

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The cover image for this issue, from Moroccan artist Mounir Fatmi's installation *Modern Times*, depicts architectural structures and the cogs of a machine filled in with Arabic calligraphy, representing rapid architectural development and industrialization across the modern and contemporary Middle East. The title derives from the eponymous 1936 Charlie Chaplin film in which Chaplin's character Little Tramp is a factory worker during the Great Depression who, trying to keep up with the acceleration of the assembly line, is quickly overcome and succumbs to a nervous breakdown. Like the film, Fatmi's installation critiques unbridled development and draws attention to its human toll. It also explores two related features of the modern epoch: ceaseless motion and the acceleration of time.

The workings and effects of technopolitics and modern temporalities—and indeed of scientific knowledge and practice, with which they intersect—run through several of the articles and the roundtable in this issue. These subjects, long marginal to Middle East studies, are attracting renewed interest among scholars. Though by no means exhaustively, this issue examines them (and other topics) in attempt to contribute to an ongoing conversation about how they reframe our understanding of the modern and contemporary Middle East and reshape the ways in which scholars approach the region analytically.

The first section of the issue brings together three articles under the rubric of Technopolitics of Empire and Nation. On Barak's "Outsourcing: Energy and Empire in the Age of Coal, 1820–1911" tells the story of the British "outsourcing" of coal to explore its relationship to the consolidation and expansion of imperial power—what he terms "coalonialism." By tracing coal's pathways, Barak attempts to provincialize the Industrial Revolution and, more particularly, its driving force, the steam engine. In addition, he explores the question of why coal—its production and consumption—animated a culture of political participation in England while reinforcing authoritarian tendencies in the Middle East—and this before the arrival of oil. Barak shows that in the Middle East, "coal fueled the development of a modern interventionist state able to reach increasing segments of its population and territory ever more quickly and efficiently." Meanwhile, it occasioned different paths to proletarianization among English and Welsh workers on the one hand, and Ottoman workers on the other hand, leaving the latter with comparatively little political potency.

In "Development, Counterinsurgency, and the Destruction of the Iraqi Marshes," Ariel Ahrām moves us ahead in time to the 20th and 21st centuries to examine the destruction of the southern Iraqi marshes. His article explores the intersection of technology and politics in the developmental policies of the Ottoman, then the British, and finally the Ba'ath regime. Some have posited that Saddam Husayn's desiccation of the marshes in 1991 was fueled by anti-Shi'i sectarian animus, for the region's inhabitants—the Ma'dan—are Shi'i. However, Ahrām contends that this ecological disaster was instead

the logical extension and intensification of a century-long effort by the state—in its multiple manifestations—to control nature and subdue marginal populations, all part of a modernist social and economic vision. With this in mind, Saddam Husayn's policies after 1991, he posits, are better understood against the backdrop of American ecocidal efforts to pacify the countryside and promote "development" in Vietnam.

Leena Dallasheh's article, "Troubled Waters: Citizenship and Colonial Zionism in Nazareth," looks at the technopolitics of natural resources and its intersection with citizenship. Dallasheh focuses on the struggle between the early Israeli state, the semi-public Israeli water company Mekorot, and the Palestinian municipal council of Nazareth and their allies in the Communist Party (MAKI) over control and ownership of water. Some government officials and Mekorot sought to centralize water management by, in the case of Nazareth, forcing the municipality to link its water to Mekorot's regional grid. They viewed this policy as benefiting the Jewish national project by enhancing state control over the important Palestinian center of Nazareth and, relatedly, allowing them to divert water to a new, nearby Jewish settlement (later called Upper Nazareth). In opposition, the city council sought to implement a Mandate-era plan through which it would maintain ownership of and control over the city's water supply. Yet Dallasheh finds that in the thicket of local politics these dividing lines often blurred, as neither side was politically monolithic. The contestation over water, she argues, was "a microcosm of the incorporation of Palestinians as undesired and marginalized citizens into a self-defined Jewish state." Through citizenship, Palestinians pursued their collective interests, but "they were ultimately unable to overcome the exclusions inherent to a political system that maintained the dominance of a Jewish majority over a Palestinian minority."

The second section of this issue focuses on Modern Islamic Institutions. As indicated by its title, Daniel Stolz's article, "Positioning the Watch-Hand: 'Ulama' and the Practice of Mechanical Timekeeping in Cairo, 1737–1874," explores the introduction of mechanical timepieces into Cairo in the 18th and 19th centuries and the role that the 'ulama' played in spreading their use. Manuals such as 'Abd al-Latif al-Dimashqi's 18th-century handbook *al-Manhaj al-Aqrab li-Tashih Mawqi' al-'Aqrab* (The Clearest Method for Correcting the Position of the Watch-Hand) were written manifestly to help Muslims identify the appropriate prayer time. However, Stolz shows that they also served not only to popularize this new imported technology, but also to facilitate Ottoman time-keeping conventions. More to the point, he contends that new technologies did not sideline the 'ulama', but rather became vectors through which the 'ulama' could extend their knowledge and influence to a broader audience. Thus, he writes, "amidst the circulation of new objects with rotating hands, 'ulama' sought to occupy a kind of center, helping to position not only the physical hand of the watch, but the use and meaning of the watch itself."

Markus Dressler's article, "Rereading Ziya Gökalp: Secularism and Reform of the Islamic State in the Late Young Turk Period," seeks the rapprochement of religion and science from the opposite side. Dressler notes that Ziya Gökalp's sociological writings have been, and continue to be, central in the explication of Turkish modernity and nationhood. To most observers, the hallmark of his work is its secularist ideology that helped give Kemalism its strident *laïcité*. Several recent studies have emphasized—in equally one-dimensional fashion—the Islamic nature of his modernism. Pushing back against both of these interpretations, Dressler argues that Gökalp's ideas can

only properly be understood as dynamic responses within the “dramatically changing political conditions and social needs” of his time. Through a historically situated reading of Gökalp, Dressler argues that his “understanding of concepts such as shari‘a, *dīn*, and the Islamic state was not yet subordinated to a secularist episteme which juxtaposes the religious and the secular.” Rather, he saw religion and science as complementary forms of knowledge integral to the construction of a new Turkish nation.

Also focused on Turkey, Gizem Zencirci’s article, “From Property to Civil Society: The Historical Transformation of *vakıfs* in Modern Turkey (1923–2013),” looks at the ideological reincarnation of the *vakıf* over the course of ninety years, stretching from the early republican period through the mixed economy years of the 1960s and ending with the neoliberal era of the 1980s and after. Zencirci shows that in each of these periods the *vakıf* was both an object and site of development, reimagined to fit the changing needs of state and society. Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s *vakıfs* were mobilized as “national treasures” to fund economic development. Some thirty years later they were turned into private foundations tasked with training skilled labor for the evolving mixed economy. Finally, and perhaps ironically given the return to an Ottoman-era role, after the 1980s they were remolded into welfare organizations whose main goal was to alleviate poverty as the neoliberal state shrunk the social net for Turkish citizens. In all of its manifestations, *vakıfs* were a vehicle through which global discourses of development were formed and transformed locally. As Zencirci notes, “throughout the past century, *vakıfs* mediated between the local and the global, the domestic and the foreign, the economic and the noneconomic, the religious and the secular, and the ‘Western’ and the ‘Islamic.’”

Our roundtable for this issue, introduced and led by Marwa Elshakry, pushes us to rethink the modern history of the Middle East through a critical engagement with science studies (and vice versa), conceived broadly. Historicizing a range of individual disciplines, the eight contributors explore their myriad effects over time, which they link to overarching analytical and historiographical concerns in science studies and Middle East history. The focus is on exploring the connection between scientific knowledge and practice and the rise of the modern state.

The issue concludes with Inger Marie Okkenhaug’s review article, “Christian Missions in the Middle East and the Ottoman Balkans: Education, Reform, and Failed Conversions, 1819–1967.” The past decade has seen a flourishing of scholarship on missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and in post-Ottoman nation-states, as historians have read missionary sources anew and in tandem with various types of local sources. This research has allowed us to conceptualize the missionary past in the region in terms of modes of encounter rather than perpetual clash, with both missionaries and local communities affected equally. Okkenhaug reviews five new books critical to this turn, which, she argues, inaugurated three important shifts: “a national to a transnational approach, a reevaluation of local agency, and a new emphasis on unintended consequences.”

Akram Khater and Jeffrey Culang