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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA

On February 26, 2011, TAARII convened a half-day meeting to discuss the state of archaeology in Iraq, including current research activities by Iraqis and foreigners and the research priorities that American scholars have as they resume fieldwork in the country. At their own expense, twenty-seven scholars met in the University of Pennsylvania Museum, some driving through a snowstorm and others experiencing long delays at airports. The group included people who worked in Iraq from the 1960s through the 1980s; others who have not been able to work

there but have an abiding commitment to Mesopotamian archaeology and art or epigraphy; a few who have already begun or will soon initiate field projects; two Iraqis who are now graduate students in U.S. universities; and a few other graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

Dr. Donny George led the opening discussion on the organization and staffing of the State Board of Antiquities (SBAH), adding the news that the security of ancient sites has now been given to the National Guard, which marks an improvement over

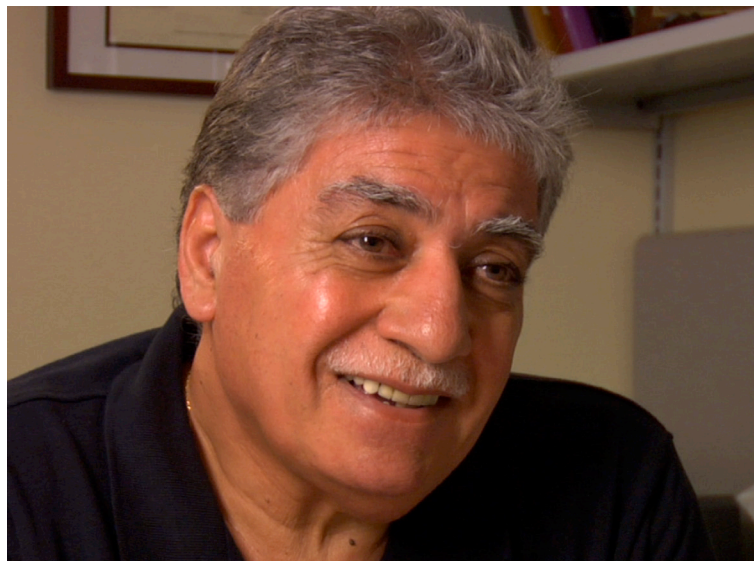
the situation in the past few years. Questions about permission and logistics for anyone wishing to initiate research led to the recommendation that they should establish joint projects with SBAH or one of the universities, with the agreement of SBAH. It was emphasized that any archaeological project in Iraq should request permission from and report to the central offices of SBAH.

Besides Iraqi expeditions, which have resumed research in all areas of the country for the past few years, there are several projects with foreign participation. Presently, Margarethe

IN MEMORY OF DR. DONNY GEORGE YOUKHANA

October 3, 1950 – March 11, 2011

Dr. Donny George, former director of the Iraq Museum and later president of the State Board of Antiquities, died in Toronto on March 11, 2011. He was on his way to give a lecture on Mesopotamian archaeology, an activity that he has engaged in tirelessly for most of his adult life. As the most televised and quoted figure in the museum and the antiquities service after the looting of the complex in April of 2003, Donny gained innumerable friends and admirers in Iraq and abroad. His love of archaeology, his dedication to the antiquities service, and his generous and open character resonated with everyone he met.



Dr. Donny George Youkhana

(Photo credit: Micah Garen & Marie-Helene Carlton/Four Corners Media)



Figure 1.1. Meeting participants include Irene Winter, Zaid Ibrahim, Donny George Youkhana, and Abdul Ameer Hamdani



Figure 1.2. Henry Wright and Elizabeth Stone viewing satellite images

van Ess of the German Institute is conducting a training excavation with Kurdish archaeologists in Erbil. Another German team under Peter Miglus has conducted surveys since 2007 and is now excavating at a Neo-Assyrian city in the Sulaimaniya area. A Dutch expedition under Wilfred van Soldt began excavating a Middle Assyrian site called Satu Qale in the vicinity of Erbil in 2010, in cooperation with the University of Erbil. The University of Rome Sapienza is fielding a joint Iraqi-Italian excavation at Tell Abu Tubaira near Ur, beginning in the summer of 2011.

Abdul Ameer Hamdani gave an overview of his post-2003 surveys in a



Figure 1.3. Excavations in the Early Dynastic Levels of the Inanna Temple at Nippur, 1962

huge area centering on the marshes of Thi Qar province, in which he located and collected from more than 1,200 sites. In September 2010, Jennifer Pournelle and Carrie Hritz carried out a short feasibility reconnaissance in part of his area. Their aim is to reconstruct the ecological system in the area through time, detailing the reach of the Gulf and investigating the nature and position of settlement related to the edges of the ancient marsh. They hope to return for more extensive research.

Elizabeth Stone reported on her ongoing project to assess damage to sites, which has led to the compilation of remarkable plans of buildings on some sites as revealed in satellite images. She and Paul Zimansky plan to open excavations this summer in a joint operation with Hamdani at the site of Tell Mathhuriya, an Ur III–Old Babylonian site near Ur.

There was an important discussion of the need for a coordinated effort to assess the damage to sites in the south, utilizing standard methods and recording to ensure comparability of results. The sharing of satellite images and location databases is essential to this effort. It is assumed that the Iraqi SBAH and cooperating foreign teams will be able to carry out such a program in the future, beginning with the data now on hand related to more than 6,000 sites located by archaeologists in the 1960s and 1970s and precisely

positioned by remote sensing. It is an irony that some good can come from the looting that has taken place, since the pottery on the surface of sites is now much more representative of the periods of occupation, and the assigning of dates to settlements will be far more accurate than before.

Several people spoke about publication projects. Richard Zettler and Jean Evans discussed progress on the Inanna Temple at Nippur. McGuire Gibson mentioned not only his work to reduce his backlog at Nippur, but also the book that Karen Wilson has submitted for publication on Bismaya/Adab and her manuscript on Kish. Holly Pittman is heading up a group to publish Donald Hansen's findings at Tell al-Hiba/Lagash. Clemens Reichel described the online Diyala object database, which is finally going to be available for scholars this year. Gibson then described the TAARII project in which he and Mark Altaweel have been translating and editing Iraqi site reports for publication in English in international journals; among these are a report by Salah Rmeidh on Tell Asmar and another by Hussayn Ali Hamzi on Tell Muqtadiya, both of which are in the Diyala region.

The meeting broke up at 5 p.m., with everyone agreeing that we should meet again in a year. We thank Richard Zettler and the University of Pennsylvania Museum for hosting the event.

THE BA‘TH PARTY AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN IRAQ

JOSEPH SASSOON, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Based on original documents of the Ba‘th Party in Iraq, this paper attempts to understand how the Ba‘th dealt with ideological education, both for its members and the general public. The Party Secretariat and its branches across the country paid tremendous attention to cultural education and political indoctrination, which became synonyms during the Ba‘th era. This indoctrination had an impact on culture in two ways: through *al-thaqafah al-hizbiyyah* (political education) and *al-thaqafa al-‘amma* (general culture). In other words, Ba‘thification of the masses was no less important than indoctrination of Party members, and as the Eighth Regional Conference of the Party in 1974 stated, special attention should be paid to “educating the masses in general and the youth in particular about the national culture ... , and immunizing them from foreign theories and ideas that do not fit our [the Ba‘th] national and humanitarian goals.”

Indoctrination was epitomized most of all in courses run by the *madrasat al-i‘dad al-hizbi* (the Party preparatory school) which was set up to develop Party cadres. Courses were organized along four major themes: ideological (such as concepts of unity and freedom); organizational (the internal structure of the Party and the etiquette

of writing political reports); history of the Party (the life of Saddam Hussein and his epic battles); and national and regional topics (Palestine, *Qadissiyat Saddam*). In the mid-1990s another theme was added: The Party and Religion. As part of these courses, Party members had also to undergo guidance in *al-thaqafa al-‘amma* (general culture). These cultural courses were not, however, very different in content from the political education.

The Party and its different organizations invested tremendous efforts in building and running cultural events. Party publications played an important role, not only in the indoctrination of Ba‘th cadres but of the Iraqi people in general. The Party also devoted significant resources to opening libraries in branches across the country, and donated a wide range of books.

In addition to visual media such as monuments and statues, the regime used *jidariyyat* (murals) to indoctrinate people. These *jidariyyat* had the dual purpose of spreading the Ba‘th’s message and enforcing the personality cult of the President, which became an integral part of the Party’s cultural undertakings. In fact one could argue that by the 1990s, the Ba‘th Party ideology and its emphasis on political and cultural education

became overwhelmingly dominated by Saddam Hussein’s personality cult. His slogans were repeated in meetings, and quotes from his writings and speeches were used as subjects for seminar research papers. Whenever any of the President’s books was published, branches had to order hundreds of copies and distribute them to members.

Saddam Hussein’s personal interest in culture and poetry cannot be underestimated as he saw himself as a writer and a poet, and thus felt a kinship with artists of all kinds. By the year 2000, artists in Iraq were divided into three groups depending on their output and seniority and were given monthly stipends according to the category they belonged to.

In conclusion, the object of political education, similar to communist regimes, was to produce better Ba‘thists who were able to grasp the Party line and, in turn, make it comprehensible to the wider public. There is no doubt that during the 35-year-rule of the Ba‘th, the lines between cultural education and political education became totally blurred, and this obviously deeply affected education and literature in Iraq at all levels. *Jil Saddam* or “Saddam’s generation” had been imbued with the indoctrination of the Ba‘th Party in every direct and indirect way.

DISSERTATION PRIZE ANNOUNCEMENT

The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) announces bi-annual prizes for the best U.S. doctoral dissertations on Iraq. One award of \$1,500 will be made for the best dissertation on ancient Iraq and one award of \$1,500 will be made for the best dissertation on medieval or modern Iraq. Dissertations defended during the 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 academic years are eligible. The competition is open to U.S. citizens at any university worldwide and any student at a U.S. university. Nominations and submissions should come directly from dissertation advisors. Advisors should submit a PDF copy of the dissertation manuscript and a letter explaining the importance of the dissertation. Please send all nominations/submissions, along with contact information for dissertation authors, by July 1, 2011, to The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq, contact@taarii.org. Electronic submissions are required. Queries may be addressed to Dr. Beth Kangas, Executive Director, at beth@taarii.org.

THE BAGHDAD CIVIC CENTER PROJECT (1960–1964)

PEDRO AZARA, UNIVERSIDAD POLITÉCNICA DE CATALUÑA, BARCELONA

After nearly thirty years as a British protectorate, Iraq gained (nearly) complete independence in 1948 (although, formally, it had achieved it in 1932). Monarchy was adopted as its political system, with a king who had been named by the British in 1921 to grant some autonomy to Iraq, at least in appearance.

Iraq had become part of the Arab empire in the seventh century, and the Ottoman Empire as of the sixteenth century. Given the rivalry between Turks and Arabs, the Arab side of the empire vegetated until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the German Empire, with whom the Ottoman government maintained good relations, achieved concessions to build a rail line that would link Berlin with Istanbul and Baghdad, along with a number of stations and accommodations for travelers. The line would cross the entire country and connect the West with the Persian Gulf, and from there to India, thereby avoiding dangerous navigation.

The city of Baghdad was rebuilt by Caliph al-Mansoor in the eighth century according to a circular town plan that reproduced the celestial planimetry of the day of the foundation. This plan was soon abandoned because it did not allow organic growth. Indeed, until it was razed by the Mongols, Baghdad became a world center of culture and home to the world's first university in the thirteenth century. There are few architectonic traces of that medieval splendor. All that remains today, still well preserved, is the first university building (the Madrasa Nizamiyah). Baghdad would not get back on its

feet until the early twentieth century because the Ottomans kept it as a small, provincial town.

In 1917, under the British occupation, the appearance of the city center was modified with some urban planning, such as the opening of the arcaded Al-Rashid Street. But it was not until the establishment of the Development Board¹ in 1950, which operated until the sixties, that Baghdad underwent significant transformation at the hands of architects.

While versions differ somewhat on the origin of the planning of Baghdad, it seems that it was the result of several factors: impoverishment of the peasantry of the south, ruined by drought or by the devastating floods of 1954, and then by a mass migration to slums of mudbrick or reed houses on the outskirts of the capital. There was also general discontent over an excessively Western policy, contrary to that practiced by Egypt (which had become a reference at that time in the Middle East). The young King Faisal II (cousin of Jordan's King Hussein, who succeeded to power precisely in 1953, on coming of age, perhaps to escape, in part, from the tutelage of his uncle 'Abd al-Ilah, regent from 1939), ordered activation of a body for the rapid promotion of infrastructural improvements in agriculture (irrigation and extensive crops), health (hospitals), and education, together with the improvement of electricity production through the installation of reservoirs and power plants.

Apparently, financing was not a problem. From the early twentieth century onwards, Iraq emerged as an oil power (even today, it is the

third largest producer of crude oil, and has, arguably, the greatest global oil reserve). However, the extraction and marketing was handled by a private company, initially, the Turkish Petroleum Company (renamed the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1929), created by the Turkish-Armenian industrialist and financier Calouste Gulbenkian, with strong participation from the British Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Profits were distributed disproportionately: 80% for the company and 20% for the protectorate. In 1953, this distribution was significantly modified. Suddenly, the Iraqi government began receiving 70% of the profits (which today reach 95%). This sudden injection of funds enabled the launch of the previously mentioned major infrastructure projects.

It was in 1955 when the type of projects undertaken by the Development Board changed course. The architect Rifat Chadirji (who still alternates residence between London and Beirut) was known by King Faisal II. He attempted to convince the king of the importance of commissioning "prestigious" public projects from great international architects (the first generation of Iraqi architects, trained in the United Kingdom was still too young). The son of Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Jawat, Nizar, was an architect working in Walter Gropius' studio in the United States. Nizar, Gropius, Chadirji and Jawdat, persuaded the king to change his course. A list of renowned international architects was established by Chadirji: Wright, Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Aalto were the best known. Dudok, Ponti, and Doxiadis, among others, also entered

the running. All of them except for Niemeyer, who, in his words, refused to cooperate with a dictatorial regime, accepted the assignments entrusted to them: cultural facilities projects (an opera house for Wright, Gulbenkian Museum of Fine Arts for Aalto), educational (university for Gropius), sports facilities (Olympic facilities for Le Corbusier), along with a wide range of public facilities (Head Post Office for Aalto, Police Headquarters and the Palace of Justice for Dudok, Ministry of Urban Planning for Ponti, etc.).

Not all projects were direct orders. Public tenders were also organized, to which prominent international architects were invited to participate in the tenders for the headquarters of the National Bank of Iraq. Gio Ponti was appointed to the international competition jury for the headquarters of the Baghdad Electricity Services in 1960. In the case of Le Corbusier, whose election was primarily the work of Abdul Rahman al-Jalili, a former minister and administrator of the Development Board,² they required his advice for various public works: a Civic Center, Government Center, the Universities of Mosul and Basrah (in 1965, sometime after the fall of the monarchy). He was also invited in 1960 to participate in the tenders for the offices of the Baghdad Electricity Services,³ although, as Le Corbusier wrote to Xenakis, “Baghdad is on the other side of the world.”⁴

The relationship between foreign architects and the Iraqi government was not easy. Despite the journeys they undertook, both to submit documentation for the projects, and to oversee the start of the work and give lectures (taken great advantage of by the first generation of young Iraqi architects, trained abroad) — the first Faculty of Architecture in Iraq dates back to 1959 — the projects suffered from the political instability and the lack of knowledge of Iraqi reality

on the part of the architects, except Doxiadis who, up until 1960, was able to construct 20,000 houses (for three classes) and twenty-six villages, and restore 30,000 buildings in five years (at a cost of 1 million dollars), and get paid for every job.

Requested changes, contracts that went unsigned,⁵ increased costs due to the changes requested by the Iraqi government,⁶ increasing difficulties in payment, the coup of July 14, 1958, that overthrew and killed King Faisal II, starting a new architectural policy that favored social facilities and housing at the expense of others deemed unnecessary (the Opera House, for example, which the present government wants to relaunch today), forced the architects, from the early sixties, to abandon little by little the projects.⁷ The letters that went back and forth are a testament to the growing irritation and dismay at the continuing gradual changes requested and the lack of honoraria. Thus, in 1958, the Ministry for Development called for a reconsideration of the entire Civic Center area, assigned to Aalto and Dudok, and asked them to appear in Baghdad. Aalto stated: “I do not want to get any ‘diva honorarium,’ but a certain feeling of freedom is necessary.”⁸ Furthermore, most of the architects chosen belonged to what is often called “the first avant-garde.” In the late fifties they were in the twilight of their careers. Wright died in 1958 at the age of ninety-two, without being able to develop the Opera House project, and Le Corbusier in 1965 would die without the work on the Olympic facility even having been started.⁹

Sert’s presence in Baghdad initially was due to different causes. Sert was not selected by the Iraqi government. As has been well demonstrated by architectural historian Josep Maria Rovira, it was the U.S. government that commissioned Sert, then the dean

of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, to build the new U.S. embassy in the Iraqi capital. Well built by the company Shahin & Janabi, the embassy was, without doubt, Sert’s best project.¹⁰

Baghdad possessed a General Plan, created by the English studio of Minoprio, Spenceley & MacFarlane in 1956. This group of architects was also commissioned to plan and coordinate the city’s Civic Center: a comprehensive public extension (219,317 m²), located in the center of the capital. Within the Civic Center were to be several important buildings, including Alvar Aalto’s Museum of Fine Arts, designed to house the private collection of Calouste Gulbenkian, which the Iraqi government thought would be donated to the city, although it ended up, finally, in Lisbon; and the Post Office Building as well as W. M. Dudok’s Palace of Justice;¹¹ Office of the City Police Headquarters; and the building for Cadastre or Land Registry. The buildings would be separated by gardens and a car park, all relatively low (three or four floors, as Dudok pointed out to Aalto).¹² The area included other buildings that would be allowed to deteriorate until their destruction in the seventies, when the center finally became urbanized, as well as some monuments such as the Aidaroosi, Kholani, and Seraj el-Din mosques. The Gailani mosque was located nearby. Some of the streets bordering the central civic area evoked its importance: streets of King Ghazi, King Faisal II, and Queen Aliyah.

On October 3, 1958, Anthony Minoprio sent a letter to Aalto in which he notified him that the contract with his studio as “co-ordinating consultants” had been canceled, “on the grounds that funds are not available for the public buildings in these centres. The immediate emphasis is to be placed on such matters as housing, water supply, irrigation, sewerage,

etc.”¹³ The effects of the coup d'état by the pro-Soviet colonel Abd al-Karim Qasim, on July 14, 1958 (symbolic date alluding to the French Revolution), had become noticeable: the institutional and representational projects were stopped or underwent budget cuts, although for the time being they were not canceled.

On September 18, 1960, the company Minoprio, Spenceley & MacFarlane was thrown out and replaced by Jose-Luis Sert as coordinator of the Civic Center, which greatly pleased Dudok (it was he who had suggested the Iraqi government name Sert as head of the Civic Center).

Two sketches remain from this commission. They were found and displayed in the retrospective exhibition dedicated to the architect that was organized in 2004 at the Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona. At that time, those drawings could not be interpreted correctly. Thus, Josep Maria Rovira wrote, “There is no commission or report for this project, or at least we have not found one. Just two small sketches preserved in the SC [Sert Collection] illustrate what must have been a proposal to offer the politician of the day on the occasion of the commission for the U.S. embassy in Iraq.”¹⁴ In 2008, a traveling exhibition devoted to projects by international architects in Baghdad in the fifties,¹⁵ made it possible to identify an outline of the Civic Center, i.e., the central area of the city, and suggest that it was the first fruit of the commission that Sert received as coordinator of the Civic Center.

Indeed, in a sketch, Sert clearly locates the projects by Aalto (marked with the name of Aalto, written out in full) of Dudok (identified by the letter D), and locates the existing mosques (although he reverses their location). In a second sketch, he locates al-Rashid Street, the unnamed New Avenues (New Av), some existing mosques, a new market (not attributed to any

architect), the post office (PO), and the Museum of Fine Arts (FA) by Aalto, and the Land Registry (Tapu) and the Palace of Justice (Courts), both by Dudok.¹⁶ In the center of the scheme, there is an unidentified building.

The *Iraq Times* of January 13, 1961, wrote:

Harvard Dean Here to Design Civil Centre in Jamhuriyah Street: this centre will house a large number of departments with which the people are in constant touch such as the Amanat al-Asimah, the Law Court, the Directorate General of Police, the Directorate General of Tapu and the Directorate General of Awqaf.

All the buildings mentioned were already allocated to Dudok, except one, the Amanat al-Asimah: the Town Hall.

Who was to build this building? Let us recall that the Civic Center area included a number of mosques (and buildings that were to be demolished).

The *Iraq Times* announced that Sert was going to design the Civic Center. Indeed, in one of the sketches there are rectangles marked with the letters *Sq*, which are probably the initial letters of the English word “square.” There is what seems to be an irregular stream, but it must be the outline of the motion of walkers, indicating that the public space can be traversed linearly (*Prom* should be an abbreviation of the English word “promenade”) across the entire Civic Center.

In the second sketch, the course mentioned does not appear, but there is a spine-shaped structure: a long building? A ditch, perhaps? Wavy lines, faintly drawn, seem to suggest the flow of water. Of course, Sert does not limit himself to making Aalto and Dudok agree, but was involved in the design of public space.

The top of the more schematic sketch shows a section or an elevation of an unknown building. This is a block with a saw-toothed upper profile, well aerated, located under a large flat roof

structure and quite high, supported by columns, composed of “conical umbrellas” similar to palm trees, that inwardly form a vaulted ceiling. This covering appears to be a very extensive continuous pergola with irregular boundaries, into which various patios open (identified by the abbreviation *Sq*, possibly meaning “square”). It casts a shadow on the Civic Center plaza, crossed by irrigation channels and fountains. The building itself, perhaps situated in the center of the covered area, displays platforms and access ramps in front and a parking area for vehicles.

Nothing seems to enable the identification in the sketch of the building's façade on an open space with channels. Nevertheless, we may interpret a rectangle in the center of the pergola as a building (no abbreviation of *Sq* indicates that it is a courtyard), since it is located in the same place where Minoprio, Spenceley & MacFarlane placed the Town Hall. It is possible that what Sert was sketching, in fact, was the new headquarters of the Amanat al-Asimah, i.e., the municipality (we may also be dealing with the new market, the plan for which is located in one of Sert's sketches, but more likely it resembles a representative building — due to the façade — than a market, but certainly this view reflects more a prejudice than an objective fact).

Although Sert completed the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, nothing remains of the Civic Center project. Aalto's and Dudok's projects did not prosper, albeit, years later, a Gulbenkian gallery was built in Baghdad, which bears little resemblance to the draft by Aalto. Similarly, Sert's outlines were not applied, and nothing more was heard of the building that Sert seemed to be sketching for the Civic Center, whether it was City Hall or not. Moreover, Sert was only in charge of the center for a few years, and the absence of a

contract and honoraria complicated the work.

The Iraqi political situation since 2003 has destroyed many of the municipal archives, and all documentation on international projects in the fifties and sixties in Baghdad has been lost. Not long ago, the great perspectives, painted in watercolours by Wright, with their particular vision of the opera on the island of Edana, were used as wrapping paper in a Baghdad market. They were rescued, but nobody knows where they were deposited. Only a stroke of luck would permit us to know what Sert planned for the Civic Center. It costs nothing, however, to dream that the Town Hall of Baghdad may have been the work of Sert.

This article has been possible thanks to the most valuable information sent by Dr. Ghada Siliq (Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Baghdad University).

Note: Aalto's and Dudok's archives concerning projects in Baghdad are unpublished, as are those relating to the work of Le Corbusier in Iraq, hence, the occasionally imprecise localization of the documents.

¹ The Development Board included the Prime Minister, Ministers of Finance, and Development, five Iraqi notables (H. E. Sayid Jalal Baban, H. E. Sayid Abdul Majid Allawi, H. E. Sayid Abdul Jabbar el-Chalabi, H. E. Dr. Abdul Rahman el-Jalili) an Englishman (Mr. M. G. Ionnides in Industry), and an American (Mr. C. H. Nelson, in irrigation).

² Le Corbusier, letter of May 29, 1957, written in Paris (Paper P4-2-36, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris).

³ Paper P4-5-98, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris.

⁴ Le Corbusier, letter to Xenakis, March 2, 1959 (Document P 4-1-275, Le Corbusier Foundation, Paris).

⁵ An interesting exchange of letters between Aalto and Sert reveals the difficulties and growing suspicions aroused by the new

Iraqi government after the 1958 coup. Helga Mattson, Aalto's secretary, sent a letter to Sert, on February 7, 1962, which asked his opinion about the desirability of continuing to work smoothly with the Directorate General of Housing in Baghdad, the Ministry of Works and Housing: "It seems to us that there may have been some difficulties already. Hitherto the ministry has failed in effecting a considerable part of their payments 'to us in due course.' For three years we have been expecting the settlement of our bill," (Alvar Aalto Archives, Jyväskylä-Finland Box AA51). Sert, February 19, 1962, answered Aalto he had not signed any contract with the Department of Housing, Ministry of Works and Housing. On November 16 the same year, Ellen M. Osborne, secretary to the dean of Harvard University, José-Luis Sert, returns to the topic: "Did not sign this office any contract with the Ministry of Works and Housing in Baghdad" (Ibid., Box AA32).

⁶ On January 21, 1957, the Development Board commissioned Dudok to carry out the Palace of Justice and the Directorate General of Police, located in the so-called Civic Center. Dudok accepted the double commission on February 14 and stated he could go to Baghdad in April. On April 15, the Iraqi governmental body expressed its surprise that Dudok had not referred to any honoraria. Was he thinking of working for free? Ten days later, Dudok replied: it is impossible to foresee a percentage without knowing what the projects consist of. This suggests deficient information by the Iraqi institution, or Dudok poorly understood the commission. The projects, added to which was The Cadastre (Tapu) Department, conclude on April 17, 1958, a year after the commission. The following year, on January 28, 1959, the Development Board manifested its displeasure because the cost of the projects had tripled, to which Dudok replied that the increase was due to the increase of the program requested. The Iraqi governmental body requested that the project be entirely revised four months later (May 3, 1959). (All of the information about Dudok in Bagdad — unpublished until now — is found in the Dudok Archives, in the Netherlands Architecture Institute of Rotterdam, The Netherlands).

⁷ In a letter to Director General of Public Buildings, of March 21, 1958, Alvar Aalto, as to a certain lack of coordination in projects commissioned, wrote that, "A conference in

Baghdad would be necessary because the city planning, as Mr. Minoprio told me, is partly characteristic depending on some qualities of the preliminary projects" (Alvar Aalto Archives, Jyväskylä-Finland-Box AA43).

⁸ Alvar Aalto letter to J. A. Douglas, chief architect in Baghdad, August 6, 1957, Alvar Aalto Archives, Jyväskylä (Finland), safety AA43. In a letter to Nouraddin Muhiaddin, Building Director General, Aalto said that he had been waiting to be paid for four years. He would receive an initial payment of 14,000 Iraqi dinars October 17, 1962 (Alvar Aalto Archives, Jyväskylä-Finland-Safety AA43)

⁹ The location of Le Corbusier's Olympic site changed at least twice, going from side to side of the river Tigris. The stadium itself was finally designed and built between 1961 and 1966 by renowned Portuguese architect Francisco Keil do Amaral, a consultant to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, for which collection Aalto designed the Museum of Fine Arts in Baghdad (AZARA, Pedro, "Le Corbusier and George Marc Présenté. Saddam Husein Sports Facilities (1955–65, 1979–83)," *Ciudad del espejismo. Bagdad, de Wright a Venturi*, DC biannual journal of Architectonic Review, Department of Architectonic Composition, ETSAB-UPC, Barcelona, 2008, p. 190, n. 8). Mina Marefat states that Rifat Chadirji notified her that the stadium was built by "Portuguese architects" (Mina Marefat, "Mise au point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," *Docomomo* 41/16 [2009]: 39–40).

¹⁰ The U.S. embassy, designed by Sert, is located on a long, perpendicular site abutting the Tigris River, in what, from the days of President Saddam Hussein, was developed as a high-security governmental area, which has been greatly expanded since 2003, as the "Green Zone." Sert's American Embassy consisted of a set of four buildings (the Embassy, the Ambassador's House, Offices, and the block housing for the embassy staff), amid gardens cooled by water channels and ponds. The embassy was only used for a few years because of the break in diplomatic relations following the 1967 Middle East war. The U.S. Interests Section, run by the Belgians, occupied the virtually empty complex until 1972, when the section was moved to the Masbah area under a Polish flag. The embassy building then became Iraqi property, after lengthy negotiations about compensation. After the fall of President Hussein, at the end of the Second Gulf War,

the U.S. embassy occupied a nearby palace. Today, the U.S. government has built a vast fortified, low-rise “city,” a city within the city near the old embassy. Sert’s complex suffered extensive damage during the Second Gulf War. In late 2008, the Barcelona City Council proposed the restoration of the complex as a Cervantes Institute or a new Spanish Embassy and ambassador’s residence. The existing embassy, on the east side of the Tigris, suffered serious damage in April 2010 due to a suicide bomber. The current Iraqi government gave the former U.S. Embassy land to the Baghdad City Council and the buildings to the Ministry of Justice. The City of Baghdad and the Iraqi government accepted the proposal of the City of Barcelona, which did not require anything in return. The economic crisis, the lack of

help from the Spanish government, the Iraqi government’s demand to have a exclusive say on use of buildings (following what the City Council raised, for that matter) has meant that currently, the proposed restoration of the complex has been shelved or forgotten.

¹¹ Anthony Minoprio wrote Dudok that the Civic Center (probably in this case is not the area but a specific building, possibly the Town Hall) and the Palace of Justice were the most important buildings of the complex, and that the “Development the Board would like to build in stone” (Letter of September 3, 1957, File Dudok, DUDO 0130, 212M.124, Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam).

¹² Letter of November 14, 1957 (Alvar Aalto Archives, Jyväskylä, Safety AA9).

¹³ Alvar Aalto Archives, Jyväskylä, Box AA24.

¹⁴ Josep Maria Rovira, “Civic Centre,” in *Sert 1928–1979, Mig Segle d’Architecture: Complete Works* (Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, 2004), p. 218.

¹⁵ *City of Mirages: Baghdad, from Wright to Venturi*, College of Architects of Catalonia, Barcelona & Casa Árabe, Madrid, 2008–2009 (publication of the same title, edited by Pedro Azara, and for a special issue of *DC magazine. Biannual magazine Architectural Criticism*, Department of Architectural Composition of UPC-ETSAB, 2008).

¹⁶ This identification is already in Pedro Azara, editor, op. cit., n.1, p. 210.

TAARII PRESIDENT MCGUIRE GIBSON WINS AWARD

Please join TAARII in congratulating our President, McGuire Gibson, on his receipt of the **Jere Bacharach Award for Distinguished Service** by the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). On November 19, 2010, at the annual MESA meeting in San Diego, Professor Gibson accepted the award with a standing ovation. The text of the award reads:

THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES ASSOCIATION

is pleased to present the

2010 Jere L. Bacharach Service Award

to

McGuire Gibson

In recognition of his exceptional service to the field of Middle East studies,

With great admiration for twenty-six years of service to the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, particularly his role in founding the American Institute for Yemeni Studies and The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq,

For his work training Iraqi archaeologists, preserving and protecting Iraq’s cultural heritage, and promoting scholarship on modern Iraq,

For his commitment to keeping the public informed about the losses to our shared world heritage caused by war and the importance of scholarly knowledge and record keeping,

And with deep appreciation for the generosity and savoir faire that delights all he encounters,

It is an honor to recognize archaeologist, linguist, fieldworker, archivist, humanist, spokesman, teacher and colleague extraordinaire, McGuire Gibson, whose wide-ranging expertise and intrepid efforts have benefited us all.

IRAQ IN CONTEXT: ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMANITARIANISM IN THE POST-2003 FIELD

BRIDGET L. GUARASCI, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

At this year's Annual American Anthropological Meetings in New Orleans in November 2010 a group of young scholars sought to reinvigorate an anthropology of Iraq. The panel, "Iraq in Context: Environment, Technology, and Humanitarianism in the Post-2003 Field," attempted to recalibrate contemporary anthropological engagement with Iraq and with the war by grounding analysis in the ethnographic and archival. Each of the six panelists conducted research in Iraq or in Iraqi communities since the beginning of the recent war. Seeking to contextualize Iraqi experience of the war and its political implications, the panel situated the conflict both historically and regionally. Specifically, panelists asked how the experience of life and war inside Iraq were caught up in parallel political processes that took shape in other historical moments or outside of current national bounds.

The papers engaged Iraq by examining questions of environment, imagination, humanitarianism, and technology. Ilana Feldman, Stefania Pandolfo, and Nadia Abu El-Haj acted as discussants and reviewed pairs of papers through their own area of expertise. Ayça Çubukçu opened the dialogue with her paper, "Iraq, the Missing Subject." Çubukçu argued that practices of international law and human rights negated Iraqi sovereignty in the way that they prosecuted Saddam Hussein for war crimes. She specifically examined the particular role of Human Rights Watch in establishing the *Iraqi High Tribunal*, which tried and executed Saddam Hussein for crimes against humanity. Human Rights Watch, which played a major role in the creation of the Tribunal, argued that international expertise from the

international community was essential in establishing the court both because the nature of the crimes rose to the level of genocide and also because Iraqi actors were deemed ill-prepared for the task. Despite the heavy international influence, Çubukçu pointed out that the court was constituted as a national body based upon the preexisting foundation of domestic law. The result was a Tribunal "produced, staged, scripted, and directed by occupying forces" but performed by Iraqi actors in the court itself. The final image of the court and Human Rights Watch reports about the Tribunal absented the role of the U.S. government and international agencies in its creation. Çubukçu asked, "What kind of human rights politics does this absence register?" In response, she argued that the politics of human rights asserted the universal, fundamental rights and responsibilities of humanity over and above the autonomy of Iraqi citizenry. In the end, she found, the Tribunal underscored foreign political power and the denial of Iraqi sovereignty.

Saleem Al-Bahloly also offered a meditation on the human with his paper "Modern Art in Iraq, the Philosophy of History and the Human." Traveling from the present-day back to the mid-twentieth century, Al-Bahloly investigated Iraqi concepts of the human constructed with the emergence of modern art in Iraq. He argued that modern artists searched for symbols underwriting the existence of distinctive Iraqi cultural forms in the figure of *al-insan*, the human. Their quest brought them back to the Mongol invasions six hundred years before when artists tried to capture "civilization" in formation. Al-Bahloly's analysis focused on

the influence of thirteenth century calligrapher and illustrator Yahya al-Wasiti on Jawad Salim, who is considered the founder of modern art in Iraq. Al-Bahloly's work demonstrated how the Baghdad Group for Modern Art, under the leadership of Jawad Salim, drew upon thirteenth century symbols to abstract modern Iraqi life towards a general idea of the human. Iraqi meditations on the human, Al-Bahloly asserted, provide a counterpoint to human rights renderings of the human and therefore a model for re-thinking what constitutes humanity. In her comments on both papers, Ilana Feldman noted that while the settings of the papers are different on the surface, both struggle with the idea of the human in relationship to human rights. In both the contemporary period and in the mid-twentieth century, Feldman asked, what are the consequences for thinking about the universal from the vantage point of Iraq?

Turning from the human, the next set of papers engaged the ways in which Iraq had been imagined historically and today. Zainab Saleh's paper, "Thoughts on the Fall and Execution of Saddam Hussein," offered a personal meditation on contemporary Iraq. Saleh described her own experience of the fall and execution, juxtaposing her reaction with that of her British relatives and friends a generation older. Watching the statue pulled from its Firdos Square mount she posited, "Was Saddam's removal that straightforward and obvious?" She set her own ambivalence against the excitement of her aunt and uncle's generation who anticipated returning to Iraq again after the deposition of Saddam Hussein; a dream that was shattered in the aftermath of 2003. Saleh's life in Iraq

under censorship, war, and violence appeared utterly distinct from the life her relatives recalled, one of political activity, optimism, and ambition. “These stories,” she asserted, “used to make me wonder if my parents’ generation and my generation shared the same place.”

Where Saleh engaged generational differences in the post-war imaginary of twenty-first century Iraq, Mona Damluji’s paper, “Petroleum’s Promise: Public Relations and Visual Culture in Iraq (1951–58),” returned to the mid-twentieth century to consider how Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) films projected a definitively modern imaginary to an Iraqi public worldwide. Damluji argued that the production and distribution of IPC films in the 1950s produced a technology of corporate and state power that equated the colonial project of oil extraction with the postcolonial narrative of nation-building. The company’s explicit priority was the production of Arabic-language documentaries for Iraqi audiences; films were produced *for Iraqis by Iraqis*, but were heavily shaped by British producers and scrutinized by IPC censors. IPC films and photographs, Damluji asserted, were meant to cultivate in Iraqis a sense of belonging to a modern nation at a critical national juncture, equating developments in infrastructure and transportation with the growth of the petroleum industry in Iraq. As in the creation of the *Iraqi High Tribunal*, at this earlier moment international expertise was also instrumental in creating an entity that was meant to be definitively Iraqi. In response to Damluji and Saleh, Stefania Pandolfo highlighted each paper’s contribution to the analysis of political trauma and the destruction of cultural forms in Iraq. She asked: “What does it mean to bear witness in an experience of political trauma? How does one

come to terms with the destruction of forms?”

Katayoun Shafiee’s paper, “Reassembling Iraq-in-Context: Mobilizing Petro-politics in Iraq and Iran,” also considered the petroleum industry in Iraq. Shafiee called for an analysis that followed the oil flowing between Iraq and Iran. From 1901 to 1954, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company produced oil in southwest Iran. Starting in the 1920s the company was the largest shareholder in the Iraqi Petroleum Company. Engineers of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company therefore acquired and honed expertise by working above the subterranean petroleum expanse, in a region that spanned both countries. The power of the twentieth century transnational oil company, Shafiee argued, was worked out in the political policies and strategies for managing labor in and between these two countries. The circuitry of oil, she asserted, traced not only an energy system but an emerging politics of the Middle East region wherein corporation and governance were mutually constitutive.

My paper, “The National Park,” similarly focused on technologies of control but turned to environment as an area of key concern. I argued that in the 2003 effort to restore the Iraqi marshes as a post-war symbol for a new political era of governance, the marsh environment became terrain on which global organizations, foreign governments, and private businesses actualized the reconstruction mandate of liberalizing the Iraqi economy. Like Çubukçu, I followed a group of actors, Iraqi exiles, who consulted the Bush Administration well before the war in order to plan the reconstruction aftermath. The national park in the marsh was one project of the movement. Through environment, Iraq was reintegrated into global systems of finance and expertise as mandated under United Nations Conventions. In

preparation for the park, international teams of experts trained Iraqi scientists to conduct field science. As internationals administered the park from afar, outside of Iraq, these Iraqi scientists were deployed deep into the heart of the marsh, territory that was extremely dangerous to navigate in post-2003 Iraq. I argued that national park planning instituted a politics of life in Iraq that favored the ecological over and above the human.

Nadia Abu El-Haj concluded the panel by commenting on the final papers. Each paper, she said, offered a fantasy of sovereignty, a fantasy of how a new Iraq, both in the mid-twentieth century and today, would participate in the international community and share its values. At the beginning of her comments, El-Haj summarized what the panel had intended: the importance of re-positioning the field of scholarship around Iraq not only in the discipline of anthropology, but also in the context of a war that most people believe has ended. The panel “Iraq in Context” offered one such opening for scholarly engagement with Iraq that grapples with the trauma, politics, and the power of war and violence as experienced by Iraqis both in the mid-twentieth century and in the present moment.

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS, COMMENTS, & SUGGESTIONS

To submit articles, images, or announcements in either *English or Arabic*, please email Katie Johnson at katie@taarii.org for submission details. The deadline for the fall issue of the TAARII Newsletter is **August 1, 2011.**

For all other inquiries, comments, and suggestions, please visit our website, www.taarii.org.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MCGUIRE GIBSON

TAARII is passing through a time of change, especially because we have lost one Executive Director and replaced her with another. As I reported to the board meeting held at MESA, Dr. Stephanie Platz has decided to take a position with the MacArthur Foundation. Actually, it is amazing that we retained her services for as long as we did, given her superb abilities. Any successor would have to strive to live up to the expectations that Stephanie created in the post. To make the transition to a new Executive Director go smoothly, Stephanie continued to work for us even after she took up her new position, and the necessary accounting procedures, reports, and fellowship competitions have gone without a hitch.

In December, we advertised the position and received sixteen applications, which we then reduced to a short list of three, who were brought to Chicago for interviews. After careful consideration, the position was offered to Dr. Beth Kangas, who has accepted it, and has begun her duties as of February 15, 2011. She has already spent a weekend in Chicago, working over procedures with Stephanie, and she has proven to be a quick study. We are once again in very good hands.

Beth is an anthropologist with a doctorate from the University of Arizona based on fieldwork in Yemen. Her research has focused on health-related issues. I first met her in Sana'a in the late 1990s, but I cannot say that I knew her well prior to our hiring interview. She has had first-hand experience of the workings of an overseas center in Yemen, so she knows what such organizations do. She has also studied and worked in Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, as well as in

the Middle Eastern community in the Detroit area. She has had experience in oral history, which makes it easy for her to further our Oral History Project.

While at the University of Arizona, she obtained valuable administrative skills in working for the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and in the offices of MESA. In addition, she managed an adult education program for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. She has organized conferences and has written successful grant proposals. In addition she has taught in anthropology departments for much of the past decade. All of this experience was critical in our choosing of her as the new Executive Director. She will be located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the mailing address of TAARII has been changed to reflect that. The TAARII phone (773-844-9658) will remain the same since it is a cell phone.

Beth is married to an Iraqi poet, Fadel Khalaf Jabr, whom she met in Yemen; they have two children, a boy Elaf and a girl Malaika.

Our temporary quarters in Amman are gradually receiving additions to the library. Another twelve boxes will be sent out soon. Many are gifts from the library of Dr. Irene Winter, who has enriched our collection with art and archaeology books on Iran, an area that we would not otherwise have.

We continue to monitor the situation in Iraq closely, hoping to establish ourselves physically in Baghdad as soon as possible. A number of foreign researchers have carried out projects in Iraq, although we are not allowed by our funder to let our American grantees to use the money in Iraq. Several foreign teams have begun archaeological projects in the north, with one German group doing something in Erbil and another on a

Neo-Assyrian site near Sulaimaniya. I have also heard that a Dutch expedition is also working or about to work there. And, in the fall, two American scholars carried out a preliminary study in southern Iraq, aimed at initiating a long-term project. There are also Iraqi/Italian and Iraqi/American projects planned for the area near Ur.

I must end on a sad note. One of my oldest friends and colleagues, Dr. Selma al-Radi has died in New York after a long illness. We first met in the museum in Baghdad in 1964. Shortly after, she was the government representative with the Abu Salabikh expedition of Donald Hansen and then was transferred to Nippur, where we worked alongside one another for more than six months. She was one of the key people setting up the exhibitions in the new Iraq Museum in 1966–67. She went abroad for her M.A. and Ph.D., and then worked for almost three decades in Yemen, where she was a transformative figure in archaeology and monument reconstruction. But she remained always an Iraqi. She rushed back to Baghdad after the 1991 Gulf War to check on her family and to help in assembling a list of about 5,000 objects that had been stolen from regional museums by looters. Again in 2003, she went back to assess damage at the Iraq Museum and to offer her help in checking to see what was missing. She was a spokesperson for Iraqi antiquities and culture even after her illness made it difficult. Anyone who knew her will agree that with her passing, a major force has left the stage.

For information on how to become
a TAARII member, visit
www.taarii.org.

2011 U.S. FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

JOHN BOWLUS, HISTORY, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
*“Kirkuk-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline and Oil Transportation
 in the Middle East, 1957–1977”*

DR. JEAN EVANS, ARCHAEOLOGY, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
“The Lives of Sumerian Sculpture”

DR. CARRIE HRITZ, ARCHAEOLOGY, PENN STATE UNIVERSITY
*“Cities in the Marsh: Settlement and Land Use in the
 Former Marshes of Southern Iraq”*

MATT SABA, ART HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
*“The Dar al-Khilafa of Samarra: Architecture, Ornament and the
 Aesthetics of Wonder in Abbasid Iraq”*

BRANDON WOLFE-HUNNICUTT, HISTORY, STANFORD UNIVERSITY
*“The End of the Concessionary Regime: Oil and American Power
 in Iraq, 1958–1972”*

JOHN BOWLUS

In the aftermath of the Suez crisis in 1957, Western governments, oil companies, and the Iraqi government attempted to build a pipeline from Kirkuk, in the oil fields of northern Iraq, to Ceyhan, a Mediterranean port in southern Turkey. However, the pipeline remained unconstructed until 1977. Bowlus will conduct research in archives in England and France to complement archival research in Washington, D.C., and Turkey in order to trace the history of the Kirkuk–Ceyhan Oil Pipeline. The project will shed light on the significance of oil transportation and oil-transit states in the history of the Middle East.

JEAN EVANS

Evans will revise for publication her book-length study presently entitled *The Lives of Sumerian Sculpture*. This study provides an object biography of temple sculpture from Early Dynastic Sumer (present-day southern Iraq; ca.

2900–2350 B.C.). It critiques earlier interpretations of and provides new perspectives on the hundreds of statues of human figures brought to temples and dedicated as gifts for the gods by individuals who, although an elite class, were not royal. The study promises to change the current understanding of the relationship of the image to the divine and to the original donor and will allow us to think dynamically about the society of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia.

CARRIE HRITZ

In the late 1990s, Iraqi governmental projects drained the marshes of southern Iraq and relocated its inhabitants. The draining revealed entire relict landscapes on the surface in the form of archaeological tell sites, channels, and agricultural fields. Hritz will use remote sensing datasets and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology integrated with past archaeological survey and excavation data to

reconstruct ancient settlement and land use systems in the marshes, particularly the Hawr al-Hammar. The study will not only provide insight on marsh resource exploitation in early cities, but will also detect archaeological sites and features before they return to the hidden landscape once water is present again in the marshes.

MATT SABA

Saba’s project focuses on the assemblage of artifacts excavated from the Dār al-Khilāfa palace at Samarra, the capital of the Abbasid Dynasty of Iraq from A.D. 836–892. Although the Dār al-Khilāfa is the largest excavated residence of the Abbasids, no comprehensive studies of the building have been done. Additionally, the significance of its form and ornamental program to audiences in Abbasid Iraq remains unclear. Through extended research of finds from the palace that are housed in Berlin and London, Saba will reconstruct and describe the fragmented ornamental program of the Dār al-Khilāfa. The study, which draws on both artifacts and texts, illuminates the development of what Saba calls the “aesthetics of wonder” in Abbasid Samarra.

BRANDON WOLFE-HUNNICUTT

Building on the findings of his dissertation, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt will conduct archival research in England and Lebanon on a group of Iraqi technical experts that played an important role in the social process that culminated in the 1972 nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a consortium of western multinationals. His research explores the relationship between technical expertise and political power, and contributes to our understanding of the history and politics of oil development in Iraq.

These fellowships are funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs through a sub-grant from the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

ASSYRIANS IN IRAQ'S NINEVEH PLAINS: GRASS-ROOT ORGANIZATIONS AND INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT

ALDA BENJAMEN, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

This article will analyze the emergence and struggle of Iraqi civil society using Assyrian organizations as a case in point. The term Assyrian will be used to refer to the Nestorian, Chaldean, and Jacobite Christians collectively. The focus will be on a region located in the northeastern portion of the Ninawa governorate called the Nineveh Plain. This area is comprised generally of ethno-religious minorities including Assyrians, Yezidis, and Shabaks. Although the Nineveh Plain has been studied extensively for its ancient Assyrian and Christian archaeological artifacts, the area's social, cultural, and political significance have been largely ignored until recently when Assyrian political organizations rallied for its formation as an Administrative Unit as per Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution. Concurrently, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has voiced its intent to include this area as part of its regional administration. This "tug of war" between the central government, the KRG, and the local political groups of the region is currently threatening the independent civil society organizations in this region, as political, economic, and social pressures have constrained the further development of civil society. A new wave of civil society organizations is appearing in the Nineveh Plain, which are directly tied to and funded by the KRG and in competition with the independent existing ones.

The data for this paper were gathered in a field mission to Iraq in 2007, followed by subsequent online and phone communications with various organizations until the summer of 2010. They will be analyzed from within the theoretical framework of nation-building and feminism.¹

A Historic Background: Assyrian Civil Society Under the Ba'th Rule (1968–1991)

Following two coup d'états in July 1968, the Ba'th political party succeeded in consolidating its power in the Iraqi political sphere.² Although leading without significant opposition, it was still wary of its two main political opponents, the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdish Democratic Party.³ Hence, the Ba'th invited the ICP to become part of the National Patriotic Front and appeased the KDP with the manifesto of March 1970 that set the precedent for the establishment of Kurdish self-administration.⁴ By luring the ICP and the KDP, the Ba'th party hoped to discover their strength and eventually obliterate them.

Although the Assyrians were not a direct threat to the Ba'th political party given that they did not have autonomous political representation during that period, their significance was realized through their membership within the ICP and the KDP. As a result, in 1973, Law 251 was issued, giving the Syriac-speaking citizens (i.e., the Assyrians) cultural and linguistic rights.⁵ The establishment of civil society organizations was permitted on the basis of social, cultural, artistic, and linguistic objectives. A number of Assyrian academics were able to take advantage of this opportunity. They not only formed organizations but vigorously published newspapers and magazines, and also produced radio and television programs. Some of the significant organizations formed included: the Union of Syriac Literates and Writers, with its seasonal magazine entitled *al-itihād* ("The Union"); the Cultural Organization with its magazine *Qālā Surāyā* ("The Syriac Voice");

the Assembly of Syriac Language, which later joined the Scientific Iraqi Academy with their magazine, *Mujma' al-lugha al-Surīāniyya* ("The Assembly of the Syriac Language"); and the Assyrian Cultural Club, which existed before the formation of this law. Its magazine was entitled *Murdinnā Aturāyā* ("Assyrian Literate"). Shapira posits that these organizations were not permitted to use their ethnic name, Assyrian, but their linguistic title, Syriac, hence the Assyrian Cultural Club was accused of being chauvinistic by the authority and its members were persecuted.⁶

As early as the mid-1970s, the Assyrians saw the reversal of these promised strategies. The turnaround coincided with the subsidizing of the political opponents of the Ba'th regime.⁷ As the Assyrians' strategic significance in oppositional groups was no longer a reality, the Ba'th "generosity" towards the Assyrians was automatically withdrawn. All established Assyrian civil society organizations were either closed down or directly controlled by the state, and the media venues became propagandist tools of the state.⁸

Civil Society Re-established (KRG): 1991–2003

With the establishment of a "no-fly" zone following U.S.-led attacks in 1991, a region autonomous of the restraints of the Ba'th regime and protected by coalition forces developed in northern Iraq.⁹ Although the region reinforced the "distinct Kurdish ethnonational identity," there was room for the emergence of Assyrian civil society organizations alongside Kurdish ones.¹⁰ The resulting Kurdish and Assyrian voluntary associations were formed in

an unprecedented manner, including the Assyrian Student and Youth Union (renamed ChaldoAssyrian Student Youth Union in 2003),¹¹ the Assyrian Women's Union, the Assyrian Aid Society, and the Assyrian Cultural Center.

Perhaps the most successful Assyrian civil society organization during that period was the Assyrian Aid Society of Iraq (AAS-I). The organization was established by a group of refugees, rather than elitists, to address the needs of Assyrian refugees who had escaped to the borders of Iran and Turkey following the U.S.-led attacks in 1991.¹² By distributing food and financial aid, AAS-I became one of the first five humanitarian organizations in the country to work in coordination with the United Nations' agencies.¹³ As the no-fly zone was officially imposed on northern Iraq, humanitarian work expanded and advanced elevating this organization's commitment from the supply of basic food necessities to rebuilding indigenous Assyrian villages destroyed by the Ba'ath regime during its nationalization campaigns (i.e., the Anfal campaign), thus reviving the language and ensuring the survival of Assyrian culture and identity.¹⁴

The main financial support for AAS-I was provided by Assyrians in the Diaspora, and sister organizations that sprang up in the early to mid-1990s on almost every continent, adopting its name and objectives. It further worked in solidarity with other civil society organizations, notably the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union, the Assyrian Women's Union,¹⁵ and the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), to push for the formation of Syriac educational schools throughout the KRG. Their efforts were met with success, and in March of 1993, an official law permitting the teaching of Syriac was passed.¹⁶ With success at the elementary level, the educational system was carried through to secondary schools. As a

result, eight secondary schools and thirty-eight elementary schools now are teaching every subject in Syriac, and numerous other schools teach Syriac only as a language.¹⁷ Until 2004, the schools were completely funded by the Assyrian Aid Society and its sister branches. Currently, the Ministry of Education (KRG and Central Government) provides partial support to the Syriac educational system.

In sum, although Assyrians were still being persecuted and marginalized (specifically by members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party),¹⁸ this period in comparison to the Ba'ath rule and the upcoming "liberation of Iraq" can be regarded as the heightened phase of Assyrian civil society's capacity and performance.

Status of Iraq's Civil Society Post-"Liberation:" Taking a Closer Look at Assyrian Civil Society in the Nineveh Plain

A) Nineveh Plain: Background, Significance, and Recent Predicaments

With the fall of Ba'ath rule following the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, civil society began to re-emerge. Within a short period of time, over 4,000 registered and 9,000 unregistered organizations were noted all across the country. Textual publications, radios, and twenty television channels became available, broadcasting the country's diverse voices.¹⁹ The Assyrians participated actively. Organizations which had been established in Iraq's Kurdish north such as the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union and which had worked underground in Mosul University²⁰ began to officially extend their branches to Baghdad, Kirkuk, and specifically, the Nineveh Plain.

The Nineveh Plain foresaw a rapid development of civil society organizations and is of a special significance to the Assyrians. For

the Assyrians, the Nineveh Plain constitutes the heartland of their historic homeland. Its proximity to ancient Nineveh along with various historical artifacts found near their villages, and religious monasteries dating back to the first eras of Christianity, strengthen their connection to the location. For instance, Assyrian inhabitants of the Nineveh Plain proudly display family trees that go back more than seven generations.²¹ This continuity, coupled with the surrounding architectural culture, adds to their collective memory and strong association to their towns and villages, considered Iraq's oldest (e.g., Alqosh).²² The Nineveh Plain is also home to other ethno-religious minorities, including Shabaks and Yezidis and a small number of Arabs, Kurds, and Turkomans.²³

Thus, on October 22 and 23 of 2003, Assyrian academics, politicians, and religious and civil society leaders gathered in a conference in Baghdad and agreed upon the formation of the Nineveh Plains as an administrative unit, allowing the Assyrian Democratic Movement to state the following in the conference's public declaration:

The conference stressed the need to designate an administrative region for our people in the Nineveh Plains with the participation of other ethnic and religious groups, where a special law will be established for self-administration and the assurance of administrative, political, cultural rights in towns and villages throughout Iraq, where our people reside.²⁴

In the following years other Assyrian political parties, including Sarkis Aghajan, the finance Minister of the Kurdish Regional Government, also supported this claim.²⁵

After the completion of the Iraqi constitution, it became evident that the Nineveh Plain administrative claim was constitutionally possible, according to Chapter Four, Article 125, entitled

“The Local Administrations,” of the Iraqi Constitution:

This Constitution shall guarantee the administrative, political, cultural, and educational rights of the various nationalities, such as Turkomen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and all other constituents, and this shall be regulated by law.²⁶

However, the draft constitution of the KRG, as per Article 2, included the Nineveh Plain’s portion of Ninawa governorate (i.e., Al-Shaykhan, Sinjar, Tell Kayf, Qaraqush, Ba’shiqa) in its regional boundaries, thus beginning the “Nineveh Plain predicament.”

Article 2 of the KRG draft constitution along with Article 35 of the latest draft (June 2009), which mimics Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution allowing for the formation of an administrative unit (referring to it as an “autonomous region”) within the regional government, are prime examples of Norman’s nation-building theoretical framework, where the majority tries to expand its perceived national identity to the outskirts of its believed territory and “nationalize” the national minorities.²⁷ According to W. Norman, all majority nationals are interested in assimilating or integrating national minorities within their identity, and eventually extending their national community (territory) to encompass all of the state in which they constitute the majority.²⁸ This is specifically significant with majorities who hold ethnic conceptions of their identities.²⁹

The KRG’s nationalization methods resemble those used by the Ba’th regime’s pan-Arabism campaigns. Although less coercive methods are employed, they nonetheless aim to undermine the rights of national minorities and their self-determination.³⁰ Other supporting examples carried out by the KDP in the Nineveh Plains include stopping the creation of the Nineveh Plains local police force in May 2005 and,

in June 2006, the second attempt of establishing a police force had gained the central government’s approval.³¹ Instead the KRG has funded a private Christian militia comprised of 1,200 locals in the Nineveh Plain, supposedly to provide protection. However, among the duties of the Christian militia is ensuring loyalty to the KRG.³² In 2005, during the first national elections the KRG was blamed for blocking the ballots and election boxes from reaching the towns of Baghdada, Karamlesh, Bartela, Ba’shiqa, and Behzan.³³ In summary, a recent report by Human Right’s Watch, “On Vulnerable Ground,” indicates that the KRG has employed two strategies in its attempt to incorporate the Nineveh Plain in its region. First, inducements with minority communities are used to ensure their cooperation. In this case, money is utilized to build a “system of patronage” by creating another civil society that competes with the existing one. Second, those who challenge the KRG agenda are subjected to harsher measures that include intimidation, threats, and arbitrary arrests.³⁴ The marginalizing of civil society organizations will be demonstrated in the following sections.

B) Civil Society in the Nineveh Plain (2003–Present): Emergence, Resistance, Success

Before analyzing civil society organizations in the Nineveh Plain, it is best to address two significant questions. What are the general virtues of civil society? And does civil society in the Nineveh Plain uphold such characteristics? Civil society, or the sphere between the household and the state, is the arena of potential freedom and “uncoerced human association.”³⁵ It is constituted of autonomous organizations and citizens involved in voluntary association.³⁶ It entails qualities of civility and tolerance.³⁷ It also assumes the idea of political

community and an implied sense of citizenship.³⁸ More importantly, it takes for granted the existence of a state, which protects its rights and civil liberties.³⁹

The last virtue — the existence of a state — is perhaps what is most problematic for the working of a civil society in the Nineveh Plain. The political status of the Nineveh Plain is still contested. Where does it officially belong?⁴⁰ The central government and the Assyrian residents of the plain will assert that it is officially part of the Ninawa governorate and hence under the administration of the central government (e.g., civil society organizations were registered officially in Mosul city in 2007). Yet, the KRG includes it in its boundaries and asserts it under its political influence. Thus, the status of civil society organizations in the Nineveh Plain is at times ambiguous. Their associations, activism, resistance, and very existence should be scaled in relation to the political and security situations their country and region are undergoing.

Civil society organizations in the Nineveh Plain can be divided into eight categories:⁴¹ student and youth unions; women’s unions; human rights associations; cultural, educational, and social groups; media and broadcasting; charity organizations; religious groups and institutions; and labor unions.⁴² These organizations were mainly formed to provide general services for their communities, as well as to maintain and develop their cultural and national identities. On a smaller scale, they supplied a pseudo-governmental system which people were able to rely on in times of desperation (e.g., churches and political bodies).

Among the most active in this region, in terms of association, mass mobilization, resistance, and production, were the student and youth organizations and the cultural, educational, and social groups.

A large number of cultural, educational, and social groups developed all over the Nineveh Plain. They constituted the majority of Assyrian civil society organizations⁴³ in the region, with an average membership of 200 people. Some of these groups were extensions of existing main organizations initially originated in the KRG, like the Chaldean Cultural Organization-Alqosh branch. Others had re-emerged after decades of suppression, like the Union of Syriac Literates and Writers (originally established in 1972). The majority took their first breaths after the fall of Ba'th rule in 2003.

The most significant student and youth group was the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union (Khoyada),⁴⁴ established on May 12, 1991, in northern Iraq. Its main objectives included:⁴⁵ uniting Assyrian students and working toward democracy and the development of society; amending discriminatory educational curriculums; giving a voice to students and ensuring equal employment opportunities (e.g., military, and police forces); expanding Syriac schools and establishing Syriac branches at university levels; and ensuring that Assyrian students were allowed fair representation in various student bodies.⁴⁶

This trans-regional organization successfully branched out to various parts of the country after the toppling of the Ba'th rule, extending its membership to approximately 2,000 students and youth. It was one of the most easily accessible civil society organizations, and it employed various forms of media and publications in disseminating information about its goals. Some of these outlets were:

- *Mezalta* ("The Parade"): official newspaper, available in text publication and online⁴⁷
- *Nabu*: published in Karkh-Baghdad
- *Arbaello*: published in Ainkawa-Erbil

- www.khoyada.com: official website

The group had also been successful in mobilizing Assyrian students and youth to resist biased policies against its body. For instance, in the 1990s, it boycotted University Student Council elections in the KRG in order to attain special voting permits and elect independent individuals to represent it in the Student Council, as was permitted for Kurdish students in the University of Baghdad. The boycott was successful. On another occasion, during the 2005 Ramadan observation period, Assyrian female students at the University of Mosul received leaflets given out by an extremist group *Mūjahidīn Mūsul al-Hudabā'*, instructing them to wear Islamic veils. University guards urged and reminded students to wear the veils, though no action was taken by the administration. In response to the religious intolerance Assyrian female students had to face, 1,500 members of the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union along with students of Mosul University went on strike for one week and demonstrated against the lack of response from the president of the university. As a result, the Minister of Education took action, and the president of Mosul University, Sa'd Allah Tawfīq was removed.⁴⁸

On May 2, 2010, two buses transporting Assyrian students from the Nineveh Plain (Baghdeda) to Mosul University were hit by explosives leading to the death of a student, Sandy Shabīb Zahra,⁴⁹ and a bystander, and the wounding of over 150 students.⁵⁰ Following this incident, the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union was once again instrumental in negotiating with the district and city council representatives, of Baghdeda and Mosul respectively, and with the president of Mosul University, Dr. Abī Sa'īd al-Dīwachī.⁵¹ The ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union submitted numerous proposals to the various administrators, the most

significant pertaining to the transfer of final university examinations to centers in the Nineveh Plain. It was argued that over 1,000 Assyrian university students refrained from attending lectures at the University of Mosul out of fear for their safety.⁵² Although this request was denied at first,⁵³ pressure from some parliamentarians, city council representatives, religious figures, and student strikes lead Dr. al-Dīwachī to reverse his decision and allow examinations to be administered off campus in the Nineveh Plain.⁵⁴

C) Civil Society in the Nineveh Plain (2003–Present): Obstacles and Struggles

The survival of the Assyrian civil society organizations in the Nineveh Plain was threatened by two trends: (1) ethnic and religious cleansing against them, and (2) their political and economic marginalization.

First, ethnic and religious cleansing campaigns were carried out by radical and fundamentalist Islamic groups shortly after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The ethnic and religious purging of the Assyrians as Christians can be categorized under the coercive "nationalization" strategies, aiming to create a uniform Iraqi society that follows the Muslim faith.⁵⁵ This "Islamization" campaign not only limited the types and locations of activities, but it has also threatened the existence of some groups. This campaign's impact was observed on many levels, starting from the destruction of churches to the beheadings of religious leaders to abductions, rapes, killings of civilians, and the ethnic cleansing of certain areas.⁵⁶ The Center for Women's Empowerment in Telkef (which is a branch of the Assyrian Women's Union) refrained from hanging their group's name outside of their building, fearing the presence of al-Qa'ida members in their city. Furthermore,

the high number of internally displaced Assyrians escaping central and southern areas of Iraq to the Nineveh Plain contributed to the elevation of the economic crisis in the area.

The second threat to Assyrian civil society organizations was the political and economic disenfranchisement of such organizations by the KRG. The KRG in this case was adopting progressive nationalization methods by supporting marginal organizations and sectarian identities, through the supply of funding and material possessions.⁵⁷ As a result of KRG's divide and rule policy, a new wave of "civil society" organizations had emerged in the Nineveh Plain as of 2006. These newer organizations were supplied with economic, political, and material enticements (e.g., monthly wages and facilities).

The Bartilla branch of the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union in the Nineveh Plain is representative of the effects of these two threats (ethnic/religious and political marginalization) on its organization. From their inception in 2003 to the end of 2005, they were the only student body in Bartilla. Most of their efforts were focused on the advancement of technology (e.g., use of computers, Internet) since it was lacking in their town. Their main obstacle was the lack of economic funding; this, however, did not stop students from joining their group, bringing their membership up to 350 people.⁵⁸ From 2006 to the fall of 2007, ethnic/religious and political obstacles began to be noticed. Ethnic/religious discrimination caused increased emigration of the Bartilla residents from Iraq. At the same time, political and economic disenfranchisement gave rise to new student groups created with political agendas and funded by the KRG via the Minister of Finance, Sarkis Aghajan (ethnically Assyrian). The ChaldoAssyrian Student and

Youth Union of Bartilla refused to accept the political funding, preferring an independent status. As a result of these two circumstances, ethnic/religious and political marginalization caused a decrease in their membership level, bringing it down to seventy-five people.

A newer group with a slightly different name but the same mission as the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union was the Syriac Chaldean Assyrian Student and Youth Union.⁵⁹ It received financial assistance and material possessions (in 2007 its members were paid 60 U.S. dollars monthly, had a free building with offices, but was not registered), while older groups who chose to remain politically independent were sidetracked and struggled to survive.⁶⁰ Moreover, international NGO funding seemed to be controlled by larger political blocks that diverted funding to Iraqi NGOs closely related to them. For instance, the Ur Center for Awareness of Civil and Democratic Rights in Nineveh saw many of their submitted proposals approved, but given without their consent to Kurdish NGO organizations closely related to the KDP.⁶¹

D) Civil Society and Issues of Gender Relations: Women in the "New Iraq"

The most established women's organization within the Assyrian community was the Assyrian Women's Union (AWU). Founded in 1992 in northern Iraq, branches of the AWU were located in most Assyrian villages and urban cities around the country, attracting over 1,000 members in 2007.⁶² AWU's objectives and activities were in line with Al-Ali's suggestions, gearing towards modernization, development, and education and political participation.⁶³ To assist women in participating in the public sphere and the workforce they had turned parts of their centers into

educational daycares for children.

In strategically aligning themselves with the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the Assyrian Women's Union gained access to the central Iraqi Parliament and the Kurdish National Assembly (KNA). Although Assyrian national issues were more often advocated before women's rights, the past president of the AWU, Ms. Pascal Esho Warda, became Minister of Immigration and Refugees in the Iraqi interim government. Pascal Esho Warda had been a strong international voice for Iraqi women.⁶⁴ As a minister, she played a critical role in supporting Assyrian females of Mosul University during the hijab intimidation crisis.⁶⁵ Their previous president, Galawesh Shaba (known as Galeta Shaba), had since been appointed to the KNA.

Although the private sphere in Iraqi Assyrian circles was becoming more "feminized," Assyrian women still felt the wrath of patriarchy. On International Women Day, March 8, 2008, 'Abîr 'Eso a member of the AWU's branch in Baghdada stated:

I can tell you frankly that I have not acquired my rights from this life. I have been oppressed by men and the community. Maybe some females have been able to acquire their rights, but in my opinion, a woman must be able to sustain herself so that no one can control her. But how? This is a difficult question to answer because neither the state nor society offers a chance for women to work and be someone independent.⁶⁶

Civil society was not the assumed diverse and equitable "haven" welcoming all.

In addition to that, the Assyrian women's movement was facing other battles. Due to the stress for female representation in politics led by the U.S., women were being utilized by political parties to satisfy the set criteria. This adversely affected the women's movement, according to the AWU. AWU

members in Telesqof, for instance, were called to the church for a meeting and asked to fill out membership forms for a political party. Another member, who was a sewing instructor for an AWU project in Telesqof, was offered 300 U.S. dollars a month if she left the AWU and joined the non-independent women's union in that town.

This political hindrance was especially prominent in the Nineveh Plain, and nationalization campaigns noted earlier also affected the AWU. The Syriac Chaldean Assyrian Women's Union (Baghdada) was an example. This group was established in April of 2006 and not registered as of August 2007. It openly professed to receiving monthly wages (starting from 115 U.S. dollars) in addition to operating a center fully paid by the KRG.⁶⁷ Moreover, independent groups such as the AWU periodically dealt with intimidation from the Kurdish Democratic Party that mingled in their affairs and coerced their members in the Nineveh Plains to leave the group, since they claimed, "the AWU is opposed to joining the Nineveh Plains to the KRG."⁶⁸ Assyrian women were also strained psychologically. They were expected to juggle their occupations, households, the deteriorating situation of the country, physical safety, and, of course, gender segregation. This was a fate they shared with other Iraqi women, who in some cases became the matriarchs of their households as their husbands were killed or gone missing, without having the same rights.⁶⁹

Conclusion

In this preliminary work on the Assyrian community and its grass root organizations, it becomes evident, using the Assyrian case, that the main impediment to these organizations has been the centralized and (generally) oppressive state and its nation-building campaigns. After the fall of the Ba'ath party, civil society has found the

breathing room it needs to grow. And although civil society is as patriarchal and repressive towards females as the private and political spheres, females are able to mobilize. Given the emergence of the Assyrian Women's Union, it is clear that Assyrian women are slowly "feminizing" civil society. But as ethnic and religious cleansing and nationalization campaigns are threatening to eradicate the Assyrians very existence in Iraq, the fate of Assyrians and their civil society seems to hang in balance.

¹ I would like to thank Professors Amir Hassanpour and Amir Harrak from the University of Toronto, along with my advisor Professor Peter Wien from the University of Maryland for their insightful commentary and guidance in preparing this paper. I would also like to thank Professor Sargon Donabed from Roger Williams University who shared his unpublished Ph.D. thesis, and along with Ryan Misler from the University of Maryland, provided helpful commentary.

² C. Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 186–91.

³ M. Farouk-Sluglett and P. Sluglett, *Iraq since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), p. 126.

⁴ Drawn from the al-Bazzaz Plan, the agreement promised political self-rule and cultural expression within the boundaries of this region. It also added to the Kurdish region in the North a new province called Duhok; D. Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), p. 57. See also A. Shapira, *Al-Ashoriyon fi al-Fiker al-Iraqi al-Mu'asir. Derasat masala: fi al-aqliya al-iraqia tejah al-aqaliyat* (London: Dar al-saqi, 2001), p. 33; Tripp, *History*, pp. 189–93.

⁵ For a portion of the Revolution Command Council Decree No. 251 (April 26, 1973) See U.N. Comm. on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD], State Party Report: Republic of Iraq, p. 32, U.N. Doc. CERD/C/240/Add.3 (April 1, 1996), available at [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CERD.C.240.Add.3.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CERD.C.240.Add.3.En?OpenDocument).

⁶ Shapira, *Al-Ashoriyon*, pp. 42–53.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

⁹ Natali, *Kurds and the State*, p. 64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The Assyrian Student and Youth Union was renamed ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union in 2003, in accordance with the Chaldean Assyrian Syriac General Conference held in Baghdad on October 22–24, 2003. Due to the urgency of the political situation in Iraq, the conference delegates agreed upon the compound label "ChaldoAssyrian" to unite Assyrians of various denominational labels constitutionally. Retrieved on December 7, 2007, from: <http://zowaa.org/news/news/english/pr4eng.pdf>.

¹² F. Aprim, *Assyrians: From Bedr Khan to Saddam Hussein Driving into Extinction the Last Aramaic Speakers* (United States: Xlibris Corporation, 2006), pp. 239–50.

¹³ Retrieved on December 12, 2007, from <http://www.assyrianaid.org/aasi.htm>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* The Anfal campaign that is usually associated with the Kurds also targeted other non-Arab residents of the northern provinces, such as the Assyrians. Over a hundred Assyrians villages were reportedly destroyed along with numerous historic churches. Further, thousands of villagers were forced to relocate to urban centers and in certain villages, mass killings of Assyrians were noted. For Assyrians and the Anfal campaign see Sargon Donabed, "Iraq and the Assyrian Unimagining: Illuminating Scaled Suffering and a Hierarchy of Genocide from Simele to Anfal," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011); Aprim, *Assyrians*, pp. 214–238; Human Rights Watch, "Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds," (1993), pp. 315–17.

¹⁵ See for example the internal by-laws of the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Unions as per the fifth conference conducted in Nineveh, Karamlesh, in 2003. Also, the Assyrian Women Union's by-laws as per the Fourth General Conference. Conducted in Duhok, August 10–12, 2006.

¹⁶ Natali, *Kurds and the State*, p. 64.

¹⁷ Interview conducted on August 29, 2007, in Duhok.

¹⁸ Aprim, *Assyrians*, pp. 252–63.

¹⁹ T. Abdullah, *Dictatorship, Imperialism, Chaos: Iraq Since 1989* (Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2006), pp. 106–07.

²⁰ ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union – Bartella branch (interview conducted, on August 26, 2007, Bartella, Nineveh Plain, Ninawa).

²¹ *Ibid.* Also, various residents, including my

host in Alqosh, were able to go back over seven generations of ancestors who had all inhabited this town.

²² Y. Babana, *Alqūsh 'br al-tarīkh* (Baghdad: Office and Printers of the East, 1979).

²³ ISDP (2007), "Proposing the Operationalization of Art. 125 Solution: Establishing the Nineveh Plain Administrative Unit," Retrieved on December 10, 2007, from <http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/NPAU-policybrief.pdf>.

²⁴ Assyrian Democratic Movement (2003), "Chaldean Assyrian Syriac Conference," Retrieved on December Retrieved on December 7, 2007, from <http://zowaa.org/news/news/english/pr4eng.pdf>.

²⁵ Zinda Magazine, "Five Parties Memo on Draft Kurdistan Region Constitution," November 20, 2006. Retrieved on December 7, 2007, from http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2006/11.20.06/index_thu.php#goodmorningassyria. Also see M. Lattimer, "In 20 Years There Will Be No More Christians in Iraq," *The Guardian*, October 6, 2006. Retrieved on December 10, 2007, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,1888730,00.html>.

²⁶ Iraqi Constitution. Retrieved on December 10, 2007, from http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/iraqi_constitution.pdf.

²⁷ W. Norman, *Negotiating Nationalism: Nation-building, Federalism, and Secession in the Multinational State* (Oxford: University Press, 2006), pp. 24, 34.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 39.

³⁰ Declaration of the Assyrian Democratic Party regarding National Elections, January, 31, 2005. Retrieved on December 11, 2007 from http://www.zowaa.org/news/news/arabic/declaration_chaldoassyrian_discrimination_31012005.pdf. Also AINA, "Assyrians Prevented by Kurds from Voting in Northern Iraq," January 31, 2005. Retrieved on December 11, 2007, from <http://www.aina.org/releases/20050131003708.htm>. Other articles also posted in *Zinda* magazine's February 2, 2005 issue. Retrieved on December 11, 2007 from http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2005/2.1.05/index_tue.php.

³¹ ISDP policy briefing, "Creating a Nineveh Plain Local Police Force," September 2007. Retrieved on December 13, 2007, from <http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/Minority%20Policing%20-%20policy%20brief.pdf>.

³² HRW, 2009, pp. 27–28.

³³ Declaration of the Assyrian Democratic Movement regarding National Elections, January 31, 2005 (www.zowaa.org); AINA, "Assyrians Prevented by Kurds."

³⁴ HRW, 2009, p. 9.

³⁵ Walzer, 1991, p. 293.

³⁶ E. M. Wood, "The Uses and Abuses of 'Civil Society,'" in *The Socialist Register*, edited by R. Milliband, et al., pp. 60–84 (London: Merlin Press, 1990), pp. 61, 63.

³⁷ E. Shils, "The Virtues of Civil Society," *Government and Opposition* 26/1(1992): 16; A. R. Norton, "Introduction," in *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Volume 1, edited by Augustus Richard Norton (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 10–12.

³⁸ S. Roy, "Civil Society in the Gaza Strip: Obstacles to Social Reconstruction," in *Civil Society*, Volume 2, pp. 222–23.

³⁹ Shils, "Virtues," p. 9.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Muslih asks a similar question in his analysis of Palestinian civil society, "Civil society in relation to whom?"; M. Muslih, "Palestinian Civil Society," in *Civil Society*, Volume 1, pp. 243–68.

⁴¹ Over twenty organizations were interviewed.

⁴² Four labor unions exist in the Nineveh Plain: Teacher's Union, Worker's Union, Engineer's Union, and Agricultural Engineer's Union (phone communication with Nineveh Center for Research and Development, December 20, 2007). It appears that these unions are branches of the main national labour unions of Iraq. For instance, the Baghdeda branch of the Teacher's Union went on a temporary strike in solidarity with all other teachers' unions across the country on December 16, 2007. They demanded a wage increase to match that of the teachers in the KRG. Retrieved on December 17, 2007, from <http://www.andawa.com/forum/index/php/tpic,152633.msg2930891.html#msg2930891>.

⁴³ Seven civil society organizations belonging to this category were examined.

⁴⁴ *Khoyada* in Syriac means "union." It is what the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union is commonly referred to. Their website is also called www.khoyada.com.

⁴⁵ For a complete list of objectives, see the internal by-laws and program of the ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union, as per the fifth conference conducted in Nineveh, Karamlesh, in 2003.

⁴⁶ ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union, Central Committee (Interview conducted on August 27, 2007, in Ainkawa, Erbil).

⁴⁷ <http://www.khoyada.com/mezaltaa.htm>.

⁴⁸ ChaldoAssyrian Student and Youth Union, Telkef branch (Interview on August 29, 2007, Telkef, Nineveh Plain, Ninawa).

⁴⁹ <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,412483.0.html>.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.middle-east-online.com/iraq/?id=92096>, http://nytimes.com/2010/05/03/world/middleeast/03iraq.html?_r=1, and <http://www.aina.org/news/20100516185823.htm>.

⁵¹ <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,411022.0.html>.

⁵² Phone interview, August 17, 2010.

⁵³ <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,410923.0.html>

⁵⁴ Phone interview, August, 17th, 2010. See also <http://www.zowaa.org/nws/ns7/n090510-3.htm>; <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,412792.0.html>; <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,410443.0.html>; <http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/Arabic/Religion/?id=3.1.381544803>; <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,412346.msg4595330.html#msg4595330>; and <http://www.aina.org/news/20100510201538.htm>.

⁵⁵ Although this could be contested because the majority of Iraqi Muslims do not seem to be pushing this agenda.

⁵⁶ See, for example, the Forced Migration Review (June 2007). "Iraq's displacement crisis: The search for solutions," Taneja P. (2007). "Assimilation, exodus, eradication: Iraq's minority communities since 2003." In *Minority Rights Group International, U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq, Human Rights Report* (November 1–December 31, 2006) and *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* (May 2006): Washington, D.C.

⁵⁷ The role of sectarian identities will not be analyzed in this paper.

⁵⁸ According to the 1997 census Bartilla had 29,787 residents, 42% or 12,500 of them were Assyrian. Demographics retrieved on April 2008 from <http://www.iraqdemocracyproject.org/pdf/Ethnic%20Cleansing%20of%20ChaldoAssyrians-1.pdf>.

⁵⁹ The English translation of their name is "The Union of Syriac Caldanic Assyrian Students and Youth," as it appears on their English internal system (by-laws).

⁶⁰ In an interview conducted with the Syriac Chaldean Assyrian Student and Youth Union, on September 4, 2007, they admitted to receiving monthly wages of \$60 U.S. dollars on average and owning a free center courtesy of the KRG. This center seems to be shared with the Syriac Chaldean Assyrian Women's

Union, who are in turn paid \$115 U.S. dollars monthly (interview conducted on September 4, 2007). Both organizations were not registered as of September 2007.

⁶¹ Interview conducted in Baghdeda, Nineveh Plain, on August 28, 2007.

⁶² Interview conducted on August 27, 2007, in Ainkawa, Erbil.

⁶³ N. Al-Ali, "Gender and Civil Society in the Middle East," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5/2 (2003): 216, 221.

⁶⁴ For instance, during Women's International Day, she attended a women's conference in India; <http://www.hindu.com/mag/2008/04/06/stories/2008040650150500.htm>.

⁶⁵ See Figure 2.2 for Ms. Warda's response letter.

⁶⁶ Retrieved on March 13, 2008, from <http://ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,173982.msg3071175.html#msg3071175>.

⁶⁷ Interview with Syriac Chaldean Assyrian Women's Union conducted on September 4,

2007, in Baghdad, Nineveh Plains.

⁶⁸ Interview with Galeta Shaba, president of the AWU, Ainkawa, Erbil, conducted September 4, 2007. The intimidation was targeted towards the Bartela branch in the Nineveh Plains.

⁶⁹ Retrieved on April 24, 2008 from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/22/AR2008042203239_pf.html.

BOOK REVIEW

DR. MUDHAFAR A. AMIN, IRAQI ACADEMIC AND FORMER AMBASSADOR

Sponeck, H. C. Von, *A Different Kind of War: The U.N. Sanctions Regime in Iraq*, New York: Berghahn, 2006. (319 pages)

Hans C. von Sponeck, a U.N. career diplomat with over thirty years of experience, was hand picked by former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, to head the U.N. Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq (UNOHCI). The UNOHCI coordinated the work of the U.N. Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Program (WFP), the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), the U.N. Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Sponeck's predecessor, Dennis Halliday, had just resigned from his post in protest over the politics of the sanctions and their devastation of the Iraqi population. Sponeck had to pick up the pieces and continue the work of the U.N. humanitarian program in Iraq, which the whole population of Iraq depended on for their food survival.

Sponeck's book is a detailed record of his daily work inside Iraq as well as inside the U.N. in New York. The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, which covers more than half the book, deals with the Oil-for-Food Program.

The remaining five chapters discuss the work of the U.N. agencies in Iraq and the Iraqi government.

As a result of Iraq's invasion of neighboring Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and refusal to withdraw, the U.N. Security Council, under the leadership of the U.S., adopted a series of resolutions. These began with Resolution 660 of August 5, 1990, which imposed total sanctions on Iraq and the freezing of its assets all over the world. Following the U.S.-led war of January 1991, the Security Council adopted Resolution 687 of April 15, 1991, which allowed the continuation of economic sanctions and was tied to the new U.N. demands for disarmament.

Sponeck states in his book that while he believed that Iraq deserved to be punished for its unlawful invasion of Kuwait, he objected to the fact that the sanctions were directed against the innocent Iraqi people rather than at the rulers of Iraq who were responsible for this tragedy. He calls the years following the 1991 Gulf War "catastrophic" for Iraqis. Malnutrition and morbidity escalated rapidly. Communicable diseases — such as measles, polio, cholera, typhoid, and

kwashiorkor — that were unknown in the 1980s as public health hazards appeared on epidemic scales.

As a result of pressure from the world community against these conditions, the U.N. Security Council passed on April 14, 1995, U.N. Resolution 986, which laid the legal framework for the Oil-for-Food Program. Sponeck arrived in Baghdad in November 1998, two years into the program. The United Nations and the government of Iraq had begun joint preparations for the fifth phase of another six months of the Oil-for-Food Program.

During the seven years of the Oil-for-Food Program (from December 10, 1996 to November 21, 2003), the source of funding was entirely Iraqi. The Iraq Central Bank had to surrender its functions to the treasury of the United Nations. Oil income had to be deposited into the so-called Iraq Oil Account at the Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP). The budgets that the Security Council approved for each six-month phase were inadequate to meet the needs of the Iraqi population. Iraq under the sanctions was prohibited from trading with its neighbors or anyone else. Iraq was only allowed to sell limited quantities of oil on

the international market under U.N. supervision. Humanitarian supplies had to be imported under tight U.N. Security Council controls. No local products, including food, could be purchased under the Oil-for-Food Program, even though the source of funding was Iraqi oil revenue. On top of that, the two previous Gulf Wars had ravaged the oil industry.

In his book, Sponeck asks the important question: Who is responsible for the suffering inflicted on the Iraqi population? With unusual courage for a U.N. diplomat, Sponeck holds the following accountable: the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members, especially the governments of the U.S. and U.K. governments; the other ten non-permanent members; the U.N. secretariat; the Secretary General; the Iraqi government; the international community of nations; and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). He blames the U.N. Security Council and Iraqi government for being aware of the human conditions in Iraq, yet doing nothing to alleviate the human catastrophe.

As a direct result of the inhumane sanctions regime, the people of Iraq suffered a miserable and impoverished life, with more than 1 million deaths. The standard of living went down to the average of the poorest countries in the world, such as Malawi and Niger. The literacy rate dropped from 80% in 1987 to less than 50% in 1998 and for females to lower than 45%. Primary and secondary school enrollment declined, despite the annual rise in the population. Child mortality had increased to between 100 and 120 deaths per 1,000. Malnutrition was rife among children and adults in the cities as well as in the countryside. Sponeck details that:

There wasn't a well-equipped hospital operating in the whole country. Electricity became a luxury and it will operate no more than four

hours a day. Clean, drinkable water was not available and most of the sewage system eroded and broke down. The farmers were not able to produce even half of what they used to, because of lack of pesticides, fertilizers and modern machinery. The average income of government employees did not exceed \$5 a month and unemployment reached more than 50% among the labor force.

Chapter 2 deals with the U.N. Compensation Commission, which was established in May 1991 as a subsidiary body of the U.N. Security Council. This happened a few months after the eviction of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. U.N. Security Council Resolution 674 (1990) held Iraq liable for "loss, damage or injury as a result of the invasion." It also asked states to compile data "regarding their claims, and those of their nationals and corporations, for restitution or financial compensation by Iraq."

The beginning of the Oil-for-Food Program in December 1996 was also the start of payments into the compensation fund managed by the UNCC. The U.N. Security Council had never done this before. Judicial court functions and executive authority for implementing a general verdict had hitherto not been seen as part of the Security Council's mandate. The same applies to the secretive manner in which in which the UNCC carried out its affairs, blocking participation by all countries not current members of the Security Council, including Iraq, who was the financier and a main party in the compensation process. Whether the U.N. Security Council had the right under international law to define compensation amounts and determine the timing of deductions is the subject of continuing debate among jurists.

Another unauthorized action were the no-fly zones established by the U.S., U.K., and French governments in

1991/92, which covered the north and south of Iraq. This aggressive policy, which covered most of Iraq's skies, was to destabilize the conditions in Iraq.

Chapter 4 deals with the United Nations Special Commission, which was searching for biological and chemical weapons in Iraq. Upon his arrival to Iraq, Sponeck learned that UNSCOM was a privileged commission, treated much more generously than the rest of the U.N. agencies. At the head of UNSCOM was the Australian Ambassador Richard Butler, who set his own rules, disregarded his colleagues, and relied on the full support of the U.N. Security Council, especially the U.S. and the U.K. representatives. On December 16, 1998, the U.S. and U.K. air forces attacked Iraq for four nights in "Operation Desert Fox," inflicting heavy human and material damages. The UNSCOM staff left Iraq hours before the attack, locking their premises and taking the keys. Rumors circulated that they left behind dangerous materials such as chemical and biological agents. When a large team of experts and diplomats finally received approval from the U.N. headquarters to open the doors, they entered to find a viable biological sample as well as a mustard gas (VX). The origin of these elements was in doubt. The team, with Sponeck among them, also discovered a meticulously prepared evacuation plan dated December 16, 1998, the day "Operation Desert Fox" began, suggesting that Chairman Butler and his UNSCOM colleagues in New York and Bahrain knew the start-date of the operation, betraying the lack of neutrality of the institution appointed to help resolve a conflict.

Chapter 5 deals with the government of Iraq, its people, and their rights. Sponeck details his meeting with the former president Saddam Hussein. He contrasts the past image he had

of a ruthless dictator who killed and tortured his people and invaded his neighbor in cold blood with the man in front of him, an elegant man, who discussed with him the sanctions, world affairs, and the situation in the Middle East and the Iraqi struggle. Sponeck was surprised when Saddam looked at him and said:

I want to thank you twice, once for your conscience and the concern you have for the Iraqi people and secondly, for the hope you are giving to the Iraqi people that they are not alone in the struggle.

The next section of the book deals with the state of human rights in Iraq. In June 1991, the United Nations appointed Max van der Stoel, a former Dutch foreign Minister, to be the first Special Rapporteur on Iraq for the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Until he was replaced in 2000 by Andreas Mavromatis, a foreign secretary of Cyprus, van der Stoel unwaveringly tried to bring about changes in the human rights situation in Iraq through his reporting and by pressuring the Iraqi government for change. Unfortunately his approach failed, which brought him in a direct clash with the Iraqi authorities. Van der Stoel also did not take Sponeck's advice to make changes in his aggressive and one-sided approach; they met only once and there was no interaction between the two U.N. diplomats. Mavromatis viewed human rights in a context other than just government violations. He thereby avoided a confrontational relationship with Baghdad and found Saddam Hussein's government more receptive to cooperation. Mavromatis decided to go beyond the limited mandate that he had been given. He continually reminded the international community that economic sanctions also perpetuated the lack of human rights in Iraq. This reassured the Iraqis that he sought to not have a

preconceived agenda. But neither of the rapporteurs devoted much time to the Security Council's responsibility for the human rights situation in Iraq, concentrating instead on the violations of the Iraqi government.

The next chapter deals with the U.N. Sanctions structure. Sponeck describes the sanction structure as if the U.N. Security Council had built a large "U.N. Sanction House" using its own designs exclusively. It declared itself the owner and passed on most of the bills to Iraq, who had to pay them whether they agreed or not. The single sanctions strategy for Iraq was to link comprehensive economic sanctions to a military embargo and disarmament. This linkage held the civilian population accountable for the acts of armament of their government and therefore became a tool for the punishment of innocent people for something that they have not done. UNSCOM, UNMOVIC, UNIOP, UNOHCI, and UNCC — the main U.N. implementers of sanctions-related programs — were subsidiary to the U.N. Security Council. Had it existed, constructive oversight would have included the assurance that these subordinate units cooperated fully in the interests of a coherent approach. From the beginning of November 2000, Iraq cooperation with UNMOVIC and IAEA appeared to be adequate and, in hindsight, should be considered satisfactory. For Iraq to prove to a justifiably suspicious international community that it had no active WMD program turned out to be mission impossible. "Absence of evidence" was not accepted as "evidence of absence," but used instead as a justification for going to war.

Sponeck ends his book by summarizing his thoughts and beliefs as he is about to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, Halliday. He had begun to seriously question his role in the U.N.'s Iraq operation. He says that

the State Department in Washington, D.C., and the Foreign Office in London had begun to do the same, but for different reasons. They had become angered by Sponeck's outspokenness and critical observations. In 1999, Sponeck states, he knew he had to make a choice between what he stood for as a U.N. civil servant and what the policymakers in the U.N. Security Council wanted to achieve with his help. On February 10, 2000, Sponeck wrote to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, asking him to release him from his position. In the letter, Sponeck expressed his deep concern over the continuation of a sanction regime in Iraq despite the overwhelming evidence that the fabric of Iraqi society was swiftly eroding.

Sponeck's book is not an easy read, especially for those unfamiliar with the sanctions or the intricate workings of the United Nations and especially the Security Council. The book is a technically detailed and in-depth analysis dealing with a very complicated subject, which some may find hard to follow and even to comprehend.

Yet, the book is also a masterpiece, a well-documented record of a country under thirteen disastrous years of an inhumane sanctions regime imposed by the U.N. Security Council and enforced by the U.S. and supported by the U.K. Sponeck demonstrates the suffering of the innocent Iraqi population and the reasons behind the devastation. He points out the main culprits: the U.N. and the government of Iraq.

Sponeck, with his integrity, straightforwardness, and human values, clearly illustrates the daily suffering and the heavy toll paid by the Iraqis. He has produced a book of historical value, well documented and superbly written. It is an excellent text for students of history and politics and specialists on the United States, Iraq, and the United Nations.

REFLECTIONS ON *INVISIBLE WAR*

DR. MUDHAFAR A. AMIN, IRAQI ACADEMIC AND FORMER AMBASSADOR

Gordon, Joy, *Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. (359 pages)

Joy Gordon's well-researched and documented book focuses on the U.N. sanctions regime imposed on Iraq from 1990 to 2003 and the role of the United States in creating, maintaining, and enforcing the sanctions. At every turn, the United States shaped the fundamental decisions and resolutions that the Security Council passed related to Iraq sanctions and disarmament. Gordon reveals in a very clear and simple style the details of the U.S. policy that resulted in impoverishing Iraq and the steps that were taken to achieve these goals. Her book sheds new light on this important historical crisis.

In January 1991, despite the imposition of sanctions, Iraq had not withdrawn from their invasion of Kuwait. A coalition of countries led by the U.S. conducted a massive bombing campaign against Iraq. The coalition air force flew a total of 118,000 sorties and dropped more than 170,000 bombs, aimed at nearly 800 targets. The targets included not only military sites, but also Iraq's infrastructure and industrial capacity. Although the war lasted only forty-two days, the massive bombing campaign resulted in widespread devastation of all service facilities and the collapse of economic activity in Iraq. The overall cost to Iraq of the destruction from the 1991 Gulf War has been estimated at \$232 billion. The final result was relegating Iraq to what can be called a "pre-industrial stage."

The U.N. Security Council resolutions, under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which imposed the sanctions regime, demanded Iraq's disarmament of all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), that is, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and long-range missiles. The U.S.,

supported by the British government, connected the removal of sanctions to disarmament, and established "No-Fly-Zones," which divided the country into three regions. The U.S. administration set up a policy of "containment" against the government of Iraq and refused to deal with it on any level.

In her quest to explore the question of how a human catastrophe of this magnitude came about, Gordon provides details and factual examples on how the sanctions operated and how they affected the Iraqi population. With the narrow exception of medicine and conditionally food, Iraq under the sanctions could import nothing, export nothing, and receive no funds. The restrictions on imports hurt this country that was heavily dependent on imports; the restricted or undermined oil sales destroyed this economy that was heavily dependent on oil sales for its gross domestic product (GDP).

In her book, Gordon addresses the question: Whom is actually to blame for this humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq?

Gordon singles out the U.S. government as the major player in shaping and implementing all policies concerning Iraq from 1990 until it waged the last war in March 2003. The U.S. exercised singular influence over every aspect of the structure and extent of the sanctions. Using a variety of means, the U.S. determined the outcome of many of the most basic issues, and did so in the face of vehement, widespread opposition within the U.N. Security Council, as well as from many sectors of the U.N., and in the face of broad, intense international community criticism. The U.S., often joined by Britain, had

enormous weight in determining the parameters of the economic restrictions or, in other words, the total sanctions policies imposed on Iraq.

In order for the U.N. Security Council to oversee the strict implementation of the comprehensive sanctions regime, the Council passed Resolution No. 661, creating the Sanctions Committee, which became known as the 661 Committee. In fact, it was designed by the U.S. to serve its objectives in stifling the Iraqi economy and making sure that Iraq could not rebuild its economy and bring back its infrastructure to a working condition. The committee's fifteen members were representatives of the Security Council members, the five permanent plus the ten non-permanent members. Its work was to administer the implementation of the Oil-for-Food Program. But, in fact, and as Gordon asserts, the committee played a major role in hindering the arrival of much-needed goods to Iraq. The 661 Committee, like the Security Council itself, operated as a political body in a number of ways that gave the members disparate and competing agendas and gave way to self-interest rather than standing on principles or standards. The procedures of the committee had the effect of maximizing restrictions and minimizing humanitarian exemptions at each juncture. The U.S. aggressively opposed all attempts to establish precedents or any other procedures that would provide consistency and predictability. At its inception in August 1990, the 661 Committee adopted a practice of decision making by consensus, effectively giving each member state a veto power over every decision, which was utilized by the U.S. and to a lesser degree by the U.K., and

led to the paralysis of the work of the committee.

The committee worked in secret and had no spokesperson to explain its decisions. There was no accountability or transparency and other member states had no access to the minutes of the meetings. More importantly, Iraq was barred from participating in any form or shape in the work of the committee. All these unusual practices allowed the U.S. to shape the initial terms of the sanctions regime and to determine its duration, as well as to impose its will in many regards on the implementation of the sanctions by the Security Council 661 Committee.

There was little consistency in the work of the committee. It approved one item allowed into Iraq at one time. The next time, it would reject the same item, claiming “dual use” or put it on hold with no explanation at all. The U.S. blocked or put on hold the imports of materials such as spare parts, or even goods like eggs, pencils, powdered milk, tomato paste, salt, and materials to produce plastic bottles for juice. The reasons given were that these materials could be used to “manufacture weapons of mass destruction” or “enhance Iraq’s infrastructure.” Of the 125 items blocked by the 661 Committee, Japan blocked one, the U.K. blocked nine, and the U.S. blocked 115. At times, goods would arrive in Iraq but could not be used because they required complimentary parts that had been blocked. For example, the committee would approve tractors, but put the tires on hold.

As the social and economic structure of Iraq deteriorated throughout the 1990s, there was a growing dispute over who was to blame. The perversity and irony of the sanctions regime, imposed under the auspices of international law, is that it might have created more human damage than Saddam Hussein’s persecution of ethnic groups and human rights violations combined.

Russia, China, and France along with other non-permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, as well as U.N. agencies and NGOs, tried to reform the rigid rules of the sanctions and make the flow of needed goods to Iraq easier. The U.S., backed by the U.K., resisted these attempts at reform. When it was forced to make some changes, the U.S. undermined the process by creating difficulties and delays.

For the first several years of the sanctions regime, no one in the U.S. Congress had any awareness or interest in what is happening in Iraq or had any actual knowledge of the U.S. role in the sanctions which was creating widespread human suffering. There was certainly no sign that anyone in either house of Congress knew that the U.S. government was blocking everything from tractor tires to ambulances to women’s clothing, or that there was even a process for humanitarian exemptions. This ignorance was in part because the State Department often presented a distorted picture of the humanitarian situation in Iraq and of the U.S. role, maintaining that the Iraqi government was exaggerating claims and that Saddam Hussein was to blame. U.S. diplomats regarded the sanctions as the responsibility of the U.N. and wanted to ensure that the U.S. was doing what it could in order to direct the organization in the right way so that “Saddam’s apologists don’t get the upper hand.”

U.S. administrations accused the Iraqi regime of being responsible for the harm done to its people under the sanctions. They accused the Iraqi regime of building palaces and buying weapons instead of spending the money on its people. They claimed the regime did not distribute the food and medicines equally to all regions of Iraq (meaning depriving the Kurds in the north and the Shi’a in the south). The administrations also blamed the Iraqi regime for refusing to get rid of

WMDs, which prolonged the sanctions on the Iraqi people.

Despite the claims of the U.S. and others, the Iraqi government undertook several important efforts to meet the needs of the Iraqi population. The government instituted a system of rations after the sanctions were imposed in 1990, which helped keep the population alive. It also initiated efforts to increase domestic food production. In addition, although much of the health care system collapsed during the sanctions, the state nevertheless implemented, with the help of UNICEF and WHO, several vaccination campaigns targeted at children. The state also permitted the expansion of the private sector in health care.

In addition, the government responded quickly to restore basic services to the extent possible within the country’s massively damaged infrastructure. It repaired the water and sewage plants, electric power stations, bridges, roads, airports, telephone lines and communications, refineries and oil pipelines – although at times partially and temporarily – by cannibalizing parts from damaged units and making risky makeshift repairs. Under the Oil-for-Food Program, Gordon states, there were indications that the government of Iraq put the imports to good use. However, the Iraqi government had its own failures within its structure and practices because of corruption, centralization, and the reliance on oil income, imports, foreign professionals, and advanced technology. Also, the dictatorial regime with a one-party system could not respond effectively to the changing circumstances of the sanctions.

The United States consistently blocked proposals for a cash component that would have allowed funds from the Oil-for-Food Program to be used to buy locally produced goods and to hire Iraqi labor, both of which would have generated work and income for the population. The collapse of Iraq’s

industrial capacity — and the economy as a whole — triggered massive unemployment, the disappearance of Iraq's middle class, and a decline in the standard of living so extreme that, just to survive, engineers drove taxis and families sent their children to beg on the streets.

The Geneva Conventions offer a clear statement of the international recognized norms for conduct during armed conflict. They provide protection for goods and materials that are “indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.” Under this provision, “the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited.” Yet this is precisely what the United States did from August 1990 through March 1991 in blocking Iraq's requests for permission to import food under the “humanitarian circumstances” exemption in Security Council Resolution 661.

Many critics of the sanctions have maintained that these policies were “genocidal” under both the Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute, as Dennis Halliday, the former U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator, announced when he resigned his position in protest of the sanctions regime and the practices of the U.N. Security Council.

Throughout the sanctions regime, U.S. practices were extreme and harsh, and often unilateral, going well beyond the mandate of the Security Council's resolutions, and well beyond the will of the rest of the Security Council members. The U.S. was excessive in preventing Iraq from dealing with the outside world. Yet, at the same time, it allowed a huge smuggling of oil and illicit trading with Jordan and Turkey, because these countries were U.S. trusted allies and helped the U.S. wage the 1991 war against Iraq. On many occasions, the U.N. staff notified the 661 Committee of violations, but they were ignored by the U.S. and no actions were taken.

Under the Oil-for-Food Program, the

Iraqi government skimmed about 10% from import contracts and, for a brief time, received illicit payments from oil sales, amounting from 1996 to 2003 to about US \$2 billion. By contrast, in fourteen months of occupation, the U.S.-led occupation authority depleted \$18 billion in funds, a good deal of it on questionable contracts with little justification, but much of it was just an outright giveaway of cash. In one transaction — the transfer of \$8.8 billion — more funds disappeared than in thirteen years of Iraq's trade with Jordan, Turkey, Syria, and Egypt combined.

Having garnered control of the predominant institution of global governance, the United States showed no wisdom in its use. The tactics came easily enough: the closed meetings, the arm-twisting for votes, the endless delays, and the opaque bureaucratic procedures. But at the same time, the United States could not see a way out of its own dilemma, and this then became the U.N.'s dilemma as well.

As the criticism grew, few within the U.S. administration or Congress questioned the legality and sanity of bankrupting an entire nation for the purpose of containing one tyrannical man. The U.S. administration stubbornly saw itself as alone in its moral leadership, never grasping the significance or thoroughness of its isolation and marginality within the world community.

The moral claim of the United States — that it was punishing a wrongdoer — was undermined by the consistent practice of equating Saddam Hussein with Iraq. The United States embraced the notion that depriving an entire population of plywood, telephones, light switches, and glue was a good way of punishing Saddam and bringing about his downfall. Perhaps at some level U.S. policymakers justified this collective punishment as some notion of collective responsibility.

The sanctions regime on Iraq, as it was designed, interpreted, and enforced by three U.S. administrations and dozens of U.S. officials was tantamount to war crimes in its willingness to see appalling things done in the name of security. Regrettably, no domestic or international criminal court is likely to have jurisdiction to pursue a prosecution against a government for its actions within the Security Council. In the end, history, and the rest of the world, will not judge the United States by its rhetoric or the intention of its leaders, but rather by its policies and the magnitude of the suffering they have wrought. Gordon's book, with its clear explanation and in-depth analysis based on well-documented research, highlights the role of three U.S. administrations in creating the human catastrophe that was inflicted on the Iraqi society. The United States' dominant and unchallenged control of the U.N. agencies and especially, the Security Council, allowed it to follow its own agenda against the will of the international community. At the outset, Gordon's book resembles Hans Von Sponeck's book, *A Different Kind of War: The UN Sanctions Regime in Iraq*. However, it differs in its focus on the role of the U.S. rather than on the U.N. Security Council. The book's richness of facts and clarity of style provide an informative — although sad — journey into the human suffering of an ancient civilization. It is one of the few books by a Western writer that deals objectively with the former Iraqi government, stating both the negative and positive aspects. Joy Gordon's book is an excellent read and a good text for students of international relations, the U.N., U.S. and Iraqi history and politics, international organizations. It provides necessary analysis for current and future U.S. government officials to learn from the country's past aggressive political practices in order to avoid repeating the human tragedy inflicted on an innocent population by a single superpower.

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Figure 2.1. Sert's Embassy, discussed in Pedro Azara's article, as it looked in 2003. (Photo credit: McGuire Gibson)

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