domestic and professional lives, collect life stories, and seek improved understanding of the ways that varied traumas have impacted Iraqis' social worlds both tangibly and intangibly.

## IRAQI STUDENT PROJECT

GABE HUCK AND THERESA KUBASAK

We are grateful to TAARII for the invitation to tell its members something about the Iraqi Student Project. We were introduced to TAARII in the summer of 2009. Once we began to read the back issues of this newsletter, we were sorry not to have known of the organization long ago.

We are a retired American couple. Theresa's work of thirty years was teaching in public elementary schools. Gabe was a writer, editor, and publisher. Ten years ago we became involved with Voices in the Wilderness (VITW). Between 1999 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, we traveled four times with small VITW groups to Baghdad, Basra, Nasiriyah, and other cities, visiting schools, hospitals, mosques, and homes. At home we tried to build awareness of the sanctions and what they were doing to the Iraqi people. This is one reason we have appreciated the TAARII newsletter: We find recognition in its pages of the impact of the sanctions that we almost never see elsewhere.

After the 2003 invasion, VITW people went in different directions. We came

to live in Damascus in 2005 and were here as the numbers of Iraqis seeking safety increased. With the Iraqi higher education structure in ruins and Syrian universities far too expensive for most refugees, we had an idea of one small thing we could do. We incorporated the Iraqi Student Project (ISP) as a non-profit in New York State and eventually obtained 501c3 status from the IRS. We could take something excellent in the U.S. — the undergraduate education at so many colleges — and make it available to some Iraqi students.

We are now in our third year of working with potential Iraqi students in Damascus. Fourteen went to colleges in the United States in 2008, and 21 more in the summer of 2009. The colleges extend tuition waivers for four years to qualified Iraqi students, and the ISP works to form a support group in the community around each college. From Dartmouth and Clark University in the east to Dominican San Rafael and the University of Oregon in the west, you can find ISP students. (For a complete list of the present schools, see the ISP

website.)

Often the support group involves four to twenty people in raising funds for expenses the school does not cover (insurance, books, transportation), finding a host family, and simply providing friendship and hospitality. Some of the students have accepted various invitations to speak about Iraq and their lives, so on many levels there is an opening for Americans and Iraqis to communicate.

From September to July we work here in Damascus. We accept applications from young Iraqis who are here as refugees or still living in Iraq. We interview many of them and visit the families of possible candidates. There is never any charge to the students or their families. We look for candidates who have completed high school but not college, are emotionally resilient, will work hard on the study skills they'll need in the U.S., can get an excellent TOEFL score, and can qualify for an F-1 visa (which requires the intention to return to Iraq) should they be accepted into a college. For ten months here, our apartment becomes a classroom for two to six hours a day as volunteers (native English speakers in Syria to study Arabic) do the teaching. We work especially on writing skills, listening, reading for comprehension — and introduce them to liberal arts education. Much time is spent completing the Common Application. We help some of the students apply directly to need-blind or need-sensitive schools; others apply to the schools giving ISP a tuition waiver.

Most of the study is done in small groups, but every Friday all the students gather (16 of them this year) for the Writers' Workshop and for an ISP meeting. The latter often gets into everything from residency requirements



Figure 3.1. Iraqi students at their weekly Writers' Workshop in Damascus, December 2009. Through the Iraqi Student Project, sixteen students hope to be studying at colleges in the U.S. in the fall of 2010. (Photo credit: Lissa Fecht)

here in Syria to volunteer activities with the Red Crescent, to field trips we organize when we have a group of visiting Americans on hand.

In the spring of 2009 one of TAARII's members, Dr. Dina Khoury of George Washington University, was in Damascus and we asked her to meet the ISP students. She agreed to teach at the Writers' Workshop. She gave a wonderful lesson on what is a syllabus for a college course and how to use it. We would welcome other TAARII members who come to Damascus to meet us and some of the ISP students

(Note: Dina Khoury is now a member of our ISP Board).

This is a year-by-year and sometimes a month-by-month project. Money to pay one or two staff people in the U.S. has been hard to find. Colleges have become fearful of tuition waivers in the present economy. Still, we are hoping to find welcoming schools and support groups for these sixteen students in 2010, and if possible to go at least one more year. We are very aware that Iraq itself is now engaged in a large effort to bring students to study in the U.S. and the U.K., but that program will not ac-

cept Iraqis who have become refugees outside Iraq. Also, we have learned — after initial ignorance and innocence about what's needed to do this work — that the preparation should be long and intense if the students are to be successful in their undergraduate studies.

We thank all of you for your ongoing concern for Iraq.

To learn more about ISP or to make a donation, visit the website: [www.iraqistudentproject.com](http://www.iraqistudentproject.com). Contact Gabe and Theresa if you or your college would like to be involved in working with us: [gabeandtheresa@gmail.com](mailto:gabeandtheresa@gmail.com).

## UNCOVERING THE “OTHER” IRAQ

MAGNUS T. BERNHARDSSON, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

Book Review: Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

The title of Orit Bashkin's excellent new book, *The Other Iraq*, can be interpreted in a number of different ways. It could refer to an Iraq that has been hidden from historians or the general public. The “other” Iraq may therefore be an alternative universe of cultural personalities that has hitherto been concealed or overlooked. The title could also be a reference to an Iraq that is not the Iraq of the headlines — a place where intellectuals and artists in peaceful ways carve out a place for their aesthetics, ideals, and ideas. Or it could be an allusion to different concepts of Iraq — of the roads not taken — and the myriad of possibilities that Iraq has to offer its citizens. As Bashkin eloquently reminds us in this rich book, Iraq is not a fixed, natural phenomenon but rather the result of negotiated compromises between its ruling elites, foreign powers and interests, and its citizens.

For the last thirty years, most studies on Hashemite Iraq (1921–1958) have been focused on political developments. Bashkin's contribution, there-

fore, is significant in that it nicely ties in significant cultural voices with the overall political context. This book is an empirical, intellectual history that utilizes evidence-based arguments to demonstrate how Iraqi intellectuals played crucial roles both as critics and proponents of the national project. As Bashkin points out, nation building characterized the politics of early Hashemite Iraq and therefore it should not be surprising that the intellectuals of Iraq would address in a variety of ways what Iraq could and should be. The most important point of this book is to show how pluralistic Iraqi voices were during this period. Bashkin should be commended for not trying to place all the intellectuals she studied in a single category. Instead, she allows the diverse perspectives (ranging from existentialism to fascism and communism) to come to the surface. She shows that what characterized Iraqi intellectual life was its multitude of perspectives. This is, of course, a sign of a vibrant and sophisticated culture. Yet, just like

other intellectual historians, Bashkin has to grapple with the disconnect between ideas and realities, between what was considered ideal and what was actualized, between what was preached and what was practiced. Nevertheless, Bashkin's work is a fascinating and rich account and will become essential reading for all interested in Iraqi history.

In her short yet dense introduction, Bashkin, an assistant professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, evokes Homi Bhabha, by proposing the term “Iraqi hybridity.” Although Bhabha's original term is predicated on problematizing categories such as “the colonized” and the “colonizer,” Bashkin takes this concept even further into Iraqi spaces. In Iraq, hybrid cultural models are not merely about the breakdown of “East” and “West” but, as Bashkin convincingly suggests, also about rethinking traditional conceptions of Sunni and Shi'a, and how the development of national identity in



Hashemite Iraq weakened or, as Baskin states, “rendered unfeasible” the standard conceptualizations.

Bashkin has a broad definition of who is an intellectual, taking a “functional approach” (p. 2), and studies the writings and careers of poets, journalists, scholars, historians, and other artists. Her main subjects are both the usual suspects and also some lesser-known figures. Her range of personalities include Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, Sati’ al-Husri, ‘Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, Mulla ‘Abbud al-Karkhi, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, and Dhu Nun Ayyub.

The number of different Arabic language sources utilized for this study is impressive: novels, newspapers, biographies, and journals. The quantity and quality of her source material gives the reader great confidence in her conclusions and in her argument. Though the book starts with a short theoretical discussion (quoting Habermas and Bhahba), Bashkin does not impose theoretical models on the sources or on the voices that she uncovers. Rather, she adeptly brings in theory and Iraqi and/or Middle Eastern historiography to enlighten her narrative.

The first chapter, “Modest Hopes,” examines Iraqi intellectuals in the early 1920s and the relatively limited public sphere they operated in. Both the British and the various Iraqi governments imposed these limits on the intellectuals. Newspapers were either censored or banned. The laws relating to print culture provided the state with considerable leeway to interfere in the public sphere. However, the government was not able to prevent the dissemination of all possible ideologies. Ideas that they viewed with suspicion, such as Kemalist and Bolshevik ideas, were discussed, for example, on the pages of *al-Dijla*. As could be expected, a particularly sensitive topic for the authorities was how the various publications depicted the Anglo-Iraqi relationship, especially at critical moments such as

when the Anglo-Iraqi treaty was being discussed and ratified in 1930 or when the Iraqi oil treaty was signed in 1925. The journal *al-Karkh*, for example, vehemently criticized Iraqi politicians during these episodes, and poets such as ‘Ali al-Sharqi and Ahmad Safi al-Najafi published poems that courageously suggested that the Iraqi government lay asleep while the nation was being robbed blind.

Bashkin’s second chapter, “Protecting Pluralism,” focuses on how Iraqi intellectuals became more nationalist and even ultranationalist between 1931–1945 in which democracy and pluralism emerged as important themes. During these years, Bashkin maintains, the intellectuals stressed the sanctity of the nation and ways to build obedience and loyalty to Iraq via education and the military. These years also saw a large increase in publications and the proliferation of clubs and societies such as the Iraqi Pen Club (*Nadi al-qalam al-‘iraqi*).

In the third chapter, Bashkin traces how intellectual life developed during the final decade of the Hashemites. She argues that there were two public spheres in Iraq in the 1940s and 1950s. On the one hand, there was the state, with its intellectuals in the various governmental ministries. On the other was the opposition that operated in labor and student organizations, communist cells, reading clubs, and the like. During these years the opposition grew increasingly combative against the state as new generations entered public life. At the same time, the public sphere was inspired by what Bashkin calls a “literary and cultural renaissance” (p. 104).

This was one of the more interesting chapters of her book. Her descriptions of the role of the intellectuals in the *Wathba* is particularly compelling. For example, she recounts the funeral of Ja’far al-Jawahiri at the Haydarkhane Mosque. Ja’far was the brother of Muhammad Mahdi, the poet, and at the fu-

neral al-Jawahiri delivered the famous poem “My Brother Ja’far,” which has become a classic in Iraqi poetry.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, Bashkin addresses how Iraqis articulated who they were and what they considered to be the basis of the Iraqi nation. She explores the relationship between pan-Arabism and Iraqi national identity and how various minorities fit into the national project. For the latter, she analyzes, for example, Dhu Nun Ayyub’s satirical novel *Doctor Ibrahim*, which highlights the sectarian nature of the Iraqi state despite official rhetoric to the contrary as well as various other publications that address the status and place of Iraqi Kurds, Jews, or Shi’a. Her sixth chapter focuses on urban and rural Iraq and how intellectuals essentially nationalized the tribes in the 1940s and 1950s. They were seen as primitive societies yet at the same time genuine reflections of authentic Arab culture. Her final chapter is devoted to theories and the practice of education in Hashemite Iraq. As in many other countries, Iraqi intellectuals were adamant in their belief that education was the key to inculcating loyalty to the Iraqi state. This was an Iraqi project though the schools also propagated Pan-Arabism. While education was centralized and meant to foster nationalism, it did not, as Bashkin demonstrates, translate into loyalty to the government.

There are a number of thought-provoking questions that arise from reading Bashkin’s work. The first is the nature of power in Hashemite Iraq and perhaps the limitations of ideas. Whereas the intellectuals and writers were ambitious, prolific, pluralistic, and progressive, the results of their output did not translate directly into political action. The “other” Iraq that they conceived existed as an idea or set of ideas. Nevertheless, this output was a powerful contributor to intellectual life in Iraq as Iraqis sought to define their place in the world, what it means

to be an independent nation, and how to navigate between nationalism and colonialism. These voices are a reflection of their own selves and of their historical moment and political challenges. They were operating in difficult political circumstances. One major contribution of Bashkin's book, therefore, is to show the courage of these intellectuals and their historical uniqueness. Many of

them were insightful and thoughtful thinkers and Bashkin's work provides us with a new appreciation of these impressive intellectuals and their times.

The final paragraphs also offer an interesting insight into our own zeitgeist as Bashkin clearly feels compelled to address the contemporary relevance of her work. Though she obviously does not think that her book contains any

policy prescriptions to help guide today's policymakers, she does believe that more knowledge about what Iraqis felt and thought in earlier decades is both important and interesting. However, she warns against a teleological reading of Iraqi history. Overall, this is a lucid, intelligent, and well-written book that will help shape the historiography of modern Iraq.

## HISTORY OF IRAQ

DR. PETER WIEN, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

Book Review: Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History From Independence to Occupation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Adeed Dawisha's new history of Iraq offers deep insights, but only few surprises. Its great accessibility and readability are its major advantages over the existing survey works. Dawisha does not aspire to provide a comprehensive country survey but — as the subtitle says — a "Political History from Independence to Occupation," that is, from the foundation of the state in the context of World War I to the present day. The reader who looks for more information on social or cultural trends will be better served with Orit Bashkin's and Eric Davis' recent books. Dawisha distinguishes this book with his ability to combine a close, at times even sympathetic, look at many of Iraq's political actors — not only first rank leadership, but also the second row of parliamentarians and community leaders of the monarchy period — with an up-to-date analysis of the evolution of the Iraqi polity. Dawisha manages to establish both an analytical and a narrative thread that helps the interested, non-specialist reader to understand what was actually going on, instead of getting lost in the thicket of names of individuals or groups. While this book is certainly not a textbook — it does

not contain any pictures, maps, primary sources, or research questions for the instructor's use — it could nevertheless be very useful reading for history and political science classes on Iraq, even as a primary text, not to mention a source for policymakers looking for an informative and reliable good read. It should, however, be read at least in combination with Eric Davis' *Memories of Iraq*.

It is apparent that Dawisha's major interest when writing this book was the monarchical period. Seven out of twelve chapters (including the introduction) treat this era, which was certainly crucial in setting the stage for the developments of the post-revolutionary period. The latter is the subject of three chapters, covering the period from Qasim's rule to Iraq since 2003. Dawisha ends his book with a look to the country's future by way of a conclusion. This structure underlines an image of Iraq that presents the monarchy as a period of at least limited pluralism, or at least plurality of political, social, and cultural forces as opposed to the growing totalitarian trends of the republican dictatorships afterwards. Dawisha presents in a nuanced, if sometimes

redundant, way the tensions between the (certainly limited) constitutional safeguards and opposition forces of the Iraqi monarchy on the one hand and the authoritarian inclinations of the governing elites on the other hand. In contrast, he depicts the republican regimes in one dimension only. This approach is in line with the general scarcity of sources and information about the republican period that are available to researchers in general, when the governments' tighter grip on society reduced the already limited transparency of the administration and made access to archives hardly possible. Only recently have historians developed new interest in the Qasim period, but there is still very little in depth of historical knowledge about Iraq under the 'Arif brothers and the Bakr-Hussein regime. A survey text such as Dawisha's necessarily leaves questions open, therefore.

Dawisha divides his account of the monarchical period in sections that combine chronological with thematic approaches, covering — with overlaps — such issues as the viability of democratic structures and the trajectory of ethno-sectarian conflicts. The post-'58 period is covered in three consecutive

chronological sections. What makes Dawisha's book stand out, however, is the author's use of primary and secondary sources. Dawisha presents a remarkable overview of the Arabic language scholarship and memoir literature of first and second rank politicians in Iraq. The evaluations by historians and social and political scientists of Iraq's recent history have to be taken with a grain of salt, of course – not necessarily those of Dawisha's favorites Ali al-Wardi and Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, two of Iraq's most outstanding intellectuals, but rather those of the 1980s generation of researchers. Eric Davis has proved to what extent the humanities and social sciences of Iraqi academia were exploited by the regime during this period. Dawisha, however, quotes them very cleverly and cautiously, using them as depositories of primary source information that would otherwise not be available. In addition, the same sources, as well as the memoir literature that he uses give us deeper insight in the proceedings of government and parliament through eyewitness accounts than what the mere usage of the British archives,

for instance, provides. There are numerous texts by authors of diverse backgrounds whose perspectives spice up the narrative. Again, these accounts favor the monarchical over the republican period.

Some of the book's terminology and concepts are a little outdated. The usage of the term "Turk" instead of "Ottoman" in the first sections of the book suggests a detachment of the Arabs in the Iraqi provinces from the Ottoman state that the latest research does not support. The emphasis on Sati al-Husri's preference for European, and especially German, political and national theory as a basis for his nationalist theory downplays his roots in late Ottoman state doctrine and disciplinary visions of society. The development of Shi'i political movements from the 1958 revolution onward would have also deserved more coverage. Most surprising, though, is the nearly complete absence of the Iraqi Communist Party from Dawisha's account of confrontations between the monarchy and the Iraqi opposition in the 1940s and 1950s. He attributes the downfall of the monarchy exclusively to the rise

of the Arab nationalist tide following the rise of Nasser in Egypt. In his account, the Iraqi Independence and National Democratic Parties, both of officially represented in the Parliament, commanded a mass following, whereas most other accounts depict the communists as the only real, popular player in the country, despite the party's clandestine status. In Dawisha's narrative, the ICP develops its mass appeal only after the revolution. Even if scholars such as Hanna Batatu may have overstated the role of the communist party in the Iraqi state and society in the past, Dawisha's departure from this paradigm appears too radical.

To conclude, Adeed Dawisha's *Iraq: A Political History From Independence to Occupation* is an excellent introductory text that will find many readers. Its major contribution is the close analysis of the existing Arabic language historiography on modern Iraq. The account puts, however, most of its emphasis on the monarchy period. Resulting gaps can easily be filled when books by Eric Davis, Marion Farouk Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, Charles Tripp, and Orit Bashkin are consulted as well.

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## TAARII ANNOUNCES BI-ANNUAL, OUTSTANDING DISSERTATION PRIZES FOR ACADEMIC YEARS 2007–2008 AND 2008–2009

One prize each for the modern and ancient periods has been awarded for the two-year period 2007–2009. The descriptions that follow are based upon the remarks of TAARII's reviewers.

TAARII has awarded an Outstanding Dissertation Prize for the modern period to **JUAN ROMERO**, for his dissertation entitled, "The Iraqi Revolution of 1958 and the Search for Security in the Middle East," which he defended at the University of Texas, Austin. This work offers a detailed exploration of the pre-revolutionary social and political conditions, the Free Officers Movement, the events surrounded the July 14th coup d'état, and the radically changed situation in the post-July 1958 period.

Drawing upon a wide array of primary and secondary sources in both English and Arabic, Romero argues that the 1958 Revolution was not sudden, but had been building during the last decade of the Hashemite Monarchy, during which the Monarchy had lost control and legitimacy in different spheres. Something vastly larger than a simple change in personnel, the revolution created a republic that earned the support of the majority of Iraqis and which moved the country away from Western powers and toward the Eastern Bloc. Economically, it instituted policies that led to fundamental changes among Iraq's

social classes, especially by curtailing the economic power of the sheikhs and landlords and by improving the lot of the poor. According to Romero, Iraqis held a sense that a revolution had occurred — especially among the marginalized poor classes, who — under Qassim — gained a new sense of empowerment that gave them a stake in the state.

In addition to providing an extensive account of the events of 1958, Romero traces the changes through to their consequences for Iraq domestically, within the Arab world, and within the field of international relations, including the Soviet perspective on Qassim's government. The study will be of interest to scholars of Iraqi and Middle Eastern history, as well as scholars of political history and international relations in the twentieth century.

TAARII has awarded an Outstanding Dissertation Prize for the ancient period to **JONATHAN TENNEY**, for his dissertation entitled, "Life at the Bottom of Babylonian Society: Servile Laborers at Nippur in the 14th and 13th Centuries B.C." This work addresses complicated issues surrounding slavery in ancient Nippur.

The study is based upon a corpus of primarily unpublished Kassite texts from the later part of the second millennium B.C. In addition to undertak-

ing a philological examination of the text corpus, Tenney also makes use of a wide range of methods outside the traditional field of Assyriology, including advanced statistics, ethnographic analogies, and historical demography.

Specifically, Tenney considered 500 tablets in three categories: rosters of workers, purchases of personnel, and administrative records that mention workers. He compiled a database of 5,500 workers, from which, he is able to present incomparably detailed data on the actual living conditions among workers and the structure and composition of the Babylonian family and household. Previously unknown aspects of Middle Babylonian society are illuminated, including sex ratios and illness, birth, and mortality rates among workers. His statistics demonstrate striking conclusions; for example, the laboring population had a high male:female sex ratio, and there was an unusually high percentage of single mothers and female heads of household in the group. The latter finding indicates that women played an unexpectedly prominent role in the servile families. This work will be of interest relevant to anyone interested in the social and economic history of the entire Ancient Near East or in the analysis of human population patterns.

### FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The annual deadline for submission of applications to the *U.S. Fellows Program* is December 15, 2010, for projects beginning as early as March 2010. The annual deadline for the *Iraq Fellows Program* is December 15, 2010. Applications from U.S.-Iraqi collaborative teams are welcome on a ROLLING basis. Teams of individual U.S. and Iraqi scholars wishing to collaborate may request up to \$14,000. For additional information, please visit the TAARII website: [www.taarii.org](http://www.taarii.org). To submit a collaborate proposal, contact [info@taarii.org](mailto:info@taarii.org).

### LANGUAGE ANNOUNCEMENT

As readers may be aware, TAARII is committed to producing a bilingual newsletter in English and in Arabic. We regret that we are now printing our newsletter in English only. We are seeking funds to resume printing a bilingual newsletter and to include full Arabic translations of English-language newsletters on our website. We appreciate your patience and understanding in the meantime.

## 2010 U.S. FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

PROFESSOR SARGON DONABED, HISTORY, ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

*“Documenting the Oral Folk Epic of Qatine Gabbara: Translation, Historical and Cultural Analysis, and Transmission”*

SAMUEL ENGLAND, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

*“A Vizier in Beggar’s Clothing: Abbasid Iraq”*

JILL GOLDENZIEL, ESQ., GOVERNMENT AND LAW, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

*“Refugees as Rents: Humanitarian Aid and the Politics of International Law”*

JOSHUA JEFFERS, NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

*“Tiglath-Pileser I: An Assyrian King Who Lit Up a Dark Age”*

DALE STAHL, HISTORY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

*“The Two Rivers: Water, Development and Politics in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin 1920–1975”*

PROFESSOR JONATHAN TENNEY, HISTORY, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

*“The People, Politics, and Economics of Nippur During the 14th and 13th Centuries B.C.”*

### SARGON DONABED

*Qatine Gabbara* is an oral epic told in modern Aramaic that is thought to be the last vestige of a continuous oral tradition of the Epic of Gilgamesh. Since 2003, this oral epic, told in the northern region of Iraq, has been exiled with refugees from war and its subsequent problems. Donabed will record the aging transmitters of this epic as they tell the tale in their native Aramaic dialects. He will transcribe and translate the narratives for future scholarly research, and will interview their tellers in their native language.

### SAMUEL ENGLAND

The *Qasida Sasaniyya* is both a literary landmark and a social and political document of tenth-century Iraq, illuminating the twilight of the most powerful and expansive Islamic empire in history. England will collate the poem by Abu Dulaf al-Khazraji from its extant manuscripts and will use philological and

historical literary analysis to demonstrate its previously unacknowledged political functions. The vizier Ibn Abbad took a keen interest in the jargon of a criminal subculture that emerged to evade official detection and commissioned the *Qasida Sasaniyya*, an example of low-brow entertainment. The use of this jargon by Ibn Abbad, an Abbasid official, reveals a complicated relationship between language and imperial power.

### JILL GOLDENZIEL

Goldenziel will undertake a case study of post-2003 management of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria, and Egypt in order to consider the mechanisms used by donor countries, host countries, and international organizations to further their own political aims. This case study will play a central role in her dissertation, which will analyze political mechanisms of refugee assistance, based on archival research and more than 100 interviews with assistance providers. Her aim is to

explain how international refugee law has enabled the politicization of refugee crises and to suggest how it might better assist displaced Iraqis and other refugee groups.

### JOSHUA JEFFERS

Tiglath-Pileser I was an important Middle Assyrian king who reigned in the late twelfth to early eleventh centuries B.C., from the city of Assur in northern Mesopotamia. Scarce documentation remains from the end of the second millennium, when the Ancient Near East was descending into a “dark age.” Jeffers will collect and analyze textual material on Tiglath-Pileser, which has recently become available and which promises to illuminate the period. Specifically, he will examine cuneiform tablets that will enable him to consider the king’s role as a figure who transitions from the Middle Assyrian territorial state of the second millennium to the Neo-Assyrian empire of the first.

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**DALE STAHL**

This study focuses on the modern development and management of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers during the period 1920–1975. Stahl will draw upon an array of primary sources, including government archival sources, publications of professional associations, maps, engineering designs, media, and personal papers, to examine the social and political dynamics involved in managing the rivers as natural resources. He further aims to understand these dynamics in the context of state formation, ideologies of economic development, the relationship of Middle Eastern societies to the natural environment, and the international system in the region.

**JONATHAN TENNEY**

Little is known about the Middle Babylonian slave population that constituted the public work force controlled by the governor of Nippur in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. Building upon his doctoral dissertation, Tenney will integrate existing documents of the Kassite period (ca. 1500–1155 B.C.) into a database and create a digital record of unpublished sources, including photographs, transliterations, and collations of Middle Babylonian tablets to form a substantial foundation of primary sources. This will enable scholars to better understand the slave population in its geographical, social, political, and economic context. His effort will mark the first step in a larger research and publication plan aimed at improving present knowledge of the Kassite period of Babylonia.

**TAARII PROPOSAL-WRITING WORKSHOP**

On January 7 and 8, 2010, TAARII Executive Director, Dr. Stephanie Platz, and TAARII Senior Scholar, Dr. Lucine Taminian, co-directed a workshop at the Columbia University Middle East Research Center (CUMERC) in Amman, Jordan, on research proposal writing. Sponsored by The Institute of International Education and the Scholar Rescue Fund, the bilingual workshop in the IIE Visiting Professor Program covered topics that included peer review and the nature of research proposals; the structure of a proposal; and the development of a successful proposal and Curriculum Vita. The two-day workshop also entailed critiques of actual work and breakout sessions for discussion. More than fifty senior scholars from Iraq participated.



Figure 4.1. Participants in the TAARII/SRF proposal-writing workshop, January 7–8, 2010, Amman.



Figure 4.2. Participants in the TAARII/SRF proposal-writing workshop, January 7–8, 2010, Amman. Dr. Platz and Dr. Taminian appear bottom-center.

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## ABOUT TAARII

TAARII has been formed by a consortium of universities, colleges, and museums, which comprise its institutional membership. Each institution names a person to act as its representative on the Board of Directors. Individual Members elect additional Directors. The Officers, along with two members of the Board of Directors, comprise the Executive Committee, which is charged with assuring academic integrity, organizational oversight, and financial and programmatic accountability.

TAARII is a non-governmental organization and is incorporated in the state of Illinois as a not for profit organization and has 501(c)3 status with the Internal Revenue Service.