

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This issue opens with an article by a pioneering scholar of Ottoman economic history, the late Donald Quataert. In the summer of 2010, Quataert wrote to inquire whether *IJMES* would be interested in a piece he had recently written on a corrupt Ottoman official in the coal mining district of Ereğli. Because the manuscript was too long for *IJMES*, Quataert revised it during a holiday in the “spectacular” Eastern Sierras. He passed away from cancer in February 2011 before learning that his article had been accepted for publication. His wife, Jean Quataert, a professor of history at Binghamton University and a coeditor of the *Journal of Women’s History*, suggested that we work with one of her husband’s students, David Gutman, to respond to reviewers’ suggestions and prepare the piece for publication. The editors of *IJMES* thank Jean Quataert for giving us permission to publish the piece and David Gutman for stepping into his mentor’s shoes—no small task—and serving as a second author. We are honored to be able to publish Donald Quataert’s final project, “Coal Mines, the Palace, and Struggles over Power, Capital, and Justice in the Late Ottoman Empire,” as testimony to a lifetime of innovative scholarship. A richly documented microhistorical account based on nineteen witness testimonies, the article experiments with narrative and shows state–society interactions on the ground, including the processes through which subaltern complaints were received and managed by the central Ottoman state as well as the ways these processes may have begun to fracture in the late Hamidian era.

The second article, by Julia Phillips Cohen, also focuses on the late Ottoman Empire, turning to an exploration of Ottoman Jewish discourses on citizenship in the final decade of the 19th century. As other scholars of the period have noted, Tanzimat notions of a multi-religious civic Ottomanism increasingly ran up against the centrality of Islam to Hamidian constructions of Ottoman identity. Yet Cohen argues that this was not always a clear linear process through which all non-Muslims in the empire were steadily and homogeneously excluded from claims of citizenship. Examining the responses of Sephardi Jewish leaders and intellectuals to the Armenian massacres of 1896 and to the Greco–Ottoman War of 1897, Cohen shows how many Ottoman Jews attempted a “precarious balancing act,” at times insisting on a multi-religious definition of Ottomanism by defending Christian victims of those upheavals and at other times struggling to maintain their own place in the shifting Hamidian framework of Ottoman belonging by asserting their likeness to Muslim citizens against the empire’s Christian others. Among other conclusions, she posits that “Abdülhamit II’s Islamic politics were not simply the domain of Muslims but also of those willing to express their allegiance to the state by engaging with Islamic symbols and rhetoric.”

The next three articles, grouped under the subtitle “States of Exception,” continue the emphasis on religious (and nonreligious) minorities in the region. Mehrdad Amanat

begins from the unusual vantage point of conflicts over graveyards and corpses in 19th- and 20th-century Iran. Focusing especially on Jewish converts to the Baha'i faith, the article argues that while there was a "good deal of fluidity" in 19th-century religious convictions in Iran, the graveyard was often a signal arena in which "the lines of communal boundaries were drawn by religious authorities." Shi'i and Jewish clerics sometimes obstructed the burial of converts in cemeteries, while clerics and laypeople alike participated in exhuming the previously buried remains of individuals posthumously accused of apostasy. One consequence was what Amanat proposes may be a peculiarly Iranian phenomenon, that of "the homeless corpse." The article traces continuities and shifts through the 20th century, as the state often took the lead in transferring the corpses of Baha'is, Marxists, and other "infidels"; destroying whole cemeteries; and burying the evidence of state-organized killings in unmarked mass graves. Yet these more recent and "industrialized" assaults on the dead, and on the memories of the living, seem to be met by the frequent and inconvenient resurfacing of human remains, perhaps "a graphic token of resistance to the state's efforts to establish absolute religious and ideological conformity."

Turning from a Shi'i-majority to a Shi'i-minority context, the article by Edith Szanto draws on Giorgio Agamben's concept of the "state of exception" to explore Shi'i devotional practices in the Syrian town of Sayyida Zaynab, which includes the shrine of the Prophet Muhammad's granddaughter Zaynab as well as a Palestinian refugee camp and Iraqi and other migrant settlements that have grown up around the shrine in recent decades. Szanto proposes that the town and its residents exist in a state of exception in the sense that they are both "inside and outside of the law" established by the sovereign. She also draws parallels between certain aspects of living in states of exception, in the Agambian sense, and Twelver Shi'i narratives on the fate of the Prophet's family (including Zaynab) at the Battle of Karbala and on the relationship of all Shi'a to authority following the occultation of the Twelfth Imam. Against Agamben, however, Szanto argues that the devotional practices of Twelver Shi'a in the Syrian shrine town, centering on the sainthood of Sayyida Zaynab, allow them to live more than "bare lives" in a state of exception.

The fifth research article, by Samuli Schielke, considers questions of religious belief and non-belief in contemporary Egypt. Drawing on his ethnographic fieldwork among the small minority of Egyptians who self-identify as non-believers during "a time of Islamic revival," Schielke suggests that the moral and subjective ground on which religious doubt in Egypt today is based has shifted from that of earlier generations. His interlocutors place less emphasis on scientific truths and on Darwinist or Marxist discourses and more on their deep sense of unease that religion does not deliver on its own promises of justice and morality. One of his conclusions is that the ground on which contemporary Egyptian non-belief is based "reflects the centrality of Islam as an idiom of morality and subjectivity . . . while non-believers deny the capability of revivalist religion to provide real solutions, they do take its promises very seriously." Engaging with recent critical anthropological work on secularism, Schielke proposes that the study of doubt and unbelief in Egypt today calls for an analytical perspective in which "the secular is less about governance and more about conviction, less about subjectivation and more about a subjective search for a sound moral base for life."

This issue's Roundtable and review article focus on Sudan and Iraq, respectively, two states of considerable turmoil if not exception. For the Roundtable, we asked specialists in different disciplines to reflect on how the secession and independence of South Sudan last year might change the way scholars think and write about "Sudan," past or present. Some recurring themes in their answers include challenges posed by the breakup of Sudan to conceptions of state formation, sovereignty, citizenship, and violence; the continuing importance of analyzing historical legacies of slavery and colonialism; and the need, now more than ever, to question essentializing racial and religious categorizations of "North" and "South" Sudanese.

The review article, by Sami Zubaida, looks at three books dealing with cultural history and political memory in modern Iraq and in particular with "the role of ideological cadres and institutions" in processes of Iraqi state formation. Dispensing quickly with the "futile" question of whether Iraq is an "artificial" or a "real" entity, Zubaida draws out and elaborates on several other themes raised in these books—especially the concepts of memory and forgetting, the importance of the Ottoman background to the formation of the first generation of Iraqi intellectuals, and various nationalist uses of categories such as "tribes" and "sects" throughout the 20th century.

Beth Baron and Sara Pursley