



# TAARII NEWSLETTER

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## A JULY JOURNEY TO THE ENVIRONS OF UR

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Is it now possible for an American archaeological field project to work in southern Iraq? This was the question we most wanted to answer when we flew to Basra in early July 2011, although we had other objectives as well. We have been to Iraq several times in the last two decades, but this was our first chance in a long time to return as archaeologists with a research agenda rather than observers of war damage. Since 1990, we have only been able to pursue our studies of Mesopotamian settlement organization, initiated in the Mashkan-shapir Project, by reworking old data and analyzing satellite images. The latter offer some intriguing suggestions on how sites might be structured, but these need to be tested on the ground. One issue largely ignored in previous research is the relationship between little sites and big ones: were the small settlements that dot the landscape around urban centers like Uruk, Nippur, and Ur microcosms of cities, specialized locations with specific functions in a complex urban matrix, or purely residential outliers? Satellite images and surveys of the environs of Ur in particular showed this to be very rich ground for looking at the problem. It was

with great enthusiasm, therefore, that we took advantage of an opportunity to spend a week in the Nasiriyah area offered to us through the efforts of our Ph.D. student, Abdel-Amir Hamdani.

Before he entered the Ph.D. program at Stony Brook, Abdel-Amir had been the Inspector of Antiquities for Dhi Qar Governorate, and he remains in contact with both the local and national archaeological institutions of Iraq. For more than a year, he encouraged us to come to southern Iraq and by October 2010 had convinced us that the time had come to act. In the past it was difficult to obtain an excavation permit to excavate a small site in Iraq outside of salvage areas, and the few small sites that have been excavated are all located far

from larger urban centers. Abdel-Amir suggested that this policy might be open to revision. There were other practical considerations that made the Ur area attractive. Nasiriyah has experienced less trouble than most of the rest of Iraq and there are two dig houses within the guarded perimeter around Ur that could house an expedition. Franco D'Agostino, of Rome, had already secured a permit to lead an Italian expedition to Tell Abu Tubaira, a nearby multi-period site slightly larger than what we were interested in, and offered to share quarters and equipment with us. He was being given a certain amount of furniture by the Italian military contingent as it pulled out of Talil Air Base, south of Ur, so we could bring an expedition in and go right to work, without having to waste precious field time setting up a camp.

There were also good scientific reasons for choosing a site nearby. Thanks to the extensive excavation program of Leonard Woolley — and the publication of his results — Ur is one of the best known ancient Mesopotamian cities, providing extensive samples of private and public buildings for both the Isin-Larsa/Old Babylonian period and the later Kassite

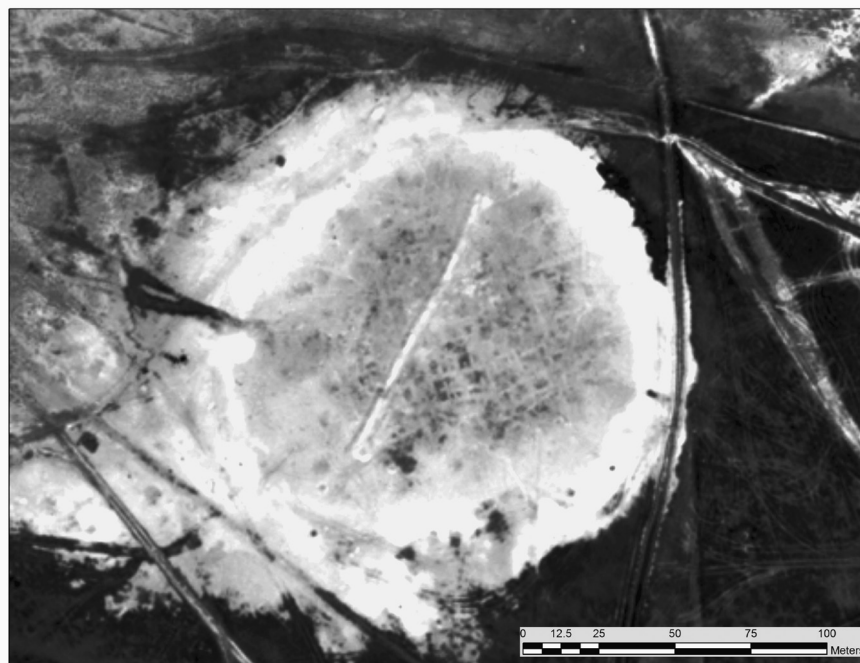


Figure 1.1. Quickbird Image of Tell Mathkhuriyah. Imagery courtesy of the Digital Globe Corporation.



Figure 1.2. Lunch at the Mudhif.

period. There also seemed to be a good number of small sites in the area to choose from. The one that seemed most appropriate from our vantage point in Stony Brook was Tell Mathkhuriyah, one hectare in diameter with very extensive architectural traces visible in high-resolution satellite imagery (fig. 1.1). We could also see a military checkpoint by the site, which suggested that it would be secure. The only question was the date of Mathkhuriyah's occupation: the few sherds we had seen from it suggested the second millennium B.C., but they weren't overwhelmingly distinctive. Clearly we needed to visit the site and, if it proved suitable, solve all of the logistical issues pertaining to working in a country that is still suffering from outbreaks of violence. We applied for an excavation permit in November. It was promptly granted to us,<sup>1</sup> with the idea being that we would make preliminary arrangements in the summer and commence work the following winter. We set about planning the summer trip immediately and at each step of the way, Abdel-Amir was absolutely essential, lining up support

from the many Iraqi individuals and institutions that made this trip not just possible, but positively enjoyable.<sup>2</sup>

A second research objective was to visit a variety of sites in the Eridu Basin and Ur area. Some of these showed quite distinctive traces of architecture in satellite images, and we wanted to see what they looked like on the ground. The summer trip would provide us with a better idea of what was showing up in the images and what wasn't.

We arrived in Basra Airport around 8 a.m. on July 7, 2011, on a Turkish Airlines flight from Istanbul. A man who said he worked for the Turkish government was sitting next to us on the plane and told us that they were still experimenting with the routes. We were a little surprised to land in Najaf on the way to Basra, and were even more surprised a week later when our return flight left an hour before schedule and stopped again in Najaf. Experimenting indeed! At the Basra airport we were met by Abdel-Amir and his friend Amir Doushi, a translator and cultural advisor who did much to facilitate our travels. There was also a documentary film crew who had come to record our trip. This was not the kind of reception we were used to on previous trips to Iraq.

After an uneventful drive to Nasiriyah and a quick stop in our hotel there, we were taken to lunch at the Mudhif (guesthouse) of the sheikh who owned the land around Tell Mathkhuriyah. He welcomed us warmly, encouraged us to come and work, and treated us to a magnificent banquet. When we worked in Iraq in the 1980s, we did not have this kind of experience when we lived in Shomeli, the small town nearest to Mashkan-shapir, where the local Ba'ath representative discouraged Iraqis from interacting with foreigners. One of our neighbors in Shomali had invited the women of the Mashkan-shapir team to tea in 1990, and the secret police turned up on her doorstep the next day. Iraqis no longer seem the least bit restrained

in their hospitality. After twenty years of working in Turkey, our Arabic is distinctly rusty, but with Amir Doushi at our side, the conversation flowed and we could almost forget the language barrier.

We had another banquet with another sheikh the next day (fig. 1.2), and at both of these meals the conversation focused on the role of the tribes in the new Iraq, a strong argument being made that the south had been quieter than central and northern Iraq precisely because the tribal system was strong. Yet we had the clear sense that these men who wield enormous power locally felt somewhat left out of the new, very centralized, political system. One argued that the collective nature of the tribes made them a quasi-democratic system that should be recognized. A day or so later we spent the evening in a restaurant garden beside the Euphrates with the literati of Nasiriyah — poets, film makers, playwrights, and the like — who were passionate about the role of the arts in the new Iraq and the importance of education and literature (and film) to open people's minds to new ideas



Figure 1.3. Abdel-Amir Hamdani holding the inscribed clay nail moments after its discovery.



and democracy. In spite of everything that has happened in the past eight years, no one pined for the past — rather they were keen to find a positive way to participate in the future of the country.

A few days after our arrival we gave lectures at the very elegant Arts Center that had been built for the city by the Italians formerly in residence at Talil. This began with a memorial for Donny George and was attended not only by a large local audience, but also by dignitaries who had come from as far as Baghdad and Babylon, and at least eight different television crews. Donny was eulogized by all, his tragically early death deeply regretted, and his memorial poster has now become part of the permanent exhibit at the center.

In spite of the crowded schedule, we were able to squeeze in a trip into the marshes, something neither of us had managed in the past. Although mid-summer is not the best time to visit, we were able to witness the return of at least some of the water to the area around Chubaish and have a close-up view of water buffalo, birds, Marsh Arab villages, and reeds of all sizes and shapes.

Our overall sense of Nasiriyah was of a town where little has been invested in infrastructure (except for the Arts Center and our hotel), but people seemed relaxed. We heard no explosions while we were there and witnessed people taking pleasure boats out on the Euphrates, filling the restaurants and coffee-houses, and even a three-year-old riding his tricycle in the street after dark. At no time did we get even a whiff of the insecurity that we hear so much about in the news. We also saw no Americans, nor any other foreigners.

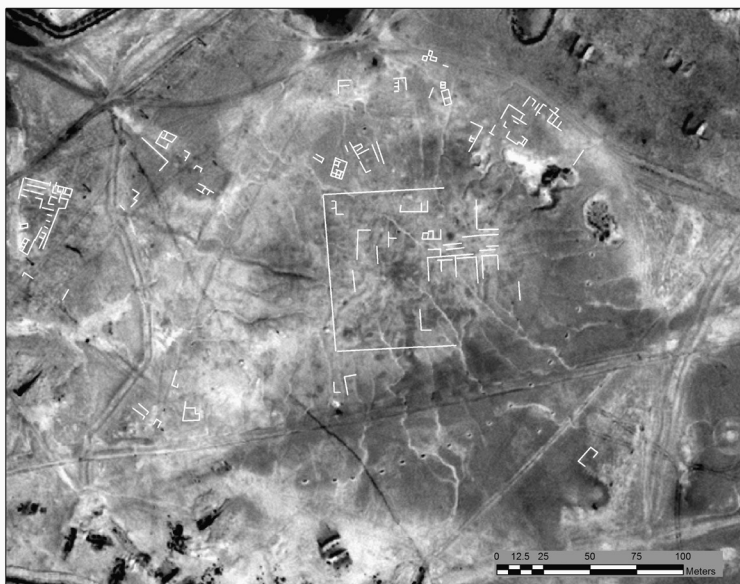


Figure 1.4. Quickbird image of Tell Sakheriya with possible wall traces shown in white. Imagery courtesy of the Digital Globe Corporation.

Late in the afternoon of our first day in Iraq, we reached Tell Mathkhuriyah. We were initially confused by the absence of the landmarks we expected. The checkpoint that we knew so well from the satellite imagery had been an American one, and was gone. Even the guardrails beside the road, which we had planned to use as a starting point for mapping, had been torn out. The site was not without its charm — a few camels wandered by while we were there and the ziggurat at Ur could be seen in the distance — but it was now in an exposed and isolated position along largely deserted paved roads. The archaeology was also disappointing. It did not take long to find a few stamped sherds that were clearly not dateable to the Old Babylonian or Kassite periods. Our best guess was that an early first millennium B.C. date was most likely, and in any case it would not serve for comparison with what was going on in Ur.

The next morning, Abdel-Amir Hamdani again came to the rescue, suggesting we take a look at another site, one of several with the undignified name of Tell Abu Ba'arura ("father of sheep droppings"). It is located along a guarded cul-de-sac leading to an Iraqi military

base, and within sight of a prison. It certainly passed all security considerations. In the 1960s, Henry Wright had judged it to be entirely Kassite,<sup>3</sup> but we found early second millennium ceramics as we began walking up to the summit of the mound and only a few clearly Kassite sherds at the very top. Nearly fifty years ago, Wright had noted a Qal'eh (shaykh's fort) in that area, but apart from a small mound of dirt it was no longer in evidence. We only spent about twenty minutes on this first visit because it was hot and we

had other sites to see, but Abdel-Amir spotted an inscribed clay nail (fig. 1.3) with what was undoubtedly a partially preserved royal inscription. These artifacts were generally embedded in the walls of large public buildings. We took a GPS reading on the findspot and subsequently recognized in the high-resolution satellite imagery that it was associated with a roughly 80 meter square area of very regular architecture. We later showed photographs of the cleaned object to Stephanie Dalley and Douglas Frayne, who recognized place names and phrases consistent with the Larsa Dynasty. In particular, it mentions a place called Pi-Naratim ("Mouth of the Rivers"), which Rim-Sin conquered around 1807 B.C. (by convention of the middle chronology).

At about 5 ha and only 6 km from Ur, this site clearly met our criteria for a small site near a metropolis. Although satellite images of it do not show the very detailed architecture of Tell Mathkhuriyah, it is not devoid of such traces (fig. 1.4), and will provide us with the opportunity to check satellite imagery with data from on-the-ground magnetic gradiometry, which we hope to collect in December. This technique was effective at Uruk.<sup>4</sup>

Having identified a site both secure and compatible with our research objectives, we immediately applied to change our permit from Tell Mathkhuriyah to one for the new site. We were persuaded that we could not apply for grants or permits for a site with such a risible name in Arabic — in English translation, at least, it might have been even worse if the animals in question were bulls — so the alternate name Tell Sakhariya was suggested. We have been assured that changes in the security of Tell Mathkhuriyah are good grounds for requesting a change in the permit, and we understand that the file is currently awaiting the signature of the Minister of Culture.

We also took a look at where we hope we will be living in December. The site of Ur is now fenced off from its surroundings and has armed guards 24 hours a day. In addition to the houses of the three families of the site guards, there are two dig-houses. One is brand new, but has been filled with conservation supplies for an impending project at Ur itself. The other is perfect. Set in its own quite private compound, it has a double room that can serve as a workroom, a partially furnished kitchen, three bedrooms and bathroom facilities. It has recently been upgraded, so all rooms have heating/air conditioning units, and there is a generator for times when the electricity fails. The families of the guards have agreed to cook an evening meal for us, and generally help with shopping, transportation, and other logistical issues. The Nasiriyah security service, who looked after us on our trip, have agreed to escort us from house to site and back.

In the time that remained to us in the

area, we were able to visit seven of the sites near Nasiriyah where reasonably clear architectural details were preserved in satellite imagery, besides Tell Mathkhuriyah. All of these sites were salinized. That is, when you walk over the site you break through a salt crust on the surface, and your feet sink into a dusty layer. This varied from only about 5 cm at Tell Sakhariya — moderately salinized — to 30–40 cm at Tell Abu Tubaira, where the Italians plan to work. Satellite imagery of the latter provides significant detail over much of the site, yet the salt is so bad that few pot sherds can be seen and it seems unlikely that the salt traces in the satellite imagery will correlate with preserved mud-brick walls below the surface.

Generally, our “ground truthing” suggests that the more salt there was on the surface, the more visible the architecture in the imagery, i.e., salt highlights architectural details. We suspect that all Mesopotamian archaeologists have had the experience of seeing ancient walls outlined in salt on the surface of a site (fig. 1.5), but had not expected this in desert sites deep in the Eridu Basin. Normally one associates it with irrigated areas

where the high water table brings the salts to the surface. However, the latter decades of Saddam Hussein’s rule saw the development of the Third River Project, which collected the salty run-off from agricultural fields in the northern alluvium and channeled it southward between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The water was then siphoned beneath the Euphrates and allowed to fill the Eridu Basin, salinating the sites. This, and the fact that many of them were looted, makes them undesirable for excavation, but they still provide useful windows into the organization of ancient Mesopotamian settlement.

We also had the opportunity to visit Umma and its early third-millennium predecessor, Umm al-Aqqarib. The excavated remains of both are impressive, but they have been devastated by looting — indeed at Umma looters had apparently been at work only hours before we arrived because the soil from their trenches was still damp. These sites, now deep in the steppe, showed no evidence of salinization — and thus satellite imagery does not help us understand their organization. On the outskirts of Umma, however, we noted a large area of over-

fired material that might have been an industrial area. There were no accompanying potsherds to identify the date of this activity. We saw a similar area of fired debris without sherds at Tell Sakhariya, presenting yet another incentive to excavate.

In sum, our brief trip to Nasiriyah was enormously productive — thanks entirely to the very large number of people who worked so hard to make this happen. We fell in love with Iraq all over again, and this time felt



Figure 1.5. Early Dynastic Temple visible in WorldView 1 imagery. Imagery courtesy of the Digital Globe Corporation.

much more free in our interactions. While we could see what the country had been through, everyone we met was welcoming and we never felt we were the least bit in danger. There are, of course, the usual hurdles to be vaulted before we can get into the field: visas, formal permit, funding and so forth. But nothing we saw on the ground in Iraq last July suggests we can't be back to do magnetometry and excavate in December.

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Qais Raschid and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage

for their continuing support for this project.

<sup>2</sup> We must thank Abdel-Amir Hamdani, former Inspector of Antiquities for Dhi Qar Governorate, now Ph.D. student at Stony Brook University; Amir Doushi, Jasim Cultural heritage consultant of IREX-Iraq organization; Talib Al-Hassan, Dhiqar Governor; Hyder Abdulawahid Al-Benian, Dhiqar Governor's Deputy; Dhafer Muslim Al-Baka of the National Security Center of Dhiqar Province; Ali Kadhem Ghanem, Inspector of Antiquities for Dhi Qar Governorate; The Iraqi Writers Union of Dhiqar; Police Major Ayad Barzan Ayyal; Al-Faiha T.V. channel in Dhiqar;

and the Tammuz Organization for Social Development.

<sup>3</sup> Henry T. Wright, 1980, "Appendix: The Southern Margins of Sumer: Archaeological Survey of the Area of Eridu and Ur," in *Heartland of Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 339 [Site 20].

<sup>4</sup> Halmut Becker and Jörg W. W. Fassbender, 2001, "Uruk—City of Gilgamesh (Iraq): First Tests in 2001 for Magnetic Prospection," in *Magnetic Prospecting in Archaeological Sites*, edited by Helmut Backer and Jörg W. W. Fassbender, pp. 93–97 (Munich: ICOMOS and Bavarian State Conservation Office).

## IN MEMORIAM: MOHAMMED GHANI HIKMAT

One more star is shining in the skies over Baghdad registering another great loss for Iraq. Mohammed Ghani Hikmat died in Amman, Jordan, on September 12, 2011. He was a household name for generations of Iraqis and Arabs whose memories of Baghdad are incomplete without the images of the *Fountain of Kahramana*, *Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves* (1969), or *Scheherazade and Shahrayar* (1971). Ghani's love for his city has been manifested in various monuments that recall her glorious past and keep the romance of the legends of One Thousand and One Nights alive, and others that celebrate Iraqis' contemporary lives. His love for Baghdad continued to motivate him to the last days of his life, campaigning and organizing committees for the recovery of looted Iraqi art in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, and finally with designs for three new monuments to adorn Baghdad that will be completed now under the supervision of his son Yasser.

Ghani is one of Iraq's most famous and influential sculptors. After graduating from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1953, Ghani studied sculpture at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome (graduated 1957), and then specialized in bronze casting in Florence in 1961. After returning to

Iraq, he taught sculpture at the Institute of Fine Arts, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the College of Architectural Engineering at Baghdad University. One of Iraq's pioneer modern artists, Ghani was a member of a number of Iraqi art organizations, including Iraq's most influential art group, the *Baghdad Group of Modern Art* that was established by Jawad Selim and Shakir Hassan Al Said, both his teachers and friends. Ghani assisted and supervised in Florence the casting of the bronze frieze for Jawad Selim's *Monument of Freedom* and then its installation after Selim's untimely death in 1961. In 1986, Ghani had to again step in after the death of the sculptor Khalid al-Rahal to finish the installation of the contested *Arch of Victory* monument.

Ghani's distinctive style developed out a deep understanding of the humanities and the history of aesthetics, weaving Islamic abstraction with Sumerian cuneiform in his famous Baghdadi doors, while his famous stylized and elegant figures combined his love for Mesopotamian epics and the humanistic tradition of

Florence. Born in Baghdad in 1929, Ghani was buried in his beloved city on September 15, 2011. He is survived by his son Yasser, daughter Hajeer, and wife Ghaya al-Rahal.

I will miss our visits and conversations in your Amman studio, dear friend. I will miss your passionate talks about art and Iraq while surrounded by the beauty you created and drinking Iraqi tea to the sounds of Munir Bashir.

— Nada Shabout, Associate Professor and Director of Contemporary Arab and Muslim Cultural Studies Institute (CAMCSI) at the University of North Texas.





## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

BETH KANGAS

TAARII has been continuing its efforts to promote Iraqi and Mesopotamian Studies. I am pleased and honored to have become TAARII's new Executive Director in February 2011 and thank Stephanie Platz for the wonderful foundation she built.

As listed in the Spring 2011 newsletter, three Ph.D. candidates and two post-doctoral scholars received U.S. fellowships to conduct research on ancient, medieval, or modern Iraq outside of the country. In addition, seven Iraqis residing in Iraq received fellowships to conduct research inside the country. Funding for these fellowships came from TAARII's 2010–2011 sub-grant from the State Department's Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC). We will announce the U.S. recipients for the 2011–2012 sub-grant in the Spring 2012 newsletter (and continue our practice of not naming the Iraq fellows out of consideration for their security).

In July, I had the chance to travel to Jordan for three weeks to learn about TAARII's activities there. Dr. Lucine Taminian, TAARII's Resident Director and Senior Scholar in Amman, and I visited several organizations in Amman to discuss collaborations with TAARII. We also had the chance to discuss fellowships and future activities with Iraqis residing in Jordan and several academics from Iraq who were visiting Amman for a conference. Lucine and I started planning for TAARII's conference on the Sanctions period in Iraq that would take place a few months later in Amman.

In August, Lucine and I attended CAORC's Directors' meeting in Mongolia, home of another of the twenty-two American overseas research centers (ORCs). The meeting offered productive opportunities to learn about

the other American overseas research centers, the operations and expectations of the State Department's Educational and Cultural Affairs, which provides funding for many of the centers, and ways to raise non-governmental funds.

In September 2011, TAARII held a very successful three-day conference in Jordan on the 1990s Sanctions in Iraq, as detailed in the final article of this newsletter. TAARII co-sponsored the conference with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), which creates a new relationship for us. Eighteen scholars — five from the U.S., six from Iraq, one each from France, Germany, and Britain, and four Iraqis residing in Jordan — presented papers that examined the political, economic, social, and cultural consequences of the Sanctions. One of the conference's keynote speakers was Hans von Sponeck, a former U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq and author of *A Different Kind of War* (2006). The second keynote presenter was Joy Gordon, a philosopher and ethicist at Fairfield University and author of *Invisible War* (2010). The participation of excellent young Iraqi scholars at the conference was particularly important and promises a continuing high level of scholarship for the future of the country. The conference also had a highly engaged audience, which included former bureaucrats and government officials in Iraq. Bassam Yousif, Magnus Bernhardsson, and Lucine Taminian will co-edit a publication that results from the conference.

For the very first time, TAARII hosted a reception at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) in San Francisco in November 2011. In the past, the ASOR meeting has occurred on the same weekend as the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), where TAARII holds its board meeting. It was nice this year to have

the opportunity to join our archaeology colleagues. TAARII also held a reception at MESA in December 2011 and sponsored a panel entitled "Baghdad 1950s + 50: Memory, Space & Politics." The panel was organized by Mina Marefat and included Bassam Yousif, Magnus Bernhardsson, Aline Schlaepfer, and Caecilia Pieri.

TAARII's three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for the Iraqi Oral History Project (IOHP) ended in June 2011 following a one-year no-cost extension. In December, we applied for continuation funding for the IOHP in order to expand the creation and preservation of the diverse histories of modern Iraq. The continuation project includes collaborating with Duke University Libraries to create an accessible archive. TAARII will use the interim period between grants to continue analyzing a portion of the results from the first phases of the IOHP.

In November 2011, TAARII was selected as one of 359 pre-identified partners for potential future, discrete funding opportunities under the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' (NEA) Organizational Interest and Capacity Questionnaire program announcement. This puts TAARII in a pool of potential applicants when funding opportunities from the NEA arise over the next four years.

At the December 2011 Board meeting, coinciding with the MESA annual meeting, TAARII welcomed three new institutional members: Brown University, the National University of Singapore, and the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). BISI and TAARII became reciprocal members and look forward to further collaborations. We welcome your ideas on activities, resources, and funding sources for TAARII to pursue.

## MARRIAGE AS MIGRATION: IRAQI-JORDANIAN MARRIAGES AND AMMAN'S REFUGEE COMMUNITY\*

SUSAN MACDOUGALL, OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Marriage is one of the means Iraqis have employed over the past several decades to migrate out of Iraq and secure residency in other countries. The institution's gendered nature makes Iraqi women employing this mode of migration particularly vulnerable. Divorced Iraqi women confront Sharia-influenced personal status laws in Jordan that work in concert with stringent citizenship codes to minimize their legal standing, while being wife and mother to Jordanians weakens their cases for asylum should they seek it following a divorce. Stories of unsuccessful marriages reinforce existing social divisions between Jordanians and Iraqis, and the Iraqi and Jordanian view of marriage as a contract between families means that failed immigration marriages are interpreted as discriminatory as well as disrespectful. A Fulbright fellowship (December 2010–August 2011) supported my work with Iraqi women married to Jordanians who were either formally divorced or separated, and TAARII hosted me as an affiliated scholar during that time. I did not intentionally exclude intact marriages, but attempts to reach Iraqi women married to Jordanians all led me to contacts with divorced women.

My findings suggest that marriage served as a means of immigration to Jordan for Iraqi women during the late 1990s but later compromised their ability to seek assistance and isolated them from family support in Iraq following their divorces. The messy entwining of intimacy with immigration increases women's dependence on their husbands by straining other social ties, thus increasing their isolation and vulnerability in the event of divorce. The social nature of marriage, specifically the attention it commands from others

interested in gossiping about their friends or neighbors, also obligates them to craft acceptable narratives for an audience of associates and acquaintances as well as for international agencies providing services and resettlement with which they often interact.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, some service providers at Jordanian NGOs observed Iraqi women married to Jordanian men feigning divorce, since the divorce would make them eligible for cash assistance from the UNHCR. In either case, divorce became a defining attribute for the women socially as well as legally.

The use of marriage for migration and citizenship purposes reflects the deteriorating conditions in Iraq over the past several decades that drove and continues to drive Iraqis to migrate. Sanctions presented uniquely challenging circumstances that inspired new streams of migration, of which marriage was one. Political and economic changes in Iraq during the sanctions, above all standstill economic growth and shrinking employment opportunities, meant families looked beyond their kin groups and neighbors for their daughters' marriage partners.<sup>2</sup> Girls' travel abroad for marriage became more palatable to families, since it meant their relief from the economic burden of an unmarried daughter and her opportunity for a better life outside of Iraq. This distance left the women with weak social support, with participants in my study noting their families' diminished role in their marriages over a long distance. Women whose parents were with them in Jordan when they were married also saw their influence wane as they relied on their new sons-in-law to help them secure residency in Jordan.

Iraqi brides of Jordanians negotiate

the push and pull of families who attempt to balance the best interest of their daughters with their limited ability to offer them support, economic or otherwise; they also navigate the currents of Jordan's citizenship and personal status laws. The former are resistant to the assimilation of foreigners and the latter partial to men, which leave them on the margins of both groups. Their limited legal rights confound their search for institutions that support them, and their misfit status in the refugee and foreign wife categories contributes to their sense of solitude. Since marriage serves as a means of travel and immigration as well as a cornerstone of social organization, Jordanian family law acts as a parallel immigration policy that affects many Iraqis and in particular women. Marginal status legally is accompanied by outsider status socially.

The four divorcees who participated in my research each arrived in Jordan during the 1990s, several years before the war in Iraq began in 2003. The four women, two of whom fled to Jordan with their husbands and two of whom came with their families before getting married, relate experiences of being outsiders in their husband's families from the beginning of their marriages. One woman said she worked as a servant for her mother-in-law; another served as a caretaker for her husband's mentally ill first wife. The economic and policy elements of that inequality appeared later on in their relationships, often when they became responsible for conducting their own affairs in the public sphere after getting divorced. To do this research, I conducted extended, open-ended interviews with each woman in her home

*\* This piece is a reflection of very preliminary fieldwork, which will continue in the future.*

over nine months in Amman, as well as participant observation and interviews with Iraqis and Jordanians providing service to refugees. All anecdotes and ethnographic data here are from interviews or personal correspondence during that period.

Mistrust of the state and of international organizations like the UNHCR make Iraqis who register as refugees selective in divulging information about themselves for fear of its consequences to their asylum case or their receipt of other charity or aid.<sup>3</sup> The disruption and violence that typically accompany escape from one's home country inspire fear and suspicion in many forms, with official, neighbor, and family relationships affected.<sup>4</sup> Questioning refugees and testing the "truth" of their stories also increasingly defines the process of seeking asylum, and providing the correct "truth" can make the difference between resettlement and refoulement.<sup>5</sup> Given these stakes, carefully crafting their stories and guarding personal details become a daily practice. Divorced women face the same constraints as others seeking resettlement or aid, and when marriage is their means of escape, new layers of social expectations and fears enter the equation. Concealment and mistrust are a part of Iraqis' experience in Jordan, and assumptions about an American researcher's connection to their application for asylum mean that the details of their marriage story can vary from meeting to meeting. Concerns about their reputation and reception with their neighbors also demand that stories be crafted with care. Circles of confidants are necessarily small, and social safety nets are correspondingly limited.

Present circumstances reflect historical trends; during the 1990s, Iraqi legal arrangements erred on the side of keeping people in the country while Jordanian policy tended toward keeping them out. Iraq imposed a requirement

that women leaving the country travel with a *mahram*, putting up obstacles to women's immigration without escorts. Anecdotal accounts from Iraqis mention the impact of these policies on the sex trade; since Iraqi women could not leave the country without their husbands, Jordanians seeking Iraqi women as sex workers sometimes married them to get them out of the country. The stigma attached to marriages with Jordanians because of this rumor means Iraqi women with absent Jordanian ex-husbands would suffer an additional layer of negative social appraisal as suspected prostitutes. This is just one example of the harsh judgment rendered against divorcees, which contributes to their sense of alienation and isolation in Jordan. Jordanian policies similarly discouraged lower-income Iraqis from permanently settling in Jordan. Iraqis enjoyed relative hospitality during the 1990s but those with limited financial means struggled to support themselves. While many middle class Iraqis settled in Jordan, lower-income Iraqis had trouble finding employment and earning an income. Marriage offered a route to residency, without which one could not secure a job.

From inside Iraq, reasons to be apprehensive about life in Jordan seemed far away. One woman, Hiba, married a Jordanian man almost forty years her senior without a second thought so that she could get out of the country. She did not even consider his age until she arrived in Jordan. "As soon as I got here," she said, "I wanted to go back." In retrospect, the women presented their marriages as choices made with immigration opportunities considered as a factor. Their relationships reflected the imbalance in Jordanian and Iraqi citizenship at the time, namely making them vulnerable brides for local men whose intentions toward them and their families they remember as callous. The new obstacles they faced to establishing residency in Jordan over time led to

different perspectives on that decision. "All I could think of was getting out of Iraq," Hiba said. Reflections on their decision to marry are colored by their later experiences in Jordan, with an emphasis on what they perceive as Jordanians' discriminatory attitudes against them. The relationship between gender and citizenship comes to bear on the institution of marriage as well; a system where men have legal power over their wives became a site for Jordanian prejudices on Iraqis to take on a new manifestation. Relationships with in-laws represent a particularly sensitive locus for this conflict. Hana mentioned conflicts between her in-laws and her family, and her limited ability to call on her own kin for support:

There were problems between my family and my husband [after we were married]. I couldn't leave my kids and run behind my family because my brothers were married and my parents, how long were they going to live? So to leave my children, and live with my brothers' wives, and let them take me here and there and away from my kids ... it's much better for me to stay in my own house.

(...)

It's been four years since he left us, but I feel that this is my kingdom, this house. I ate, drank, went to sleep hungry ... no one imposes on me here. With your family, God knows how much time you've spent with your family and how much of your upbringing was with them, but when you get married and go to them, you feel like you've become a foreigner. Tomorrow, you'll get married and you'll feel this feeling. Remember me.

Dua'a heard promises of *iqama* (residency permit) for herself and her family during her courtship with a Jordanian that were left unrealized in her marriage. "They're rich, we're poor



... they laughed at us," she said. Her marriage ended after several years of her husband's adultery and abuse, leaving her responsible for two young sons. She presents not only herself but her family as victims of the arrangement and misled as a result of their lesser status in terms of class and citizenship. Her husband had a bad reputation and was known for drinking and seeing lots of women, she learned later, and her stories of their introduction are full of ominous but overlooked signs to this effect. When her family asked acquaintances and friends about him, they kept this to themselves, staying loyal to their Jordanian neighbors rather than to them, the foreigners. Her family's outsider status and financial weakness led to a bad marriage for her, followed by self-reliance and social isolation as she cares for her two sons. Dua'a criticized Iraqi marriage for its harsh standards on wives:

[In Iraq] They blame the woman for everything. No matter what you've endured already, you have to endure more for the sake of your family. Full stop. (...)

Even if there are disagreements, the important thing is you, the woman. No one asks why you waited things out or why you stayed silent, no. And then when divorce happens, no one welcomes the divorcee. She's divorced. Why did he leave her? He's never in the wrong. They don't give her any excuses. She's so-so, no good. That's why he left her. Or she can't have kids. Or she doesn't know how to raise her kids. They forget any good qualities that a woman might have. It's a man's world more than a humane world.

Changing social mores in Iraq extended to the types of marriages permissible for daughters, but less often extended to compassion for divorced women. In Du'a's experience, being alone without a husband inspired others to gossip about her and limited her circle of

friends. But Jordan, for all its problems, seemed a safe haven to her since she could go to buy vegetables on her own without drawing attention. Returning to Iraq would mean an even more hostile environment, with restricted mobility for her and her children. Her husband legally blocked her sons' departure from the country without his permission, she said, so she will not go back in any event.

Continued unsafe conditions in Iraq represent the clearest disincentive to returning to the country, but, as she indicated, Jordanian child custody laws also represent an obstacle. Fathers have the right to prevent their children from traveling out of Jordan, which means that an escape home or resettlement abroad is unavailable for many women who have children.<sup>6</sup> Jordanian children of these marriages similarly represent baggage for their mothers in seeking resettlement. Dua'a related her conversation with a lawyer at UNHCR in simple terms: why would the U.N. grant the rights of a refugee to children who have Jordanian passports? The personal status laws in Jordan leave divorced women without rights to custody, making it difficult to leave the country without leaving their children as well. Leaving one's children is out of the question, making Jordan a last resort of sorts.

Marriage also represents a closed door behind which secrets about immigration are kept. Its intimate nature makes prying questions in that direction rude as well as detailed sharing indiscreet. To intervene in the relationship between spouses, as research with this population does, touches a vein of mistrust and inspires different kinds of partial explanations on the part of participants. For that reason, the preliminary findings presented here will benefit from further ethnographic and textual inquiries in this vein.

<sup>1</sup> E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, eds., *Mistrusting Refugees* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1995). Didier Fassin, "The Vanishing Truth of Refugees." Colson Lecture, Refugee Studies Center. (Oxford: Oxford University, 15 June 2011). Miriam Ticktin, "Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France." *American Ethnologist* 33:1 (2006): 33-49.

<sup>2</sup> Yasmin H. Al-Jawaheri, *Women in Iraq: The Gender Impact of International Sanctions* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008). Rana Hussein, "Jordan," in Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin, eds., *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance* (New York: Freedom House, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> IRC, Dawn Chatty and Philip Marfleet, "Iraq's Refugees: Beyond Tolerance." *Forced Migration Policy Briefing* 4 (Oxford: Oxford Refugee Studies Center, 2009)

<sup>4</sup> Daniel and Knudsen, *Mistrusting Refugees*. Fafo and the Government of Jordan, "Iraqis in Jordan 2007: Their Number and Characteristics" (Amman, Jordan: 2008). International Rescue Committee, "Five Years Later, A Hidden Crisis." Report of the IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees (2008). International Rescue Committee, "A Tough Road Home: Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Report of the IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees (2010). International Rescue Committee, "Iraqi Displacement: Eight Years Later Durable Solutions Still Out of Reach" (2011).

<sup>5</sup> Didier Fassin, "Vanishing Truth."

<sup>6</sup> Rana Hussein, "Jordan."

### 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, 2012.**

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## PROVINCIAL HISTORIES OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY IRAQ: REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

### ARBELLA BET-SHLIMON, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The historiography of the modern state of Iraq has always focused on Baghdad. Many authors have examined the policies and internal politics of the Iraqi central government throughout the twentieth century. Historians have written about the machinations of British mandate authorities and the leverage held by British diplomats based in the Baghdad embassy after the mandate. More recently, historians have paid close attention to intellectual and political discourses emanating from Baghdad, particularly those related to nationalisms and identities. Scholars of architectural and urban studies have also written about Iraqi ideas of modernity as they were manifested in the development of Baghdad, especially in the 1950s.

While this work is invaluable to a fuller understanding of modern Iraq, it has yet to be supplemented by comparable attention to Iraq's provincial areas. Among the few historical studies of provincial Iraq in the twentieth century are monographs by Nelida Fuccaro on the Yazidis of Jabal Sinjar during the mandate and by Reidar Visser on the separatist movement in Basra in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, several historians have done excellent work on pre-Iraq Mosul and/or Basra, including Thabit Abdullah, Gökhan Çetinsaya, Dina Khoury, and Sarah Shields.<sup>2</sup> Various authors have also written histories of the Iraqi Kurds in the modern state, though these works tend to approach the topic through the framework of ethnic politics rather than as an analysis of the provinces themselves.<sup>3</sup> In my current project, "Kirkuk, 1918–1968: Oil and the Politics of Identity in an Iraqi City," I aim to contribute to these existing efforts to shift the focus of histories of Iraq onto the provinces. To do so, I analyze

an area, Kirkuk, with distinct political, social and economic dynamics. I contend that such a refocusing is necessary not only to build a more comprehensive literature of modern Iraq, but also to achieve a deeper understanding of Baghdad's own political dynamics by examining its contentious, and often violent, attempts to exert power and influence over the rest of the country.

Researching the Iraqi provinces, especially from outside of Iraq, poses a particular set of challenges. In this article, I will discuss my own approach to research on Kirkuk in order to illuminate for other researchers the kinds of information to be found and conclusions to be drawn from archival and print sources on provincial areas of Iraq. My hope is that the insights herein will be useful for those who wish to undertake similar projects in the future. I conducted the research for this project from 2008 to mid-2011, completing the bulk of the research in London in 2009 and 2010 with the assistance of a TAARII fellowship. Of course, the potential for archival research on this and similar subjects within Iraq does exist, and interviews with Iraqis both inside and outside of the country can also be a productive way to learn more about provincial areas. Nonetheless, I will focus here on the research I have conducted with twentieth-century archival documents in Europe and with published materials that are available in Western libraries. Indeed, even historians from the region who have written about Kirkuk have relied mostly on published works and on external, particularly British, sources.<sup>4</sup>

#### Works of Memory

There are several well-known memoirs by prominent Iraqi politicians of the

twentieth century, but they generally do not go into detail about everyday life or political issues in Kirkuk — not even with reference to the oil industry, which was centered in Kirkuk for several decades. For instance, the late former politician and oil expert Muhammad Hadid discusses various issues related to Iraq's oil industry in his lengthy autobiography but says little about the city of Kirkuk specifically.<sup>5</sup> In my research, I have found that published works written by people from Kirkuk are few in number and hard to come by. However, those that are extant have proven to be fascinating sources of information about local culture. I have broadly termed these "works of memory" because most of them are not, strictly speaking, memoirs.

In Arabic, the most interesting such works have been produced by members of the Kirkuk Group (Jama'at Karkuk), an influential collective of writers originally from Kirkuk, most of whom left the city in the 1960s but continued to be active. A few members of the group, along with other Iraqi writers, first published reflective essays about their experiences in a 1992 issue of the Arabic literary journal *Faradis*, though these did not focus on the period when they were in Kirkuk.<sup>6</sup> In 1997, the journalist and novelist Fadhil al-Azzawi, a key member of the Kirkuk Group, wrote an essay about the group that discussed its initial formation at some length.<sup>7</sup> Azzawi's piece is useful to historians of Kirkuk for its discussion of local bookstores and the newspapers and magazines that locals read. The late poet Anwar al-Ghassani published an enlightening essay about the Kirkuk Group on his personal website in English in 2003 which, like Azzawi's, situates the group's origins in the context of Kirkuk's artistic and

literary culture of the 1950s, with an even greater attention to details like the names of people associated with the group.<sup>8</sup> Due to the generally increased scrutiny of Kirkuk's history today, and thanks in part to English translations of the work of Azzawi and of Kirkuk Group poet Sargon Boulus, it appears that the group's work is becoming the subject of renewed attention.<sup>9</sup> Studies of the group by literary scholars may enrich historians' work on Kirkuk's social history in the future.

There are also many histories of Kirkuk published in Turkish, and occasionally translated into English, by members of the city's Turkmen community. While these books seek to advance preconceived political ideas, a few of them nevertheless constitute useful works of memory because they exhaustively document various aspects of the community and of the city's heritage and culture from a Turkmen perspective. Hence, a book by Suphi Saatçi, an architect from Kirkuk who now lives in Istanbul, aims to make the case that Kirkuk is historically Turkmen through extensive use of original photographs and descriptions of the oldest parts of Kirkuk's urban fabric.<sup>10</sup> Other books contain the names of prominent Kirkuki Turkmens, such as newspaper publishers and singers, with short descriptions of their activities; these are of interest to those concerned with the social history of Kirkuk.<sup>11</sup> A book boldly (and tellingly) titled *Kerkük Soykırımları*, "Kirkuk's Genocides," which lists the names of Turkmen victims of twentieth-century massacres in the city, gives a sense of how the Turkmen community responded to and interpreted urban violence.<sup>12</sup>

Much like Turkmen authors, a number of Kurdish authors from the region have written histories of Kirkuk in Arabic

and English to make a predetermined argument about the city's character from a Kurdish perspective.<sup>13</sup> These books are useful for understanding Kurdish discourse on Kirkuk, particularly with regard to the Ba'th-era "Arabization" policy that resulted in the expulsion of large numbers of Kurds and Turkmens from the city and its surrounding areas. Yet I have found that they tend to offer little original information of interest to researchers looking for primary-source materials. A Kurdish scholar has told me that memoirs written in Kurdish by politically active Kurds, most of whom spent time in Kirkuk between 1958 and 1975, could potentially be a useful source of information about the city's politics in the revolutionary era, though these memoirs have generally not been translated into any other language.

#### Official British Documents

Official British archival documents are by far the most fruitful sources freely available to historians of the politics of modern Iraq, and they are equally valuable to those who are interested in provincial history. These documents include Colonial Office, Foreign Office, War Office, Air Ministry, and Labour Ministry files at the National Archives of the United Kingdom; India Office records at the British Library; and the private papers and memoirs of mandate-

era British officials housed in various institutions such as the Middle East Centre Archive at St. Antony's College, Oxford. My project relies mostly on these documents, as do the majority of political histories of Iraq written in the past few decades.

However, before using these kinds of sources, it is crucial to gain a sense of what they distort and omit. As Orit Bashkin, among others, has noted, the information recorded by British authorities reflects their colonialist interests and fears, even in the subtleties of the language used to describe different groups in Iraqi society. Furthermore, relying on British archives to understand Iraqi perspectives "silences voices not recorded in the British archives."<sup>14</sup> Researchers who use official British documents to write Iraqi history are already aware of the need to separate empirically true observations and data from British colonial perspectives. At the same time, though, it is necessary for them to contemplate the reasoning behind the British perspectives they encounter, as well as to consider which Iraqi viewpoints are not represented at all within the document's particular framework of British interests and the significance of these omissions. This methodical and careful approach is especially essential when using official British sources to write Iraqi

provincial history. Documents on the provinces often focus myopically on either rural tribal politics in hinterlands or the activities of a limited number of urban notables in the cities, a fact that is indicative of the British approach to maintaining authority at that particular moment. In addition, extant documents from most areas outside of Baghdad are fragmented, having been distributed among many different types of files and often having been lost or destroyed;



Figure 2.1. Two boys stand in front of a wall in Kirkuk's Arrapha Estate. Source: DSIR 4/3021, National Archives of the United Kingdom.



this makes it more difficult to draw solid conclusions from them.

That said, after persistent sifting, the fragments are plentiful enough to allow one to make ample analytical observations for a major study. One strategy that I found useful was to seek files on topics that were not directly related to the urban history of Kirkuk, but that could provide relevant data upon a careful reading. For instance, a search through files from the British Labour Ministry's International Labour Division and Overseas Department (series LAB 13) reveals numerous reports on local politics and working conditions in Iraqi industries, including a few on the Iraq Petroleum Company, which was Kirkuk's single largest employer.<sup>15</sup> One of the more unusual examples I found of interesting information in an unexpected place was a series of photographs of Kirkuk in a 1950s Department of Scientific and Industrial Research file on brick efflorescence.<sup>16</sup> The caption of one photograph of two boys standing in front of a salt-covered wall in Kirkuk's then-recently built Arrapha Estate (fig. 2.1) only describes the bricks, but the photo is one of the clearest images I have found of what the new neighborhood, not to mention its inhabitants, looked like from the ground.

### Papers of Corporations and Firms

Another way to glean information about areas like Kirkuk is to seek the papers of companies that operated there in the relevant time period. Since Kirkuk was the center of Iraq's oil industry throughout much of the twentieth century, the papers of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), housed in the BP Archive at the University of Warwick in Coventry, are an obvious place to look. Another source that has proven to be valuable is the archive of the papers of the Greek architect and urban planner Constantinos A. Doxiadis and his firm, Doxiadis Associates. Doxiadis created housing and other types of plans for

several Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyya, Amara, and Karbala. The Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archives are housed at the Benaki Museum in Athens and the materials there are mostly in English.

While these kinds of sources have some of the same drawbacks as official British ones, they are also useful as a complement to British governmental documents because the companies' interests and local positions were distinct from those of British diplomats and authorities. The IPC and Doxiadis papers contain accounts of meetings and correspondence with local officials in Kirkuk that illuminate the municipal and provincial governments' concerns in ways that memoranda and reports written by British diplomats often do not. For instance, when Doxiadis visited Kirkuk in 1955, local officials gave him details about rural-to-urban migration in the province, including its underlying causes and the problems resulting from it, that he subsequently recorded in his diary.<sup>17</sup> This was a topic that was relevant to him as someone who was planning housing for the city, but would not have concerned the British government as greatly. Similarly, IPC correspondences are especially important sources to analyze in order to gain a deeper understanding of Kirkuk's labor affairs, since the company's employees and their families were estimated to total about 30,000 people, or about 30 to 40 percent of Kirkuk's population, by the late 1940s.<sup>18</sup> These papers are an abundant source of information on the needs and grievances of company employees and the responses of the company and local government to the emergence of organized labor in the city. Both the IPC and Doxiadis papers also contain many maps and photographs of Kirkuk, which are essential sources in the writing of urban history.

### Conclusions

In all, researching the provincial history of Iraq in the twentieth century is not

a straightforward process, especially for scholars based in the West who are conducting their work mostly or entirely outside of Iraq. It can be a productive endeavor, however, if researchers use a variety of types of archival and published sources, both governmental and non-governmental. Often, these sources must be sought and used in creative and unexpected ways. By their very nature, provincial histories of Iraq require the researcher — and, eventually, the reader — to read against the grain of narratives and sources that are usually centered in Baghdad.

<sup>1</sup> Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State: Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Thabit Abdullah, *Merchants, Mamluks and Murder: The Political Economy of Trade in Eighteenth Century Basra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Gökhan Çetinsaya, *The Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890–1908* (London: Routledge, 2006); Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Sarah Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Two of the best-known examples are Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006); David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Kamal Muzhir Ahmad, *Karkuk wa-Tawabi'uha: Hukm al-Tarikh wa-l-Damir* (Arbil: Matba'at Rinwin, n.d.); Yücel Güçlü, *The Turcomans and Kirkuk* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Hadid, *Mudhakkirati: Al-Sira' Min Ajl al-Dimuqratiyya fi al-'Iraq* (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Fadhil al-'Azzawi, "Qissat Jil al-Sittinat fi al-'Iraq," *Faradis* 4/5 (1992): 25–34; Sarkun Bulus, "Al-Hajis al-Aqwa: Khawatir Hawl

al-Sittinat,” *Faradis* 4/5 (1992): 37–43; Anwar al-Ghassani, “Al-Sittinat, Hunaka, Huna, Hunalika: Al-Hubb, al-Hurriyya, al-Ma’rifa,” *Faradis* 4/5 (1992): 55–62.

<sup>7</sup> Fadhil al-‘Azzawi, *Al-Ruh Al-Hayya: Jil al-Sittinat fi al-‘Iraq* (Damascus: Dar al-Mada, 1997), 279–317.

<sup>8</sup> Anwar al-Ghassani, “The Rose and Its Fragrance: The Kirkuk Group/Fifty Years of Presence in Iraqi Culture” (2003), accessed 31 August 2011, <http://al-ghassani.net/an-kirkuk-and-kirkuk-group/kirkuk-group-essay-2003.html>.

<sup>9</sup> See for example: Fadhil al-Azzawi, *The Last of the Angels*, trans. William Hutchins (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007); Sinan Antoon, “‘To the Master of the Banquet’ by Sargon Boulus,” *Jadaliyya* (30 May 2011), accessed 31 August 2011, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1715/to->

the-master-of-the-banquet-by-sargon-boulus. Antoon has published several translations of Boulus’s poetry through Jadaliyya since the magazine’s establishment in 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Suphi Saatçi, *The Urban Fabric and Traditional Houses of Kirkuk*, trans. Mehmet Bengü Uluengin (Istanbul: Kerkük Vakfı, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Ata Terzibaşı, *Kerkük Hoyratları ve Manileri* (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1975); Ata Terzibaşı, *Kerkük Matbuat Tarihi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Istanbul: Kerkük Vakfı, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Şemsettin Küzeci, *Kerkük Soykırımları* (Ankara: Teknoed Yayınları, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Ahmad, *Karkuk wa-Tawabi’uha*; Nouri Talabany, *The Arabization of the Kirkuk Region* (Arbil: Aras Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford:

Stanford University Press, 2009), 7–8.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, W. J. Hull, “Visit to I.P.C., Kirkuk Fields, 15–18 August 1950,” August 1950, LAB 13/672, National Archives of the United Kingdom, London (hereinafter UK).

<sup>16</sup> DSIR 4/3021, UK.

<sup>17</sup> Constantinos A. Doxiadis, “7.12.55, The City of Kirkuk,” Iraq Diary DOX.Q.7, 1955, Archive Files 23874, Constantinos A. Doxiadis Archives, Athens.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, File 135819, BP Archive, University of Warwick, Coventry, for its documentation of politically motivated housing schemes for oil workers. For the figure of 30,000 IPC workers and their families in Kirkuk, see M. T. Audsley, “Report on Visit to Iraq from 8<sup>th</sup> June to 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1948,” FO 371/68482, UK.

## TIGLATH-PILESER I: A KING WHO LIT UP THE “DARK AGE” OF THE LATE SECOND MILLENNIUM B.C.<sup>1</sup>

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Although Assyria was not initially a member of the so-called great states of the Amarna period — which included Egypt, Babylonia, Ḫatti, and Mitanni — it suddenly rose to prominence in the mid-14th century B.C. when it quickly acquired territory from Mittani in the west and Babylonia in the south, thus gaining international influence. This expanded polity reached its height in the 13th century B.C. under Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I, when it helped to dismantle the once powerful Mitanni kingdom, checked Ḫatti’s movements eastwards, and even struck at the heart of Kassite territory with its conquest of Babylon in 1225 B.C. After this period of stability, however, Assyria was beset with political turmoil as its centralized administrative system weakened and it lost control over much of the land it had acquired. This territorial state receded to its pre-expansion borders of the early 14th century B.C. and the Assyrian kings ruled only a small region north

of their capital at Assur, modern day Qal’at Šarqāt located approximately 160 miles north–northwest of Baghdad. The political and administrative structures of many of the other Near Eastern powers also collapsed at this time, resulting in a “dark age” for scholars, named for the dearth of written documentation that is necessary for historical reconstruction. This seemed to be the fate of the once strong Assyrian state as well.

Political fortunes shifted when Aššur-rēša-iši stabilized Assyria in the late-12th century B.C. and laid a foundation for the renewal of the kingdom. It is within this environment that Tiglath-pileser I ascended to the throne of Assyria in 1114 B.C. He seized upon his father’s progress, launching numerous military campaigns to re-establish Assyria’s power. In the course of his nearly forty-year reign, he resisted the encroachment of groups of semi-nomadic Arameans and reclaimed Assyria’s western territories, even

leading a campaign to the Mediterranean coast; he also put pressure on Babylonia when he defeated his southern neighbor in two major battles. This re-constituted territorial state endured for the majority of his rule as king. It was only toward his reign’s end that Aramean pressure could no longer be withstood. They helped erode the Assyrian kingdom, continuing to do so even after Tiglath-pileser I’s death in 1076 B.C., until Assyria was finally swept into almost complete obscurity during Aššur-bēl-kala’s rule in the mid-11th century B.C. This state of affairs lasted for almost 150 years until the Neo-Assyrian kings at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 9th centuries B.C. ushered in a new period of expansion and empire building.

This brief survey of Near Eastern history highlights the importance of Tiglath-pileser I’s reign over Assyria.<sup>2</sup> At a time when documentation was meager throughout most of the Near East, Tiglath-pileser I revived Assyria’s

administrative apparatus. The Assyrian bureaucracy produced hundreds of clay cuneiform tablets that are invaluable for reconstructing the history, economy, and culture of this time. Most of the research concerning the Middle Assyrian period has centered on the kings of the 14th–13th centuries B.C. for whom there is even more substantial documentation. Consequently, Tiglath-pileser I and the corpora of cuneiform texts dating to his reign have only been cursorily discussed in various articles, and a systematic investigation of his rule over Assyria has yet to be conducted. The recent publication of hundreds of cuneiform documents from the early twentieth century German excavations of Assur and recent archaeological excavations of settlements under Assur's administrative umbrella in the Habur River Valley have set the stage for a detailed examination of this king and his place in Assyrian history.<sup>3</sup> My dissertation project aims to situate Tiglath-pileser I's rule in its broader historical context within the Near East and also to examine diachronically his role as a transitional figure from the small Middle Assyrian kingdom to the later Neo-Assyrian empire. While my discussion of Tiglath-pileser I's reign here must admittedly be relatively general as my dissertation research is still in progress, I will call attention to several key topics pertaining to Tiglath-pileser I's tenure as king of Assyria.

One important way in which the Assyrian kings expressed their political power and dominance, as well as codified the ideology of the state, was through their royal inscriptions which recorded the kings' epithets, genealogy, military activities, and building projects. Some of Tiglath-pileser I's most significant modifications to Assyrian historiography are his changes to the literary structure of the royal inscriptions.<sup>4</sup> Tiglath-pileser I is the first king to organize the inscriptions according to the sequence of his military campaigns, placing them

in an apparent chronological order of when they were carried out. This literary technique removed the sometimes sloppy and confusing organization of previous kings' inscriptions, and thus set the standard that the later Assyrian kings followed and continued to develop. Furthermore, Tiglath-pileser I is the first king to include a lengthy account of his hunting expeditions in the royal inscriptions, which was placed directly after his military accounts. In this way, Tiglath-pileser I makes the ideological claim that hunting wild animals is the same as defeating political foes; this defines enemy space as a dangerous wilderness which must be overcome through combat. Later Assyrian kings continue to use this motif in their annals, and a few of the Neo-Assyrian kings visually produce the metaphor upon their palace reliefs, depicting hunting scenes alongside military conquests.

With respect to the administration of Tiglath-pileser I's kingdom, the aforementioned publication of numerous economic tablets from the capital city's archive has been quite valuable in determining the scope of Tiglath-pileser I's realm and the style of its governance. Unlike the royal inscriptions that present a propagandized view of the kingdom, economic texts preserve more "realistic" data concerning the extent of Assyria's territorial borders. Documents of this type are useful in delimiting the extent of his kingdom since they often contain the names of the cities that delivered tribute to Assur (in Akkadian called the *ginā'u*, "regular offerings"), thus demonstrating that Assyria likely held administrative authority over them. These records show that while Tiglath-pileser I directly ruled a smaller territorial area than his predecessors at the height of the Middle Assyrian period, his control over this area was secure throughout the full length of his reign. In addition to this information, the economic documents preserve the everyday administrative activities of the kingdom and frequently

provide the names and titles of officials working within the administrative machinery — one example is Aplīya, the great palace administrator, who was in charge of making sure the system ran smoothly. These texts give us interesting insights into how the bureaucracy of the state functioned, even at the lowest levels where temple workers would borrow grain from the central storehouse in order to complete their daily work assignments of making bread or beer.

The economic texts are also an invaluable source for data relating to the correct sequence of eponym names that make up the yearly dating system. In Assyria, kings did not utilize a numerical system for keeping track of the year date, as with modern calendars (e.g., 2011). Rather, each year was named after an important official in the Assyrian court,

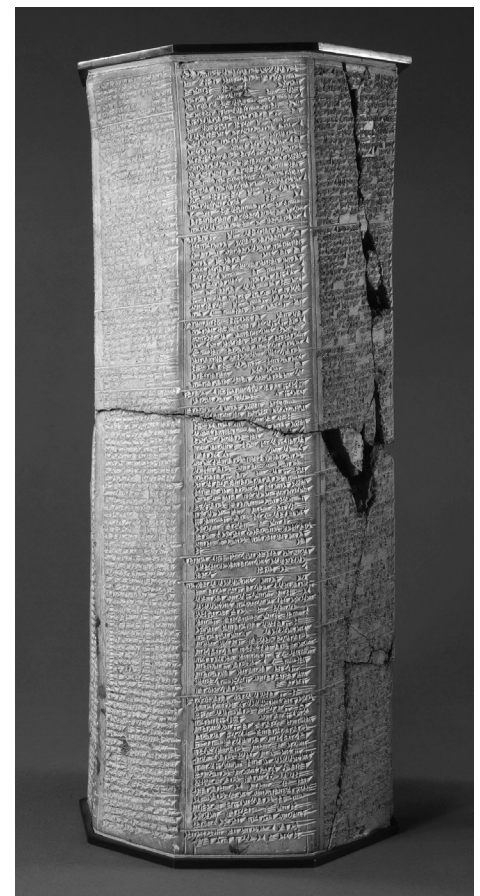


Figure 3.1. BM 91033. Octagonal clay prism inscribed with a royal inscription of Tiglath-pileser I (© Trustees of the British Museum).



and the cuneiform tablets created in that year were inscribed with the name of this individual, called an eponym (Akkadian *līmu*). Then, in order to preserve the proper chronological sequence of officials, the scribes composed lists of eponym for reference. Unfortunately, the eponym list we possess for Tiglath-pileser I is badly damaged; it only preserves the eleven eponyms at the end of his reign, but even these names are in a very fragmentary condition. Earlier scholars, such as Claudio Saporetti and Helmut Freydank, have worked on reconstructing the Middle Assyrian sequence of eponyms, but they have not been able to recreate the entire sequence.<sup>5</sup> With the recent publication of new cuneiform documents, many of which contain eponyms, I have identified new eponyms that belong to Tiglath-pileser I's time period and have further refined the sequence of eponyms for his reign. As a result, a more accurate chronological context can be provided for Tiglath-pileser I's tablets. Furthermore, by charting out the individuals who are specifically mentioned in tablets containing known eponyms, it is now possible to assign other tablets to Tiglath-pileser I's rule even if they lack an eponym date based upon the presence of these specific individuals, though the tablets can only be given a relative position in his reign.

One final approach for examining Tiglath-pileser I's kingdom that I will mention here is the excavation of sites along the upper Ḥabur River, such as Tell Bdēri, Tell Ṭābān, and Tell Barri. The information collected during these archaeological investigations has proved vital in illuminating the relationship between the Assyrian core and the settlements on the periphery that were subservient to it. While textual documentation from these locations is certainly not as abundant as that found in the capital city, these texts are crucial to a study of this period since they present how the people of the settlement viewed

themselves outside of the ideology of the centralized authority. One example of this is found in a royal inscription of Aššur-kettī-lēšir discovered at Tell Bdēri.<sup>6</sup> In this text, Aššur-kettī-lēšir is called "king of the land of Mari," but then in the colophon, the inscription is dated to "the time of Tiglath-pileser I, king of Assyria, his lord." This text implies that Aššur-kettī-lēšir, as "king" of another land, had some type of autonomous authority separate from the central Assyrian government, but yet was still under the influence of the Assyrian ruler. Neither Aššur-kettī-lēšir nor the land of Mari appear in the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I, nor do they appear in the economic texts from Assur up this point. So archaeological activity at one of the peripheral sites has supplied a text which points to a relationship between the Assyrian ruler and one of the peripheral areas that neither the Assyrian royal inscriptions nor the economic documents do, thus demonstrating that the connection between the king and his kingdom is much more complex and variegated than the official documentation of the state admits.

In conclusion, by integrating the information from newly published texts with those that have long been known, and by incorporating recent archaeological discoveries from the settlements outside the Assyrian core, a clearer and more complete picture has emerged for Tiglath-pileser I's role in this "dark age" of ancient Near Eastern history. It is my intention and hope that future studies will be able to use this comprehensive examination of Tiglath-pileser I's reign as a foundation that can be supplemented with newer textual and archaeological data whenever it becomes available.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a condensed overview of the research that I am conducting for my dissertation thesis at the University of Pennsylvania. I would like to thank TAARII

for its support of the project. The provided monies were helpful in funding a month-long stay in Berlin, where I was able to transcribe, collate, and translate numerous cuneiform tablets that are housed in the Vorderasiatisches Museum. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Joachim Marzahn at the VAM for placing the requested tablets at my disposal. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum of the Freie Universität. She kindly met with me on several occasions during my stay to discuss this dissertation project and, as an expert in the Middle Assyrian period, provided valuable constructive criticism and excellent advice.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed examination of the history of the broader ancient Near East as a whole, see Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 BC*, 2 vols. (New York: Routledge, 1995). For a closer look at specific events during the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, see Donald J. Wiseman, "V. Tiglath-pileser I" and "VI. Pressures from the West" in *Cambridge Ancient History*, Volume 2/2: *History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380–1000 B.C.*, 3rd Edition, edited by I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, N. G. L. Hammond, and E. Sollberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 457–71.

<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of newer texts have been published by Helmut Freydank in several volumes of the series *Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag) under the title *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*. New texts also appear in several other publications, which are too numerous to name individually here. For a detailed survey of the archaeological material from the Middle Assyrian period, see Aline Tenu, *L'expansion médio-assyrienne: approche archéologique* (BAR International Series 1906; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Tiglath-pileser I's royal inscriptions are available in A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859)* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). For an earlier examination of the Assyrian royal inscriptions and many of

their features, see Rykle Borger, *Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften, I. Das Zweite Jahrtausend v. Chr. mit Verbesserungen und Zusätzen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> Initial work on the eponyms of the Middle Assyrian period was carried out by

Claudio Saporetti, *Gli eponimi medio-assiri* (Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 9; Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979). A significant reworking of the eponyms that incorporated data from numerous cuneiform texts housed in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin was then done by Helmut Freydank,

*Beiträge zur mittellassyrischen Chronologie und Geschichte* (Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des alten Orients 21; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Stefan Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bderi* (Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient, Text 2; Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1992).

## IRAQ UNDER THE SANCTIONS: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL EFFECTS

The sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990 were the most severe ever laid upon a country, and the thirteen years that they lasted can be argued to have had far more devastating and long-lasting effects on the populace than the three wars that Iraqis suffered since 1980. To assess these effects, TAARII, with the co-sponsorship of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), convened a three-day conference in Amman, Jordan, from September 23–25, 2011.

In his introduction, McGuire Gibson drew upon his experience in Iraq between 1964 and 2003 to outline first the creation of an impressive modern infrastructure in the 1970s, with general prosperity, advances in public health and education. The coalition bombing in 1991 destroyed that infrastructure, but after the war, Iraqis got the phones working in a month, the electricity and refineries in two months, and repaired more than 100 bridges in a year. The embargo on almost any kind of product, under “dual-use,” blocked the import of spare parts to maintain the repaired infrastructure, vehicles, and machinery that allow a modern country to function. But the Sanctions served the more important purpose of draining the technical ability from the country through the wholesale exodus of people with advanced degrees. The embargo strengthened the regime in

relation to the populace, who suffered drastic reductions in economic resources, health, and education. More telling was the tearing of the social fabric, with a great rise in criminal behavior. Yet, at the same time, the strength and resilience of the Iraqis brought about a resurgence in national culture. Hundreds of young people began to learn traditional music (*maqam*), and Iraqi artists and writers, blocked from foreign developments, looked into themselves and Iraq’s millennia of culture to produce new and original art and literature. The Oil for Food program brought some relief, and by 2001, it was obvious that the embargo was breaking down. Before it could do so, however, there came the invasion.

Two keynote speakers laid out aspects of the role of the U.N. in the Sanctions. Hans von Sponeck, former

U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq and author of *A Different Kind of War* (2006), gave an insider’s view of how the U.N. functioned, how the definition of Sanctions was understood in different ways by various powers, and how the day-to-day administration of the humanitarian aid was made difficult or impossible by the U.S. and Britain. He stated that the sanctions not only contributed to the human catastrophe in Iraq, but they violated international law and damaged the credibility of the U.N. Thus, the Iraqi regime and the U.N. share responsibility for the destruction of the country. Von Sponeck’s predecessor, Dennis Halliday, had resigned the post, calling the Sanctions a form of genocide. Disputes with the U.S. and Britain ended in von Sponeck’s resignation, despite the backing he had from Kofi Annan.

Complementing von Sponeck’s presentation was the other keynoter, Joy Gordon, a philosopher and ethicist at Fairfield University, who presented data from a variety of sources, including U.N. documents and interviews. She had initially begun to write a general book on the ethics of sanctions, with Iraq as one chapter. Instead, she wrote an entire volume on Iraq (*Invisible War* [2010]) because the Iraqi embargo was such an exceptional form of sanctions. Key to understanding the stringency of the Sanctions was the fact that after the collapse of the



Figure 4.1. Hans von Sponeck, former U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (Photo: Joan Porter MacIver).



Figure 4.2. Tamara Daghistani and Hala Fattah listen to a conference presentation (Photo: Joan Porter MacIver).

Soviet Union, the U.S. was able to exercise unprecedented control over the U.N. She delineated the workings of the various bodies involved in the Sanctions, both in the U.N. and the U.S. government, all operating behind closed doors with surprisingly little public accountability. She showed that the blocking of items was often arbitrary, even when they were not on the proscribed list, which included the most mundane of items.

In the discussion, Mudhafar Amin, historian and former ambassador, was able to add an Iraqi perspective to the operations of the Sanctions. He was the Director of the Compensation Committee for the Iraqi government from 1994-98. He views the Compensation payments to Kuwait and other nationals affected by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as the main method of "pillaging of Iraq." Connected directly to the Security Council, the Compensation Committee could only accede to the directives from New York; no decision could be appealed. There were 2.46 million claims, including personal and corporate claims. Corporations made claims, but each partner in a corporation could also make a claim, so they were paid double. Thirty percent of the Oil for Food money went to compensation payments. And, on top of that, the 200 employees involved with the compensations were paid from Iraqi

oil. The only real function of the Iraqi committee was to give a 15-minute speech to the Security Council when required.

Wamidh Omar Nadhmi is a senior political scientist from Baghdad University who oversaw the implementation of a humanitarian aid program in Iraq during the 1990s. He discussed Sanctions in relation to divine and international law and questioned the sufficiency of the medical and food

supplies that the U.N. allowed to enter Iraq.

Hudab al-Qubaysi, an Iraqi economist now teaching in Amman, detailed the suffering of Iraqi families, having to sell off family heirlooms and libraries to stay alive. Crime rose to new heights, social and family bonds deteriorated, and child labor became common, as students dropped out to become breadwinners for their families. The universities deteriorated because fewer students were able to attend, faculty emigrated, and there were great difficulties in receiving textbooks and journals. She especially cites the lack of paper that made it difficult even to photocopy and distribute books that did arrive.

Yihya al-Qubaysi, an Iraqi linguist currently at the Institut français du Proche-Orient in Amman, addressed the disintegration of the state and the re-emergence of pre-state relations. He went back to the founding of the Iraqi state, stating that Iraq stood on three pillars: legitimacy of the king, military power, and oil. With the revolution of 1958, the first pillar fell and was replaced by a new regime. The 1991 war and the uprising afterwards degraded the legitimacy of the Baath State, and the subsequent degrading of the army in favor of party power eroded the second pillar, while the Sanctions reduced the oil flow. The regime resorted to the manipulation of and even creation of

tribal groups, and the playing off of religious group against one another in order to maintain some power, but these moves created more problems.

Loulouwa al-Rachid, an independent scholar from Paris, discussed the Iraqi exopolity, meaning the Iraqis in exile who formed a new political and cultural entity. Based on fieldwork in Iraq in 1997 and on interviews with exiles in Europe, her study showed that the process of state decay began with the Iran-Iraq War, when Iraq's existence and future were internationalized, with an unprecedented amount of foreign interference in Iraq's affairs. The Sanctions era was characterized by a dysfunctional society inside Iraq, while in the diaspora there developed a vibrant debate. At the same time, there was a mass emigration of talent, corruption, forgery of higher degrees, and predation of public resources by individuals and groups. Sectarianism became a unifying element in the exopolity during this time. The politicians in the exopolity deconstructed and reconstructed Iraqi identity. Meanwhile, the Kurds inside Iraq were creating their own narratives and an enshrinement of federalism.

Haydar Sa'id, an Iraqi philosopher now at the Center for Iraqi Research in Amman, addressed "Critical Trends in Iraqi Culture and the Birth of the Non-State Intellectual." Prior to the 1990s, intellectuals were allied with the government or with parties, not independent. With the Baath regime, intellectuals became subjected, not partners. The weakening of the state during the Sanctions led to more despotic rule and greater attempts to control religious institutions. But the regime could not control the country, and there was some separation of intellectuals from the state. There arose a systematic critique of homeland, nation, and patriotism, especially in poetry. Some daring plays also were presented. In his view, novels were on the sidelines, and were not central to this movement.



Eric Davis, a political scientist at Rutgers University, then insisted that although there was despotism in the 1990s, there was also resistance. The Sanctions curtailed legitimate economic activity and Iraqis increasingly turned to crime, especially the smuggling of oil and antiquities. But, despite years of repressive rule, values from civil society and democracy that had existed in Iraq prior to 1963 persisted, even under Saddam. Educated and professional families inculcated in their children values of pluralism, tolerance, and democracy. This “hidden generation” of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s has contributed many of the democracy activists now operating in Iraq.

The conference then turned to economics. Ahmad Ibrahimi Ali al-Alwash, former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, gave the ultimate insider’s view of the destruction of the Iraqi economy. In 1980, Iraq had reserves of 40 billion U.S. dollars. Because of the Iran-Iraq War, they were gone by 1983. The government borrowed, mainly from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, from 1984–88, creating an admitted 82 billion dollar debt, though the figure was actually 127 billion. The 1991 war destroyed vital assets, and the Sanctions gnawed at the economy and society. The Oil for Food program saved Iraq, and it should have been accepted earlier. But, at the same time, the program destroyed the private sector. The international community had decided to prevent Iraq from fixing its economic woes. This situation explains the quick collapse of the Iraqi economy after the invasion and the ease with which the U.S. was able to reorganize and structure the country as it is now. Political-ethnic conflict has created an environment in which greed, corruption, opportunism, and illicit gains from public office have thrived.



Figure 4.3. Conference participants discuss the various effects of the Sanctions (Photo: Salam Taha).

Glen Rangwala, from the Politics and International Studies Department at Cambridge, is the co-author of *Iraq in Fragments*, a study of the Occupation. In his contribution, he pointed out that the Sanctions era has been forgotten by the world. Major books on Iraq, such as those by Thomas Ricks and Larry Diamond, have only one mention of Sanctions, and Gareth Stansfield’s book sees no need to look at earlier history because 2003 was transformational. During the 1990s, the government of Iraq became a marginal actor in the economy because decisions were reserved for the U.N. Security Council. The government focused on circumventing sanctions and developing streams of revenue outside official channels, while Iraqi citizens turned to entrepreneurial agents who acted outside the U.N.’s 661 Committee. This informal economy created networks of exchange and gave local actors economic agency, and thus made them political powerbrokers. Rangwala argues that understanding Iraq’s radical economic transformation under Sanctions helps explain the forms of resistance and conflict that developed during the Occupation.

Bassim Yousif, an economist at Indiana State University, stated that it was easy to sanction Iraq because of its geography. There are few export points, and the export is mostly oil. The GDP took a 75% plunge in two to three years,

and the dinar became virtually worthless. (Normally, a 2% drop in GDP makes a country give in to pressure.) Long-term effects of the sanctions remain grossly under-examined. The brain-drain was particularly damaging, with resignations and emigration far more effective than layoffs. The loss of productive capacity explains why rebuilding since 2003 has proceeded so slowly. During the Sanctions, clan and sect took the place of government or other forms of civil society, and remain dominant players today.

Addressing the effects of the Sanctions on women, Asma Jameel Rasheed Abu Nader of Baghdad University demonstrated the reversal of gains made by women since 1958 and the growth of gender-based discrimination. She accounted for it partially in the need by the government to buy the loyalty of tribal leaders in the 1990s, which allowed the emergence of tribes as a social powerhouse with a patriarchal agenda. The demise through emigration and impoverishment of the middle class, which had been pro-woman, added to the change, which was accelerated by attempts to Islamize Iraqi society. Statistics show that women were, in the 1990s and still today, poorer than men, and that female-headed households are extremely vulnerable, with 89% in poverty.

The psychological effects of the Sanctions will be felt for years. Faris K. Omar Nadhmi, a psychologist at the University of Baghdad, has done studies on the deterioration of social trust, using statistical reports and his own survey of students at Baghdad University. As with the revival of polio, diphtheria, and other diseases that had been in check before 1991, psychological problems increased markedly, with, for instance, a 157% rise in depression. It had been a goal of the Sanctions to undermine the mind-

set, to remold the society. The Sanctions contributed to the disintegration and fragmentation of the relationship between individuals and the state in Iraq, resulting in alienation, nihilism, and resentment. His survey of students resulted in the following: the greatest distrust is for state institutions, followed by social groups, and then human nature. In his opinion, interpersonal trust is so low that it will threaten the future of Iraq. But he has some hope because Iraqis have survived under extraordinary conditions.

In considering the effect of Sanctions on the intellectual life, first Sher Zad Ahmad Ameen al-Najjar, professor of Political Science and Constitutional Law at Salaheddin University, Erbil, reviewed the development of higher education in Iraq, going back to the Ottoman period. With the setting up of the University of Baghdad in 1956 and Basra and Mosul in 1967, and with the establishment of new universities around the country in the 1970s, Iraq became renowned for higher education. But as a result of three decades of war and sanctions, the universities were politicized and lost their dynamic nature and ability to deliver quality education. The Sanctions played a key role in isolating, weakening, and impoverishing the once renowned higher education institutions in Iraq, including those in the Kurdistan Region, even though it was no longer under government control. The Kurdish Region suffered not only from the international sanctions, but also from an embargo by the Iraqi government. Saddam's regime cut off contact with the Kurdish area and ordered all faculty there to leave; of the 700 faculty, all but 140 left, which crippled the universities for a time. Then some of the 104 emigrated. The skeleton staff was further stressed by the arrival at Salaheddin University of 8,000 high school graduates, for whom there were no dorms, no stipends, and no textbooks. International funds helped

in the reconstruction of the universities in the Kurdish area, but it was the Oil for Food program (13% for the Kurdish area) that allowed a true revival. In the discussion session, a conferee asked how Kurdish universities could teach only in Kurdish with a different curriculum and texts from the rest of the country and still pretend to be in a federal system. In answer, al-Najjar said that this is a dilemma. Arabic was not dropped but was neglected. There are few grade schools teaching in Arabic. There is a cultural disconnect from the rest of Iraq, but the central government also ignores the issue and doesn't interfere with the Kurdish Regional Government.

The next speaker, Muhammad Ghazi al-Akhras, a poet and literary critic from Baghdad, delineated the response of writers and publishers during the Sanctions. There were some shops that specialized in the photocopying of books, including textbooks, literature, journals, novels, and books on the fine arts. But because of the embargo on paper, writers invented books the size of a hand, the so-called "palm books." Especially important among the palm books were poems that were critical both of the regime and the Sanctions. Because of the reduced format, genres and literary styles changed, with shorter poems, for example. Books were sold on the streets like clothing and other items, and the selling was seen as a way of breaking the sanctions. It was the Era of the Street. The production of books outside official channels was part of the nihilistic spirit that permeated during the 1990s.

Suheil Sami Nadir, an art critic and journalist now living in Amman, dealt with three issues: the artists' responses to the Sanctions, the rise of private art galleries, and the giving up by the state of purchasing works of art at the same time that there was an emerging pan-Arab and international market

for Iraqi masterpieces. Many of the better-known artists emigrated and are now dispersed around the world. Inside Iraq, the response did not include pessimistic ideas nor were alien traditions introduced to the semi-poetic Iraqi art tradition, which has relied at least from the 1960s on literature as a source of inspiration. Artists generally ignored the regime's directions since it paid much less for art. There was a small activist group that has lost its roots, being mostly outside Iraq. The "artists of the 1980s," who had served in the military and had seen the worst of times, produced folklore-based semi-abstract works of high technical skill that were not influenced by Western artists due to the isolation of the Sanctions. They held collaborative exhibitions and even opened private galleries during the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, the regime failed to hold one successful exhibition, unlike the private galleries.

Whereas some would see the 1990s as a time in which Iraqi artists rediscovered their roots, Nada Shabout, an art historian at University of North Texas, sees the generation of the 1980s as a group who do not fit into either Iraqi art tradition or in the history of world art. The Venice Biennale of 2011 welcomed Iraq back to the "cultural stage" after thirty-five years of absence. All of the artists represented, however, were Iraqis living in Europe. Once considered



Figure 4.4. Asma Jameel Rasheed Abu Nader of Baghdad University addresses the effects of the Sanctions on women (Photo: Joan Porter MacIver).

the most progressive art movement in the region, Iraqi art was transformed drastically by the Sanctions. Established artists migrated and those left in Iraq felt alienated from the world. The Baghdad Art Institute and College of Fine Arts suffered from lack of faculty and resources and State patronage dwindled. But new private galleries, selling to the U.N. personnel in Iraq as well as outlets in Amman, allowed artists to make a living. The embargo limited the materials available, and, as with literature, new materials and formats were developed. A major theme was ruination or burning, with scorched art works. In Shabout's view, although isolation led to a purity of vision that was Iraqi instead of European, the Sanctions crippled art because the production of the 1990s lost its place in tradition. This has resulted in an inferiority complex in some artists who feel they are outside the mainstream but, conversely for others, a superiority complex: "We stayed." After the 2003 war, many artists thought they would be able to return to Iraq, but under the Occupation many of those who "stayed" have left Iraq. Oddly enough, there is now great interest in Iraqi art, spurred in part by the theft of hundreds of pieces from the National Art Gallery, which Shabout and the late Muhammad Ghani have been trying to document and recover.

McGuire Gibson ended the presentations with a detailing of the drastic effects of the Sanctions on the archaeological heritage of Iraq. Drawing on a tradition from the 1920s, the Antiquities service of Iraq had become the best in the Middle East by the 1970s. With a strong Antiquities Law from 1936, Iraq had halted virtually all illegal digging and smuggling of Mesopotamian artifacts. From 1938 onwards, the department sent students to European and U.S. universities for advanced degrees and by 1975, the department had thirteen Ph.D.s on its staff, and there were equal or higher numbers in the universities around the country. The Iran-Iraq War reduced budgets, but the organization still functioned well. In the uprisings following the Gulf War, nine out of the thirteen regional museums were looted by mobs and more than 5,000 objects were stolen. This looting spree gave birth to an orgy of illegal digging on hundreds of archaeological sites in southern Iraq throughout the 1990s. The looting was not entirely random, as dealers abroad working through Iraqis sent men to loot specific sites. Major new Mesopotamian collections were formed in Europe, America, and Japan during the 1990s and new ones have come into existence, especially in the Emirates, since the 2003 war, when looting resumed on a

grand scale. The thousands of artifacts that have been lost to Iraq are its cultural heritage but also represent a great loss of monetary value. More important, the destruction of sites will mean a loss of future employment for people who might have worked with archaeologists, and it will lower the number of potential tourist destinations, on which Iraq's economy will depend when the oil is no longer flowing. During the Occupation, the Antiquities organization has become a political football in sectarian rivalries. If it survives as an entity, it will take years for the organization to regain its former level of professionalism.

In general discussions with a highly engaged audience, a number of issues were raised, along with recommendations for future action. It was pointed out that a major topic that was not covered in the sessions was the role of the neighboring countries in the Sanctions, perhaps a focus for another conference. The conferees were assured that their papers would be published, with Magnus Bernhardsson, Bassim Yousif, and Lucine Taminian as editors. The sessions were all recorded, including the simultaneous translations that everyone agreed were outstanding, and thus the discussions will be reflected in the book. Beth Kangas and Lucine Taminian were acknowledged for their excellent organizing of the conference.

## DONNY GEORGE YOUKHANA DISSERTATION PRIZE



Dr. Karen Sonik

We are pleased to announce that the family of the late Dr. Donny George, the former Director of the Iraq Museum and President of the State Board of Antiquities who passed away in March, gave TAARII permission to name its biennial dissertation prize in the ancient category in his honor. TAARII awarded the [first Donny George Youkhana Dissertation Prize](#) to [Dr. Karen Sonik](#), who received her Ph.D. in 2010 from the University of Pennsylvania in the Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World graduate program. Her dissertation is entitled, "[Demon-Haunted Universe: Conception of the Supernatural in Mesopotamia](#)." TAARII did not award a prize in the modern category this year. The next competition will be in 2013 for dissertations defended in the academic years 2011–2012 and 2012–2013.



## IRAQI STUDENT PROJECT: PROGRESS REPORT

GABE HUCK AND THERESA KUBASAK

In the Spring 2010 TAARII Newsletter, Issue 05-01, we wrote of the Iraqi Student Project (ISP), then in its third year. Ours is a non-governmental organization, operating from Damascus but dedicated to providing Iraqi students with an entree into American educational institutions. We thank TAARII for allowing us to report on our work. Here we provide an update on our efforts.

Ten new Iraqi students are settling in at nine U.S. colleges/universities: Ziad to Dartmouth; Mohammed to Tufts; Mimoon to Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Sarah to the University of Rochester; Huda and Ali to Berea College in Kentucky; Sarab to Loyola University in Chicago; Anas to Lewis University near Joliet; Saif to the University of Great Falls; and Mustafa to Gonzaga University in Spokane.

Nothing was easy for Iraqi students moving from Damascus to college this year. F-1 visas with intention to return were secured despite troubles at the U.S. embassy. Airline tickets were purchased on the ever-fewer flights from Damascus. Then came the long farewells to parents and siblings, aunts and uncles in Baghdad and Damascus, and the hearty welcomes from new friends and support groups in Boston and Chicago and beyond.



Figure 5.1. Sarah is beginning her studies at the University of Rochester, New York.

These ten Iraqi students, aged 18 to 24, completed ten months of daily studies in Damascus with Iraqi Student Project (ISP) volunteers: academic writing, critical reading, listening skills, math, giving presentations, learning to bridge the differences between educational systems, composing application essays and gathering letters of recommendation, searching for and finding transcripts from high school in Iraq or Syria, rehearsing visa interviews, even preparing Iraqi recipes for a cookbook.

ISP never asks for any payment from students or families. We are a retired couple who can live in Damascus on our U.S. Social Security payments and keep busy with the daily challenges of what we envisioned more than four years ago as a modest and workable way for Americans to make reparation to Iraqis and for each to learn about the other. ISP students reflect the diversity of Iraq. They are majoring in a variety of subjects and see their life's work in a wide spectrum of possibilities from engineering to NGO work, from interior design to physics, from health care to business. Just what one would expect.

Since 2007 Iraqi students have worked with us in Damascus from September to July each year: 53 were accepted at U.S. colleges and received F-1 visas. Six have since been separated from ISP because of change in non-immigrant status, or academic or behavioral problems; 46 continue their studies, and one has graduated (in three years, thanks to credits accepted from the University of Baghdad) and has received an assistantship to continue for his graduate degree.

The two of us returned to Syria in September to begin the cycle again with yet another dozen or so students.

ISP is a 501(c)3 in the U.S. We depend on funds raised from generous



Figure 5.2. Saif is now a student at the University of Great Falls, Montana.

individuals, congregations of religious women and men, the Mennonite Central Committee, and foundations devoted to peace and justice. It doesn't take all that much. We never seek government money from any source.

Each June since 2009 we have published a book, printed and bound in Damascus: *The River, The Roof, The Palm Tree*. In this book, the students speak for themselves. This year one section includes their writing about a photo exhibit they visited at the French Cultural Center in Damascus. The photos were the work of a Syrian news photographer. ISP student Ali described a photo taken in Baghdad shortly after the 2003 invasion:

During the chaos in Baghdad, thieves were stealing from the government buildings. In this photo, an American soldier has a prisoner who might be one of these Iraqi thieves. In my point of view we now have two thieves in one photo! The American used the handcuffs to arrest the Iraqi. But my question to the soldier is: Who is going to arrest you? Both of them are thieves. The Iraqi was stealing from his home. The American soldier was stealing the land that belongs to Iraqis.

On a dozen Saturdays in the winter/spring of 2011 we gathered on Saturday afternoons for food and film. We

watched and discussed a dozen hours of the “Eyes on the Prize” PBS series from the 1980s, the story of the civil rights movement, 1955–68. That is, Montgomery to Memphis. We were able to deal with a part of U.S. history and U.S. reality that offers the newcomer to the U.S. much insight. Mimoon wrote:

I didn't believe in the power of nonviolence until I saw “Eyes on the Prize.” It changed my perspective on life and what I want. Using the mind before the hand is very powerful. The power of youth combined with perseverance can change the world. And the living example is the Egyptian revolution.

Their book also shows how the students tried some poetry in English like these haiku poems:

Tea with cardamom  
Flies me back into Iraq;  
Smell of home and hope.

I fall to the ground.  
The grass there stands up proudly.  
Rise up — keep walking.

And here is “Seeing Baghdad after Seven Years”:

Darkness is diminishing.  
Nothing but desert  
stones and an open space.  
They are mine, they know me.  
The sun is different.  
It is mine.

But “me” is not mine any more.  
In the presence of this  
magnitude  
I lost my legitimacy back there.  
I blended in.  
In that other land my existence  
was being fulfilled.

Seven years have passed.  
And now my lungs are being  
cleansed by your purifying scent.  
A remote whisper: “It has been a long  
time.”

Members of TAARII and others who read this newsletter might want to make a connection to ISP. Our website is a good beginning and gives contact information for us in Damascus and for the ISP Board of Directors and



Figure 5.3. Students of the Iraqi Student Project.

staff in the United States. See [www.iraqistudentproject.org](http://www.iraqistudentproject.org).

Please contact us if you have any questions or might want to become involved in our work or in outreach involving our students: [gabeandtheresa@gmail.com](mailto:gabeandtheresa@gmail.com). We thank TAARII for the good work of the organization and its members.

For information on how to become  
a TAARII member, visit  
[www.taarii.org](http://www.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.

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Figure 6.1. Scholars from Iraq, Europe, and the United States discussed the effects of the 1990s Sanctions in Iraq (Photo: Salam Taha).



Figure 6.2. Junior and senior scholars participated in the September 2011 conference on the Sanctions period in Iraq (Photo: Salam Taha).



A Trip through the  
Marshes of Iraq,  
Summer 2011

(Photographer: Elizabeth C. Stone)



# TAARII

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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.