



Syrian Studies Association Newsletter

Volume 12, Number 2

Fall 2006

SSA on the Web: www.ou.edu/ssa

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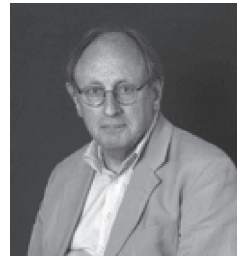
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From the President

**Peter Sluglett, Professor of History
University of Utah, Salt Lake City**



Dear Colleagues,

Some six months ago, I wrote that I would 'be spending most of next academic year at the American University of Beirut', but, given the timing of the 'Sixth Arab-Israeli war' I felt unable to take up the position I had been offered there. Hence I have been, and am still, watching events unfold from the relative tranquillity of Salt Lake City. It is difficult to comprehend the logic of the US' inaction in a conflict that resulted in so many civilian deaths and so much infrastructural and economic devastation. From another point of view, and although the analogy is not quite exact, the history of colonialism and decolonisation is replete with examples of the apparently mightier force being obliged to come to terms with the terrorists/freedom fighters 'in the end'. I was pleasantly surprised to find President Bashar al-Asad putting my own thoughts into words in a radio interview with John Simpson of the BBC; the only path out of this conflict, he said, is to go back to UN resolutions 242 and 338. Of course, that is not the complete answer, as President al-Asad well knows, but it is an essential first step.

The SSA has sponsored one panel at the annual MESA meeting in Boston, on Aleppo and its Hinterland (Sunday November 19, 4.30 pm), with six participants, Marco Salati, Charles Wilkins, Stefan Winter, Miriam Kubina, Mafalda Ade Winter and Paulo Hilu Pinto -- and a frantically clock-watching chair. The Society has its annual board meeting at MESA on Saturday November 18 at 11 am, and the business meeting is at 7-8 pm followed by a reception. The latter two events are open to the whole membership, and I urge as many of you as possible to come. Joshua Landis has kindly agreed to give us an informal presentation on 'Contemporary Syria' at the reception. I look forward to meeting old and new members in Boston. Finally, I would like to express my own and the membership's gratitude to Elyse Semerdjian for all her work on the Newsletter, not least for her generous tolerance of procrastinating contributors ...

-Peter

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 2005

SYRIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION (SSA) BUSINESS MEETING

**Held 7:10-8:00 pm, 19 November 2005, at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel, Washington, D.C.,
in conjunction with the 2005 Middle East Studies Association Meeting.
Attended by 20 persons.**

At 7:10 pm, SSA President **Dawn Chatty** opened the meeting and announced Syrian Studies Association sponsored events at MESA 2005. Copies of the 2004 Syrian Studies Business Meeting Minutes were circulated and approved, pending correction of the spelling of Sluglett in the first paragraph.

Dawn Chatty then announced the election of **Peter Sluglett** as the SSA President-Elect and **Annie Higgins** as SSA Secretary-Treasurer, both of whose terms of office would begin at the end of the 2005 SSA Business Meeting. **Dawn** then announced the upcoming, spring elections for a Member at Large, currently **Fred Lawson**, and a Student Representative, currently **Faedah Totah**, to serve November 2006 through 2008. In response to a call for nominations, **Geoff Schad** volunteered to stand as a Member at Large candidate. **Dawn** announced that a call for nominations would be distributed to members via email, with nominations accepted until March 1, and the ballot appearing in the Spring 2006 *Newsletter*.

In the absence of Prize Committee Chair, **Mary Wilson**, Prize Committee member, Dick Doves, announced the award of the 2005 SSA Article Prize to **Geoff Schad** for his January 2005 in *REMMM* article, "Colonial Corporatism in the French Mandated States: Labor, Capital, the Mandatory Power, and the 1935 Syrian Law of Associations," a study of strikes organized by Syrian artisans and factory workers in the 1930s and the French Mandatory power's response, the creation of officially controlled associations, a policy that the author labeled 'colonial corporatism.'" (See www.ou.edu/ssa/ for more information.) **Dick** noted that the committee's decision was a difficult one, as it received a number of excellent, original contributions on diverse topics.

Dawn Chatty sought membership approval for two Board proposed changes in the award of SSA Prizes. First, the SSA Board proposed awarding the Article Prize and Dissertation Prize in alternate years, each for

appropriate entries produced in the two previous years. The motion to adopt this "alternative year" prize schedule was unanimously approved. The second Board proposal was to institute a Book Prize to be awarded every two years, in the same years as the Article Prize, for books published in the previous two years. Submissions for the first Book Prize, covering 2005- 2007 publications, could be submitted by authors, publishers, or others. The motion was unanimously approved.

There was no report from Book Review Editor, **Steve Tamari**, who was not present.

Sherry Vatter presented the November 2005 SSA Treasurer's Report (see Report in this *Newsletter*) She noted that the SSA bank balance had increased since last year largely because many members had paid dues for three years at a time and because Whitman College, Newsletter Editor **Elyse Semerdjian's** institution, covered the cost of *Newsletter* postage and printing. The Treasurer's report was accepted. Those present thanked Sherry for her service by acclamation.

Dawn announced a drive to increase Syrian Studies Association individual and institutional members (who pay \$100 per year). She strongly urged members to make graduate students aware of SSA and to encourage them to join. **Dawn** also described a SSA Board proposal for \$500 Lifetime Membership, which would entail receipt of a certificate, the SSA *Newsletter*, and recognition on the SSA website.

SSA *Newsletter* Editor, **Elyse Semerdjian**, announced that future issues of the *Newsletter* will be posted on the SSA website in pdf format six months after publication. She also announced that future issues would contain a page devoted to graduate student affairs. **Elyse** then called on members, including graduate students, to submit articles to the *Newsletter*.

These might be book reviews or articles about places of interest in Syrian similar to **Faeda Totah's** Fall 2004 article on juice and ice cream shops in Damascus.

Peter Sluglett, Chair of the Lifetime Membership Award Nominating Committee, announced the nomination of **Thomas Phillip** as the recipient of the third SSA Honorary Lifetime Membership Award. Please forward other nominations to **Peter Sluglett**. The final vote will be taken at the 2006 MESA business meeting.

Dawn Chatty introduced, **Hassan Abbas**, the Syrian scholar whose trip to MESA 2005 the SSA helped support.

Dawn Chatty then invited suggestions for SSA sponsored panels at MESA 2006 and for names of Arab scholars who SSA might invite to attend and help support at MESA 2006. **Geoff Schad** proposed, in light of U.S./Syrian tensions, a history -political science panel comparing U.S. policies under Eisenhower with those at present. **Sherry Vatter** proposed a panel focused on Syrian painters or other artists. **Shannon Maher Arthur** suggested that a session focused on Syrian architecture, possibly co-

sponsored with the Danish Institute, which has a project on this topic, might be feasible. (**Peter Sluglett** replaced **Dawn Chatty** as chair of the Business meeting when she left to meet SSA reception speaker, **Syrian Ambassador to the U.S., Dr. Imad Moustapha.**) **Fred Lawson** encouraged panel organizers to submit proposals for SSA sponsorship to the SSA Board in a timely manner, not later than ten days before the due date. He suggested circulating the request for early submission of panels for SSA Board approval on H-Levant. **Geoff Schad** concluded the discussion by asking about the SSA's relationships with organizations such as the Lebanese Studies and Israel Studies Associations.

Peter Sluglett thanked **Dawn Chatty** for her service as SSA President.

The meeting concluded with those present introducing themselves.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

*Unapproved minutes submitted by Sherry Vatter
SSA Secretary/Treasurer*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SYRIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION MEETINGS AT MESA

Board Meeting • 11 am Saturday, November 18

Business Meeting • 7-8 pm followed by a reception and informal presentation by Josh Landis: **"Syria: Where does it stand in the showdown with Washington?"**

SYRIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION SPONSORED PANEL AT MESA

Sunday, November 19, 4.30 pm

"Aleppo's Hinterland: Regional Networks and Social Integration in the Modern Period" Organized by Stefan Winter. Sponsored by the Syrian Studies Association Chair/Discussant: Peter Sluglett, University of Utah

"The Shi'i Villages in the Ottoman Province of Aleppo (16th-17th Centuries)" Marco Salati, University of Venice, Italy

"Aleppo in 'The Age of Rebellious Governors': The Revolts of Seydi Ahmed Pasha (1655-1656) and Abaza Hasan Pasha (1658-1659)" Charles Wilkins, Wake Forest University

"The Province of Aleppo and Ottoman Tribal Settlement Policy, 1690-1790" Stefan Winter, Université du Québec, Montréal

"The Art of Landholding: A European Merchant in Aleppo" Miriam Kubina, University of Heidelberg, Germany

"Foreign Merchants in Late Ottoman Aleppo and Beyond: The Poche Family and Its Connections in Diyarbekir, Urfa and Antioch" Mafalda Ade Winter, University of Tübingen

"When Our Shayks Were Powerful: Historical Imagination and Religious Authority in the Sufi Zawiyas of Aleppo and the Kurd Dagh" Paulo G. Hilu Pinto, Universidade Federal Fluminense

THE SUQ HARAJ PROJECT REPORT

By Stefan Weber

The Orient-Institute Beirut (OIB) of the “Stiftung Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland” (“Foundation German Humanities Institutes Abroad”) is focussing on urban and social life in the Middle East during the Ottoman period. During the last years several international conferences were held and several books published. Two years ago, concentration shifted to Tripoli.

In addition to a research project on written and material sources on Mamluk and Ottoman Tripoli the Orient-Institute conceptualised and coordinated the restoration project of what might be the most important Mamluk (1289-1516) commercial building of the region: the Suq Haraj. The restoration is a Lebanese German co-operation, financed jointly by a generous donation of the German Foreign Office and the Lebanese Ministry of Culture. Also the Municipality of Tripoli contributed to the project.

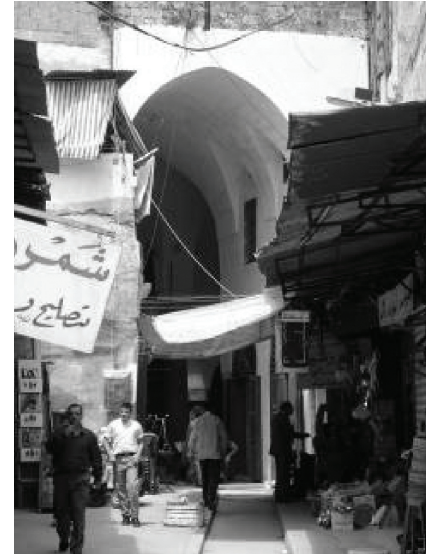
The Orient-Institute Beirut pinpointed Suq Haraj as a place of core importance. First fundraising preparations took place in cooperation with Dr. Rawiya Majzoub head of the Institute of Restoration (Lebanese University), Juren Meister and Nabil Itani in Tripoli in 2002. This involved the German embassy and the DGA [Direction Générale des Antiquités / Ministry of Culture, here the director general Frédéric Hussein and Samar Karam] with Antoine Fichfich, who prepared the first cost accounting for the application.

SUQ HARAJ

Suq Haraj is situated in the historical center of Tripoli, in the Hadid quarter, to the east of Suq al-Bazerkan, not far from Khan al-Askar and the Tawba-mosque.

Suq Haraj is a market from the Mamluk period which was probably donated by the Amir Manjak. It has mercantile structures on the ground floor and living units on the upper floor. The western row of shops might be of an older phase and integrated into the construction of Suq Haraj. The Suq Haraj area is entered via a north-south oriented passage and through an entrance to the east and to the west of which is the open hall of the structure.

The building consists mainly of an irregularly cross vaulted hall supported by two central granite reused columns of 4m height and twelve other shorter ones. The shorter ones are distributed on the northern, eastern, and southern sides, where the hall is nearly rectangular.



These columns open up on the ground floor into a cross vaulted gallery on the north, east, and south sides. This gives to the main hall a U-shaped structure, which to the west faces a linear street. The living units on the first floor are accessed from the Sussiyye street on the east side and from a passage to the Suq al-Jadid on the west side, and from an entrance on the southwest side. Suq al-Jadid was maybe linked during the building of Suq Haraj by transforming one shop of the western (older) side into a passage; hence, one could access the main hall of Suq Haraj from four sides. Parts of the first floor in the northern side of the building are divided by mezzanines which may have been an original part of the construction. The mezzanines may have been used as storage rooms, whereas the other full height spaces, as living units. The roofing system of the building is characterised by skylight openings that illuminate the main hall on the ground floor, as well as the living units on the first floor.

THE PROJECT

The survey and excavation of archaeologists have proved that the building is probably of Mamluk planning and construction. However the columns that carry the vaults and the arcades are reused antique material.

Between two large columns in the center of the hall a fountain was placed which may date into the Mamluk period.

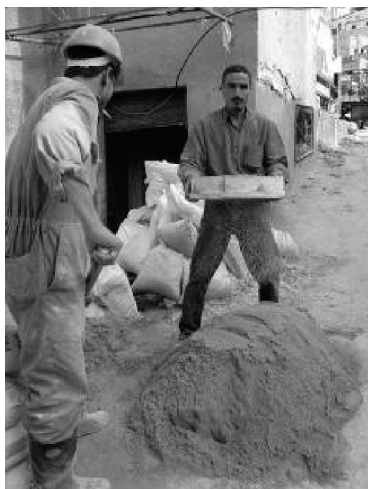
The construction work was divided into two phases. Phase one, from winter to spring 2003/04, was to safeguard the structure by dealing with the most important structural problems including the roofs, restoring damages caused by war which meant rebuilding the eastern section of the suq. This phase was finished in spring 2004 and inaugurated by the mayor of Tripoli and the German Ambassador.

Phase two, from winter to spring 2004/05, concentrated on the interior space of the Suq: up valuation of the façades of Suq Haraj, doors, windows, floors, ceilings and lighting, in addition to the necessary infrastructure works.

For the preparation of the project international experts in restoration and architecture were invited to participate in two workshops financed by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Orient-Institute and the Municipality of Tripoli. The workshops were designed for an international academic exchange and the training for Lebanese students and helped to develop the restoration concept. The detailed restoration plan was composed by two architect-restorers, Antoine Fishfish and Michel Daoud, who conducted an intensive survey of the building with their diagnosis to determine the task schedule on a scientific basis.

Prior to the execution of works, a complete archeological survey, using the most modern equipment was undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute (Juren Meister, DAI) and OIB along with extensive photographic documentation. This was furthered by more works undertaken during the restoration by a DAI, DGA and OIB team that clarified the building's original layout, older then the structures and alternations made during the centuries.

To achieve best results for the project, a multi disciplinary team was gathered where international experts gave their assessment of the building and an extensive and detailed restoration plan was done entirely by the two architect-restorers Antoine Fishfish and Michel Daoud. This comprehensive



and detailed study was evaluated by the DGA, by the municipality and by German experts. The outcome of the research of the building archaeology was integrated in the concept of restoration where five aspects were taken into consideration:

- (a) the original Mamluk building,
- (b) its history, alternations, reasons of neglect through different centuries,
- (c) the meaning of the building and its surrounding today, its future use and functional needs by today users,
- (d) the architectural safeguarding of the monument,
- (e) an architectural aesthetic treatment.

The outside eastern façade was totally rebuilt in traditional techniques. Concrete and modern blocks were dismantled and the entire façade and the vaulting above reconstructed. The barrel vaulted western access was reconstructed. The eastern elevation of the main hall was also reconstructed with the same traditional building material of the building in question (sandstone). Decayed stones were replaced with stones of the same characteristics in order to preserve the physical and architectural coherence of the building. Roofing of the building was restored by making it waterproof. The main hall was retiled using lime stone tiles that are similar to the original flooring of the Suq. The walls were redone where lime plaster was only applied on the surfaces of the façades of the hall, and the eastern elevation (i.e. in the public spaces). In some locations, the original plaster which is in relatively good shape, was kept as evidence of the original situation. A small joint was added in-between the old and new lime-plaster to distinguish them. Other works concerned the infrastructure where water tanks and restrooms were added and connected to the cities main drainage system. Wooden work included the replacement of windows and doors that were constructed similarly to the old, yet protecting residents and shop owners by placing iron cores to the doors. Canopies and shamsiyyat (grills) were set as a modern interpretation of the 1900 situation of the spatial lay out, the proposed shamsiyyat are a simplified copy of the ones belonging to the 1900 period. The canopies were also simplified and built as a light wooden structure inspired by historical models and techniques, without copying details of canopies of one particular period.

Altogether the project of the Suq Haraj was a great success of interdisciplinary and international cooperation that aims at preserving a core part of the history of Tripoli.

THE EMBRACE WE CALL DAMASCUS

By Annie C. Higgins

GLANCE up to assure yourself a moment of road space to cross that segment of the street, and the glance lifts your gaze up in a small remembrance of amazement. Mountains. Gaining the opposite sidewalk, you continue in the concrete world hosting its glass shop windows and flesh shop keepers, potential customers, and people whose errands impel them swift and swerving among those who make their way with certain steady grace. You have reached another cross street, and out of habit, check to see if your path is clear to cross, when your attention is arrested again, for shorter than the length of a breath, by the silent presence of the mountain holding its place at the end of the street. The mountain is the constant contrast to the motion of the city. Its silence speaks above the horns, voices, hawkers, whistles, gears, horse carts, bicycle horns - and answers the *muadhin's* call to prayer. The mountain calls you to its stationary being-there. It does not try to convince you. It just appears from one street to the next. You traverse the roundabout and find it again. It doesn't fight the urban landscape. It doesn't criticize. It just exists around it. Nature's embrace.

For a moment in the midst of all the points on your agenda – your tasks and appointments, schedules and plans, hopes and uncertainties and contingencies – for just a moment, all of these yield to the unyielding mass of mountain holding its own, unmovable behind the urban motion and commotion, and for that moment, you feel your own unmovable self, devoid of complications or variability.

Not far from noon, you look up from the bus depot to see the mountain, even from its distance dwarfing the biggest bus beside you. Blue minerals inside enliven the mountain's grey beyond the grey of the depot's endless concrete.

"What time is it?" asks Ahmad, his red fez hat looking as quizzical as he does. Why does he wonder about the time? Surely he doesn't have another engagement! Ah, of course – his boredom propels his imagination forward to going home; home to doing nothing, home to the shelter of close walls and a curtained window, home to shelter from the sun. His complexion is nearly as fair as mine, and rebels against persistent solar slather. One day, I put some suntan lotion on my hand and showed him how to put it on his cheeks and nose, red and peeling from the sun's attention. He was thankful. The next time, I brought him a little container of the lotion, and told him to use just a small dab.

But today he is asking about the time. Without looking at my watch, I turn around and look toward the sun. "It's about three o'clock," I say confidently. Puzzled and desiring to understand the mystery, he asks, "How can you tell the time by looking at the sun?" Then I remember that you are not supposed to look directly at the sun and I should not be influencing a school boy to do so. So I explain that at noon, the sun is almost straight above, and it gets lower in the sky as the afternoon progresses. To illustrate the point this time, I turn to indicate a lower spot than the bright orb itself. I find myself pointing toward the mountain. Mount Qasyoun, right there, witnessing time

and its measurement. My explanation seems only to increase Ahmad's bewilderment. I am hoping this is a summer job for Ahmad, and that he goes to school during the year. No matter how many times I try to catch him before he adds rosewater to the dark beverage, he always splashes a portion instinctively. And I don't mind. I like tamarind juice in any case, but giving him business and exchanging greetings are the real reasons I always stop.

As night falls, and the shop lights and automobile lights cast their dots and dashes in the air and on the pavement, the mountain rises up between converging lines of the building-lined street, its own lights answering those close at hand. The mountain embraces you. And if someone contends with you, it embraces you both.

After the theatre, a small get-together. A special elevator protrudes outside the building entrance. We must be going to the top floor! We ascend . . . one storey. But the idea of height comes through the room's wall of windows, bringing the mountain so close. If we opened a window, I feel we could almost touch the stone. The warm black tableau of night welcomes the lights on the mountain. Both families include a daughter named Kinda, a name I have encountered only as a tribal designation in historical texts. The Kinda were here long before our little party, relaxing into their own evening conversations after the dramas of their day, settling into the embrace of the mountains' shadows.

Another day, at home on the rooftop facing north toward Mount Qasyoun. The evening call to



Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins (second from the left), Ph.D. Candidate at Columbia University in Anthropology, dances the debka in Damascus.

prayer heralds the process, that magical change of light and night, of distinction and disappearance. The mountains shape themselves into dusky objects obtruding into the open panorama of light blue. Shifting degree by subtle degree, the sky descends the scale of hues, slowly, so slowly wrapping its cloud-colored embrace around a cloud-colored mountain. The moment that equalizes the intensities of mineral and ether, erasing the line of distinction, making sky and mountain one, could be at any moment. It is now. Then, tiny white lights trickle outward, declarations of home defining solid

ground, foundations the heavens do not try to match. Backdrop dims: mountain projects itself as points of light in a darkening sky.

Dawn will reverse the transformation.

- 9 January 2005, Damascus

Annie Higgins teaches Arabic Language and Literature in the Department of African and Asian Languages at the University of Florida. She researched poetry in Syria in 2003-04 as part of a Fulbright-sponsored project on Elegy and Identity in Palestinian Refugee Camps. This complements historical work on identity issues in Shurat (Khawarij) poetry.

A SENIOR FULBRIGHTER EXPERIENCE IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

By *Nimat Hafez Barazangi*

DURING my Senior Fulbright Scholarship for 2005-2006, I performed the project “Higher Education and Training Program in Contemporary Social Sciences (HETPCSS)” in Syria in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE), represented by the Deputy Minister for Scientific Research and Academic Affairs, and the Supreme Council of Sciences (SCS), represented by its Secretary General. The immediate goal of the program was to bring a self-selected group of faculty and researchers at the four public universities (Damascus, Aleppo, Tishreen, and Al Baath) in the Syrian Arab Republic into a deeper familiarity with state-of-the-art of contemporary social science research, particularly Action Research (AR). This goal is to solidify the steps and dialogues that the Syrian government has initiated in 2001 by creating a concrete, hands-on experience in contemporary perspectives and methods for the social sciences and the humanities. The goal of the program also resonated with, and builds-on my research work and experience at Cornell, collaborating with Professor Davydd Greenwood in the area of AR and higher education. AR is a research modality in which professional researchers and members of a community organization form a single research team that decides the subject of the research, learns about, and selects appropriate techniques, collects and analyzes the data, and assists in the process of applying the results to the institution as well as to other societal infrastructures.

The long-term goal is to further develop existing capabilities into a collaborative program to address relevant issues to the Syrian society, using local knowledge and integrating the Islamic/Arabic heritage of the participants with contemporary knowledge of scientific research.



THE COUNTRY, THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE PROGRAM

Syria, situated at the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, is at the crossroads of many civilizations such as the Canaanites, Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, and Islamic. It played and still plays a major role in the evolution of the Islamic/Arab civilization and culture. Its present educational system is a remnant of the 19th and 20th centuries colonizing era of the Ottoman and French systems.

Damascus University was established in 1901 as a medical institute. It is the first Syrian institution to adopt the French colonizer “modern” education system in the 1920s. Current enrollment is over 130, 000 students who may receive BA, MA, and PhD degrees, in addition to many vocational diplomas such as nursing, teaching, and engineering. Its colleges, hospitals, institutions, and students’ housing spread for few kilometers. In northern Syria, Aleppo University was established in 1946 as an Engineering school after Syrian independence from the French

colonization. It houses 39 colleges in 4 different cities (Aleppo, Dair Al-Zor, Raqqa, and Hasakah). About 100,000 students enrolled in 2004-05, receiving special diplomas in addition to BA, MA, and PhD degrees.

In the city of Homs, Al-Ba’ath University was established in 1979, with a recent branch in the city of Hama. Housing 19 colleges and serving about 38,500 students, it recently began granting MA and PhD degrees, in addition to BA degrees. To the west is Tishreen University, the youngest public university, established in the early 1980s in the city of Latakia on the Mediterranean coast.

Initially 55 professors from three colleges (Education, Economics, and Arts and Sciences) of each university participated in the HETPCSS program, nominated by the deans of each college. Given that some of the nominees did not fulfill the three conditions for participation (i.e., considerable time commitment, reasonable mastery of the English language, and a working computer literacy and Internet skills); only 31 professors continued after the brain storming sessions that took place at each of the four universities. As soon as the spring semester began, and the teaching and administrative load became overwhelming, only 23 professors went through the prepared online course and conducted their field work. At the conclusion of the program, 14 of them presented preliminary results of their projects in a public seminar. Finally, we generated a list of recommendations and future actions.

The tool of the program was the contextualized self-learning online course, “Deploying and Evaluating Action Research.” I have prepared this experimental course before departing to Syria as a primer in AR. The updated version of the online course will soon be published on the web.

Interestingly, after few workshops going through the Primer, the participating professors at the different work groups decided to focus on “scientific research at the university level” as the content of their hands-on action research fieldwork. Each group began deploying the principles of AR by investigating the real issues that they and their colleagues encounter while attempting to conduct scientific research in their respective university.

The clients of the research, the professors themselves went through conceptual change and at the same time generated new local knowledge about their own experience of AR as the approach to scientific research, which is one of the objectives of AR. That is, in order for them to understand AR, the professors needed to put themselves in a different mind-set to be able to re-think the meaning of scientific research. Indeed, these professors realized what it means to systemize and institutionalize scientific research at the higher education level. They were dealing with real issues in their deployment of action research; such as women and career: the case of Syrian female academics and research work, the lack of academic support in professional and personal skills (communication skills, foreign language, and computer skills), and organizational behavior of the university. These workgroups were across colleges and universities that helped in forming a single research team with the intention of

continuing their communication and collaboration with each other, with the MHE and with me.

This collaborative program in Syria was a unique opportunity to address new aspects of action research in a developing country, whereas a real gap exists in paying attention to many aspects of conducting any serious research in the social sciences and the humanities. HETPCSS was intended to partially remedy this gap through introducing AR in Syria. My ability to communicate in Arabic and being familiar with the culture proved to be a key factor in the progress and success of the program. Despite the slow Internet connection and some technical difficulties, all participants made special efforts in accessing the online course material and participated in a web-based bibliographic search. Toward the end of the program, the participating professors presented their working papers in a ministry sponsored seminar, where they also held small group discussions, inviting the attending deans and directors of research to make their input based on the findings.



BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SELECTED RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women and career: A case study of Syrian female academics and research:

Sixty-five professors responded to a questionnaire developed for the purpose of the study. Two-thirds (44/65) of them stated that the main obstacle to women professors’ advancing in scientific research is their family responsibilities and the societal perception, including the women’s own perception of



themselves, that domestic affairs represent their primary role. About one-third stated that the next obstacle is the lack of financial and infrastructure support, including the lack of respect by those in charge of scientific research. When asked who benefits from scientific research, only 17/65 stated the researcher as the beneficiary. Finally, only 20/65 stated that Syrian women were able to overcome some of the obstacles in doing scientific research. Work is still in progress to finalize the analysis and the results.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

Although few are those universities in the US or Europe that have contextualized AR and the relationship between university and society in an effective pro-social way, my experience with the Syrian universities is unique in that some of the participating professors in the social sciences and the humanities were learning AR by re-thinking and reviving scientific research at their universities, wherein a big gap exists in conducting research.

The long-range goal of the program was achieved by realizing that all action research approaches are built on the affirmation that significant social change occurs only when the capacity for change is in the hands of those who are affected by

the change, and who may benefit from it. Preliminary discussions suggest that educating in AR at the level of higher education was more effective when the professors saw their ability to conduct any scientific research as the priority. This self-evaluation process was the first achievement of the program, focusing on what facilitates or deters from doing scientific research, or what deters from doing social research for social change in the Syrian universities. This social change involves members who could control their destinies and improve their capacities to do so.

It is my recommendation that, given the fairly successful program and the existing human potential, those interested in improving scientific research within the Syrian higher education system need to systemize the scientific research, perhaps by using the module developed in collaboration with the professors of social sciences and the humanities at the four public universities. There is a need to expand the process by giving these across-campus professors the means to lay down the ground work for a larger investigation about scientific research and to include more members. It is now the responsibility of each university administrators, as well as the MHE and the SCS, to see through the implementation of these plans of action and to facilitate the deployment of the recommendations by collaborating with the trained professors to expand their existing research and to generate new membership and venues for action research.

Nimat Hafez Barazangi is a Research Fellow in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Cornell University. Her recent book, Woman's Identity and the Qur'an: A New Reading, was published by University of Florida Press this year.



NOVEMBER 2005 SSA TREASURER'S REPORT

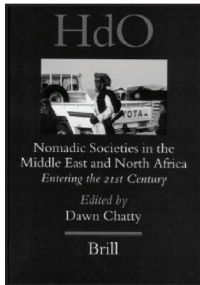
Balance as of 20 November 2004	\$1,599.26
SSA 2004 Dissertation and Article Prizes [M. Boeckler & D. Sajdi](Nov. 04)	-150.00
SSA MESA 2004 reception expenses [Dawn Chatty] (Jan. 04)	-449.19
MESA 2004 Meeting-in-Conjunction fee (Sept. 05)	-150.00
Bank Charge for check receipts (April 05)	-3.00
Dues income 21 Nov. 2004 through 17 Nov. 2005	2070.40
Total available to SSA as of 17 November 2005	\$2,917.47

Note: The balance does not reflect expenditures for the 2005 SSA reception(Nov. 20), \$500 contribution towards Hassan Abbas' MESA 2005 travel/hotel expenses, or \$50 for the 2005 Article Prize.

Prepared by Sherry Vatter, Treasurer, Syrian Studies Association



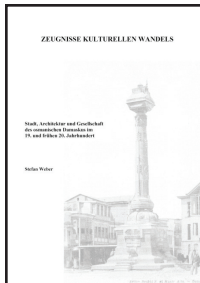
NEWS OF MEMBERS



**Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa, *Entering the 21st Century* Edited by Dawn Chatty (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006)
ISBN 90 04 14792 6**

A scholarly volume devoted to an understanding of contemporary nomadic and pastoral societies in the Middle East and North Africa. This volume recognizes the variable mobile quality of the ways of life of these societies which persist in accommodating the 'nation-state' of the 20th and 21st century but remain firmly transnational and highly adaptive. Composed of four sections around the theme of contestation it includes examinations of contested authority and power, space and social transformation, development and economic transformation, and cultures and engendered spaces.

Readership: Those interested in contemporary Middle East and North African studies in the social sciences – anthropology, sociology, geography, demography, economics, history, political science, oral poetry and linguistics, ecology and environmental subjects. Area studies, Middle Eastern Studies, as well as those interested in nomadic peoples. Interest to libraries, academic and institutes, specialists and students.



**Stefan Weber, 'Zeugnisse kulturellen Wandels. Stadt, Architektur und Gesellschaft des osmanischen Damaskus im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', EJOS, IX (2006), No. 1, I-XI + 1-1014. ISSN 0928-6802
(in German, ca. 2000 figures, 19 maps) English book in preparation.
<http://www2.let.uu.nl/Solis/anpt/ejos/EJOS-IX.0.htm>**

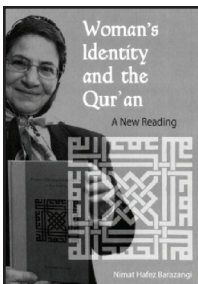
Summary: Urban Transformation, Architectural Innovation and Cultural Change in Late Ottoman Damascus (1808-1918)

Damascus, capital of the Ottoman province of Syria, faced the same developments in the long 19th century, as other peripheral urban centres in the Mediterranean area. In the course of the industrial revolution of Europe, with the advances in traffic and communication, new dimensions of the international exchange of ideas and goods incorporated Damascus into a world-wide net. This globalization led to an increasing orientation of urban and social structures towards supra-regional models. The current work focuses on one of the most important turning points in the history of the Middle East and the responses of a local society to the new challenges.

To understand the complexity of this process, this study examines as comprehensively as possible the dynamic character of Damascus as an Arab-Ottoman provincial capital and its society between 1808 and 1918. In addition to basic historical research, the work also approaches its topic through methods of Islamic art and architectural history and building history. The material basis of the research is the city itself with a detailed survey of over a 1000 buildings. The history of these buildings, their transformation and their clients are reconstructed by several means: building phases, ground plans, building materials, decoration, inscriptions and furniture, as well as written sources that include court records, foundation deeds, Ottoman yearbooks, contemporary documents and descriptions. The study also includes historical photographs providing an insight into lost urban textures and private worlds. From a micro-historical approach, actors and their living worlds are the centre of interest.

On the basis of a reform and a modernization program of the Ottoman state, Damascus was widely transformed, particularly after the provincial reforms of 1864, and the municipality was integrated into the administrative structures of the province. Numerous large-scale projects were commissioned by a committee of elected Damascene citizens. Altogether, more than 70 schools, 8 hospitals, 4 stations were opened, comprehensive electrical lighting and modern water pipeline systems were installed throughout the city, in addition to a streetcar system and dozens of new roads. Marja Place, where numerous administrative buildings, city gardens, hotel, cafés and a theatre were located, became a new city centre. Parallel with this almost the entire bazaar of the city was modernized. Formerly narrow bazaar lanes became broad shopping streets. As a combination of bazaar and arcade, the 450m long Suq al-Hamidiya was the most important construction project at the time. The same people who were active in the modernization of the bazaars also restructured their houses according to new principles. Nearly all of the 600 houses examined were built or rebuilt throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, in the process integrating new forms of dwelling and interior design.

This investigation demonstrates that in addition to Europe, the Ottoman capital Istanbul was the main source for the development of new patterns. Locally unknown models were integrated into the local context and solutions suitable to local needs were developed. The dimensions of cultural change were various. New forms of living corresponded to social changes within Damascene families, while behaviours in newly-constructed public areas, the adoption of different modes of dress, and the development of previously unknown interior designs mirrored the changing views of world and self.



Nimat Hafez Barazangi, *Woman's Identity and the Qur'an: A New Reading* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2006) pp. 192, ISBN 0-8130-3032-3

“A valuable contribution to the Islamic scholarship-activism explosion of the 21st century.”—
Middle East Journal

“Readers of this work will learn that men and women are equal when it comes to the worship of God. Thus, the male-dominated practices of several centuries derive not from divine revelation but from human error.”—Charles E. Butterworth, University of Maryland

An original study of the Qur'anic foundations of women's identity and agency, this book is a bold call to Muslim women and men to reread and reinterpret the Qur'an and to discover within its revelations an inherent affirmation of gender equality. Barazangi asserts that Muslim women have been generally excluded from full participation in Islamic society, and thus from full and equal Islamic identity, primarily because of patriarchal readings of the Qur'an and the entire range of early Qur'anic literature. Based on her study of the sacred text, she argues that Islamic higher learning is a basic human right, that women have equal authority to participate in the interpretation of Islamic primary sources, and that women will realize their just role in society and their potential as human beings only when they are involved in the interpretation of the Qur'an. Barazangi offers a curricular framework for self-teaching that could prepare Muslim women for an active role in citizenship and policymaking in a pluralistic society by affirming the self-identity of the Muslim woman as an autonomous spiritual and intellectual human being.

Short Notices of Recent Books on Syria

The following is a list of recently published books on Syria that were brought to the attention of the book review editor. Please contact Steve Tamari, Book Review Editor, at stamari@siue.edu with titles of recent books for inclusion in the next newsletter. Members are also encouraged to contact the Book Review Editor if they are interested in reviewing new books or seeing that recent publications get reviewed in these pages.

The book review editor thanks Samar Haddad of the Atlas Bookstore in Damascus for her help in identifying recently published books in Arabic. Interested readers can contact Ms. Haddad directly at samh@scs-net.org if they are interested in ordering books from Syria.

Books

Afifi, Muhammad, Rachida Chih, Brigitte Marino, Nicolas Michel et Isik Tamdogan, *Sociétés rurales ottomans. Cahier des Annales islamologiques* 25 (2005). Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2005. Includes articles by Abdul-Karim Rafeq on the rental of *waqf* lands in Bilad al-Sham according to *madhhab* and social affiliations; by Astrid Meier on rural *waqf* in the Damascus region during the first half of the 18th century; by Chieko Shindo on rural Hama in the 16th century; by Brigitte Marino on the cereal-producing regions of the Hawran and the Bekaa in the 18th century; by Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı on Ottoman settlement policies in Syria; and by Stefan H. Winter on the Kurds of northwest Syria and the Ottoman state between 1690-1750.

Chatty, Dawn, ed., *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2006. Includes the following chapters that focus on nomads in the Levant, in the order they appear in the book: Cedric Parizot, "Counting Votes That Do Not Count: Negev Bedouin and the Knesset Elections of 17th May 1999, Rahat, Israel"; Riccardo Bocco, "The Settlement of Pastoral Nomads in the Arab Middle East: International Organizations and Trends in Development Policies, 1950-1990"; William and Fidelity Lancaster, "Integration into Modernity: Some Tribal Rural Societies in the Bilad ash-Sham"; Michelle Obeid, "Uncertain Livelihoods: Challenges Facing Herding in a Lebanese Village"; Alan Rowe, "Government Interventions and Pastoral Accommodations: Social and Economic

Adaptation to Change in Agricultural Policy in Jordan's Badiya"; Dawn Chatty, "Assumptions of Degradation and Misuse: The Bedouin in the Syrian Badiya"; Alan Rowe, "Conservation, Land and Nomadic Pastoralism: Seeking Solutions in the Wadi 'Araba of Jordan"; Aref Abu-Rabi'a, "A Century of Education: Bedouin Contestation with Formal Education in Israel"; Steven C. Dinero, "Women's Roles, Polygyny and Cultural Transformation in Negev Bedouin Townships: A Gendered Landscape of National Resistance to Post-Colonial Conquest and Control"; Katharina Lange, "Heroic Faces, Disruptive Deeds: Remembering the Tribal Shaykh on the Syrian Euphrates"; Lidia Bettini, "Permanent Values in a Changing World: Bedouin Women's Tales from North-East Syria."

Goodarzi, Jubin M. *Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2006). The alliance between Syria and Iran has proved to be an enduring feature on the political landscape of the Middle East. Moreover, since its inception after the Iranian Revolution, it has had a significant impact in terms of moulding events and bringing about major changes in this troubled region. The study demonstrates that, contrary to prevailing views, the alliance between the two states has been essentially defensive in nature. It emerged in response to a series of events and developments, most notably, the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and US adventurism in the Middle East. The book traces the critical stages in the evolution and consolidation of the alliance in the 1980s, and offers explanations for its longevity into the 21st century.

Lawson, Fred H. *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. This book explores the emergence of an anarchic states-system in the twentieth-century Arab world. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Arab nationalist movements first considered establishing a unified regional arrangement to take the empire's place and present a common front to outside powers. But over time different Arab leaderships abandoned this project and instead adopted policies characteristic of self-interested, territorially limited states. In his explanation of this phenomenon, the author shifts attention away from older debates about the origins and development of Arab nationalism and analyzes instead how different nationalist leaderships changed the ways that they carried on diplomatic and strategic relations. He situates this shift in the context of influential sociological theories of state formation, while showing how labor movements and other

forms of popular mobilization shaped the origins of the regional states-system.

Mundy, M. and R. Saumarez Smith. *Governing Property, Making the Modern State: Law, Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria*. London: IB Tauris, 2006.

Rabo, Annika. *A Shop of One's Own. Independence and Reputation among Traders in Aleppo*, London: I B Tauris, 2005.

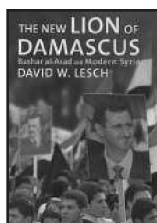
Rabo, Annika and Bo Utas, eds. *The Role of the State in West Asia*. Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions. Vol 14. London: I B Tauris, 2006. The book contains articles by Peter Sluglett on the Iraqi and Syrian middle classes between the two world wars, by Emma Jorum on understanding current Syrian policy towards Hatay, and by Annika Rabo on Aleppo traders and the Syrian state.

State Frontiers. Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East (ed. Inga Brandell) I B Tauris, 2006. The books contains a number of the articles focusing on Syria and the Syrian-Turkish border area.

Yuzo, Nagata, Miura Toru, and Shimizu Yasuhisa, *Tax Farm Register of Damascus Province in the Seventeenth Century: Archival and Historical Studies*. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2006. Includes a forward by Abdal-Razzaq Moaz; an introduction by Nagata Yuzo on tax farming in the Ottoman Empire; a description of the tax farm register and a history of tax farming under the Ottomans in the Province of Damascus by Shimizu Yasuhisa; an article by Abdul-Karim Rafeq on the Province of Damascus and provincial challenges to Ottoman authority in the 17th century; an article by Okawara Tomoki on the importance of the tax farm register for the study of the city of Damascus; and the Ottoman Turkish text of the tax farm register.

Book Reviews

Lesch, David W. *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 320 pp. US\$ 30.00 (cloth), ISBN 0300109911.



Reviewed by William Ochsenwald

According to Professor David Lesch, the purpose of this new biography of Bashar al-Asad is to explore his life and first few years as president of Syria as a means of seeing the future direction of that country. The author asks whether President Bashar al-Asad, the son of former President Hafiz al-Asad, will act so as to continue the basic patterns of the “worn-down dictatorship” (p. vii) he inherited, or will he lead Syria in new and more productive directions? Another purpose of the book is to urge the United States to adopt a more balanced and patient understanding of Bashar’s policies and reforms, giving him the benefit of the doubt, as opposed to aiming at regime change along the lines adopted by the U.S. in Iraq in 2003.

In addressing these matters, Lesch examines Syria’s past, concentrating on the years from 1970 to 2000 when Syria was led by Hafiz al-Asad, but also including substantial discussion of earlier periods of time. However, the heart of the book, and by far the most important sections, consist of analyses of developments since the death of President Hafiz al-Asad on June 10, 2000, based closely on several lengthy interviews of President Bashar by Professor Lesch. While the author cites the appropriate English-language secondary scholarly and journalistic sources, voluminous quotations of Bashar and other Syrian leaders are the chief support for the author’s new interpretations and buttress his often-expressed and strongly-held views. This reliance on interviews might be thought to compromise the objectivity of the author, who forthrightly confronts this possibility by citing his own highly critical earlier comments on the Syrian regime. Lesch came to hold a far more favorable view of Bashar Asad by getting to know him well; he provides the reader with an opportunity to experience, second-hand, the same transformation of views. Although both Syrian and foreign critics of the regime are cited, the book as a whole is quite positive about Bashar’s first years in office, with the notable exceptions of some Syrian policy and actions in Lebanon, and incomplete economic reforms.

The main approach of the author consists of alternating sections on the personal and political life of Bashar with other sections on the development of Syria, resulting in a good deal of repetition. Readers should be aware that the author spends considerably more space on matters touching on Syria’s foreign policy than on domestic concerns. Also, most readers of the *Syrian Studies Association Newsletter* will probably already be acquainted with the information presented in the substantial background expositions, but undergraduates and beginning-level graduate students might well find these sections informative. A close examination of the footnotes will be rewarding since Lesch sometimes uses

these to present alternative points of view or informative detail.

According to the author, Bashar al-Asad experienced a childhood remarkably unlike the children of other Middle Eastern dictators. Bashar often interacted positively with his parents; he was treated almost like any other student by his teachers; and he was modest, friendly, and unassuming. He graduated from the University of Damascus and worked in a Syrian military hospital as an ophthalmologist, ultimately seeking advanced training in eye surgery for a brief time in London. It was the accidental 1994 death of his brother Basil that brought Bashar into the political line of succession. Bashar unconvincingly says his father did not groom him to be the next president.

Bashar's succession to the presidency represented for Syrians continuity "for the public—and continuity for those in power who had benefited from Hafiz's regime." (p. 71) Lesch argues that Bashar has succeeded in remaining in power thanks to this desire for continuity as well as a hope for gradual changes. However, initial optimism for change faded somewhat when the so-called "Damascus spring," a short-lived period of political openness in 2000-2001, was followed by renewed repression. According to the author, Syrians wanted stability more than they wanted political reforms that might spin out of control. Developments abroad, including the second Intifadah and the war in Iraq, also contributed to Bashar's decision to slow down the pace of change.

In Chapters 6-8 Lesch turns to an evaluation of recent U.S. foreign policy in regard to Syria, concentrating in particular on the causes of the adoption of the Syrian Accountability Act of 2003 and, in general, the reasons behind new American pressures on Syria. The author criticizes American neo-conservatives who put Syria in the same category as North Korea, even while Lesch acknowledges Syrian errors in Lebanon, Bashar's harsh rhetoric against Israel, and conflicting views in the Syrian governing elite on post-2003 policy on Iraq. According to the author, the Syrian military-security apparatus was probably responsible for the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005. Syrian support of groups such as Hizbullah and Hamas is an asymmetric means to apply pressure on Israel for the return of the Golan Heights to Syrian control. Bashar seems to be genuinely interested in peace with Israel but, according to Lesch, the Syrian president can not move quickly on this front for fear of domestic opposition inside the ruling group.

Domestic reforms have also been stymied by a "nepotistic oligarchy" (p. 217) in government as well as the problems posed by a rapidly increasing population with

high unemployment. Bashar has worked especially hard to bring about substantial reforms in education and some changes in the economy, such as private banks. However, political change has been very slow. The regime is a kind of republican monarchy with an inherited presidency dependent ultimately on an Alawi-dominated military-security apparatus.

Despite some minor typographical errors, Professor Lesch has written a useful biography of President Bashar al-Asad that could be read with profit by all those interested in contemporary Syria. Lesch's generally positive evaluations stand in stark contrast to the negative judgments of the Syrian leader predominant in American policy-making circles.

William Ochsenwald is Professor of History at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He is the author of many books and articles and is co-author of The Middle East: A History (McGraw-Hill) which is currently in its 6th edition. He can be reached at: ochsen@vt.edu.

Watenpaugh, Heghnar Zeitlian. *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Ottoman Empire and its Heritage.* Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004. xxii + 280 pp. 37 b/w illus. US\$ 157.00 (cloth), ISBN 9004124543.



Reviewed by Amal Cavender

What made an Ottoman city an Ottoman city? What are the patterns of Ottomanization and how did they evolve in a single city over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? These are some of the questions posed by Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh in *The Image of an Ottoman City*. This book represents an urban and architectural study of Aleppo and the city's progression in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during Ottoman rule, and proposes a new perspective to understand the reception and adaptation of imperial forms, institutions and norms in context of the Ottomanization of provincial cities.

Watenpaugh argues that in Ottoman society, the ruling group negotiated an ever changing relationship with the past—the past of the Ottoman polity, as well as the "acquired" past of conquered territories. Watenpaugh also argues that interconnection rather than influence reframes the hierarchical construction of the center/periphery

relationship. The nature of engagement between the center (Istanbul) and periphery, the use of forms derived from the past, and the dissemination of standardized designs were key elements in shaping the image of Ottoman rule. Watenpaugh addresses development and rapid growth in the sixteenth century (the Classical Age), and the reorientation and consolidation in design in the seventeenth century that created imperial architecture and design forms tailored to the needs of the House of Osman and the ruling elite.

Through the study of institutional complexes as the most visible signs of the Ottomanization of provincial cities, Watenpaugh argues that imperial architecture served two purposes:

- 1) as standardized designs for less lavish Ottoman public structures throughout the empire and
- 2) as an index of Ottoman rule. The book consists of an introduction, six core chapters, and a concluding epilogue.

In the first three chapters, Watenpaugh examines public buildings within the context of Ottoman imperial architecture and its appropriation within the context of an ongoing, multilayered dialog between the ruling group, the urban dwellers, and the past of the city as embodied in buildings and spaces created by previous regimes. The new interventions on older structures show the subtle changes in architectural styles through the first half of sixteenth century, which demonstrates Ottoman flexibility and a recognizable process of integrating the city within the empire. Ottomanization required different methods in the predominantly Christian European territories, on the one hand, and in the former domains of the Mamluk state, on the other. For Istanbul and the cities of Eastern Europe, it entailed a process of Islamization through the introduction of Islamic institutions, such as mosques, *medreses*, and *kulliyes*, in predominantly Christian landscapes. For former Mamluk realms, such as Aleppo, Ottomanization entailed the incorporation of a pre-existing Islamic social order into new dynastic structures of administration and representation. This required introducing important elements of the Ottoman style such as the profile of the lead-covered hemispherical dome and the pencil-shaped minaret.

Watenpaugh also analyzes the important role of *waqf* and the creation of the revenue-producing institutions through these endowments which allowed servants of the sultan to leave their mark on Empire's provinces. Such institutions, in turn, contributed to the rise of Aleppo as a center of world-wide trade. Ottoman endowments provided particular support for the Hanafi *madhhab*, and

for education through *maktabs*, and motivated Ottoman officials to build commercial structures in Aleppo, both to encourage and to profit from the trade (p.122).

In chapters four and five, Watenpaugh focuses on the endowments of the seventeenth century by examining how the Ottomans re-contextualized and appropriated signs of popular piety. She examines four major Sufi lodges and the popularity of Sufism among Ottoman officials in the seventeenth century. Ottoman official patronage in Aleppo emphasized Sufi lodges rather than the congregational mosque in the economic district, as had been common in the sixteenth century. Dervish lodges located on the urban periphery became the most important outlets for patronage, marking a shift of boundaries between the city and the wilderness. Although official Ottoman patronage of economic, political and legal institutions declined, the Ottomanization of the city's past continued as a series of interventions modified the most ancient and sacred structures of the center of Aleppo.

In chapter six, Watenpaugh studies the texts related to urban life which reflect the new types of knowledge fostered in different parts of the Empire of the sixteen and seventeenth century. These texts define and describe Aleppo and its urban practices as the built environment was the privileged marker of civilization. Watenpaugh also investigates the way the city was conceptualized and represented in texts and in paintings, and how the texts on cities and urbanity were geographically circumscribed. She argues that the types of books produced in Istanbul in Ottoman, and those produced in provincial centers of learning, such as Aleppo, in Arabic, were consistently different throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Her observations demonstrate the divergent and convergent aspects of the imperial and local realms. The Aleppan Arabic sources include geographies, biographical dictionaries, topographical histories, and *fada'il* works (travelogues which describe the virtues ascribed to particular cities), in addition to legal sources such as endowment deeds and probate records. While the city and architecture were omnipresent subjects, early modern Arabic literature rarely produced architectural treatises, and the textual genres were rarely illustrated (p.212).

Thus, biographical dictionaries and the topographical history which focused on a single city are important sources for historians, as discussions of the explicitly formal aspects of buildings are absent. Watenpaugh shows that the Ottoman period was bound to introduce changes in the types of intellectual production fostered in the provinces. Aleppo, as a result of its integration into the Ottoman state, became part of a new social order, where the intellectual center of gravity was Istanbul. Thus,

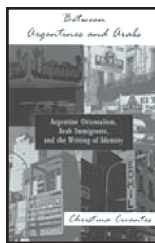
scholars pursued better educational opportunities at the imperial capital, where they also made their careers as bureaucrats. Watenpaugh concludes by demonstrating how both center and periphery were engaged in the process of architectural change, the change in ideas and forms as well as the revision of tradition. However, certain Ottoman expectations of buildings remained crucial and determined the manner in which new structures were built and existent ones were remodeled (p. 238).

Watenpaugh's book is the winner of 2006 Spiro Kostof Award, which was established in 1993 in recognition of Spiro Kostof's extraordinarily productive and inspiring career. In the spirit of Kostof's writings, the award is given to a work in any discipline related to architectural history that has made the greatest contribution to our understanding of historical development and change.

This book is well researched and based on an array of archival and narrative texts and theoretical literature in a variety of languages (Arabic, Ottoman, Turkish, French and English) as well as architectural evidence. It demonstrates the relation between imperial ideology, urban patterns, and architectural form. This book will be of use to scholars and students in urban architecture, art history, intellectual history and Islamic studies generally.

Amal Cavender worked as an architect in Turkey before moving to the U.S. She recently completed a post-professional Master of Architecture Program at Ball State University with a thesis titled "Village of Endurance: The Case of Ma'aloula."

Cristina Civantos, *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity*. Suny Series in Latin American and Iberian Thought and Culture. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. 270 pp. US \$65.00 (hardcover), ISBN 0791466019. US \$21.95 (paperback), ISBN 0791466027.



Reviewed by María del Mar Logroño Narbona

The history of the Arab immigrant communities in Latin America remains largely untold. When compared to its North American counterpart, Arab immigrant communities in Latin America have not yet received the attention of Middle East scholars they deserve. Among the reasons for this vacuum are the inherent limitations

posed by area studies and well known to scholars, such as language barriers and a high compartmentalization of knowledge. Not surprisingly, the first efforts in English to bring some light to this subject were the result of collaborative efforts such as Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi's *The Lebanese in the World* (1992) and the volume edited by Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser, *Arabs and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America* (1998).

It is in this context that *Between Argentines and Arabs* represents a different and important contribution to a field still in its infant stages. Working with both Arabic and Spanish literary sources from the perspective of cultural studies/literary criticism, Christina Civantos studies identity formation processes in Argentina from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Her book explores the textual dialogue in the writing of identity in Argentina through the works of European-Argentines and Arab immigrants in Argentina. Her book addresses two main questions: "How do Euro-Argentines employ the figure of the Arab—images of the 'Orient' and the 'Oriental' immigrant—in constructing an Argentine national culture, and how do Arab immigrants in Argentina make sense of the linguistic and cultural dislocations that they experience while responding to Euro-Argentine discourses?" (p. 2)

With this double task in mind, Christina Civantos sets to offer a thematic analysis of what she identifies as three "objects of representation": the figure of the gaucho; representations of the Orient and the Arab; and language choice and registers of linguistic purity (pp. 21-23).

The analysis of the gaucho, the mixed-race cowboy and icon of Argentine identity, leads the author to reformulate the concept of Orientalism and explore a new and related concept, "auto-Orientalism". Auto-Orientalism is the "essentialization of the self based on preexisting archetypes." (p.22) In the literary works of well known European Argentine writers Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Leopoldo Lugones, the Arab is a figure who links the Spanish Andalusian (Moorish) heritage with the identity of Argentina. This analysis is "contrapuntally" contrasted with the lesser known works of Arab immigrants such as Juan Yaser and Ibrahim Husayn Hallar, who developed on those notions to establish a deeper connection between the Arab immigrant and Argentina.

The Orient, according to Civantos, served as another cornerstone in the processes of identity formation, both amongst European and Arab Argentines. For European Argentines, constructions of the Arabs served to situate themselves in opposition to "the Other". This happened in two main sets of literature. The first was the pre-immigration and anti-Rosas literature of José Mármol,

Claudio Cuenca, Felisberto Pélissot in the mid-nineteenth century in which the Arab served as a metaphor for the national illnesses of Argentina. The second set of post-immigrant works in the 1900s followed the creation of a new social reality in Argentina in which the Arab was represented as the opposite of “civilization” by some Euro-Argentine writers. Arab Argentines such as Emin Arslan and José Guráieb, on the other hand, appropriated and responded to these discourses by either refuting them or creating new representations. According to Civantos, this process marked yet another self-essentialization of the community that represented the other side of Argentine Orientalism.

Her last point of analysis, “Performing Mother Tongues”, explores language and the performance of group identities to study the correlation between linguistic purity and cultural identity. Once more, discourses of linguistic and national purity made by *criollo* Argentines throughout the mid-nineteenth century until the 1930s were contested by Arab immigrant writers such as Emin Arslan, Pablo Achem, Juan Khury, and Durval Abdala. Their responses varied from demonstrating that the immigrant could be “a linguistically legitimate subject” to undermining those same discourses of pure language and national affiliation “by highlighting their performative nature”. (p. 23)

Historians may not feel at ease with some of Civantos’ chronological comparisons as different decades merge in the analysis of the development of common rhetorical strategies. This is, for instance, the case with the works of Arab immigrants such as Arslan (1917), Achem (1931), and Khury (1938) and Durval (1962). It is also the case in the comparisons and contrasts made between the works of Arab immigrants such as Hallar (1962) and Yaser (1992) to those of European Argentines such as Sarmiento (1845) and Lugones (1916). The assumption for this lack of chronological specificity seems to be that the works of Arab immigrants in Argentina must be read in the context of a textual dialogue with European Argentines and a dialogue among themselves.

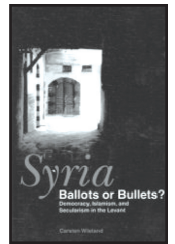
These questions of chronological specificity and textual dialogue are related to the internal logic of the book, in which the identity formation processes of the Arab immigrant community are analyzed at only one level, that resulting from the dialogue between Arab immigrants and European Argentines. Only once does Civantos use the Middle East as the cultural backdrop with which to understand the writings of Arab immigrants. She does so in discussing Arslan, Achem, and Khury in relation to the “preoccupation with language, morality, and nationality in Argentina” and “issues of linguistic purity and the shifting boundaries of group identity in the Arab world”. (pp.142-

143) Such an approach, common in previous studies with the exception of Ignacio Klich’s work, does not consider the role of specific historical connections beyond Argentina that may have shaped the identity formation process within the Arab immigrant communities.

This logic does not detract from the merits of Christina Civantos’ work. Her book is a solid and thought-provoking literary analysis that tests our notions of Orientalism and opens an array of important new sets of works, from a community that needs further attention from a Middle East perspective.

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Carsten Wieland. *Syria: Ballots or Bullets – Democracy, Secularism, and Islamism in the Levant*. Seattle, WA: Cune Press, 2006. US \$34.95 (hardcover) ISBN 1885942168. US \$17.95 (paperback) ISBN 188594215X.



Reviewed by Andrea Stanton

Carsten Wieland’s *Syria: Ballots or Bullets – Democracy, Secularism, and Islamism in the Levant* brings a new reflectivity to the growing genre of “Bashar’s Syria and how to deal with it” books. Wieland incorporates a sober assessment of the Iraq war’s domestic and international impact on Syria into an analytic description of contemporary Syrian politics, economics, and society. These two elements make the book stand out. *Ballots or Bullets* is the first book to seriously assess the effects of the now three years’ residence of over one million Iraqis on Syrian society and its economy. While the international community focuses on whether Syria supports for the *jihadi* resistance, Syrians worry about competition from Iraqi merchants, rent inflation, and demands for costly municipal services in newly created suburbs. Equally valuable is its portrayal of contemporary Syria without the insertion of heavy-handed condemnations or superficial solutions. Wieland has spent considerable time in Syria, making his observations both rich and nuanced.

Like all books in this genre *Ballots or Bullets* proclaims that Syria is one of the region's most opaque and little-known countries – an increasingly tired claim. While Wieland covers much of the same ground as David Lesch, Alan George, and Flynt Leverett, his coverage offers greater textural depth. Wieland's observations come from a deep engagement with Syrians across the full spectrum of social, economic, and political positions. This pays off in his de-mystification of much conventional wisdom regarding Syria – such as Syrian Baathism. Despite the rhetoric, Baathist Syria has focused more on stability than ideology. Even under Hafez's hard-line rule, socialism was replaced by de facto capitalism after the fall of the USSR, and Syria's pan-Arabism has remained largely rhetorical. The Asads' Syria has operated on a pragmatic consideration of world realities, not a blind adherence to party rhetoric. It is in this pragmatism that Wieland sees hopes for reform.

Wieland focuses on four issues: Syria's national politics, economy, the political opposition, and its image as a rogue state. Politically, he sees a shift from one (presidential) to multiple (cliques linked to high government officials) centers of power, which has reduced governmental coherence and suggests that this type of pluralization may be more destabilizing than productive. Economically, the Syrian regime has historically focused on redistribution, using state revenue to buy security rather than to invest in growth. Now, Lebanon and Iraqi oil have been removed as revenue sources and Syrian oil is in rapid decline; while inflation and a rising economic gap, coupled with a growing population and stagnant job market, signal that reforms cannot wait. Consequently, Syrians welcomed Bashar's initial focus on economic reform, and are disappointed by the results. However, progress is evident in new foreign investment laws, which enable everything from private banks to the Four Seasons hotel, and regional and EU trade initiatives.

Syrian opposition, comprising the post-Damascus Spring civil society movement and various Islamist groups, is the third issue. The regime has shunned the secular opposition while reaching out to moderate Islamists by supporting manifestations of Islam in the public sphere. Wieland cautions that this could backfire if today's moderates lose out to more radical Islamists. He warns the international community that regime change would likely result in an Islamist takeover, possibly moderate, possibly not. The fourth issue is Syria's image as a supporter of terrorism in Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. Syria's position is ambiguous: it supports but does not direct militant operations. Wieland criticizes the international community for its United States-led conflation of Syrian

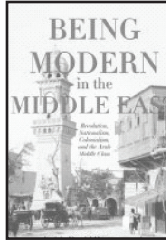
support for the Palestinian resistance with al-Qaeda style Islamic terrorism. He argues that this may in time give them common cause.

Wieland discusses United States and EU approaches to Syria in two separate chapters. Poorly thought out US policy—focusing on regime change but nothing longer term—has produced a “crisis of credibility” among government and opposition figures alike. The EU has acted far more intelligently, working with a positive, economically focused agenda that taps into Syria's economic woes. Syria has to work for EU trade agreements by meeting human rights and domestic reform targets. The EU program has had successes: while human rights violations still occur, they are less egregious.

Wieland concludes with an optimistic set of policy recommendations and a pessimistic epilogue. He views Syria as the Arab state best positioned to evolve toward democratization, thanks to its non-sectarian politics, receptivity to women in the public sphere, religious and ethnic diversity, relatively small economic gap, internal stability, and lack of oil. Thus he promotes diplomatic initiatives and ‘political engineering’ over military intervention. He proposes a three pronged strategy: support the efforts of the civil society movement and other moderate forces, secular or religious; strengthen economic ties to promote “change through trade”; and intensify diplomatic dialogue that directly addresses Bashar as the person who sees that reforms are necessary and can push them past hard-line opposition. Yet in his June 2006 epilogue, Wieland wonders whether diplomacy will enjoy a reasoned, let alone receptive, response. He takes the regime's crackdown upon signers of the Damascus-Beirut declaration as a sign of its growing insecurity. Insecure regimes do not think clearly, and they do not make good decisions. He ends by stating his hope that the situation will improve, and his fear that it will get worse - a pessoptimist's view and perhaps the most fitting one to share with an ‘interested non-specialist’ audience.

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Keith David Watenpaugh. *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006. xi + 325 pages. Bibliography, index. US \$ 35.00 (hardcover) ISBN 0691121699.



Reviewed by Kevin Martin

The historiography of modern Syria continues to display a general reticence or inability to address the issue of class in anything but the most formulaic or anecdotal manner. This is particularly true of that country's middle classes, which remain largely absent from scholarly discussion. As its title indicates, Keith Watenpaugh's *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* seeks to redress this imbalance.

The nominal subject of Watenpaugh's study is the middle class of Aleppo between the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and Syria's achievement of independence in 1946. Yet this ambitious book situates its ostensibly narrow topic within a variety of interrelated historical processes and contentious historiographical issues. It also attempts to redefine certain key terms employed by scholars of the region. First, Watenpaugh seeks to uncover the meaning of "being modern" for Aleppo's middle class, and to elucidate the processes by which this class's "commitment to being modern shaped its attempts to create civil society and mold urban politics, the multiple ways it employed nationalism, history writing, and violence to make sense of the post-World War I world, and its engagement with – or resistance to – European imperialism." (pp. 8-9) The author also states his intention to "explain how the emergence of this middle class began to alter the ideological, social, and cultural topography of the contemporary Middle East, especially as it bears on the question of secularism, citizenship, and liberalism." (pp. 8-9) Finally, *Being Modern* is informed by a desire to formulate "new descriptive vocabularies of geography." Thus, despite the book's title, Watenpaugh's analysis locates Aleppo within a putatively distinctive topographical, cultural, and economic zone, the "Eastern Mediterranean" that, he argues, "makes more sense as a geographical construct than the Middle East." (p. ix)

Watenpaugh employs a fairly unconventional structure to accomplish these manifold objectives. *Being Modern* consists of eleven chapters. The first two chapters, which are introductory in nature, and the final chapter, which constitutes a "coda" rather than a formal conclusion, lie outside the book's thematic structure. In Chapter

One, entitled "Introduction: Modernity, Class, and the Architectures of Community", Watenpaugh uses the text of an Aleppan newspaper publisher's 1910 public address on the topic of "true civilization" to introduce the issues central to his study, the "historical problem" of "being modern," the particularities of middle-class modernity, and the "architecture," i.e., structures of economic, cultural, and political relations, of Aleppo as archetypal "Eastern Mediterranean community." He then explains his chosen temporal and spatial units of analysis, e.g., Aleppo as the site of an Ottoman (read, pre-Syrian and pre-Turkish) identity outside of Anatolia, and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 as the "crucible" from which civil society, as manifested by "voluntary associations and newspapers," was formed. (p. 8)

Chapter Two, "An Eastern Mediterranean City on the Eve of Revolution", describes the ethnically, linguistically, and confessionally complex demography of Aleppo in the early twentieth century as well as the city's place within existing networks of international trade and the political economy of the Ottoman Empire, then provides preliminary descriptions of the city's rapidly evolving "modern" institutions and their collective role in shaping social and cultural solidarities.

The core of *Being Modern in the Middle East* is organized into three thematic sections, each of which explores a different valence of modernity as lived experience. Section One, "Being Modern in a Time of Revolution," analyzes the evolution of late Ottoman-period institutions in interaction with the revolutionary policy initiatives of "Young Turks" and the exigencies of the First World War, and explores the processes by which these institutions, primarily journalism and voluntary associations, became sites of contestation and instruments of social conflict between a variety of individuals and interest groups.

Section Two, "Being Modern in a Moment of Anxiety", explores the emergence of contending nationalist and other collective identities in the post-WWI period, their adherents' engagement with a variety of international forces, and their employment of various techniques in pursuit of social and political objectives. These techniques included historical representations of the ancient, medieval, and recent past (particularly the First World War and the Armenian Genocide), the manipulation of language and modernist discourse to create new horizontal solidarities, the rhetorical reconfiguration of Syria's "natural" boundaries, the reassertion of Islam's centrality to political theory and practice, a final attempt to reformulate Ottoman cultural and political identities in the local context, and the selective application of violence.

Section Three, “Being Modern in an Era of Colonialism”, explores the period of the French Mandate in Aleppo and its environs. It thus tackles some of the most sensitive and contentious issue of modern Syrian historiography. These include local elites’ engagement with French administrative measures whose apparent goal was the physical and conceptual fragmentation of Syria, the processes by which the famous Sunni notability mobilized support for – or enforced acquiescence to – its continued dominance of political and economic life, the middle classes’ adoption of “fascist” modes of political discourse, popular mobilization, and communally structured street violence, and the context in which many of Aleppo’s ethnic and religious minorities employed collaboration with French colonial authorities as a strategy of self-defense.

After giving the reader so much to ponder, Watenpaugh returns to the theme of “the middle class as a historical problem” in Chapter Eleven, the aforementioned “Coda: The Incomplete Project of Modernity and the Paradox of Metropolitan Desire”. (p. 303) This final chapter comprises a bold attempt to initiate a theoretically informed, comparative study of Western and non-Western middle classes as both “social and cultural” phenomena of modernity. (p. 302) This effort takes the form of five “conceptual axioms” about middle-class beliefs, practices, aspirations, tendencies, and attitudes/relationships to power. Watenpaugh’s “problem-oriented” approach to modern Syrian history and the book’s precisely bounded temporal and spatial scope are reminiscent of the conceptual and methodological approaches of the early Annales school, particularly the work of Lucien Febvre. As such, they constitute a fresh and suggestively fruitful approach to Syrian historiography.

On the negative side of the ledger, *Being Modern in the Middle East* features the occasional typographical error, and the odd minor error of fact. Yet, these minor flaws constitute mere distractions. More substantial criticism is

due the author’s tendency to base broad, general arguments on a relatively (empirically speaking) thin body of sources. This is not to imply that the arguments in question are invalid or the sources inappropriate to the task, it is merely to suggest that a study that engages with such large and difficult historiographical problems while employing such a diverse and unorthodox body of sources could benefit from more elaboration of the former, and more explicit justifications of the latter’s usage in this effort.

These criticisms aside, Watenpaugh should be commended for this ambitious undertaking, which succeeds far more often than it fails. In the final analysis, *Being Modern in the Middle East* is intellectually critical of yet empathetic toward its subject, displays an innovative selection and use of archival, journalistic, literary, and other sources, and focuses on a critical and fascinating period in order to recapture a “moment” at which the collective identities of political actors and their modes of action and expression were not yet cast in rigid, ethno-linguistic nationalist terms. Watenpaugh’s study thereby problematizes a host of persistent assumptions about the history of modern Syria. Furthermore, it does so with a considerable degree of theoretical sophistication and nuance, restoring agency to the middle classes of Syria while remaining mindful of historical contingencies and local specificities. Thus, it constitutes a genuine contribution to the historiographies of modern Syria and the modern Middle East, as well as a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship motivated by a desire to theorize and historicize modernity as both phenomenon and lived experience outside the confines of Western Europe and North America.

Kevin W. Martin is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Memphis. He is currently completing an article entitled “‘Images of Syria’s Awakening’: Bourgeois Industry, Consumption, and Leisure at the Damascus International Exposition of 1954,” and revising his dissertation for publication.

BOOKS TO CHECK OUT

The Role of the State in West Asia
(eds Annika Rabo & Bo Utas)
2005, Swedish Research Institute
in Istanbul, Transactions vol 14,
distributed by I B Tauris.

The book includes for examples articles by Peter Sluglett on the Iraqi and Syrian middles classes between the two world wars, by Emma Jorum

on understanding current Syrian policy towards Hatay, by Annika Rabo on Aleppo traders and the Syrian state.

A Shop of One’s Own. Independence and Reputation among Traders in Aleppo,
Annika Rabo 2005, I B Tauris.

State Frontiers. Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East
(ed. Inga Brandell) 2006, I B Tauris,
a number of the articles focuses on Syria and the Syrian-Turkish border area.

“MAKING SENSE OF HIZBULLAH”

By Fred H. Lawson

LIKE the Republican Party, the National Organization for Women or any other serious political organization, Lebanon’s Party of God (Hizbullah) consists of a variety of components. These wings of the party—it is too strong to call them “factions”—can be characterized in several different, sometimes overlapping, ways.

First, there is underlying friction between those who want to promote the party’s program by participating in Lebanon’s democratic system and those who reject the existing political order. This is a relatively new struggle inside the organization. Hizbullah refused to play an active role in electoral politics before 1992. The decision to contest parliamentary seats that year led one of the party’s founders, Shaikh Subhi al-Tufaili, to organize an open revolt against the leadership. Although he was subsequently expelled from the organization, al-Tufaili continues to exert influence over party members and supporters alike. Nevertheless, those who favor working within the system have gained momentum, and two party members presently serve as cabinet ministers.

Second, Hizbullah consists of one wing that insists on preserving the party’s credentials as a Lebanese national resistance movement and another that sees it as the vanguard of regional transformation. So long as Israeli troops occupied southern Lebanon, this tension remained dormant. But following Israel’s sudden withdrawal from the south in May 2000, the party has been torn over whether or not to pursue external objectives, such as the liberation of

Jerusalem. At least for the present, the leadership has subordinated regional issues to domestic concerns.

Third, party leaders and cadres alike can be divided into moderates who exhibit broadly bourgeois sentiments and radicals who demand a major redistribution of wealth and opportunity in Lebanese society. The former emphasize the importance of spiritual regeneration as a means to achieve social justice, and claim that any infringement on property rights reflects illegitimate notions of western socialism. The latter demand more immediate remedies for Shi’i communities that suffer from widespread poverty and discrimination. Hizbullah’s extensive network of hospitals, dispensaries and schools offers a compromise that both wings can support, at least in the short term.

Fourth, the organization includes both a “civilian” branch and a “military” branch. In principle, militia commanders act under orders from a seven-member Consultative Council. But military operations can be authorized by either the Jihad Council or the Military and Security Apparatus. The latter is in turn divided into three distinct clusters, an assortment of guerrilla units, Party (or internal) Security and External (or counterintelligence) Security. Links among these agencies, as well as between them and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and Iranian intelligence, remain opaque.

Recognizing that Hizbullah is not a monolithic actor enables us to reframe the most puzzling question surrounding recent events on the Lebanon-Israel border: why did

Hizbullah militants cross into Israel on July 12 and abduct a pair of Israeli soldiers? This action violated the long-standing rules of the game in southern Lebanon, whereby Hizbullah commandos targeted Israeli military personnel only after they ventured into Lebanese territory and Israeli commanders refrained from retaliating against attacks that took place inside Lebanon. The raid has therefore been widely regarded as irrational, or at best quirky, and has reinforced the general consensus that Hizbullah is nothing but a group of unpredictable trouble-makers.

On the other hand, to the extent that Hizbullah consists of competing wings, the “decision” to seize the Israeli soldiers might have come about in one of two more complicated ways. On one hand, the party’s primary leader, Hasan Nasrallah, champions active involvement in Lebanon’s democratic system, publicly defended the continuation of direct Syrian intervention in Lebanese affairs, advocates comparatively moderate economic and social policies and stands for firm civilian control over the military command. This package has turned out to be hard to sustain, and has sparked grumbling among the rank and file. It would not be surprising if Nasrallah opted for a belligerent course of action toward Israel in order to reconsolidate his faltering hold over the organization.

On the other hand, it is possible that radicals inside the party carried out the July 12 operation, and left Nasrallah with no choice but to rally behind it. No one expected Israel to respond so aggressively, particularly

WORLD CUP FEVER IN SYRIA

By Faedah Totah

in light of the conflict that was raging in Gaza. Furthermore, the last time a prisoner exchange was undertaken between Hizbullah and Israel, it came off relatively well. Nasrallah and his allies might well have chosen to go along with a risky initiative on the part of the radicals, only to be caught up in an unanticipated conflict spiral.

No matter how it started, the crisis is almost certain to strengthen Hizbullah's radical wing. It will be harder to convince party cadres and supporters that they should be part of a regime that cannot defend Lebanese civilians from Israeli bombs. Ties to Palestinians militants, as well as to Shi'i activists in Iraq and other parts of the Arab world, will probably expand. More resources will be required to sustain and rebuild poor neighborhoods, whose residents can be expected to be enraged rather than dispirited. And whatever vestiges of centralized civilian command existed before the war will collapse. It remains to be seen whether a completely splintered Hizbullah is less dangerous than the earlier umbrella organization.

Fred H. Lawson, Rice Professor of Government at Mills College, is author of Constructing International Relations in the Arab World published by Stanford University Press this year.

I want to time my trips to Syria to coincide with the World Cup. I was in Damascus for the 2002 games and got caught up in the excitement, it was infectious and everywhere. Every four years and for one month Damascus takes on a new appeal. Perhaps it is the summer and soccer in Damascus, a perfect combination. The football matches are the talk of the town, who to watch, where to watch, and when to watch. Forget about getting any work done during the World Cup. I walked into a store and the shopkeeper was watching the game with his friend and only reluctantly came to my assistance, which was just as well because I wanted to watch the game too. Germany was playing and it was only after they scored he came to help me saying to his friend: "They are a well-oiled machine, when they get going, nothing can stop them!" And nothing can stop soccer in Syria.

The games became the most important event and everything else has to be scheduled around the matches especially when the all-time favorite team Brazil plays. The World Cup is the one thing that truly unites Syrians. This summer I was not disappointed. The games were playing everywhere, and you could catch the action just walking through the alleys of the Old City. You heard cheers and shouts from stores, homes, and restaurants. The games were the topic of conversation over morning coffee and evening tea. During the times when favorites like Brazil or Germany played the streets were empty. When Brazil won the streets became alive with revelers, when it

lost with the silence of mourners. My neighbor's husband, a barber, closed his shop at seven when the evening games were aired because he had no customers. He told me "I was busy until 6:30 and everyone was asking me to hurry. No one wanted to miss the games. I didn't either."

I arrived in late May 2006 and the streets of Damascus were already decked with international flags. Brazilian flags outnumbered German and Argentinean ones, the other favorite teams. You had to look hard for Italian or French ones and I even spotted a lone English flag.



Brazilian and Italian flag outside a café in the Old City

At times two flags, Brazilian and German, hung from the same house, perhaps a split in the family over soccer allegiances. The proliferation of Brazil flags in Syria might lead one to wonder about the affinity among Syrians for Brazil. An English journalist thought it might have something to do with the large number of Syrians in Brazil, but



Brazilian flags hover over the Virgin Mary shrine during a religious festival.

according to the six year old son of my neighbor he supports Brazil because they are strong. Naturally, one would support a strong team and it was with much sadness that we all watched Brazil exit the games before reaching the semi-finals. They got too cocky and made too many mistakes. Which made the few Syrians supporting Germany snotty, but it did not last long before Germany was defeated.

Women were also following the games for different reasons. One young woman behind me on the bus told her friend she was supporting

Italy because they have cute players. In the days leading up to the games the discussions in the alleys of the Old City where I was staying centered on where to watch the games. Apparently, the games were being broadcast on satellite TV with special subscription, unlike the past. For the month of games the extra charge was as much as 6000 SP or \$120, already

beyond the reach of most Syrians. But this was a justifiable expense for many, their one true indulgence. Of course you could always have a cable installed from the neighbors' satellite dish. Restaurants and cafes throughout the city were advertising specials for the games. Many were charging an extra fee just for sitting in the café during the games. My landlord's teenage daughter spent hours on the cell phone making arrangements with her friends and reservations at the different restaurants.

The games caught up with every one. At Mar Musa the Monastery near Nabk overlooking the Eastern desert, monks snuck to their rooms to catch the game before returning to evening prayers. An Iranian expatriate came into a café I was at during the Iran vs. Mexico game. Unfortunately, neither team had a huge following in Syria and the café was almost empty. This did not deter the Iranian who wore a green shirt and red tie and took out a small Iranian flag which he set on the table in front of him. When the game began he reverently kissed the flag and closely watched the game as we watched him. He was in a bar speaking to waiters in English and cheering Iran in Persian. At the final game between France and Italy my friend Dan and I had to go to three different cafes before we found one that allowed us to squeeze in after the start of the second half. Afterwards Italian supporters filled the streets, it was a night to remember. We could not find a taxi back to the Old City. The games will be in South Africa in 2010, and I will be back in Syria.

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2006 Syrian Studies Association Election Results

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